

A New World Coming God's Kingdom on Earth

The earth on which we live is a beautiful place, but it is subject to suffering, evil and death. 'If everything were to continue as it does today, the fate of the world would be destruction through war, environmental catastrophe or global war. But the Bible tells us that things will not continue as they are now and promises a coming time of peace, safety and plenty for all. The Bible calls this time

The Kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is referred to throughout the Scriptures. The first mentions of it are found in the book of Genesis, and the kingdom is still being described in the book of the Revelation. Jesus described the kingdom of God over a hundred times in his recorded words in the Gospels and the subject was so important that it was almost equivalent to the main message of the apostles: *preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ...* (Acts 28:31; see also Acts 1:3; 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23).

The picture that is given of the kingdom of God is consistent from one end of the Bible to the other. It is a real kingdom, on earth, with a ruler, a capital city and laws. It is to be set up at the return of the Lord Jesus, and is to last forever.

A History of God's Kingdom

The kingdom of God existed on earth in past times. The ancient kingdom of Israel was the kingdom of God, ruled by a human king on God's behalf (Chronicles 28:5; 29:23). This kingdom was overthrown by the Babylonians because of the failure of its people to adhere to God's precepts. This was predicted by the prophet Ezekiel in the following words: *And you, O unhallowed wicked one, prince of Israel, whose day has come,... remove the turban and take off the crown; things shall not remain as they are;... A ruin, ruin, ruin will I make it; there shall not be even a trace of it until he comes whose right it is; and to him will I give it.* (Ezekiel 21 :25-27)

This passage promises the overthrow of the kingdom, but it also promises a restoration when the right person comes. The right person is the Lord Jesus: and his rule over the restored kingdom is prophesied in Psalm 2: *He who sits in the heavens laughs; the LORD has them in derision. Then he will speak to them... saying, "I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill."* (Psalm 2:4-6) This describes the start of the kingdom of God, where God subdues the nations and sets up his chosen king to rule them. The following verses are the words of the ruler sent by God [*will tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my son, today have I begotten you. Ask Of me, and I will make the nations your heritage and the ends of the earth your possession"*] (vv 7,8)

The ruler is God's begotten son, the Lord Jesus Christ. As he rules from Zion, he must have returned to earth, and his rule is to cover every nation. The same picture is given in the New Testament, which tells us that Jesus is to judge mankind at his coming and at his kingdom (2 Timothy 4: 1). The return of Jesus was a major part of the gospel preached by Jesus and the apostles; there are over 300 verses in the New Testament which refer to this event (see for example: Matt 16:27,28; Matt 24:30; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thess 4:15,16; 2 Thess 2:1-8; Rev 1:7; Rev 22:20)

The Bible gives us the sequence of events that follows the return of Jesus in a passage that is mainly about the resurrection of the dead. *...each [will be raised from the dead] in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his, coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying all rule and authority and power, for he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.* (Corinthians 15:22-26).

Jesus was raised from the dead in the first century; the remainder of the dead are to be raised at the return of Jesus. There then follows a period when Jesus rules the world, gradually subduing his (and God's) enemies. The last of these enemies to be destroyed is death, which means that some people will still die up to this stage, and then the kingdom will be handed over to God, *that God may be everything to everyone.* (v28) It seems that the period between the return of Jesus and the destruction of death will be a long one; the book of Revelation describes it as lasting for a thousand years (Revelation 20: 1-7), and for this reason this period is sometimes called *the Millennium* (from the Latin for a thousand years). .

A Real Kingdom

When the Bible describes the kingdom of God it is very clear about what kind of kingdom it is. The first and most important point about the kingdom of God is that it is to be established on earth: *I will make the nations your heritage* (Psalm 2:8); *.. the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.* (Isaiah 11 :9) *..the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the most high...* (Daniel 7:27); *And the LORD will become king over all the earth;* (Zechariah 14:9); *or thou... didst ransom men for God... and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.* (Revelation 5:9,10) These passages not only tell us that the kingdom of God will be on earth; they also tell us that the kingdom will cover the whole earth. The picture is that the whole world will be governed by Jesus from Jerusalem, and that the law of God will be administered from there: *for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem .* (Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:2); *At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the LORD in Jerusalem.* (Jeremiah 3:17); *Do not swear... by Jerusalem, or it is the city of the great king.* (Matthew 5:34,35)

The Kingdom Described

There are many other passages which describe the thousand year reign of Jesus. One of these appears on the back page of this leaflet. But the most important points about this period can be summarised by a few headings:

- No more war Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; 65:25
- No more famine Joel3:17-21; Amos 9:11-15
- No more disease Isaiah 35:5,6
- No more sorrow Isaiah 65:18,19
- Justice for all Isaiah 2:2,3
- Real peace. Isaiah 65:21,25

This is completely different to the world we now live in with its threat of disease, famine, war and sudden death.

Your place in God's Kingdom

Not only is the kingdom of God the only hope for the survival of mankind, but °it is also the only hope for your future. The Bible promises that *the meek shall inherit the earth* (Matthew 5:5) and tells us that by becoming true followers of Christ *we shall also reign with him* (2 Timothy 2: 12). We do not even lose this hope if we die before Jesus returns, as the scriptures tell us that if this happens we can be raised to new life in God's kingdom (See I Corinthians 15:20-26; 50-54). This is the true hope of the gospel, as proclaimed by Jesus and written in the Bible. To have a part in the kingdom of God we need to become true followers of Jesus, because Jesus is the only way to salvation. There is no other hope.

Final word

It is vitally important to understand the kingdom of God. This is at the centre of the gospel and of our salvation. The only way to understand the kingdom of God is to read the Bible.

For behold I create a new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days or an old man who does not fill out his days, or the child shall die an hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat;... The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, says the LORD.
(Isaiah 65:17-25)