

The Kingdom of Heaven

by Wayne Goff

Both Jesus and John the Baptist announced that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand in their lifetime. But when did it begin?

At Jesus' Birth?

While perusing a copy of *the Chronological Study Bible* published by Tyndale, I came across this interesting quote in their notes on Matthew 3:2:

"Matt 3:2 The Kingdom of Heaven began when God himself entered human history as a man. Today Jesus Christ reigns in the hearts of believers, but the Kingdom of Heaven will not be fully realized until all evil in the world is judged and removed. Christ came to earth first as a suffering servant; he will come again as king and judge to rule victoriously over all the earth."

Did the Kingdom of Heaven **begin** when Jesus came into the world? We know it had not come when Jesus began His earthly ministry because both He and John proclaimed that it was "*at hand*." Furthermore, we know that it had not yet come *immediately after* the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, because His disciples asked if He would *restore* it (Acts 1:6).

So **when** did the Kingdom of Heaven begin?

At Pentecost, Acts 2

We know the Kingdom of Heaven had its beginning in Acts 2 when the apostles preached the Gospel to the Jewish nation gathered in Jerusalem. Upon proclaiming that the Jews had crucified Jesus Christ, the Son of God, those who believed the message asked what they could do to be saved? Peter and the other apostles told them that they must repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Those who gladly received this message were baptized, and about 3,000 souls were added to the Kingdom of Heaven, or the church (Acts 2:41-47).

Now the argument centers around whether or not the Lord's church which began on Pentecost is the same as the Kingdom of Heaven. We know that it is because of what Jesus said about it in Matthew 16:18-19. Upon Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus promised to build His church. In the same breath, Jesus promised to give the apostles the "*keys of the kingdom of heaven*" so that whatever had been bound or loosed in heaven would be bound or loosed on earth! The apostles took those "*keys*" (**authority**) and opened the door of the church with their very first sermon after the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Since the keys of the kingdom opened the door to the Lord's church, we know they are one and the same. Jesus considered the terms synonymous, and so must we.

Kingdom of Heaven Fully Realized?

The comment in the Study Bible went on to say that the Kingdom of Heaven will not be fully realized until all the evil in the world is judged and removed. This is based upon the premillennial concept of an earthly kingdom where Jesus reigns upon the earth for a thousand years. In fact, the comment went on to say that Jesus "*will come again as king and judge to rule victoriously over all the earth*."

The apostles taught that God raised up Jesus Christ from the dead to be both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). Therefore, since He is raised up from the dead, then He is already **King (Christ)** and **Judge (Lord)**! The apostle Paul wrote that Christians have been "*conveyed into the kingdom of the Son of His love*" (Col. 1:13). So the kingdom must be in place already. And finally, when Jesus comes back the second time, it will be "*the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power*" (1 Cor. 15:24)!

The Kingdom of Heaven is in full operation now, Jesus reigns from His heavenly throne, and when He returns the second time, it will be for judgment upon all men, 2 Thess. 1:6-10. Be sure you understand well the time and place of God's kingdom in your life.

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