

Understanding the End Times

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The Day of Judgment

Sequence of Events upon Christ's Return:

1. *Second Coming*: Christ returns in glory, with host of angels, so that every eye will see Him, at a time known only to God. (Lk. 17:24; 2 Thess. 1:7-8).
 2. *Final Resurrection of Believers*: Upon Christ's return, the dead in Christ are raised and, along with believers who are still alive, they "meet the Lord in the clouds." Believers take up and enter into their glorified state. (1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:17).
 3. *Final Judgment*: Immediately after His return, Christ takes up His throne and judges all the nations. The dead are all raised in their bodies to be judged. The "sheep" – glorified believers – are separated out from the judgment, rewarded for their good works, and entered into glory – by virtue of the imputed righteousness of Christ (Rev. 20:15; 13:8); the goats are condemned for their sins. (Mt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15).
 4. *Eternal Punishment / Blessing*: After the final judgment, those condemned in their sins are cast into the lake of fire; justified believers are entered into their reward. (Mt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15).
 5. *Eternal State*: The eternal state begins. Unbelievers enter into eternal, bodily torment. The heavens and earth are regenerated ("born again" – Mt. 19:28). Believers enter with Christ into the eternal glory of the age to come. (Isa. 66:24; Mt. 19:28; Rom. 8:17-23; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 11:15; 21:1ff).
- The return of Christ is the believers' "blessed hope" (Tit. 2:13), to which we look with joy and peace, having nothing to fear from the return of our Savior.

The Kingdom of God

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt. 3:2).

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mk. 1:15).

- What is the “kingdom of God” (also, “kingdom of heaven”)?
 - The Kingdom of God is God’s sovereign reign. The idea of “reign” is primary over the idea of “realm”.
 - While God reigns eternally, the entry of sin and evil has necessitated the coming of God’s reign.
 - The Kingdom of God is “The supremacy of God in the sphere of saving power, of righteousness, and of blessedness, entered by repentance and saving faith” (Geerhardus Vos).
- The Coming of God’s Kingdom is *the* theme not only of eschatology but of the entire Bible.
- Four statements regarding God’s eternal Kingdom:
 1. God has always possessed the royal right over all His creatures.
 2. God as sovereign Creator has always possessed the power to maintain His royal rights.
 3. God had always maintained His royal rights in heaven.
 4. God has always exercised a royal providence over all things so that everything occurs through and in accordance with His royal decree.

The Kingdom of God

“And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold” (Dan 2:44-45).

- Six statements regarding God’s eschatological (coming) Kingdom:
 1. The Kingdom has come in Christ’s defeat of Satan (Mt. 12:28-29).
 2. The Kingdom has come in the preaching of the gospel (Lk. 16:16; Mt. 11:11-14).
 3. The presence of the King means the presence of the Kingdom (Mt. 21:4; Jn. 18:36).
 4. The preaching of the apostles attests the presence of the Kingdom (Rom 14:17; 1 Cor. 4:19-20).
 5. The enthronement of Christ means the presence of the Kingdom (Acts 2:29-36; Eph. 1:20-23).
 6. The advance of salvation history extends the Kingdom in the lives of the elect and over all creation.
- The Bible’s basic teaching on the Kingdom of God (Daniel 2:31-45)
 1. Human kingdoms will change and develop, gaining in power but diminishing in glory and stability (Dan. 2:36-43).
 2. God’s sovereign intervention (“a stone cut by no human hand” v. 45) will smash the kingdoms of men, so that they topple into ruin.
 3. By His own sovereignty, God will establish His own Kingdom “that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people” (Dan. 2:44).

The Kingdom of God Revealed in Parables

“To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given” (Mt. 13:11).

- Three Kingdom parables in Mt. 13: parables of the sower, of the weeds, of the mustard seed and leaven, of the hidden treasure, of the pearl of great value, and of the net.
- Common emphasis, address the same question: What did Jesus mean by the coming of the Kingdom of God? How could the Kingdom have come if things had not yet been fixed? Answer: “The kingdom of God has come and is present in a form unexpected by the Jews, but that this present form anticipates its future, glorious consummation” (Waldron, 74). The kingdom of God comes in two stages: planting and sowing; growing along with weeds and final harvest; a tree in seed and a tree in bloom.
- *Parable of the Four Soils (Mt. 13:3-9, 19-23)*: Kingdom of God is present in the sowing of the Word of God. Some soils reject the Word (coming of the Kingdom does not mean God’s Word always accepted), good soil accepts it and bears much fruit.
- *Parable of the Weeds (Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43)*: While the Kingdom of God is seeds in the ground, there will be weeds growing also in the garden. (Coming of the Kingdom does not mean immediate destruction of the wicked). The wicked will be destroyed at the Kingdom harvest.
- *Parable of the Dragnet (Mt. 13:47-50)*: During the gospel age, the net will have good and bad fish. At the “close of the age” the evil will be separated from the righteous and cast into hell. (Coming of the Kingdom does not mean evil defeated presently, but assures eventual defeat of evil).
- *Parable of the Treasure and Pearl (Mt. 13:44-46)*: The Kingdom is now present in hidden form. In order to possess the Kingdom, you must sacrifice all else. One cannot seek the treasures of this world and also the treasures of the Kingdom.
- *Parables of the Mustard Seed and Leaven (Mt. 13:31-33)*: Two phase coming of Kingdom. Looks small, but contains divine power for growth; is small, but contains penetrating power to remove all sin. Astonishing growth from small origins. No matter how small the seed, if the true Kingdom seed it will become great.

Kingdom of God in the Parables

Kingdom of God Now

- Sowing the Word
- Wheat and Weeds Together
- Good/Bad Fish Mixed Together
- Hidden in Field/Pearl
- Small, but with great potential

Kingdom of God Then

- Bearing Abundant Fruit
- Weeds burned, Wheat gathered
- Good gathered, bad thrown out
- Revealed in Great Worth
- Great and Mighty

Kingdom of God in the Parables

Kingdom of God Now

- *4 Soils*: Sowing the Word
- *Weeds*: Wheat and Weeds Together
- *Net*: Good/Bad Fish Mixed Together
- *Hidden Treasure / Pearl*: Hidden in Field/Pearl
- *Mustard Seed / Leaven*: Small, but with great potential

How We Serve the Kingdom Now

- Witness/Preach the Gospel
- Cultivate and Grow the Wheat
- Continue to Witness
- Give up the world to gain salvation
- Faithfully minister the gospel and God's Word, with hope and confidence