

# **The Book of Luke**

## **The Kingdom of God**

Lesson #11 for June 13, 2015

Scriptures: Luke 1:32-33; 11:2; 17:23-24; 18:16-30; 21:34-36; Revelation 21:1-3.

1. During His ministry, Jesus spent a great deal of time talking about the kingdom of God. That was at least partly because the kingdom He was talking about was very different from the kingdom for which the people of Israel were looking. The followers of Jesus were told to pray for it, to recognize that it had already come in its first phase, but was yet to come in its ultimate form. They wanted things to be like they were in the days of David.

The kingdom of God comes not with outward show. It comes through the gentleness of the inspiration of His word, through the inward working of His Spirit, the fellowship of the soul with Him who is its life. **The greatest manifestation of its power is seen in human nature brought to the perfection of the character of Christ.**—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 36.2. [Bold type is added.]

What do those words mean?

2. The people of Israel were looking for a kingdom like the kingdom of their ancestor David. They wanted earthly power and glory. But, what kind of kingdom was Jesus talking about? It was and will be very different from any earthly kingdom because it will be God's kingdom—not one in which those in power rule with authority, often oppressing those under them. In God's kingdom, the King dies for the citizens and humbly serves them whenever and wherever He can. (See Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:5,9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10.)
3. God's kingdom is to be a worldwide kingdom in which all will be treated equally and fairly with no class, gender, racial, or income distinctions. And best of all, Jesus Himself will be King, and His kingdom will never end. There will be no more wars and no more striving for the mastery.
4. When he appeared to Mary, the angel Gabriel assured her that the Messiah Who was to be born to her was none other than "the Son of the Highest," and He was to be named Jesus. By His life and death, He would forever prove the fallacy of all of Satan's claims and ultimately, bring to an end Satan's challenge that started next to the throne of God in heaven.
5. Christ risked everything to win this battle. In the end, He will establish His kingdom on planet earth where the battle was won. Satan wishes that God would leave this earth to him.
6. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus offers the opportunity for human beings to be transformed to become members of His winning team.
7. So, what do citizens in this new kingdom of God look like? Read Luke 18:16-30; 12:31-33; 9:59-62. Citizens of this new kingdom will exhibit childlike trust. It will not be the domain of the rich. No matter how much we have to give up—even home, father, mother, or children—it will be worth it. Everything we have should be invested in this new kingdom. Like Jesus, we are to assist the poor and the downtrodden; by helping them we are demonstrating that we understand the principles of this new kingdom. But, being a citizen of this new kingdom requires a total commitment. Once we understand something of what it is all about, we will never allow earthly matters to distract us and turn us back from our commitment.
8. In Luke 18:29-30, Jesus made this amazing statement: "I assure you that anyone who leaves home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the Kingdom of God will receive much more in this present age and eternal life in the age to come."—American Bible Society. (1992) *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation* (2nd ed., Luke 18:29–30). New

York: American Bible Society. Surely, this statement is not meant to suggest that we are to abandon all our earthly responsibilities. What Jesus was saying is that becoming citizens of this new kingdom by following Him must take priority over everything else in our lives.

9. There are two temporal aspects to the kingdom of God. Jesus stated clearly that the kingdom of God had come in His day. (Luke 4:16-21; 17:21) What was Jesus implying by those statements? Jesus was saying that the King had arrived. He Himself was in their midst. God's power was manifest through the healing of the sick, the preaching of the gospel, the forgiving of sins, and the ultimate triumph of good over evil. (Luke 9:11; 7:48-50; 19:9-10; 11:20) But, even today, God's kingdom is growing and enlarging because:

The kingdom of God's grace is now being established, as day by day hearts that have been full of sin and rebellion yield to the sovereignty of His love.—Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 108.1.

10. Satan's final defeat has been assured. But, there is also a "not yet" aspect to that kingdom.  
. . .The full establishment of the kingdom of His glory will not take place until the second coming of Christ to this world.—*Ibid*.
11. Read Luke 17:23-24; 21:5-36. If the kingdom of God has already been established, why do we see so much trouble in the world? Has God lost control? Or, as some claim, does God not even exist? In fact, Jesus predicted all the turmoil that we see in the world. (Luke 21) If this turmoil were not present in the world at the present time, then Jesus's words would be false and God could not be trusted. But, God's foreknowledge and His full awareness of all that is going to happen before the second coming is manifested by His accurate prophecies.
12. What two certainties are we given about the kingdom of God? (1) God, through His church, has established a plan to save humanity from sin; and (2) Ultimately, God plans to come to this earth to live in peace, harmony, and happiness with His family. (Revelation 21:1-4) We now have the privilege of living in the kingdom of grace (Ephesians 1:4-9) and have the future hope of living forever with Christ, the Father, and the Holy Spirit. Through the death of His Son, God will ultimately accomplish His goal of returning the entire universe to harmony and peace, and He will accomplish that with the cooperation of His earthbound children. (Ephesians 1:7-10; 3:7-10; Colossians 1:19-20; Titus 2:13; John 12:31-32)
13. If Jesus does not plan to come back to finalize His great victory, then there was no reason for Him to come the first time. Was it risky for Jesus to hand over His mission to His disciples?
14. Read Luke 21:34-36. In the mad rush of activities here on earth, one thing must take priority: Getting ready. There will not be a second chance to prepare ourselves for the coming kingdom. The opportunity is now—to become faithful citizens by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. We need to demonstrate that God can transform human beings even now.
15. Read Acts 1:1-8. Crucifixion weekend proved to be a revolutionary transformation for the followers of Jesus. They had to give up their old ideas of earthly glory before they could begin to comprehend the idea—understood later as they watched Jesus ascend in the clouds—that He would come in like manner to take all His followers home with Him. But, there is work to do between now and that day. So, what are we supposed to do? First, never lose sight of the certainty of His return. Second, because we do not know the exact time of His return, we must be constantly ready. We must trust Him to do what is best in that respect. Galatians 4:4 assures us that when the right time arrived, Jesus came the first time. When His people are ready, He will come again. And third, we are not supposed to wait idly; we are to be witnesses to the gospel of Jesus. There is a lot of work to do, but Christ promises us that the Holy Spirit—which was and will be poured out in Pentecostal power on those who are willing to become true citizens of the new kingdom of glory—will be with us and guide us.

16. While living in that uncertainty, can we still be faithful citizens of the kingdom?

Of the poor in spirit Jesus says, "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This kingdom is not, as Christ's hearers had hoped, a temporal and earthly dominion. Christ was opening to men the spiritual kingdom of His love, His grace, His righteousness. The ensign of the Messiah's reign is distinguished by the likeness of the Son of man. His subjects are the poor in spirit, the meek, the persecuted for righteousness' sake. The kingdom of heaven is theirs.—Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 8.1.

We are now in God's workshop. Many of us are rough stones from the quarry. But as we lay hold upon the truth of God, its influence affects us. It elevates us and removes from us every imperfection and sin, of whatever nature. Thus we are prepared to see the King in His beauty and finally to unite with the pure and heavenly angels in the kingdom of glory. It is here that this work is to be accomplished for us, here that our bodies and spirits are to be fitted for immortality.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 355.2.

17. All of this points us as Christians forward to the most momentous event that will ever happen on planet earth. The members of God's family know that the time is coming when they will take their places alongside Him in the heavenly kingdom. Physicist Steven Weinberg once commented about our world's history saying: "The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless." Some of his fellow scientists agreed with him even suggesting that there is no reason for the universe to have any point since it is just a physical system! Christians know that God has a plan, and we need to be a part of it.

18. Over 170 years after the Great Disappointment in 1844, are we prepared for the second coming? Are we helping others to understand the necessary issues and the steps they need to be taking to be prepared for that coming?

19. Jesus assures us that the kingdom of God is not just a theoretical or ethereal idea. It is a divine plan to transform human lives and restore peace in the universe. But, it requires serious commitment on our part. Are we prepared to make the kind of commitment that is necessary? When we pray the Lord's prayer suggesting that we want God's kingdom to come, what does that include? There are at least three ideas involved: 1) We need to remember that it is God's kingdom and not ours. It will be very different from any human kingdom. 2) Our lives are to be transformed as we become citizens of this kingdom of grace now. And 3) Experiencing that kingdom of grace, we look forward to the kingdom of glory where we shall live forever in the very presence of God. (Revelation 11:15; 21:1-3)

20. Jesus came to a world which was being overrun by Roman military might. He came to a people who were hoping to overthrow that Roman yoke. They were looking to a glorious kingdom like that of their ancestor David. In the fullness of time, Jesus had come to announce that the first phase of God's kingdom was at hand. There was no uncertainty about His message. But, it did not involve conquering the Romans! He came to defeat sin and not Romans. While there has been a 2000-year delay, God's ultimate victory is guaranteed. And what does that victory involve? Most importantly, it involves a victory in the great controversy. All of Satan's false claims have been decidedly refuted. The true nature of sin has been revealed, and God is just waiting for His children on this earth to get ready for the kingdom of glory. (2 Peter 3:10-12; Romans 3:1-4)

21. How was the kingdom of God connected with this plan of salvation?

The plan provides for the forgiveness of sin (*Luke 5:20, 21*), for involvement in the ministry of healing (*Luke 9:2, 11*), for the caring of the poor and the needy (*Luke 18:22*), and for the ultimate defeat of Satan as the conclusion of

the great controversy (*Luke 10:18*). Thus, the kingdom of God is far from being a myth; it is a dynamic, God-centered, present reality (*vss. 9-11 [Luke 10:9-11]; 16:16, 17; 17:21; Matt. 12:28; Mark 1:14*) and an eschatological hope of glory (*Luke 13:28, 29; Luke 21; 22:14-18, 29, 30; Matt. 13:42, 43; 16:27, 28; Matthew 24; 25:34; Mark 9:1; 13*). The establishment of God's kingdom results in the destruction of all hostile powers, the last of which are death and Satan (*1 Cor. 15:23-28*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, 147. [Content in brackets is added.]

22. Those who recognize all that is implied by God's kingdom will not permit any compromise or any distraction to take their eyes away from Jesus who is the door to the kingdom.
23. There is no doubt or any question left about the future success of God's plans. (*Luke 17:21; 21:34-36; and John 14:1-3*) God cannot fail. Despite all the troubles on this earth, the kingdom of grace is still present and growing.
24. But, the ultimate expression of the kingdom of God is still to come. And that expression will be far more glorious than we can even imagine. (*1 Corinthians 2:9; 4:9*)
25. When the disciples finally began to ask questions pointedly about the future of the Jewish nation, Jesus spelled out in considerable detail what would happen before the kingdom of glory would come to this earth. Read *Luke 21, Matthew 24 and 25, and Mark 13*. None of what we now see occurring in the world around us is a surprise to God. The day of the Lord will only come after God's people pass through a terrible time of trial. Satan will not give up his kingdom without a final, ultimate all-out battle.
26. In the midst of that battle, we are to be preparing ourselves and others through the proclamation of the gospel. (*Matthew 25:1-13; 28:19-20*)
27. Christians are to have their hopes constantly buoyed up by faith.

The hope of Christ's appearing is a large hope, a far-reaching hope. It is the hope of seeing the King in His beauty, and of being made like Him.—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, June 20, 1895 par. 3; *RC* 59.3 ; *FW* 116.4.

28. Even as they were walking from Jericho up to Jerusalem for the final time, Jesus's disciples and the huge crowd were looking forward to the establishment of the kingdom. Read *Luke 19:11-27*. What does this parable tell us about the time between the establishment of the kingdom of grace and the establishment of the kingdom of glory? The man in this parable must have come under the larger jurisdiction of the caesar or emperor. Thus, he had to get approval for his ascent to the throne. That probably refers to Herod's trip to Rome or possibly the journey to Rome of Archelaus his son whom Julius Caesar ultimately denied the right to be king. But, in the midst of all this time of trouble, God has a plan for every one of us.

To His servants Christ commits "His goods"—something to be put to use for Him. . . . **Not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God.**—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 326.4-327.0; *Signs of the Times*, July 2, 1902 par. 2; *AG* 244.4; *MYP* 219.2; *ML* 218.3. [Bold type is added.]

29. Are we preparing to be a part of that future kingdom?

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