

# The Kingdom of God



## SABBATH—JUNE 6

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Luke 11:2; Luke 1:32, 33; Luke 18:16–30; Luke 17:23, 24; Revelation 21:1–3; Luke 21:34–36.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “ ‘People will come from east and west and north and south. They will take their places at the feast in God’s kingdom’ ” (Luke 13:29, NlrV).

**THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AN IMPORTANT THEME IN THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS.** The wording shows up almost fifty times in Matthew, 16 times in Mark, about forty times in Luke, and 3 times in John. It may appear in the Lord’s Prayer, or in the Sermon on the Mount, or in Jesus’ other preaching and parables. But the kingdom of God is an explanation of what God has done in history for all people as He deals with the problem of sin and brings the great controversy (war) with Satan to a final end. The kingdom of God is not the same as any kingdom the world has ever known. That is because it is not a worldly kingdom.

“The kingdom of God comes through God’s word [the Bible] and the inward working of His Spirit. It is the fellowship of the soul with God, who is its life. The greatest example of God’s power is seen in human nature changed by the perfect character [thoughts; feelings; actions] of Christ.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Ministry [Work Done for God] of Healing*, page 36.

This week we will study this theme, as it appears in Luke.

**THE MAKEUP OF GOD'S KINGDOM: PART 1  
(Luke 11:2)**

The Gospels are filled with examples about the kingdom of God. They all show that a new kingdom has been started and introduced by and through Jesus.

**What does Luke 11:2 say about the kingdom of God? Whose kingdom is it, and why is that so important?**

To say that this kingdom is God's supports the idea that the kingdom of God is not simply an idea. It is not a social gospel preaching bread and water for the people who are hungry or suffer injustice. It goes above all the good actions of people. It also finds its center in the rulership of God in Christ as a human, who came preaching the good news of the kingdom (Luke 4:42–44; Matthew 4:23–25).

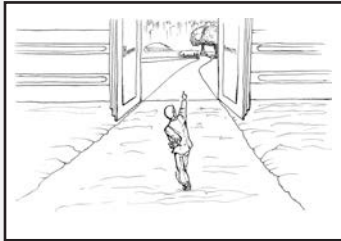
**What does Luke 1:32, 33 teach about who started the kingdom of God and what its final result will be?**

These verses are of greatest importance for two reasons. First, the Messiah who is expected in the Old Testament is none other than Jesus, "the Son of the Highest." Second, "Of his kingdom there will be no end." This means that, through His coming to the earth as a human, His death, and resurrection (return to life), Jesus defeated Satan's challenge to God's rulership. And He established for eternity God's kingdom. " 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. He will rule for ever and ever' " (Revelation 11:15, NIV). In the battle between Christ and Satan, Satan claimed victory after the fall of Adam and Eve. But the mission of Jesus proved that Satan's claims were false. He defeated Satan at every turn, and with His death and resurrection Christ has proved to the entire universe that the kingdom of God has arrived.

**How can we live to show that the kingdom of God is real? Most important, how can we show that it is real in our own lives? What should be different about how we, as citizens of God's kingdom, live now?**

**THE MAKEUP OF GOD'S KINGDOM: PART 2**  
(Luke 18:16–30)

**What do Luke 18:16–30; Luke 12:31–33; and Luke 9:59–62 teach us about what citizenship in the kingdom of God is about?**



**To enter into the kingdom of God, we must be willing to give up everything.**

Entering the kingdom of God is not dependent on one's position or riches. Luke, along with other Gospel writers, points out that those who come to Jesus must come with an attitude of full surrender and childlike trust. They must be willing to give up everything. For whatever they would not want to give up would compete with Jesus. Jesus, and His claim on our life, is the most important thing to us in this life. This makes sense, because, after all, it is only through Jesus that we have life. So, He should have our full loyalty.

Read again Luke 18:29, 30. What is Jesus saying to us? And what is He promising? *To have to leave parents, spouse (husband or wife), even children for the kingdom of God?* That is a very hard thing to do, is it not? Jesus is not saying that these actions are required of all believers. But if one were called to leave these things for the sake of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of God would be worth it.

**Think deeply on Jesus' words about letting the dead bury the dead. What important truth is He telling us about not making excuses to keep from following Him when the call comes? It does not matter how good those excuses might seem.**

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD: ALREADY, NOT YET (Luke 17:23, 24)

Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God. He gave His first public sermon at Nazareth (Luke 4:16–21). He announced the fact that, through Him that day, Isaiah's prophecy<sup>1</sup> of the kingdom and its saving ministry had started.

Luke records another event supporting the idea that the kingdom is real in the present time. The Pharisees (Jewish religious teachers) asked Jesus when the kingdom would come. And Jesus answered them that the “kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21, NKJV). Other translations suggest that the kingdom is “among you.” With the arrival of Jesus, the kingdom has already come, including (1) healing the sick (Luke 9:11), (2) preaching the gospel (Luke 4:16–19), (3) forgiving sins (Luke 7:48–50; Luke 19:9, 10), and (4) crushing the forces of evil (Luke 11:20). So, Jesus made the kingdom real within the person's life. It changes the person to be like Him. The kingdom of God also is seen among believers. This is an example of righteousness (forgiveness and cleansing) and salvation. This present part is also known as “the kingdom of God's grace.”<sup>2</sup> This kingdom is now being established so that day by day hearts full of sin and rebellion [war against God] surrender to the rulership of His love.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, page 108.

The “already” part has been settled with the defeat of sin and Satan and Jesus' victory in the great controversy. But the “not yet” part looks forward to the full end of evil and the beginning of the new earth. “The full start of the kingdom of His glory [power] will not take place until the second coming of Christ to this world.”—Adapted from *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, page 108.

### What do Luke 17:23, 24 and Luke 21:5–36 teach about the kingdom of God at the end of the earth's history?

Our world is full of fighting, sorrow, and trouble. This world certainly proves all too often how true the words of Jesus are. Some argue that the pain and suffering in this world mean God is not around. But we could answer what Jesus had warned us about almost two thousand years ago. The condition of our world gives proof that God is around us and the Bible itself is true too. (If the world were paradise now, Jesus' words would be false.) Only at the end will the kingdom of God be established (started). Until then, we have to be patient.



**Jesus said that the kingdom of God is within you.**

### DEFINITIONS

1. prophecy—a special message from God to His people sent to warn them or to tell them about what will happen in the future.
2. grace—God's gift of mercy and forgiveness that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

## THE KINGDOM AND THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST (Luke 21:34–36)



**Those who have experienced the kingdom of grace must wait, watch, and pray for the kingdom of glory.**

When Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God, He spoke of two certain things: (1) God's work through Christ in history to save humans from sin and (2) God's closure of history by bringing the saved to live with Him forever in the earth made new (Revelation 21:1–3). The first has arrived in the mission and ministry of Christ. In Him we are already in the kingdom of grace (Ephesians 1:4–9). The second part is the gathering of the saved into the kingdom of glory. And it is the future hope that those in Christ await (Ephesians 1:10; Titus 2:13). Jesus and the rest of the New Testament connect with that historical moment when the faithful will receive the kingdom of glory at the second coming of Christ.

The second coming of Christ is the final outcome of the good news that Jesus came to preach when He was on earth the first time. The same Jesus, who defeated sin and Satan on the cross, is soon to return to remove evil and make this earth pure from the sad mess that Satan caused on God's creation.

**Read Luke 21:34–36. In your own words, write down the basic message. As you do, look at your life, and ask yourself what these words tell you about your life. What do you need to do in order to make sure that you are following what Jesus asks?**

As we wait for the return of Jesus, we are called to “‘always keep watching. . . . Also, pray that you will not be judged guilty when the Son of Man comes’” (verse 36, NlrV).

Those who have experienced the kingdom of grace must wait, watch, and pray for the kingdom of glory. Between the “already” kingdom and the “not yet” kingdom, the believers are to be busy with ministry and mission, with living and hoping, with Christian growth and witness. The hope of the Second Coming requires us to keep our spiritual lives holy here and now.

## WITNESSES (Acts 1:1–8)

**Read Acts 1:1–8. What important truths about the kingdom of God are being shown here?**

The kingdom of God was most important in the mind of Luke as he wrote a sequel (another book) to his Gospel. This book is a short history of the early church. In the opening lines of that book on history, the book of Acts, Luke speaks of three basic truths about the kingdom of God.

*First, be sure that Jesus will come again.* For 40 days between His resurrection and ascension (return to heaven), the Lord continued to teach what He had taught the disciples before His crucifixion: “He spoke about God’s kingdom” (Acts 1:3, NIV). The powerful events of the Cross and the Resurrection had not changed anything in the teaching of Jesus about the kingdom. For 40 days the risen Jesus continued to tell the disciples that God’s kingdom is real.

*Second, be waiting for Jesus to come again in God’s own time.* After His resurrection, Jesus’ disciples asked a serious question: “ ‘Lord, will You at this time restore [return] the kingdom to Israel?’ ” (Acts 1:6, NKJV). Jesus did not answer the question but corrected the disciples’ understanding: God must always be God. To study His mind, to foretell the “when” of His plans, to understand His secrets is not the work of humans. God knows when the kingdom of glory should come, and He will cause it to happen in His own time.

*Third, be witnesses to the gospel of Jesus.* Christ tried to lead the disciples away from guessing about when the kingdom of glory will come. Instead, He told them what is known and must be done. The time of the Second Coming is not known to us. But we are called upon to wait for that glorious (great) day and to “occupy [keep busy]” until then (Luke 19:13). This means that we should be involved in taking the gospel of Jesus Christ to “ ‘the end of the earth’ ” (Acts 1:8, NKJV). That is our responsibility—not in our own strength but by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is promised to be poured out on all those who shall be witnesses to what they have seen and heard (verses 4–8).

**These faithful followers of Jesus still had some big misunderstandings about the nature of Christ’s work. But the Lord was using them anyway. What message might there be for us about not needing to fully understand everything in order to do His work?**



**We must tell others of the second coming of Jesus as we wait for His return.**

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** “Of the poor in spirit Jesus says, ‘Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ This kingdom is not an earthly kingdom that lasts for a short time. Christ was opening to men the spiritual kingdom of His love, His grace, His righteousness. The sign of the Messiah’s [Chosen One’s] rule is known by the likeness of the Son of man. His people are the poor in spirit, the meek, the persecuted [suffering] for righteousness’ sake. The kingdom of heaven is theirs.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, page 8.

“We are now in God’s workshop. Many of us are rough stones from the stoneyard. But as we hold upon the truth of God, its influence has a hold on us. It makes us noble and removes every sin from us. So, we are prepared to see the King in His beauty and finally to unite [join as one] with the pure and heavenly angels in the kingdom of glory. It is here that this work is to be done for us. As a result, our bodies and spirits are to be fitted for eternity.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies<sup>3</sup> for the Church*, volume 2, pages 355, 356.

### DEFINITIONS

3. *Testimonies*—the writings of Ellen G. White.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① Physicist Steven Weinberg wrote, “The more the universe seems understandable and knowledgeable, the more it also seems pointless.” His words made quite a storm. He later tried to soften what he said. But some did not see any reason for the quarrel about the universe not having a point. “Why should it have a point?” asked Harvard astronomer Martha Geller about the universe. “What point? It is just a physical system, so what point is there? I have always been puzzled by that statement.” *The universe, just a system, and a pointless one at that?* As a Christian awaiting the second coming of Jesus and the full settlement of the kingdom of God, how would you answer these ideas?

② Every generation of Christians has expected Jesus to return in their time. And some pastors have set dates. But each has failed. What is wrong with time setting?