

The Richness of the Kingdom

📖 Various Passages

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Tonight we want to wrap up the Gospel of Matthew by briefly reviewing the theme, outline and purpose of Matthew's writing, and then chiefly discussing the nature of the kingdom; what the kingdom will be like, what the world will be like. Jesus said to the Jews, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." We might want to limit that to the Jews but because we are in preparation now for reigning with Christ in the kingdom, there is a sense in which we should be seeking the kingdom. So we'll take some time to try and clarify exactly what the world will be like in the kingdom.

But first, the theme, outline and purpose of Matthew's writing. What's the theme of the Gospel of Matthew? The kingdom. Matthew primarily refers to it as "the kingdom of heaven." What does that expression mean? Matthew is the only gospel writer to use that expression. What expression do the other gospel writers use? Kingdom of God. So do they have a distinct meaning or the same meaning? The same essential meaning. Earlier dispensationalists tried to make a distinction between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God. Why do we reject that? Because when a passage in Matthew uses kingdom of heaven it's parallel in Mark or Luke uses kingdom of God. In fact, can you think of a place within Matthew itself that uses both in synonymous parallelism? Matt 19:23-24, "it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." So from usage these expressions are synonymous. Why did Matthew use kingdom of heaven primarily, and only rarely kingdom of God? Because his audience was Jewish and Jews did not look favorably on over-using the name of God. They thought that might be breaking the commandment to not use the name of God in vain. Finally, where did Matthew get his concept of the kingdom? From the OT. Matthew doesn't even give us a concept of the kingdom. It's presupposed. What was the kingdom like in the OT? It was political, earthly, social, legal, spiritual, geographical, it involved God, man and nature and every area of life was tied together. So when we say kingdom of heaven are we saying the kingdom in heaven? No. The expression is a genitive of course, the kingdom coming from heaven, it's a kingdom coming from heaven to earth. So the theme of the Gospel of Matthew is what? The kingdom.

Now how do we outline the Gospel of Matthew? What's the easiest way? Three sections; the offer of the kingdom, the rejection of the kingdom and the postponement of the kingdom. What do we mean by the offer of the kingdom? That there was no kingdom of God on earth when John and Jesus came so it had to be offered to the nation Israel. The kingdom of God had vanished when they went into exile to the Babylonians. Now they were living in Rome, a Gentile kingdom of man. So when John and Jesus came what was the message? "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." What is the condition for the kingdom of God coming from heaven to earth? Repentance. Israel needed to repent. What does repent mean? Have a change of mind. About what? About the kind of righteousness necessary to enter the kingdom. What kind of righteousness were they taught was necessary? Pharisaic righteousness. What was Pharisaic righteousness? Keeping the Pharisaic interpretation of the Mosaic Law. Not keeping the Mosaic Law. The Mosaic Law was a tutor to lead or point them to the Messiah. But what the Pharisees did was re-interpret the Mosaic Law by reducing it to externals. This they could keep and it effectively shielded them from the conviction that the Law was to provide so that they would be led to look to the Messiah. So instead they just had a self-righteousness, not a God-kind of righteousness established through faith in the Messiah. But that this was obviously wrong is seen from the fact that how did other OT saints like Abraham, Moses and David get a God-kind of righteousness? Through faith. And all OT saints will be in the coming kingdom. But is that all John and Jesus and the Twelve were offering? No. That had been offered to every generation. What was being offered to this generation? That the kingdom of God might actually come from heaven to earth and they might see it. What has to happen for that to occur? The entire nation needed to repent. So the first part of the gospel of Matthew is the offer of the kingdom. What chapters? 1-11. What's the second part? The rejection of the kingdom. Or maybe better, the rejection of the King. What chapter? Matt 12. Who led the rejection? The leadership of the nation. What do we call the sin of rejection? The unpardonable sin. What did it essentially mean? That the kingdom offer was no longer on the table. That generation would not see the kingdom of God break into history. How exactly did they commit this unpardonable sin? They said Jesus' miracles were done by Satan indwelling Him rather than the Holy Spirit. So what's the other name of the unpardonable sin? The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Can that sin be committed today? No. That was a generational sin. What was the judgment on that generation for that sin? The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD70 by the Romans. So what is the second part of the Gospel of Matthew? The rejection of the kingdom or better the King. And where is it found? Matt 12. What's the third part? The postponement of the kingdom. What do we mean by postponement? That from the standpoint of man, the kingdom breaking into history is being put off till a later time in history. Did that change the plan of God? No. Was God surprised? No. Was the offer genuine then? Yes. If they had repented would the kingdom have come? If words have meaning, then yes. And what is Christ going to build during the postponement? The Church. And who is going to be the foundation of the Church? The apostles. So what is Jesus doing in Matt 13-28? He's preparing His apostles. For what? For ministry in the Church. And who laid the foundation of the Church? Jesus Christ. How? His death and resurrection. He laid the foundation and the apostles and prophets writings in the NT are the foundation. And what is our commission? To go to all nations and make disciples. And when people become disciples what do

they also become? Sons of the kingdom, heirs of the kingdom. So we are preparing now for reigning in the kingdom to come, reigning with Christ. This is the big picture of Matthew, a three-fold outline; offer, rejection, postponement.

Now, what's the purpose of Matthew? Why did Matthew write? To demonstrate to Jews that Jesus was the King, even though the kingdom did not come. This was a major apologetic issue for 1st century Jewish believers in the Roman world. What was the argument of unbelieving Jews? Jesus can't be the King because the kingdom did not come. Why did they say that? Because they read the OT predictions of the King coming in His kingdom but they saw only the political aspect. What aspect were they missing? The spiritual component. Israel had to be spiritually prepared. How could they get spiritually prepared? By repenting. So, was the problem that Jesus did not do the work of the Messiah? No. He did all the miracles. What was the problem? The nation Israel's lack of spiritual preparation. They weren't ready. When is the kingdom going to come? When the nation Israel is spiritually prepared. Until then what is going on with the kingdom? It's in postponement. The King is in waiting. And what is forming now? the Church. Jesus said, "I will build My Church." So what's the purpose of Matthew's Gospel? To demonstrate that Jesus is the King even though His kingdom did not come.

Alright, now let's talk about the kingdom. What will the kingdom be like? What will the world be like during that 1,000 year period? I tried to do this by including quotations from all the OT passages, but it got too long, it was probably three or four weeks' worth of material, and this was just supposed to be a summary, a compact picture of the kingdom. So I left out quoting all the passages. You'll just have to take my word for it...some of it you will be familiar with.

First of all, what is the essential feature of the kingdom? What is at the core of the kingdom to come? Spirituality! This is where our amil friends always criticize us. The amils believe the kingdom is now and it is spiritual. And they like to accuse us premills of proclaiming a carnal kingdom. And they like to do this while they are putting down their fifth piece of fried chicken in their spiritual kingdom. I think that is a bogus charge. Premills are not talking about a carnal kingdom with fleshly excesses. Premillennialism has always taught that the core of the kingdom is spirituality. Think about it. Why does the King come in His kingdom anyway? Because Israel is spiritually prepared. The Lord will pour out His Spirit on Israel at the end of the Tribulation and they will call on Him to return. So the kingdom only begins because of spiritual preparedness. And the spirituality is going to continue throughout the entire kingdom. And though those who enter in mortal bodies will procreate and have children, and those children will have to decide for or against Christ, there will still be a continual spirituality unlike anything the world has ever seen. The OT presents the kingdom as the real age of the Spirit. Even though we have the Spirit functioning in many ministries in the Church age, His function in the kingdom is even more pervasive, extending even into the soil of the ground. And all this will begin when He is poured out on Israel in fulfillment of the new covenant just before the Second Coming. But I view this pouring out as not all at one time, but as continual, throughout the whole kingdom, and the new covenant as being fulfilled continually, not all at

one time. So the kingdom is spiritual at its core and from there it will move out into every department of human activity. So what I mean by spiritual is not some kind of Platonic dualism where we escape into an ethereal, non-physical realm. That was the view of Augustine and he just about single-handedly ruined the Church by saying the Church is the kingdom. He was into Platonic dualism and thought that the physical-material realm was inherently sinful. But in the Bible, what is the problem with the spiritual intermingling with the physical? In Genesis God made the spiritual and the physical together and it was declared very good. So you don't have to tear the spiritual away from the physical in order to have true spirituality, you can have both. So what we mean is that true spirituality is that man made in the image of God is a spiritual being and when his spiritual needs are being met there is a thorough penetration of spirituality into every realm of human life; ethics, politics, religion, and even the physical world. There can be no separation and we're going to look at the kingdom in these realms starting with the spiritual, since it is the core component of the kingdom, and makes the others what they are.

In the kingdom, all spiritual blessings will flow from the Son of Man who will be seated on David's royal throne. He Himself is a righteous King and righteousness will go forth from Him to Jerusalem like a burning torch. All the nations of the world will see the righteousness of Jerusalem and salvation will go out from Jerusalem abundantly. Even the walls of Jerusalem are called "salvation." So the kingdom will be a time of great salvation. Salvation will be by the grace of God. Even the kingdom itself is by the grace of God because Israel doesn't deserve it. God says He will remember their sins no more but He will remember His covenant instead, speaking of the Abrahamic, and He will establish His everlasting covenant, which is the new covenant. And so salvation under the new covenant will be abundant and everlasting. Salvation is always therefore of grace. It is not by merit. The means of salvation will be by faith. Just because men will see Him does not mean they will believe in Him; the Pharisees saw Him and did not believe in Him. So while the present dispensation is characterized as an age of grace, the kingdom will see no end to God's saving grace. The salvation in the kingdom will include forgiveness of sin, justification unto righteousness, regeneration of life, eternal security and experiential sanctification for all who believe. In fact, the sanctification level will be astounding, especially among Israelites who it is said will do no wrong and tell no lies. They will have such a prevailing influence of the Spirit that it sounds in many places like they will not sin. So there is a high spirituality in the kingdom and the result will be an abundance of joy throughout the world, especially since the effects of the Fall will be greatly alleviated. And this ties right in with the corollary truths in the physical realm. No more physical maladies such as lameness, blindness or muteness; no more accidental deaths, no fear of wild animals. The spiritual will permeate the physical as cause does effect. So the kingdom is highly spiritual and it is the core component. If the kingdom is one thing, it is spiritual, but it is more than one thing, and to limit it to one thing is to neglect or explain away a great deal of divine revelation. As Alva McClain said, "We can have no quarrel with the dictum of writers who insist that the Kingdom is a "spiritual" matter, unless they insist upon a definition which is exclusively Platonic, or if they are so foolish as to deny that a spiritual kingdom can function tangibly in a world of sense experience. As

a matter of fact, it would not be wrong to say that the Kingdom of the Old Testament prophecy is *basically* "spiritual," yet a Kingdom producing tangible effects in every area of human life."¹

Now as to ethics, the world will move from relative ethics to absolute ethics. This will start with Jesus Christ and extend to the Jewish people and then to the nations. The source of all values and ethics will be the Law of God. The Law will go out from Zion and Jerusalem. He will not need to teach the Jewish people, for they shall all know Him from the least to the greatest. The Jewish people will teach the nations the Law of God and the nations will come up to Jerusalem to worship the King. When all this takes place men will have to adjust their moral values so that they no longer say evil is good and good is evil. That kind of idea will not be permitted in the kingdom. The King Himself will be the arbiter between the nations. There will be a universal core educational curriculum that is spiritual at its core and integrates ethics and values into every area of study; mathematics, history, science, politics, etc... No area of life will be permitted to proceed separated from the LORD. This will strengthen the conscience toward the good rather than sear the conscience with evil. Furthermore in ethics, people considered great today; like sports stars, celebrities, artists and musicians who receive wide acclaim and yet live filthy lives, will not be considered great. Greatness will be preserved for those who are truly great, for to call such men and women great is nothing more than a great fiction. Those who are wicked will be named exactly what they are. People will no longer say that a man who teaches false doctrine is a good man. Truth is the height of all morality and ethics and in the kingdom truth will come from the King who will rule with truth. So He will not rule like the rulers today who use untruths as propaganda to manipulate people. He will not use people. He will bring forth justice in truth. Even the city of Jerusalem will be called the city of truth. Additionally, punishment for wrongdoing will be exclusively personal. In other words, children will not have to pay for the wrongdoings of their parents, as in the case where a mother consumes alcohol during her pregnancy resulting in a child with physical deformities. Each will start with a clean slate, as far as those things are concerned. His divine power will see to it. Moreover, wickedness will be immediately and justly judged just as goodness will be immediately and justly rewarded. There will be no long delays of the wicked sitting in prison or worse, loose and gaining riches. The bottom line is that the seeming moral problem today and how God can be just will be openly solved.

As to the social effects, all warfare on the planet will cease. Everyone will live in safety. Military science and training will cease because they will not be necessary. This will immediately result in a great deal more wealth, since the wealth will not be used for destruction but can instead be used for constructive endeavors, such as the furthering of technology development and advance. It will be the true golden era. The greatest result of no warfare will be freedom from fear. Additionally, true social justice will become a reality. Someone who really knows all the answers will be ruling on the throne. He will not need to consult a council of limited, fallen men to know what to do. People who work are going to get to enjoy the fruits of their labor and not have to give it to lazy people. However, at the same time, those who have legitimate needs will be given special care. So the balance between justice and benevolence will be struck perfectly. As far as the resources of the earth, they will be used without waste and the slum areas of cities will be rebuilt and beautified so that they flourish. The

balance between the interest of the individual and the interest of the society will also be perfect. Individuals will not be slaughtered for the sake of society or for economic progress. The bottom line here is that social progress will take place, but not at the expense of the infinite value of each individual. In the realm of marriage, it will no longer be degraded and manipulated into every grievous form it has taken, but will be restored to its honor and joy. The elderly will be given respect and dignity. The children will have joy and safe recreation in the streets. So great will the social changes be that it will be like a dream to those who live there. And when they realize it is not a dream but a reality, they will be filled with laughter and their tongues with singing.

As to political effects of the great spirituality of the kingdom, the world will not be riddled by the national disputes and problems due to sinful men forming their governments. Instead there will be a central and international authority centered in the King Himself. He will render decisions both wise and impartial, and will have the power to execute that authority. After the fact there will be no appeals, no warfare, no vengeance and national security will be given by Him to all nations. Just as there will be a central authority so there will be a central world capital. This world capital will be Jerusalem, which will be greatly enlarged and the land surface changed so that it sits atop the whole world. A further political effect will be the resolution of the Jewish problem. No longer will the Jewish people be hated and ridiculed and considered the central problem of the whole world, but rather they will be sought after, for all blessing will come through the Jewish people and they will instruct the nations in the things of God. Along with this past wrongs against the Jewish people will be righted. Egypt will be in burning for 40 years and Babylon for the entire millennium. In short, past political wrongs will be righted in the kingdom. As far as language is concerned, as history has shown, the language barrier is a great barrier to forward progress. It was changed at Babel in order to impede men's sinful progress. People have also recognized the great value of one's language being the lingua franca, or common language of commerce and business. In the kingdom the world will return to one language. This can be so because their lips will be purified for worship, the chief purpose of the tongue.

Now as to physical effects of the spiritual we are reminded of the truth that the spiritual is not necessarily separate from the physical, as the amillennialist claims. His views are based on Platonic dualism. But the Scriptures are not Platonic. They view the spiritual as permeating the physical and manifested through the physical. All of Jesus' miracles demonstrated that He could change the physical world and make it what the kingdom passages demand. So we see no problem with changes in the physical world at that time. As to climate, the brightness of the sun, moon and stars will change and this will cause climate changes on earth, yet at the same time it will not scorch the earth. Catastrophic geological changes will not take place as earthquakes and the like will take place during the Tribulation, to modify the earth, but not in the kingdom and this will have a beneficial impact on the climate. As to cultivation, areas that are arid and produce little to nothing, will receive adequate rainfall, and not just rainfall, but rainfall at the proper times. Also springs and rivers will flow miraculously, in summer and winter. And that they will be miraculous in their provision of all the nutrients needed for growth is seen in the millennial river flowing from beneath the throne in the temple, which flows to

the Dead Sea and turns it into life-giving waters. This will result in tremendous fruitfulness and abundance so that the sower will overtake the reaper, and the earth will resemble the Garden of Eden. The Holy Spirit is actually connected to this fruitfulness of the soil in the kingdom. As a result, there will be no more famines. As to the animal world, their inner disposition will be changed so that they are not harmful to man or to other animals. The wolf will dwell with the lamb and a child will lead a leopard and play by the den of an asp. As such their diets will change and the lion will eat straw. Presently all creation groans awaiting the revealing of the sons of God, but at that time their groaning will cease and all creation will burst forth in praise to God. As to physical disease and deformity, the need for doctors and hospitals will cease. God will supernaturally alleviate these things so that the blind shall see, the ears shall hear, the lame shall leap like a deer, the mute tongue shall sing. Disease will be abolished. People will not say they are sick. The means seems to be, in part, fruits and leaves. Already we see the good that fruits and leaves can provide for the human body. Then their effects will be even greater. But certainly along with it may be supernatural effects. Since physical problems will be so greatly dealt with, long life will be the rule, not the exception. Someone 100 years old will be considered but a youth and old age will be comparable to that of a tree. There will be no infant mortality and only those who rebel against the Laws of the king will face death, and even that is delayed until they are 100 years old. Furthermore, all the ordinary hazards of life, falling out of trees, having car wrecks, getting electrocuted, etc...will not happen. These things will be under divine control. There will be no hurting or destroying. The reason is ultimately because all of these things will be under the immediate and direct control of the One who spoke to the wind and the waves and they obeyed.

Now as for religion in the kingdom, there will not be freedom of religion in the sense that is spoken of today, where a person may choose what or who to worship as a god. But there will be a freedom of religion in the sense that men will find true freedom only by worshipping the one true God, Messiah, seated on the Davidic throne. Right now He is seated on the Father's throne in heaven, but then He will sit on His own throne. And from that throne He will also be a priest. So He will be a Priest-King. Israel as a nation will be a kingdom of priests, fulfilling God's original intent. The Gentile nations will be the beneficiaries of their priestly ministry. The religious center will be Jerusalem, the same city that will be the governmental center of the world. It will be a rebuilt Jerusalem high above all the cities of the earth. Out of it will go the law to all the nations and from year to year the nations will go up to worship the King. In this way the church and state will be united in one person and one city. This is a problem in our world, when such power is given to the sinful men composing a church. But it will be no problem in the kingdom when such power is held by the sinless Messiah. Since there is one truth, it can only be the highest possible good if all men worship the one true wise and loving God. Anything else would be idolatry. And those who refuse to worship Him will be deprived of rain, food and health. So the short story is there will be no freedom of religion but there will be true freedom by worshipping the one true God, Messiah. There will also be a millennial temple where sacrifices are offered. This temple will be built by the Messiah himself and it will be glorious. The sacrifices will partially serve as a memorial for Christ's sacrifice, but they will also serve ceremonial

purposes of ritual cleanness for approaching the Lord. That said, they will not be for salvation, as even the OT sacrifices were not for salvation, they must function in another sphere and in another way, and this they do. But to deny a millennial temple is to deny the plain reading of Ezek 40-48. So we must affirm it. It is to this temple that the nations of the world will go up annually. How they will get there is obvious from the technological innovations building on the innovations already in place, such as flight, automobiles, ships, etc... It is not too hard to imagine that those who enter the kingdom from our world, will also take with them knowledge from our world, and add to that knowledge the much further advances that will be made in the kingdom.

In conclusion then, the core of the kingdom is spiritual, and this spirituality will pervade every area of human life. It will indeed be a golden age beyond that of Solomon, which is really only prefigured by Solomon, for a greater than Solomon will be here, and His rule will extend from Jerusalem all over the whole earth. His people will live sinlessly in the land and will teach the nations about God and His law and the nations will come up annually to Jerusalem to worship the King. Jerusalem will also serve as the ultimate metropolis and political center, and from it righteousness will go forth like a stream and justice from the King's throne. True social justice balanced with benevolence will reach every corner of the earth. Every knee will bow to the King alone or suffer the consequences of lack of rain and blessing. For those who worship blessing will flow by means of the Spirit to the soil so that food is abundant and its health giving benefits enjoyed by its partakers. This is the world we are to seek first, a kingdom of righteousness, a kingdom that belongs to us.

¹ Alva McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, 221.