

A Stop by Quiet Waters

Dick Germaine

"It's All About The Kingdom"

Dear Friend,

A member of my board signs his e-mails to me with the letters IAATK (It's all about the Kingdom). If he is right, that what we are doing is all about the Kingdom, why do we hear so little about the Kingdom of God today? In the Gospels Jesus spoke about the Kingdom in one way or another nearly 100 times but he spoke of the church only three times. The New Testament speaks of the Kingdom of God approximately 136 times and the church approximately 70 times.

I have my messages catalogued as far back as 1985 so I looked to see how often I had preached on the Kingdom. I preached only two sermons directly dealing with the Kingdom of God and another 19 in which I dealt with it somewhat. I preached 106 sermons on the church, and scores of others in which I touched on it to one degree or another. Over 800 sermons and only two directly dealing with the subject of the Kingdom of God. If Jesus spoke so often about the Kingdom and I have spoken so seldom about it, something in me has been out of focus.

Recently I committed myself to a study of the passages in the New Testament which refer to the Kingdom of God. I want to share with you some of the things I'm discovering. Let's look briefly at the first references to the Kingdom of God made by the Lord Jesus. In Matthew 4:17 he says, "*Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is near.*"¹ In Mark 1:15 he says, "*The time has come, he said. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!*" In Luke 4:43 Jesus said, "*I must preach the good news of the Kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.*" Jesus began his public ministry by preaching the Kingdom of God.

The first thing to note is that whatever this reference to the Kingdom being near means it is so significant that Jesus commanded us to prepare for it by repenting. The second thing to note is that Jesus' introduction of the Kingdom implies that God is present in this world in a way he wasn't before.

To grasp what Jesus was referring to I want to quote from George Eldon Ladd's book, The Gospel of The Kingdom: "*We must ask the most fundamental question: What is the meaning of Kingdom? The modern answer to this question loses the key of meaning to this ancient Biblical truth. In our western idiom, a kingdom is primarily a realm over which a king exercises his authority. ... The second [modern] meaning of a kingdom is the people belonging to a given realm. ... The exclusive application of either of these two ideas to the Biblical teaching of the Kingdom leads us astray from a correct understanding of the Biblical truth.*"² Dr. Ladd goes on to say, "*When the word refers to God's Kingdom, it always refers to His reign, His rule, His sovereignty, and not to the realm in which it is exercised.*"³

Jesus' declaration of the Kingdom being near was a declaration about himself -- that through his coming the reign, rule, sovereignty of God was near in a way never before experienced on the

¹ Kingdom of God and Kingdom of heaven refer to the same Kingdom from different perspectives. More on this in a future article.

² The Gospel of The Kingdom, George Eldon Ladd, Eerdmans, 1977, page 18, 19.

³ *ibid.* page 20.

earth. The reign, rule, sovereignty of God would be established among men through who Jesus was and what Jesus came to do. Satan understood this, so he sought to gain control by getting Jesus to bow his knee to him. *“All this I will give you if you bow down and worship me.”* If Jesus did then the reign, the rule, the sovereignty of God would be destroyed and he, Satan, would be in full control.

The world has never been the same since the first coming of the Lord Jesus because the reign and rule and sovereignty of God is nearer than it has ever been, in some respects it is already in us, and in some respects there is still more of His kingdom to come.⁴ Don't be deceived by the appearance of how things are in our world. The Kingdom of God is at work. There is only one King and only one Kingdom. All other kingdoms will disappear.

We experience and demonstrate the presence of the Kingdom when we live by Kingdom teaching, virtues, practices. When we separate from each other, compete with each other, criticize and oppose each other, etc. we are not acting like members of the Kingdom and not demonstrating the presence of the Kingdom among us. Remember, Jesus preached the kingdom not the church. Local churches are to be communities of believers who in their relationships with one another, and with other communities of believers, give visible expression of the Kingdom's presence within and among them.

Submission to and love for God, love for one another, unity in Christ, and healthy relationships among believers are evidences of the Kingdom. When we treat each other, each other's churches, other Christians, other pastors with indifference, or criticism, or in a spirit of competition, or an attitude of superiority we are denying the presence of the Kingdom of God not demonstrating it. Saving faith is an individual thing and must be demonstrated individually, but the Kingdom of God is the reign, rule, sovereignty of God over all of us and is demonstrated by humble repentance of our sins against God and one another, and by godly relationships with all others in the Kingdom.

Peace and joy in Christ,
Dick

PS. *If the Lord spoke to you through these words, please send them along to your fellow pastors, friends, and lay leaders for their encouragement.*

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⁴ More on this in future articles on the Kingdom.