

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG137 – Understanding the Kingdom of God

Hi, and welcome to the podcast today. I am really anxious to get into this teaching. I would like to call this *Understanding the Kingdom of God*. I am bringing this out of a burden of my heart to see that the Kingdom of God become more of a focus to us as believers. It is my personal feeling that there is not enough emphasis on the Kingdom of God, and on people understanding really what the Kingdom of God is all about. I think it is something that is not covered enough in church, and it is not taught enough to believers so that there is a grasp about the Kingdom of God. The emphasis that we have tends to be on preaching salvation, and it seems to have come about that the gospel and salvation are one in the same thing; so when you talk about the gospel and preaching the gospel, you are talking about getting people saved, or understanding salvation. I think that is a limitation, because salvation is obviously a part and a necessity of the Kingdom of God, but it is not the whole of the Kingdom. So hopefully, we can clarify some things today and get some understanding.

I want to start by first showing the emphasis within the New Testament Scriptures about the Kingdom of God, and that it was the Kingdom of God that was preached. It was not just a salvation message that was given through the Gospels; it was a focus, a very clear focus on the Kingdom of God. We are going to look at Matthew the third chapter, verses 1-2. It says, "Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" So there is a repentance because the Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom of God, is coming. Now, some people could say, "Well, Kingdom of Heaven is something different than the Kingdom of God," and that is really a wrong concept. The Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom of God, as used in the Scriptures, are both the same thing; and there are reasons why one was used instead of the other at certain times. One of the concepts that some speak about is the fact that God's name was not mentioned. Consequently, to say "the Kingdom of God" would be offensive to some, or a violation of the rabbinic rules about not saying the name of God. This is one school of thought, that they used the Kingdom of Heaven concept or terminology, replacing God with heaven. Whether that is correct or not, I don't know; but it is just pointing out the fact that they are not two different things. There are reasons why maybe one was used instead of another at different times, but we see both in use, and they are all referring to the same concept, which is the fact of His Kingdom, God's Kingdom. And so, we know exactly what we are talking about. There is a Kingdom of God; be it in heaven or on earth, it is still a Kingdom of God. That is what the emphasis must be in our own hearts and minds, that we understand what that is and what it is all about.

In the very beginning, John the Baptist came preaching, it says, in the wilderness of Judea the Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom of God. Yeshua, Jesus, also picked up the same focus. We see it in Mark the first chapter, in verses 14-15: "Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God." What is the gospel of God? He was saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." This is important to me, because it directly ties the concept of the gospel with the Kingdom. It is not a gospel of salvation. It is not saying you need to be saved, and once you are saved, then that's it, you have attained to the pinnacle of a relationship

with the Lord. No, salvation is an element, it is an experience; it is a very necessary experience for people to have to enter into the Kingdom of God. But, in a sense, it is a first step into the Kingdom. And I think that too much today, you replace the concepts – you focus on the concept of gospel and salvation over the Kingdom of God, and you displace the Kingdom of God when all you discuss is a gospel of salvation. It is a correction that I think needs to be made, because believers need to understand about the Kingdom of God, and know that it is something to be pressed into. Christ Himself said that “until the days of John the Baptist, the Law and the Prophets were preached; but now the Kingdom is preached, and everyone must press in to the Kingdom.” So, again, the focus was on the Kingdom.

Matthew 4:23, says, “Jesus was going through all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.” Here we see that even the miracles and the healings and the deliverances had to do with a connection to the Kingdom of God, not just a focus on salvation of the believer. We see that Yeshua, Jesus, when He commissioned His disciples, He sent them out specifically to preach the Kingdom of God. Luke 9:1-2 says, “He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing.”

We see this with Paul in Acts 28:23. It says, “When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening.” Paul is in Rome now, and he is testifying about the Kingdom of God. He is connecting the revelation of Christ to the Kingdom of God – not just to a partial revelation about salvation. Again, very, very important for us to get. It goes on in Acts 28 about this event. Skipping over some of the story of Paul in Rome, it says in verses 30-31, “He stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.” They are making that emphasis because he was under arrest at the time, yet he was living in his own rented apartment and he was ministering freely to people. He was ministering to them about the Kingdom of God. And here we have something very necessary to understand – when we talk about the Kingdom of God, this is the connection, where Christ is related to as Lord. It is His Lordship. In any kingdom, you have to have a lord. You have to have a king. You have to have the one who is over that kingdom, represents that kingdom, and is the authority of that kingdom being dispersed throughout the kingdom that he is ruling over. And so, here Paul not only is preaching about the Kingdom, but he is bringing the understanding that Christ is not just Messiah, He is Lord and Messiah.

The Messianic revelation of Christ is very connected to the salvific function that He has, both on a natural level and on a spiritual level; because if you go into the Jewish mindset, you see that a messianic figure is one who is saving on a natural level. For instance, David taking down Goliath, in a Jewish concept, would be very messianic: he saved Israel from a natural threat of destruction, and he became the one saving them from death and the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel by virtue of his actions. That is very messianic. So this idea of Messiah relates to the salvation aspect of the individual; and here we are speaking of Christ, of course. But Paul is also talking about the Lordship. The Lordship has to do with the Kingdom, because this is where we see Yeshua, the Christ, the Messiah, as the Lord over, the ruler over, the Kingdom. That does not necessarily apply to the salvation of the believer; it applies to the reigning of His Lordship over the believer. And that is why this idea for me is so necessary to be understood by us as believers – because He is not just our salvation, He also is our Lord. That means that

He will rule over us, and that we will come into absolute submission and obedience to that Lordship, which He will reign with in His Kingdom; and we will come to a place of complete subjection in obedience to that Lordship, to Him as Lord, to Him as King. That is the aspect that concerns me when it is left out, because the salvation portion of the Kingdom, like I said before, is just the opening of the door so that we can enter into, so that we can be qualified to become a part of, His Kingdom. But once we become a part of that Kingdom, and we enter into the Kingdom of God, into the Lordship of Christ, then it is an issue now of our subjection, our obedience to that Lordship. Those concepts need to be taught more, because I think that for some people they are difficult concepts.

In some ways, I think that in America, this is a difficult concept; because we relate to democracy, which in some instances means nobody is really in charge. We do not like this idea of there being a singular ruler. America was established on the idea that we are getting rid of a king, and that runs very deep in the psyche and experience of Americans. The difficulty comes when America must transition into the Kingdom of God, because that will be the realm of the King; His Lordship will be the absolute rule and order of that Kingdom. And I don't believe that we are being prepared as believers to really bring ourselves into subjection to that Lordship as we need to be.

I want to continue going on to Matthew 24:13-14. It says, "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come." I think that through the history of the Church, this has kind of been blended into a concept that the gospel of salvation will be preached in all the world, and then the end will come. That is not what this says. It says the gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached. We need to come back, we need to draw ourselves back into a focus on the Kingdom of God as it was in the beginning – as it was preached by John the Baptist, as it was preached by Yeshua Himself, by the disciples before the crucifixion, and by the apostles following the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. There, the Lordship was magnified.

An example of this is found in Acts the second chapter. I will read starting with verses 34-36. This is on the Day of Pentecost, when Peter is preaching to everyone, explaining this outpouring of the Holy Spirit that has happened on the Day of Pentecost. Now this is following the resurrection of Christ, and this is the start of the apostolic ministries beginning to move. Peter says, "For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself," speaking of David, "says, 'The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'" Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him" – speaking of Yeshua, of Christ – "both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified."

What is the emphasis of Peter at the very outset of what is called by many people the opening of the Church, or the beginning of the Church or the Church Age? His emphasis is the fact that God had made Him Lord and Christ. He is not just Messiah. Christ means *the anointed one*; it is the Greek terminology for what in Hebrew would be *messiah*. So he is saying that He made Him Lord and Messiah. Notice the preeminent word here is Lord, followed by the Messianic emphasis. This is what Peter is preaching. He is saying, "He is now your Lord. He is Lord over you, Israel. He is your King." Israel had waited for the return of the kingdom back into the authority of an Israeli king. They wanted to get rid of Rome, and they wanted to reestablish Israel as a kingdom under an anointed king by God. That is the terminology Peter is using, and that is what he is addressing to this gathering of the Jewish people, who would have understood very, very clearly what he was referring to.

I want to go on into Romans the tenth chapter now, and just emphasize again that you cannot separate this idea of salvation from Lordship. Our salvation is our introduction to our being submissive to Him as the Lord in our lives. Romans 10, starting at verse 9, says, "That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Notice this emphasis; because I don't know that this emphasis is given when people are brought into a salvation prayer to begin their experience and their relationship with the Lord – that what you are confessing is Him as Lord of your life. So if you are confessing Yeshua as your Lord, you are confessing His Lordship over your life, and you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead – that is what triggers what we call salvation.

Verses 10-13, "For with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation." What is he confessing? That He is the Lord of your life. "For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for 'Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.'" Again, you cannot separate His Lordship from the experience of salvation that you have. It literally is your revelation and your confession that He is now the Lord over you, and you are bringing your life to Him; and you are bringing yourself to a place of submission and total subjection to His Lordship, recognizing Him as King over all the earth, but also King and Lord over your life.

I want to go to Matthew the twenty-eighth chapter, verses 16-20, when the disciples first see Him in the Galilee. "But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe'" – see, again, this is all about His authority over the lives of these people: make them disciples, teach them obedience – "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

I want to give a picture of this Kingdom as it is presented in the book of Daniel, because I think this gives us a different perspective than what we normally think of from the New Testament Scriptures. I am reading out of Daniel 7, verses 13-14: "I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him." Now, we understand that this vision is talking about Yeshua, and He is coming and being presented before God the Father. So I will read it again, to make sure you have that concept in mind as we are going forward: "I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given" – it was given to Yeshua, from the Father – "dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him" – serve Him. "His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed."

We see that what was manifested following the cross and the ascension of Christ into the heavenlies to be seated at the right hand of the Father is that He was given dominion, He was given glory, and He was given a Kingdom – that all peoples and nations and men of every language might serve Him, serve under His Lordship, serve under the dominion of His Kingdom. It says, "His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away." It is a beautiful picture through which we can really grasp this idea of what transpired in the New Testament verses where we see the ascension of Christ.

We know then that all things are subjected to Him. So, where do we go from there? What actually is the progression of the Kingdom of God in its manifestation up until the point where we reach the final conclusion, or the final fulfillment in manifesting the Kingdom of God? We see that in First Corinthians the fifteenth chapter, verses 22-28: "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then comes the end" – So now we are getting to the end of all of this story that the Scriptures have been working on from the very beginning of the book of Genesis – "then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He" – we are speaking of Yeshua, we are speaking of Christ – "For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death. For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, 'All things are put in subjection,' it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. When all things are subjected to Him," being Christ, "when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all."

What is going on here? What is this story all about? It is all about the fact that Christ came, He learned obedience through the things which He suffered, and He came Himself into perfect submission and subjection to the Father; so, all authority was given Him over heaven and earth and the creation. Now He must rule until that has been completed, that under His Lordship, everything comes into order, everything comes into subjection to Christ. That was the purpose of the Father in giving Him that dominion and that authority and that Lordship. Christ brings all things into subjection – He must rule until all His enemies are put under His feet, and everything is brought into subjection. Once everything is brought into subjection to Christ under His absolute Lordship and authority, then the Son Himself will also be subjected. Why? Because now it is all perfect. Now it is no longer Christ seated at the right hand of the Father, but with parts of heaven and the creation out of order and refusing to be in submission to Him. You say, "What is out of order? What is out of submission?" Well, look around the earth – it is rather evident that the earth and humanity are certainly not in complete subjection to the Lordship of the Son at this point; but they will be. He will reign, and He will exercise His Lordship and authority until that perfect subjection and submission has come about. Once it has come about, then Christ Himself is in perfect subjection to the Father, because He has brought all things into order. Once that is done, then Christ subjects Himself and all things unto the Father, that God Himself may be all in all; everything may be subjected to Him. That is the conclusion and the purpose of the manifestation of the completed Kingdom – and it is what everything is working towards through the Scriptures, until we come to this time. And I say, God hasten the day.

I want to make just a few points so that they are vivid in your mind before we conclude this. Number one, the preaching of the gospel was the announcing of the Kingdom of God to come – it was not just a presentation about humanity's salvation. The Kingdom is much bigger than that; it is over all creation. So the preaching of the gospel was announcing the Kingdom of God.

Point number two, salvation is a necessary experience for someone to enter into the Kingdom, but it should not be confused as being the Kingdom of God. When you are saved, that does not mean that the Kingdom is fully manifest or come; that means that the door is open for you to be included in the Kingdom. Now begins your process of perfection and submission.

Number three, the cross and the resurrection of Yeshua did not only provide salvation for mankind, it placed all things in subjection to Yeshua, establishing His Lordship over all creation in eternity.

Lastly, the Messiah will exercise that Lordship which has been given to Him until all things are in subjection to that Lordship; then He will subject all things to the Father, so that God is all in all, and over all. That is the Kingdom of God.

Lord, we ask that You give us wisdom and understanding of Your Kingdom. We ask to be a part of it. We open our hearts to be perfected in our submission to Your Lordship. And we ask all of these things in the name of Yehoshua HaMashiach. Amen.