

## What is the kingdom of God?

Firstly, we must emphasise that there is only one kingdom of God, not two as claimed by Dispensationalism. The terms, 'kingdom of heaven' and 'kingdom of God' are synonymous; as proved by Matt 19:23-24 where Jesus uses both terms interchangeably, and their use in Luke's parallel passages to those in Matthew (e.g. Matt 11:12-13 with Lk 16:16; Matt 10:7 with Lk 9:2; Matt 4:12,17 with Mk 1:14-15).

What is a kingdom? It is the rule and reign of a king over a people. It is more than control of a country, often a king will have more subjects than are present in his land, it is the rule over a people. Where is the prime example of God's absolute rule over a person? It is in Christ. Only in Jesus do we see full obedience to the will of God; he is the only real expression of the kingdom as the rule of God in a man. So who are God's people? They are those who are in Christ. By spiritual union with Christ they are seen by God as new creatures, and constitute his people. God's reign is now in those who are in Christ, the elect, the church. The kingdom is not a material country, like Israel or the Vatican City, but converted people, 'He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love' (Col 1:13).

Thus the kingdom is a term for the elect, gathered today as the church, from the point of view of the rule of God's will; 'Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."' (Jn 3:3). From the viewpoint of God's family, the elect are adopted sons; but from the consideration of God's authoritative rule, the elect are the kingdom – those over whom God reigns. This rule is initiated and continued by God's grace mediated by the Holy Spirit. God's kingdom is gracious.

God has delegated his rule to his Son. Christ's kingdom at this time is spiritual (Jn 18:36) since the rule is in the hearts of his people and over those heaven. Christ is Lord of all creation as creator and ordained King, but the earth is currently under the power of sin. While it belongs to God it is dominated by human lawlessness and by Satan through directing man's sin; thus the church/kingdom is at war with it (Matt 16:18; Rev 20:9). God is allowing this until the full number of elect are saved; then the world will be renewed and restored and heaven will be on Earth – the material and eternal kingdom of God. This what we pray for in the Lord's Prayer – the consummation of the kingdom and the fulness of our salvation.

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