

Kingdom of god

[Religion](#), [Christianity](#)



What exactly is "the kingdom of God?" How does one recognize the kingdom? Are you in the kingdom of God? So often, people search for the evidence of the kingdom of God rather than simply identifying it. In the present day, the stress is evasively put on works and actions rather than a personal relationship with God.

Too many people fall into the trap of participating in as many activities as they can, living to have their good deeds noticed by others; however, the key point is entirely missed. It is the innermost intimate part of a person that divulges the power of an individual's life, not the actions. Jesus makes this clear in the book of Luke when he states, "The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you" (17: 20b-21).

Luke places a lot of emphasis on this topic, it is of utmost importance to study what the Bible says about the kingdom of God and view it in the context of which it was written in order to grasp the precise concept of what God wants to reveal.

Throughout the book of Luke, Jesus' life, teachings, and miracles illustrate the nature of God's kingdom, who it includes, and what it costs to enter into His kingdom. The kingdom represents God's government, authority, and ruling power, therefore, the kingdom is present whenever someone yields their life completely to God's authority.

Donald Kraybill, in his book *The Upside-down Kingdom*, notes that people must enter into the kingdom because it is state of affairs rather than a state of mind (19). Until one is born again, one cannot enter the realm of the

kingdom of God. In the book of Luke, Jesus tells His disciples that He speaks in parables so that others will not understand the "secrets of the kingdom of God" (8: 9-10). Furthermore, one cannot understand the kingdom of God without being born again.

When one submits their life to God's authority, he or she releases the nature of Christ to work through them, thus begins a spiritual transformation and an intimate relationship with God. John Drane points out the challenge of the kingdom in his book, *Introducing the New Testament*, as a willingness to conform to God's ways and the desire for inward transformation (150).

The central point of the kingdom lies in developing a personal relationship with Him. Therefore, one must intentionally fully submerge himself in the truths of God and spend time getting grounded and rooted in Him in order to enter into God's kingdom. Each deeply rooted believer alone, is not the kingdom of God; it is a network, where the fellowship among believers are what create the kingdom.

Kraybill asserts that the kingdom of God is for a group of people, not individuals and the people have obligations to each other as well as to God. God calls the people to help one another, He has built it into our human nature to long for companionship and accountability, this allows the body of Christ to be a strong force, which comes together to be united in a community where the people have one major thing in common: a passion for the Son of God. Kraybill notes that God's kingdom is dynamic: always becoming, spreading, and growing (20).

Jesus illustrates this in Luke when He relates God's kingdom to a mustard seed, it starts small then grows carefully until others are perching in its branches (Lk. 13: 18-19). Generally, people have a difficult time understanding the gospel because it starts small, like the mustard seed, and they have failed to see the greatness of what something so simple can become. Some might expect the kingdom of God to grow through external means for all to see, but to counteract this notion, Jesus compares God's kingdom to yeast (Lk. 13: 20).

Just as a small portion of yeast is needed to leaven a loaf, the doctrine of Christ will strangely diffuse its impact into the world of mankind, but it requires time and patience. Usually the natural longing for immediate results, impedes God's purposes. For leaven to leaven it must take its own time, but through patience, you will find it does wonders and by degrees, the whole will be leavened. This passage contrasts the present and the future magnificence of the kingdom, which is constantly growing.

The kingdom of God includes everyone: the poor, the gentiles, the outcast, the oppressed, the women, Samaritans, tax collectors, the sick, and the sinners. Jesus states that " the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them" (Lk. 7: 22).

If you take this out of the context of which it was written and it may not seem like a very big deal that some of these groups of people would be included in the kingdom of God, but in reality, Jesus caused a lot of controversy through focusing on these neglected and oppressed people.

The possession of illnesses and sin created a greater sense of desperation within the people, this allowed more room for grace to abound in their lives and explains the reason why miracles took place in their lives more often than the rich and prestigious upper class. A significant aspect of Jesus' teaching was setting people free from sin and giving them dominion over evil (Drane 149).

Jesus constantly breaks down social barriers and places heavy emphasis on going against the social boundaries that separate the people. Jesus completely redefines the role of Jewish women, which Luke draws special attention to this throughout his book.

In the Bible, women were of little to no value. They were considered their husband's property and treated like slaves. So when Jesus compared God to the diligent woman who would not give up looking for her lost coin until she found it, He completely went against the social norm (Lk. 15: 8).

Widows, like other women had no role in public or religious life, they were usually living in poverty as well, yet Jesus has compassion on a widow who's son just died when He raises her son from the dead (7: 11-17). Jesus teaches that women are more than domestic servants through the story of Martha and Mary (10: 38-42).

When Martha is upset at Mary for not playing her role by working in the house, Jesus praises Mary for desiring to engage intellectually. In doing this, Jesus makes a bold statement that women are fully human who are entitled to think and learn just as the men; an idea which was completely foreign in their century. Women also could not be in public unless it was to run an

errand, but Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna accompanied Jesus and the disciples (8: 1-3).

By permitting women to publicly travel with Him and the disciples, Jesus overturned social boulders and crumbled the female box. They even helped support them financially and they were the most loyal disciples, they stood by and watched Jesus' crucifixion (23: 49). Even though they were considered liars in their day, they were given the distinctive honor of announcing the victory of the resurrection, which was announced first to them (24: 11).

Through these events, Jesus bestows a new dignity on women; all of these are compelling signs that women had a new status in the kingdom of God (Kraybill 213). In addition to Luke describing how women are a part of the kingdom, he further explains that the kingdom of God includes the poor. There is more than just one meaning to the word poor.

Poor has at least three meanings: material poverty, the oppressed and the humble or poor in spirit (Kraybill 223). In his book, *Discovering Evangelical Heritage*, Donald Dayton states that, "If there is a consistent movement in the church, from liberation theology to more traditional relief, it is the declaration of a special Christian responsibility to the poor and oppressed of this world" (Dayton 101).

These actions declare that the scriptures have a partiality in favor of the economically poor. Luke further emphasizes this when he quotes Isaiah on being "anointed to preach the gospel to the poor" (4: 18). Luke makes it

clear that the " poor" must be understood above all in economic terms (6: 34-35; 16: 13).

" The poor were never appreciated until Christ came. In the eyes of Christian law and of our country all men are on a common footing of rights and equality whatever their condition. Why? Because Jesus came to the poor, to preach the gospel to them, to tell them of their worth as men, regardless of all the accidents of birth, position, or race." (Dayton 114).

Luke continues describing the Kingdom of God as he works his way through the book. It is important to realize that the wealthy may also enter the kingdom of heaven, but it is much harder, Jesus explains that it is like a camel trying to fit through the eye of a needle (Lk. 18: 24-25).

First, the rich had to rid themselves of the shackles of wealth, obey God's economic laws and practice jubilee (Kraybill 211). Even though it is more challenging, the Bible reassures that God's grace will save the wealthy (Lk. 18: 27). The key here is that we cannot serve wealth and God simultaneously (Lk. 16: 15).

Giving generously makes us rich in God's kingdom, so we must hold onto our possessions lightly (Lk. 12: 21). Jesus spends a major part of His ministry healing the sick. Jesus teaches us to " Cure the sick [] and say to them, ¶ The kingdom of God has come near to you" (Lk. 10: 9). Jesus also cast out demons and set people free who lived in bondage to evil spirits; He released them from their shackles to the kingdom of God (Lk. 11: 20).

Jesus brought the kingdom of God through these miracles, in doing them He demonstrated God's principles and values. This offered the possibility to

create a society whose standards ran parallel to God's, shattering those which distinguish the world today. Christians are to find their destiny in embracing this new, contradictory kingdom (Drane 375).

By embracing the sinners, Jesus made it clear that the kingdom of God is for everyone. He invited tax collectors and sinners to banquets and meals, which was a sign of peace, trust, intimacy and forgiveness (Kraybill 160). He demonstrates divine compassion for all. People are more important than pious religious rules. This set Him apart from the other religious prophets of His time.