

## Essential Truths I: Living With God

# 16

## Kingdom of God

Your relationship with God is described in many different ways throughout Scripture, but none is as basic as your relationship with God as a citizen of his kingdom.

### Read 1 Peter 2:9

The *New International Version of the Bible* translates Peter's words in this way:

“But you are a chosen people...a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

You have been snatched from darkness into light, from Satan's rulership into God's rulership. You are now under a whole new authority – that of the Lord Jesus. This change of authority is the keystone to the Christian life.

As we saw in **Module 102**, our relationship with Christ takes two distinct and complementary forms, and it is worthwhile having a quick revision before exploring the nature of God's kingdom in more depth. A healthy relationship with God must involve a recognition of Christ on two levels:

### ***As Savior***

We cannot know God as Father or Friend until we first have had a revelation of Jesus as Savior – the One who died for us and rescued us from Satan's dominion. Jesus saved us from:

- God's righteous judgment (**1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9; Romans 5:9**)
- Satan's evil tyranny (**Acts 26:18; Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8**)

The Word

God

Origins

Jesus

The Cross

The Blood

Resurrection

Repentance

Faith

Grace

Water Baptism

Holy Spirit

Temptation

Fellowship

Generosity

▶ **Kingdom of God** ◀

Worship

Prayer

Eternity

Second Coming

The Call

As **Hebrews 5:8-9** explains:

“...[Jesus] became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.”

## ***As Lord***

### **Read Colossians 2:6-7**

Knowing Jesus as Savior brings us into God’s kingdom, but that is not where our relationship with him ends. Once we are inside his kingdom, that relationship takes on dramatic new changes. Now we know him not merely as Saviour, but as Lord – *our* Lord!

### **Read John 13:13**

### **Read Romans 1:4**

Peter describes both these aspects of our relationship to Christ in **2 Peter 3:18**:

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.”

## **New Citizenship**

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### **Read Colossians 1:12-13**

In these two verses, Paul tells us that our being “translated” (KJV) from “the dominion of darkness” into “the kingdom of light” is based on our becoming “qualified” as citizens of this new kingdom. When one person migrates from one country to another and wishes to become a citizen of the new country, there are usually a set of qualifications and conditions that must be met.

### **Read 2 Thessalonians 1:5**

The *New International Version* phrases Paul’s words in this way:

“All this is evidence that God’s judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.”

The *Amplified Bible* expands on the meaning of this verse with these words:

“This is positive proof of the just and right judgment of God to the end that you may be deemed deserving of His kingdom – a plain token of His fair verdict [which designs] that you should be made and counted worthy of the kingdom of God – for the sake of which you are also suffering.”

The one essential and non-negotiable qualification for entrance into the kingdom of God is royal birth (**John 3:3,6**), but once a citizen of the kingdom, we are encouraged to live our lives as worthy citizens of that kingdom.

Being “counted worthy” of our citizenship should not be confused with the actual getting of that citizenship. We do not become citizens of God’s kingdom through our own suffering, but through the suffering of Christ; once a citizen, however, our suffering for the sake of God’s kingdom is evidence of the fact that God will

count us “worthy” of that kingdom. Citizenship in God’s kingdom means a total identification with the values and lifestyle of that kingdom, even to the point of suffering.

When we enter the kingdom of light, we enter a relationship for which we were created – a relationship between the Lord and his creation. When Jesus becomes Lord of our individual lives, we find that our lives begin falling into place (**Colossians 2:9-10; 1 Corinthians 8:6**). The Lordship of Christ in our lives changes our whole lifestyle into that of a citizen of the Kingdom of God.

## The Model Citizen

### Read Philippians 2:5-7

The *New Testament in Modern English* (by J. B. Phillips) renders Philippians 2:5 in this way:

“Let your attitude to life be that of Christ Jesus himself...”

Jesus, though King of the Kingdom, became the servant of all. He is the example for us of the true citizen of His kingdom.

### Read John 13:5-17

### Read Matthew 20:26-28

### Read Luke 22:26-27

As members of God’s kingdom, we have entered into a master-servant relationship with the Lord (**Matthew 6:24**). Jesus came specifically to do God’s will (**Hebrews 10:5-9**). Every day he displayed what the lifestyle of the kingdom is all about: living to please God (**Ephesians 5:8-10**). We are to have a servant’s heart, just as Christ had a servant’s heart (**Matthew 20:26-28**).

## Paradoxes of the Kingdom

Many Christians don’t like the concept of servanthood because it seems to make one person inferior to another. But in the Bible, we find four interesting paradoxes:

- In slavery, there is freedom (**Romans 6:16-23**)
- In serving, there is greatness (**Mark 9:35; 10:43-44**)
- In humility, there is exaltation (**Luke 18:14; 1 Peter 5:5-6**)
- In submission, there is authority (**Luke 7:3-10; James 4:7**)

The lifestyle of the kingdom of God is an attitude of *submission* and *obedience to God*. In **1 Thessalonians 4:1-3**, Paul reminds the Thessalonian Christians of the pattern of life in God’s kingdom:

“Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more...It is God’s will that you should be holy...”

**Read Matthew 12:50**

**Read Ephesians 6:6**

**Read Hebrews 13:21**

**Read 1 John 2:17**

We submit ourselves to God's will *not* reluctantly – because of fear or duty – but rather we seek to please Him...

- Because of all God has done for us (**Romans 12:1; Ephesians 4:1; Titus 3:4-7**)
- Because in doing so we find fulfilment (**Psalms 40:8**)
- Because of love for God (**John 14:15; 1 John 5:3**)

## The Kingdom Become Flesh

**Read Luke 4:43**

**Read Matthew 4:23**

**Read Matthew 9:35**

When Jesus came into the world he had a clear, resounding message. That message was called “the good news of the kingdom of God.” He later sent out his disciples with exactly the same mandate – to declare the good news of the kingdom (**Matthew 10:1-7**) and instructed them to pray “your kingdom come” (**Luke 11:2**). Even the early Christians placed a great emphasis on the message about God's kingdom come to earth (**Acts 8:12; 28:23**).

Jesus used the phrase “the kingdom of God” more than 100 times! Almost all his teachings revolved around the kingdom. But much more than just teaching *about* the kingdom of God, Jesus *demonstrated* the kingdom of God.

**Read Luke 11:20**

In **John 1:14**, Jesus is described as “the Word [become] flesh.” Much more than just preaching the message of the kingdom, Jesus himself *was* the message of the kingdom become flesh. He was the kingdom personified.

**Read Luke 17:20-21**

The New American Standard Bible translates this passage with these words:

“...The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or, ‘There it is!’ For behold, *the kingdom of God is in your midst.*”

The kingdom of God was present in the person of Jesus. For where the King is, there is the kingdom. In Christ, people caught a glimpse of:

- The power of the kingdom (**Matthew 4:23; Luke 11:20**)
- The culture of the kingdom (**Mark 6:34; 10:13-16; John 13:1-17**)

**Read Philippians 2:8-10**

The Lord Jesus is now “seated at the right hand of the mighty God” (**Luke 22:69; Mark 16:19**), with all power and authority at his disposal. The superlative degree of Jesus’ kingship is illustrated in:

- The exaltedness of his rule (**Ephesians 1:19-21**)
- The extent of his authority (**Ephesians 1:21-22; Matthew 28:18**)
- The eternity of his throne (**Hebrews 1:8,12; Isaiah 9:7; Luke 1:33**)
- The enormity of his power (**Hebrews 1:3; Luke 8:25; Philippians 3:21**)
- The excellency of his name (**Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 1:4**)

## The Two Absolutes

We live in a world government largely by relative values, yet the book of Hebrews reveals two absolute truths that undergird the Christian life:

- The unchanging Person – **Hebrews 13:8**
- The unshakable kingdom – **Hebrews 12:28**

Jesus (the King) and the kingdom of God (his realm) go hand in hand. You cannot separate them. You cannot have one without the other. The nature of God’s kingdom flows from the nature of its King. Each facet of his nature reflects in the nature of his kingdom. Let’s have a look at just a few examples:

- With Jesus as the unchanging King, the kingdom is one that has no end (**Daniel 2:44; 7:14**)
- With Jesus as the great Conqueror, the kingdom is invincible (**Revelation 17:14**)
- With Jesus as the One who is absolute control, the kingdom cannot be shaken by any mere force that may try to assail it from the outside (**Matthew 26:53; Romans 8:31**)

The kingdom of God is absolute, simply because Jesus is.

## Fruit of the Kingdom

### Read 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12

Paul continually encouraged the Thessalonian Christians “to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory” (note again **2 Thessalonians 1:5**). In **Matthew 21:43**, Jesus said that the kingdom would belong to those who “produce its fruit”.

The fruit of the kingdom is summed up in a number of scriptures:

- Love, joy, peace (**Galatians 5:22-23**)
- Goodness, righteousness, truth (**Ephesians 5:9; James 3:13-17**)
- Righteousness, peace, joy (**Romans 14:17; Hebrews 12:11**)

### Read Colossians 1:10-13

Your ability to live a life worthy of the Lord depends upon a revelation of the kingdom of which you are now a citizen (note **Philippians 3:17-20**). Since you were created by God, you were also made for his kingdom and its lifestyle. The fruit of that kingdom is simply the natural outworking of rebirth that the Holy Spirit has performed in you. Your responsibility as a citizen of God's kingdom is to live like the person you now are!

### Read 1 Peter 2:11-12

The kingdom of God is not of this world (**John 18:33-37**), but it has come to this world in the person of Jesus. Because you are in Christ, as Paul declares in **Colossians 1:12**, you now share an inheritance in this kingdom as a son and an heir! (note also **Romans 8:16-17**). Our prayer for you reflects Paul's own:

*We pray that the values, lifestyle and power of God's kingdom will resonate in your life – that you may live a life worthy of the magnificence of the kingdom to which you now belong!*

### Read 1 Chronicles 29:10-13