

What is the Kingdom of God and Where is it?

Luke 17:20-37

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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, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you." - Luke 17:20-21, ESV

Throughout the Gospels, we hear Jesus teaching on the kingdom of God over and over again. Many of His parables began with, "The kingdom of God is like . . ." Today we might ask, "Where is the kingdom of God?" In past centuries, some Christians thought they could identify the geographical boundaries and political structures of the kingdom of God. When "Christendom" ruled over Europe and the Americas, many Christians believed they could look at the maps and see where the kingdom of God was spread.

But Jesus never taught, envisioned or encouraged such a narrow, political, worldly perspective on the kingdom of God. Jesus did not challenge the Roman authorities and seek to overthrow their political rule over Israel. Instead, when the Pharisees asked Jesus about the kingdom of God, He told them "*the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.*"

Where God rules in the hearts and lives of His people and where His power to save is working in the lives of sinners, the kingdom of God is present. The visible manifestation of the kingdom of God is found in the church, specifically in faithful churches where God is worshiped, the word of God is preached, and people are being saved and growing in love for the Lord and for one another.

And so, in the ways in which the world measures power and kingdom and glory, the kingdom of God a hidden kingdom, tucked away among the kingdoms of the world. It is spread among the kingdoms and yet rises above them in the life-changing power it has in the lives of its citizens.

While the kingdom of God is hidden now, it will not always be. One day, Jesus will come again and cause His kingdom to be fully and gloriously known by all the nations of the world. Jesus taught, "*For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day.*" That which is hidden will be revealed.

Until that day, we must be careful, as the followers of Jesus, not to confuse the nature of His kingdom. We must be careful not to measure power and glory as the world does, for that kind of perspective lowers the kingdom of God to a lesser standard. When the church forgets that the spiritual power of the gospel given to it is, in fact, far superior to the world's political and military power, our influence for good in the world declines.

Instead of compromising with the world and seeking to matter in the ways that the world says matter, we need to hold fast to the Gospel, to God-honoring worship, to missions and evangelism. We need to let Jesus define His own kingdom. And we need to wait in faith, longing for that day when Jesus will come and shine from one end of the sky to the other! Come quickly, Lord Jesus!