



DOCTRINE

ROOTED IN TRUTH

Kingdom of God

- Jesus was sent to proclaim the kingdom of God to the world
- Matthew 4:17–25, Luke 4:16–21, 42–43
- When we think about the Gospel, many of us only think about individual salvation.
- But Jesus Himself said He was sent to preach the Good News (gospel) of the kingdom of God, not just individual salvation (Luke 4:43).
- Because the end of God's rescue plan to save the world isn't just about our individual lives, it's about making all things new (Revelation 21:1–4).

Kingdom of God

- When Jesus came on the scene, the Jews were ready for a revolution.
- They had been living under foreign rule for hundreds of years – overthrown by Babylon in 586 BC, which was taken over by Media and then by Persia.
- The king of Persia let them go back to their own land and rebuild the city and the temple, but they were still under Persia's rule. Then Persia was taken over by the Greeks.
- For a short time had self-rule. Then they were overthrown by the Romans. So they hadn't truly been an independent nation in more than 600 years.

Kingdom of God

- Daniel had a vision that four great kingdoms would rule over the Jews.
- The kingdom of God would come, symbolized by a stone not cut by human hands (Daniel 2:34). In the vision, that stone smashed the fourth kingdom.
- The angel told Daniel the first kingdom was Babylon. In a later comparable vision, an angel said the second kingdom was Medo-Persia and the third was Greece (Daniel 8:19–21).
- That made Rome kingdom number four, which meant the Jews were just waiting for the kingdom of God to come smash Rome to pieces.

Kingdom of God

- When Jesus came on the scene preaching the kingdom of God, the people expected a revolt against Rome and Jesus' ruling as king over the physical kingdom of God, a restored Israel.
- Even after His death and Resurrection, the disciples still thought that's what the kingdom of God would be (Acts 1:6).
- But when Jesus was on trial before Pilate, He said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). When He preached the kingdom of God during His ministry, He didn't talk about overthrowing Rome.

Kingdom of God

- Jesus talked about bringing good news to the poor, freedom for the prisoners, sight for the blind, freedom for the oppressed, and the year of the Lord's favor.
- This referring to the Year of Jubilee when all the slaves were set free, debts were forgiven, and everyone's land and property were returned to the original owners (Leviticus 25:8–24).

Kingdom of God

- Jesus also showed them the kingdom of God by His actions – healing the sick, casting out demons, calming the storm, feeding the people, eating with sinners, touching the leper, reaching out to the marginalized.
- In everything Jesus said and did, He showed us a picture of what the coming kingdom of God will be like.
- It would be a place where there is no more sickness, death, pain, suffering, natural disasters, evil, oppression, broken systems, or any evil at all.

Kingdom of God

- In all these things, Jesus showed that He had ultimate power over every broken thing in this world, and that His mission is to heal all that is broken.
 - Power over disease (Mark 6:56)
 - Power over hunger and poverty (Matthew 14:13–21)
 - Power over demons (Mark 1:34)
 - Power over natural disasters (Matthew 8:27)
 - Power over death (John 11:25, 43)

Kingdom of God

- Jesus rejected human systems of oppression, inequality and injustice by:
 - welcoming and eating with sinners (Luke 15:1–2)
 - calling a tax collector to be a disciple (Mark 2:13–17)
 - speaking to Samaritans with respect (Matthew 15:21–28; John 4)
 - treating women as legitimate disciples (Luke 8:1–3; John 4:1–26; 20:1–18)
 - valuing children and using them as an example (Luke 18:15–17)
 - receiving sinners who had faith (Matthew 21:31; Luke 7:36–50; John 8)

Kingdom of God

- These were categories of people who were oppressed and marginalized by human systems of oppression, inequality and injustice.
- Jesus even rejected oppressive religious leaders (Matthew 23:4, 8–10).
- The message of the Gospel isn't just about our individual salvation.
- It's about God making all things right.
- Not only fixing our individual broken relationships with God but fixing all the brokenness in our world.

Kingdom of God

- Jesus told His disciples that the kingdom was at hand (Matthew 4:17), but He also said the kingdom was like a mustard seed. At the time of His ministry, it was small, but it would grow into a massive place of refuge (Matthew 13:31).
- When Jesus came, He brought the kingdom of God as a seed, but the kingdom will not come in all its fullness until Christ returns and, after the Millennial Kingdom, creates the new heavens and new earth.
- This doctrine is called “inaugurated eschatology” – the kingdom of God is already here but not yet in all its fullness.

Kingdom of God

- Jesus told His disciples that the kingdom of God is “in the midst of you” (Luke 17:21).
- The full kingdom where everything is perfect will come later, but for now, we get to experience the kingdom of God among His people, the Church.
- One day there will be a totally new creation, but for now, we have been made new creations individually in Christ, which makes us kingdom people living in this fallen world (2 Corinthians 5:17–20).

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- We are ambassadors for His kingdom.

Upside-Down Kingdom

- The kingdom of God is upside-down from the kingdoms of this world
- Matthew 5:1–12
- The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) shows us clearly just how upside-down the kingdom of God is from the kingdoms of this world.
- The values, ethics, goals and plans of the kingdom are completely opposite from the ways of the world.
- The character, motivation, and heart of kingdom people are opposite from the people who still dwell in the kingdom of darkness.

Upside-Down Kingdom

- 5:1–11: The Beatitudes: The list of who is called blessed in the kingdom of God (poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, the peacemakers, those who are persecuted) are opposite of what the world tells us we should want to be.
- 5:13–16: We are the salt of the earth and the light of the world because we are different from the world around us.
- 5:17–42: The standard of morality in the kingdom of God is higher than the standards of the world. But Jesus raised the standard even higher than the “letter of the law” in the old covenant, physical kingdom of God.

Upside-Down Kingdom

- 5:43–48: Love in the kingdom of God is not just loving those who love you and are kind to you – as the world does – but also loving your enemies as God does.
- It's not just the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus' teaching from all over the Gospels shows us how the kingdom of God is upside-down from the world:
 - Those who are first in the world will be last in the kingdom of God (Matthew 20:16).
 - Jesus called His disciples to serve not seek power (Matthew 20:24–28).

Upside-Down Kingdom

- It's difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom but not impossible (Matthew 19:23–24).
- It's not the powerful who will enter the kingdom but those who take the lowly position of a child (Matthew 18:3–4).
- Tax collectors, prostitutes and Gentiles with faith in Jesus will enter the kingdom while “good religious people” who don't have faith will not (Matthew 8:10–12; 21:28–32).
- Jesus did not come to be served as king but to serve others (Matthew 20:28).

Upside-Down Kingdom

- Jesus even painted Himself as an upside-down king when He came into Jerusalem on a donkey (Matthew 21:1–11).
- In the triumphal entry, Jesus was making a very intentional contrast with a traditional Roman “triumph,” a civil and religious ceremony of ancient Rome in which military heroes paraded through the streets after a military victory.
- In a triumph, the hero rode on a war horse or chariot through the city streets wearing a crown of laurel and a purple robe, with a procession of his army, local dignitaries, captives, and the spoils of war going before him.

Upside-Down Kingdom

- In Jesus's "triumphal entry," He rode on a donkey, an animal of peace, not war. The crowd cheering for him was small and unimportant.
- He hadn't won any wars.
- In fact, He was on His way to offer Himself as a sacrifice, which is ironically how He would win the ultimate victory.
- Jesus used this event to intentionally make a contrast between Himself and the kings of this world. He was a humble, servant-leader king who sacrificed Himself for the good of His people rather than hoarding power for Himself.

Upside-Down Kingdom

- The kingdom of God is upside-down from the kingdoms of this world
- Matthew 5:1–12
- Matthew 13 contains a series of parables which all begin “the kingdom of God is like...” First Jesus described how the Gospel is like a seed.
- We spread the message everywhere, but whether it is received, and fruit actually grows from it depends on what kind of soil it lands on (verses 1–23).
- We are responsible for spreading the message; we can leave the growth part up to God (1 Corinthians 3:5–9).

Upside-Down Kingdom

- Then Jesus described how the kingdom is like a field where the farmer allows the weeds to grow up with the good grain until the harvest time, Judgment Day (vv. 24–30).
- Then He said the kingdom is like a mustard seed; it started out a small seed, but it would grow into a giant place of refuge (verses 31–32).
- It is like leaven. It's a small thing, but it spreads throughout the whole dough (earth) and impacts everything around it (verse 33).

Upside-Down Kingdom

- Jesus said the kingdom is like a treasure hidden in a field and a pearl of great value, both of which people sold everything they had to buy (verses 44–46).
- The theological point continues with this contrast we have seen between the kingdoms of the world and the kingdom of God.
- The kingdom is worth more than everything we could possibly have in this world. This doesn't mean we have to sell everything we have to gain the kingdom; it actually costs us nothing.
- But its value is far greater than anything we have in this world.

Upside-Down Kingdom

- As we said above about the Gospel, we often read this parable and think about the kingdom of God as our individual salvation, that our salvation is worth trading everything we have.
- But we've learned the Gospel of the kingdom isn't just about our individual salvation and gaining entrance to the future kingdom in heaven.
- It's about our lives with Jesus in the here and now as kingdom people living in this fallen world, as members of the Church, His body, which is the outpost of the kingdom of God on earth.

Upside-Down Kingdom

- The message of the kingdom is not just about our future inheritance in the final kingdom in heaven. It's about how we live in the here and now, choosing to walk with Jesus instead of in the ways of the world.
- This parable shows us that kingdom values and kingdom purposes are more valuable than anything else we could choose in this world.
- To walk with Jesus in the here and now, we may have to give up some of the things of this world, but it is worth it. Not only because we will go to heaven one day but because our current lives will be better for it.

Upside-Down Kingdom

- When we walk with Jesus, the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control) will grow in our lives.
- Doesn't that sound like a better life than the things of the flesh – biting and devouring one another, immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies and things like these (Galatians 5:15–24)?
- Who would want to live that way, choosing division and dissension over peace and enmity and strife over love and joy?

Resources

