

# A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expository Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

**Chapter 13- Luke 13:18- 21**

**248- The Mystery of the Kingdom of God**

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July 27, 2014

**Luke 13:18-21**

**18** So He was saying, "What is the kingdom of God like, and to what shall I compare it?"

**19** It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and threw into his own garden; and it grew and became a tree, and **THE BIRDS OF THE AIR NESTED IN ITS BRANCHES.**"

**20** And again He said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God?"

**21** It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened."

To the Glory of God

Now Dr. Luke had a lot to say about "**The Kingdom of God**". And so far in our Journey through **Luke**- Jesus has taught us many things about "**The Kingdom of God**". For example:

**Luke 4:43**

**But He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose."**

**Luke 6:20**

**Blessed *are* you *who are* poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.**

**Luke 7:28**

**I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."**

**Luke 8:10**

**And He said, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest *it is* in parables, so that SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND.**

**Luke 9:2**

**And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing.**

**Luke 9:11**

**But the crowds were aware of this and followed Him; and welcoming them, He *began* speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing.**

**Luke 9:27**

**But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."**

**Luke 9:62**

**But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."**

**Luke 10:8-11**

**8** Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you;

**9** and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

**10** But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say,

**11** 'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off *in protest* against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.'

**Luke 11:19&20**

**19** And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? So they will be your judges.

**20** But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

And, of course, in today's Passage- Jesus tells us that the Kingdom of God is like two different things:

1. Mustard Seed
2. Leaven

So all in all- there are at least 98 separate references in the NT about either the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven. And in Luke's two volumes- his Story of Life, Ministry, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus that we call "**The Gospel of Luke**", and in the Diary of the early Church- that is called **The Book of the Acts of the Apostles**- the good doctor uses this phrase 38 times- of which we have already studied 15 of them. The Apostle Paul used this phrase 7 different times, while Levi or Matthew used the phrase "The Kingdom of Heaven" 32 times.

So "The Kingdom of God" is a *Biblical* phrase that we need to try to understand as it pertains to not only our own relationship with Jesus Christ but also as it pertains to our eternal home.

So, is the Kingdom of God a *future reality* that is to be hoped for or is it a *present reality* that we are to experience right now? Are we to look *forward* to God's Kingdom or are we to enjoy it now? Are we to *hope for* The Kingdom of God at some future point or are we to use it and dwell in it right now?

And the answer is: "both". God's Kingdom is partly present right now and it is partly future; it is- The Kingdom of God is- in one sense- existing right now and in another sense it is something to look forward to.

Many of the Blessings of The Kingdom of God are here to be enjoyed right now- but many of them are not yet here. Some of its Power is available right now- but not all of it. Some of the curse and the misery of this present age can be overcome now by the reality of the Kingdom of God- but some of it cannot be.

The decisive battle against all sin and all rebellion, along with satan with all his fallen demon angels, along with all sickness and disease and poverty and injustice and even death itself- has been fought and has been won by the King of the Kingdom in His Death by Crucifixion and in His glorious Resurrection three days later- and yet the war is not yet over.

Sin and rebellion and human arrogance must be fought against and resisted on a moment by moment basis, satan and demons must be resisted, sickness must be prayed over and groaned under (**Romans 8:23**), injustice must be cried out against, and death must be endured until the Second Coming of the King and the *final Consummation* of the Kingdom of God.

Now I want you to see this clearly in the New Testament and particularly here in **Luke**- because it is extremely important for your faith. Knowing about this- Biblically- will inspire you with hope that there is a great and glorious future yet to come for all genuine believers. And the Truth of that future makes the struggle right now to be something that is worthwhile.

And so knowing what the Bible actually teaches about "The Kingdom of God" will deepen your confidence that the glory of your future in the Kingdom is secured and guaranteed by a very precious and past "down payment" of that very Kingdom. Please turn with me to **Romans 8**- to see what the Apostle Paul said about this:

#### **Romans 8:28-39**

**28** And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

**29** For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

**30** and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

**31** What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?

**32** He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

**33** Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;

**34** who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

**35** Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

**36** Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED."

**37** But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

**38** For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

**39** 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.

Now if you understand The Kingdom of God Biblically- you will comprehend why so much amazing Kingdom Power is being unleashed in the world right now, and yet so much of sin and satan and sickness and suffering remains. So if you get a handle on both the present presence and the future glory of The Kingdom of God- you will find yourself on a pathway of spiritual power- which *might* include the power to be used by God in some meaningful way now but it absolutely *will* definitely include the equally remarkable power to patiently and faithfully endure suffering to the Glory of God- as the Apostle taught in Colossians 1:9-12 when he said:

**9** For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

**10** so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

**11** strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously

**12** giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

So let's look at the Passages of Scripture that show us that The Kingdom of God to be both present and future. First- turn with me just ahead to **Luke 17:20-21**:

**Luke 17:20-21**

**20** Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed;

**21** nor will they say, 'Look, here *it is!*' or, 'There *it is!*' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."

Now this is a very clear statement that the coming of Jesus *is* the coming of the Kingdom. And so when He was asked by the Pharisees just when the Kingdom of God was coming- Jesus answered them:

**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."**

So right off jump street- Jesus begins to correct a terrible misunderstanding of the Kingdom that was popular in that day and one that the Pharisees, in particular, held to, and that is that God's Kingdom would come with such outward visible, tangible, physical, observable signs that it would be unmistakable. And among the signs that these unsaved Jews were looking for was:

- ✓ Rome would be vanquished
- ✓ The Jews would be vindicated
- ✓ An earthly kingdom in Israel would be established with Jerusalem as its capital
- ✓ The Messiah would rule the world with a rod of iron from Jerusalem

But, Jesus said, *"No! God's Kingdom is not coming in a way that can be observed like that. There is a mystery about the coming of the Kingdom. It is here in your midst without those kinds of observable signs. And it is here now because I am here now. I am the arrival of the Kingdom- even though I will not overturn the Romans or set up an earthly kingdom (yet!)."*

Another clear statement about the present presence of the Kingdom is back in **Luke 11**. There the Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub (v. 15). But Jesus has a very different interpretation of what's happening and He told them:

**Luke 11:17-20**

... Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and a house *divided* against itself falls.

**18** If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul.

**19** And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? So they will be your judges.

**20** But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

So what are we to make of this? We are to understand that when Jesus does battle with satan by the Spirit of God, and the Lord begins to violently plunder the strong man's house- stealing people from satan's bondage and forcefully brings them to God- the Powers of the Kingdom are at work, and in that sense- the Kingdom is already present.

But there are other Passages that make it very clear that the Kingdom of God is not yet present. For example- turn with me to **Luke 19**.

#### **Luke 19:11&12**

**11** While they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately.

**12** So He said, "A nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and *then* return.

Now here- Jesus is near Jerusalem. And these unbelieving Jews thought Jesus was about to make His move on the power center of the whole country and that Jesus was going to *violently* and *forcefully* overthrow the Romans and set up an earthly Kingdom right then and there. And they thought this because that was the common misconception about the coming of the Messiah and the coming of God's Kingdom- that it would be with open shows of spectacular Glory with signs and wonders that would result in the destruction of all Israel's enemies and establish a new reign of peace and righteousness in the earth.

But instead of leading a physical military army into Jerusalem- Jesus tells them a Parable that was designed to make clear that the Kingdom of God was not here yet- and that it is not coming that way

now- it would be a long time in the future. And so in Verse 12 Jesus began to say:

**"A nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and *then* return.**

... in other words, Jesus is going to go back to Heaven *first* and He will be gone for quite some time before He returns to establish His Kingdom in Power and Glory. So make no mistake about this, dear friends- in this sense- the coming of the Kingdom is still in the future.

So how we are to comprehend this is that the Kingdom of God has already come- in one sense- according to **Luke 17:21** and many other texts, and the coming of the Kingdom is yet to come at some point in the future- in another sense- according to **Luke 19:11&12** and many other texts.

And this is very puzzling. It is a mystery- a paradox. And it threw the Pharisees into great confusion. But, not just them. This very same mystery also took John Baptist off guard in **Matthew 11:2–6** and it caused one crowd to want to throw Jesus off a cliff in **Luke 4:29** while another wanted to make Him king in **John 6:15**.

This mystery baffled Pilate when Jesus was on trial in **John 18:36–37** and it left the Apostles confused and hopeless between Jesus' Death and His Resurrection according to **Luke 24:21**.

And behind all this confusion was what Jesus called:

The Mystery [or the Secret] of the Kingdom.

So in order to unveil this mystery only to the elect- Jesus described the Kingdom of God in Parables- statements that were designed by God on purpose to be utter nonsense to those who have *not* been chosen by God from before the foundation of the world to be saved while being great enlightenment to those who *have* been blessed by God to receive God's Mercy.

Now I want to turn to **Matthew 13** for a moment because Levi wrote a compilation of many of the different statements that Jesus made about The Kingdom of God- including the two that are in our text in **Luke 13** today. So let's go to **Matthew 13** and see how the *Parables* of the Kingdom unfold the *Mystery* of the Kingdom for us.



Now what is mysterious about the Kingdom is that it has come *partly* but not *fully*. And since it is true that The Kingdom is associated with Jesus- you simply cannot understand The Kingdom fully without an understanding of *why* Jesus came the first time and why He is going to come again. And so there was great confusion with the Jews about how many times the Messiah was going to come.

You see until the development of the New Testament- the final, full, and completed Revelation of God that supersedes the partial and inferior Revelation of the Old- people really didn't understand that the Messiah was actually going to come *twice*- once as the gentle Nazarene and once as the conquering King. Jesus would come the *first* time to seek and save that which was lost, and He would come the *second* time to claim His Own forever; He would come *first* to be rejected and scorned and crucified and die and rise again, and He would come the *second* time to end all controversy and to remove all sin from the earth by removing all unrepentant sinners. His First Coming would go *unnoticed* by the majority of all Mankind, but every eye will witness His Return.

And so even though there were hints about all this in the Old Testament- like in **Isaiah 53**- which describes the suffering Servant- it was still true that by and large- the Old Testament does not clearly separate the two comings of Christ. It only sees one great "Day of the Lord" coming when God would deal finally with sin and defeat all His enemies and gather His people into a Kingdom of peace and righteousness and joy and make the earth and the heavens new and glorious with the Messiah ruling forever and ever.

But the inferior Old Covenant didn't make clear that this day of the Lord—the coming of the Kingdom—would happen in two stages:

- A. With Jesus coming initially as a suffering Servant to atone for sin and to *initiate* God's Kingdom
- B. With Jesus coming back in the clouds of Heaven with Power and great Glory to *consummate* God's Kingdom

So this is the "Mystery" (or the Secret) of the Kingdom- the arrival of the Kingdom in a preliminary, small, basically unnoticed way in advance of the final consummation- when all the enemies would be defeated and all sin and satanic power and sickness and suffering would

be gone forever. And this mystery, as George Ladd- the Professor of exegesis and theology at Fuller Theological Seminary- puts it, is:

"Fulfillment without consummation."

So the *fulfillment* of the Kingdom is here now- but the *consummation* of the Kingdom is not. Many "Kingdom Blessings" can be experienced today- the greatest and most important being the Salvation of unworthy sinners- especially the Gentiles- while many of the Kingdom Blessings are reserved for the consummation and the Return of Jesus to this earth.

So let's read from the Parables how Jesus teaches about the "mystery of the Kingdom". Notice **Matthew 13:11**. There Jesus says to His disciples,

**To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.**

... and then further down in Verses 16&17- Jesus says:

**Matthew 13:16&17**

**16 But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.**

**17 For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see *it*, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear *it*.**

... because it is obvious- even though it is startling- that Jesus did *not* want everybody to understand or see or hear and to know about Himself or the Kingdom- which is *why* He spoke to them in Parables.

So we are seeing the fulfillment of things that these people longed to see. The Kingdom of God has come- but there is a mystery. Not everyone is recognizing it. It's not what they expected. It's here- but the way it's here is a mystery. That is the mystery. That's what these parables in **Matthew 13** are meant to show.

Now we learned several of these Parables earlier in our Journey through Luke- but here in **Matthew 13**- they are all put together while- they are in several different Chapters.

And here in **Matthew 13**- we see that Jesus describes the Kingdom of God in seven different ways:

1. In **Matthew 13:1-9**- Jesus says that the Kingdom of God is like a Sower who sows Seed
2. In **Matthew 13:24-30**- Jesus says that the Kingdom of God is like Wheat among the Tares
3. In **Matthew 13:31&32**- Jesus says the Kingdom of Heaven is like a Mustard Seed (**Luke 13**)
4. In **Matthew 13:33-35**- Jesus says the Kingdom of Heaven is like Leaven (**Luke 13**)
5. In **Matthew 13:44**- Jesus says the Kingdom of Heaven is like Hidden Treasure
6. In **Matthew 13:45&46**- Jesus says that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a Costly Pearl
7. In **Matthew 13:47-50**- Jesus says the Kingdom of Heaven is like a Drag Net or a Fishing Net

So let's examine these

## 1. The Parable of the Sower and the Seed

Now look again at **Matthew 13:18- 23**. Now here- Jesus said four different things can happen to the Seed:

- I. Satan can snatch it
- II. The heat of trouble can scorch it
- III. The thorns of worldly care can choke it
- IV. It can bear fruit in good soil.

And the mystery here is that the Word of the Kingdom- the Gospel of the Kingdom, "Our God reigns!" — is *not* dominating the whole world. It is here with Power to save *some*- yet a full three-fourths of Kingdom Preaching seems to be unproductive. The Jews never expected that to happen when the Messiah arrived and said,

The Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand. Our God Reigns!

And why would they? Who would ever think that this precious holy Seed could ever be anything other than amazingly productive? But the mystery is that it was never God's Will to save all- but to only save those who have been blessed by God to understand that they are lost sinners- unworthy of eternal life. So while some Jews would hear and believe- most would not. So the first mystery is that God's Seed of the Kingdom- the Gospel of the Kingdom, would only be heard by those who have been prepared by God to hear.

## **2. The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares**

Now look at **Matthew 3:24-30** again. Here we see that The Kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. An enemy sows bad seed, and the wheat and tares grow up together. And Jesus says that's a picture of the Kingdom.

And Jesus says that the sons of the Kingdom and the sons of the evil one will co-exist- side by side- until the final Harvest- the Day of Judgment.

And the interpretation is given in verses 41-43. At the end of the age it says,

### **Matthew 13:41-43**

**41** The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness,

**42** and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

**43** Then **THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN** in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

So this is the second mystery of the Kingdom of God- it is a Kingdom that exists for a long time in this world with the Righteous and the evil dwelling together- side by side- until the final Consummation. And this was not expected by the Jews either.

They only understood that the Kingdom was going to come with total Power to destroy the wicked immediately and vindicate the righteous- not that they would dwell side by side for thousands of years.

But Jesus says the Kingdom has already arrived. So there is a fulfillment now. But the consummation- the final separation of the

wicked from the Just- will not occur until the Second Coming of the Son of Man.

### **3. The Parable of the Mustard Seed**

Now look at the Parable of the mustard seed in vv. 31&32. The third mystery of the Kingdom is that the Kingdom of God came in Jesus like an insignificant mustard seed that could easily go unnoticed and not through a military coup that would grasp everybody's attention. God's Kingdom will one day be a huge unmistakable mighty tree that cannot and will not be ignored as every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

But the third mystery is that the Kingdom has initially come into the world in a very obscured and unnoticed and humble way- without the visible, public dramatic and cataclysmic transformation that most of these Jews expected.

### **4. The Parable of Leaven**

Now look again at **Matthew 13:33** to see how the Kingdom is like Leaven. It is molded into the individual and it becomes a part of the whole lump- but is not noticed alone other than in how it changes the individual- even as leaven changes the bread.

So the fourth mystery is that the Kingdom works inside people and transforms them and makes the lost to be saved and makes the unrighteous to be righteous- which is not at all what the Jews expected God Almighty to do in the earth.

### **5. The Parable of Hidden Treasure**

Now look at **Matthew 13:44** to see how the Kingdom of God is like Hidden Treasure. Jesus says that God's Kingdom is like a treasure that is hidden in a field- but notice that the treasure is not the field itself. And Jesus says here that those who are chosen will rejoice and sell all that they have- not to purchase the Treasure- but to purchase the opportunity to search for the Treasure that is hidden in the field.

So the fifth mystery of the Kingdom of God is that it is hidden and must be searched for- even though it cannot be bought and will not be

earned. So while it is the Father's Good Pleasure to give us the Kingdom- it will only be possessed by those who value it enough to search for it.

Now the Jew would have been terribly insulted at the thought that they needed to search for anything. They were offspring of Abraham and they knew it and they expected God to give them what they needed and thought it was beneath them to have to value anything other than their own Jewishness.

## **6. The Parable of the Costly Pearl**

And then in the sixth example- Jesus repeated how much a Treasure the Kingdom of God is- by using an example that would have been repugnant to the average Jew of that day. Jesus equated the insurmountable Value of the Kingdom of God to being like the product that came from an unclean animal- the oyster.

And this mystery illustrates again that what God has cleansed- we are not to call common or unclean- which was a pre-cursor to the Truth that the day would come when the majority of all the saved would be from the pagan nations of the world and not from Israel- showing that God is Sovereign over all the earth.

## **7. The Parable of the Fishing Net**

Finally- Jesus gave the seventh example of the mystery of the Kingdom of God in **Matthew 13:47–50** in the Parable of the fishing net or the drag net.

Here Jesus says that the Kingdom of God is like a net which was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind; when it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into vessels but threw away the bad. So it will be at the close of the Age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous, and throw them into the furnace of fire.

And so the seventh mystery of the kingdom is that as the net- the Power of the Kingdom- draws all sorts of men into its sway for a variety of reasons. It draws both the good and the bad- those who will be saved and those who will never be saved. And only when the net is up on the shore at the close of the Age will the good and the bad fish be separated.

But notice carefully that the separation described here is not between the fish which didn't get caught in the net of the Kingdom and those which did. That's not the point of this particular Parable. The separation here is between the two kinds of people who are swept into the net of the Kingdom. One is genuine and the other is a fraud. One is a real convert and the other is a false convert and so one kind is kept and the other is cast into the fire.

So the seventh mystery of the Kingdom is not only that the Kingdom is at first limited in its scope and its effect in the world (it's a mustard seed), but also the mystery of the Kingdom is that the people who come under the sway of the Power of God's Kingdom are, as we say, a mixed bag. Some are true disciples. And some are hypocrites.

So we see that the Kingdom of God is both present and future. There has been a fulfillment- but there has not been a final consummation. And this is the mystery of the Kingdom. And it leads to two brief applications, one an encouragement, the other a warning.

First, the warning:

Beware of insisting that God demonstrate dimensions of the Kingdom now which He has reserved for the final Consummation. Jesus says that the Kingdom now is *limited* in both its scope and effects. So beware of assuming that all who are swept into the Power of God's Kingdom and who talk about the Kingdom are the legitimate children of the Kingdom.

The Power of the Kingdom gathers many (**Matthew 7:22**) into its net that will be cast out in the end because they loved physical healing but not holiness; they loved power but not purity; they loved signs and wonders but not the will of God; they wanted an open show but not to suffer as a Christian.

So simply because people are drawn to God's Power doesn't mean that they are drawn by God to repent and be saved, and so we must know that not all who name the great name of Jesus will not pass through God's Judgment on their lives.

So just how is the Kingdom of God here right now? Or just what Kingdom Blessings did the arrival of the Kingdom bring with it? I am going to mention seven powerful effects of the Kingdom that exist right now.

## 1. In Relation to Death and Resurrection

The Kingdom of God overcomes death and brings resurrection. When Jesus sent out the twelve apostles, it says in **Matthew 10:7&8** that he told them, *"Preach as you go saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead . . . "* So they were to preach, *"The kingdom of heaven is at hand!"* And they were to perform certain signs including raising the dead. So one of the ways the Kingdom comes is by overcoming death and bringing resurrection.

But notice something very important. To our knowledge Jesus raised only three people from the dead during his earthly ministry (**Matthew 9:18–26; Luke 7:11–17; John 11:38–44**). And in **The Book of the Acts**- the Apostles raised two people from the dead (**The Acts 9:36–43; 20:9–10**).

Now contrast this with the countless people that Jesus healed. So why do you suppose Jesus healed people by the hundreds or even by the thousands- yet only raised three people from the dead? Ultimately it comes down to this: in the overlap of this Age and the Age to come- in the "already" and the "not yet" of Redemption- during the time of the Mystery of the Kingdom- God wills that *some* blessings of the Age to come be experienced more fully than others. And God chooses as He wills which Kingdom Blessings were to be manifested and in what measure. And I also suspect that one reason Jesus raised so few people from the dead is that it is no great blessing to have to die twice. Because we must always keep in mind that virtually all the people Jesus healed and raised got sick again and died. So that particular blessing- the blessing of physical healing was- at best- only temporary in this fallen Age. So what were they? They were signs- pointers- foretastes- of the great final resurrection and "the redemption of our bodies" (**Romans 8:23**).

We have to know that sickness and death were *not* abolished with the First Coming of Jesus. And so we are to understand this by saying that His healings and Resurrections were signs that in the final consummation of the Kingdom- these two curses- disease and death- would be completely abolished forever.



## 2. In Relation to Demonic Oppression and Deliverance

The Kingdom of God overcomes demonic oppression and brings deliverance. In **Luke 11:20** Jesus says, *"If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."* So the arrival of the Kingdom brings an unprecedented conflict with satan and his demons. It is amazing to consider that in the whole Old Testament only about five of the 39 books even mention satan. And nowhere does any prophet or priest or king or wise man cast out any demons. But as soon as Jesus is on the scene- He is in conflict with satan in the wilderness and His Ministry involved casting out "many demons" (**Mark 1:34**); and in **Matthew 10:1** it says, **"Jesus called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out . . ."**

So it is clear that something unprecedented is in the making here with the initial Coming of the Kingdom. The spiritual root cause that is hidden behind idolatry and false doctrine and national conflict in the Old Testament is brought out in the open and Jesus gives His people a new kind of authority and armor to make war with the evil one.

## 3. In Relation to Rebellion and Conversion

The Kingdom of God overcomes rebellion and brings conversion. Jesus made clear that no one enters the kingdom without being converted. In **Matthew 18:3** he says, **"Truly, I say to you, unless you turn [be converted!] and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."** So what Power brings about this conversion from rebellious, proud independence to submissive, humble, childlike dependence on God? The answer is the Power of the Kingdom itself.

And this is implied in the Parable of the net in **Matthew 13:47–50**: **"The kingdom of heaven is like a net which was thrown into the sea and gathered fish."** The Kingdom is the Power that gathers the fish. Fish don't simply jump into the net. They try to get out of it. (Cf. **Colossians 1:13**.)

And it is also implied in the Parable of the wheat and the tares (**Matthew 13:24 & 38**). **"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field . . . He who sows the seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed means the sons of the kingdom."** So where do "Sons of the Kingdom" come from in this world? They come

from the Son of Man. They don't put *themselves* in the world. The Son of Man sovereignly puts them there. (Cf. **John 6:44, 65; 15:16; 17:16.**)

When the rich young ruler turned away from Jesus and Jesus said, **"It will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven,"** the disciples were amazed and said, **"Who then can be saved?"** To this Jesus responds, **"With men this is impossible [to enter the kingdom and be saved], but with God all things are possible"** (Matthew 19:23–26). In other words being converted and entering the Kingdom is not merely the work of man or a "free choice" that we made, or a "decision" that people make. It is much more than a simple act of our will.

The Bible says that it is impossible with men to enter the Kingdom and be saved. But, not with God. God can override people's natural and normal tendency to rebel and to sin by sovereignly changing their nature and God can convert people and then bring them into the Kingdom.

#### **4. In Relation to Condemnation and Forgiveness**

The Kingdom of God overcomes condemnation and brings forgiveness. You see, the great obstacle to Salvation is that we are guilty of sin and under the Just Condemnation of God. So if that is true—then why is it that **the tax collectors and harlots go into the kingdom of God before the chief priests and the elders (Matthews 21:31)?** Why is it that **the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who at the end of the day hires people for one hour's work and yet gives them pay for a full day (Matthew 20:1–16)?** Why is it that **the kingdom of heaven is like a king giving a marriage feast for his son and yet inviting whoever happens to be in the street, both good and bad (Matthew 22:1, 10)?** And why does Jesus say, **"Blessed are the poor in spirit [the ones who have nothing to commend themselves], for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"** (Matthew 5:3)?

The answer is given in **Matthew 18:23–35**: the Kingdom of Heaven is like a King Who called His debtors to account, and when one of them pleads for mercy concerning a million dollar debt, the King has pity and forgives him everything he owes. The Kingdom overcomes Condemnation and brings Forgiveness. And we know from this side of the Cross how the King did that!

## 5. In Relation to Wrongdoing and Righteousness

The Kingdom of God overcomes wrongdoing and brings righteousness.

Jesus taught us to pray, "**Thy kingdom come, thy will be done**" (**Matthew 6:10**). So where the Kingdom of God comes- the Will of God is done- and Justice and Righteousness abound. "**Seek ye first the kingdom of God,**" Jesus said, "**and his righteousness . . . in the Holy Spirit.**" When the Kingdom of God comes- it comes with Righteousness. Paul said in **Romans 14:17**:

**... for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.**

So the Kingdom of God overcomes wrongdoing. It changes the way people live. It brings Justice and Righteousness.

## 6. In Relation to Sadness and Joy

The Kingdom of God overcomes sadness and brings joy. It's obvious that if the Kingdom brings life and healing and deliverance and conversion and forgiveness and righteousness, it would also bring great joy. But Paul makes the point explicit in **Romans 14:17** when he says, "**The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.**" And Jesus made it just as plain when He said, "**Blessed—happy—are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven**" (**Matthew 5:10**). The Kingdom overcomes sadness and brings joy- even in the midst of suffering.

## 7. In Relation to Aimless Futility and Purposeful Ministry

The Kingdom overcomes aimless futility and brings purposeful ministry.

And I take this point from **The Revelation 1:6**. There John says,

**... and He [Jesus] has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father — to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.**

So what the Kingdom *creates* when it draws men and women into its Power is a priesthood of believers. And priests are, above all, ministers. So if you belong to the Kingdom of God- you belong to a "royal priesthood" (**1Peter 2:9**). You are a priest. Your Calling is to draw near to God with the burdens of people, and to draw near to people with the blessings of God. That's what it means to be a priest.

So the Kingdom has come and it has overcome the aimlessness and futility of our lives and given us an awesome reason to live. We are a royal priesthood. You are a priest to God and to man.

And so finally we have the encouragement: the Kingdom really *has* arrived. Unprecedented fulfillments of God's Purposes are here.

The King has come. The King has dealt with sin once for all in the Sacrifice of Himself. The King sits at the Father's Right Hand and reigns now until all His enemies are under his feet. The King's Righteousness is now already ours by faith. The King's Spirit is now already dwelling in us. The King's Holiness is now already being produced in us. The King's Joy and Peace have now already been given to us. The King's Victory over satan is now already ours as we use the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. The King's Power to witness is now already available to us. And the King's gifts—the gifts of His Spirit—are now already available for Ministry.

And so with a sober awareness of the Mystery of the Kingdom—that is both present yet future, that is both fulfilled but not yet consummated- let us go on as a Church to seek the Kingdom first- to discover all we yet should be for the Salvation of lost sinners and the Glory of King Jesus!

Amen. Let's pray