

LESSON ESSENTIALS

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

LESSON 11: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

As a citizen of a nation, a person reaps benefits from the kingdom, but also has responsibilities to the kingdom. In the kingdom of God, we also reap benefits and have responsibilities. This should be seen as a joy and a privilege.

“And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming”

(1 John 2:28)

There are expectations of citizens of God's Kingdom: we must trust our King, obey Him, abide in Him, and worship Him only

"behold, the Kingdom of God is in the midst of you."

Luke 17:21

In the Bible, the Kingdom of God is described as coming (for example, Acts 28:31) and as having already arrived (for example, Luke 17:21). Some call the kingdom of God the "already, not yet Kingdom." This is not a contradiction in terms. There are two aspects to the Kingdom of God: first, there is the spiritual reality that believers already enjoy because of Christ's appearing. When Christ came, He brought us into the Kingdom by conquering sin and death, and becoming the King over all kings. Second, there is the eternal Kingdom that will be made complete on that Last Day. No one knows when that day will arrive, and so we wait for the coming of the Kingdom of God when we will be in the new heavens and the new earth, experiencing the presence of our great King forever!

Because there is an 'already' aspect to the Kingdom of God, there are benefits that we can expect as citizens of the Kingdom, as well as there are requirements upon us in the Kingdom. Some of the many benefits are that we have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us and as such can live out the fruit of the Spirit; we are now dead to sin and alive to Christ; we are not only citizens of the Kingdom, but children of the King; we protection from our enemies because our King is great; we have a spiritual advocate because our King is also our High Priest; we know the law of the Kingdom, and can live by it, because our King is also our Prophet who has written His Word for us; and so much more.

Some of the requirements that are on us as citizens of the Kingdom are that we must no longer make ourselves available to sin or to our enemy but remain faithful to our King; we must love the King's law and uphold it; we must preach His good news making disciples of all the nations in the Kingdom; we must trust our King, obey Him, abide in Him, and worship Him only; we must love our neighbour as ourselves and pray for our enemies; ultimately, we must act as ambassadors and accurate reflections of our King to the watching world.

In the 'not yet' aspect of the Kingdom of God, there are benefits and requirements as well. Some of the benefits are that we will be eternally in the presence of our King; we will understand fully His plans and His ways; we will be in a place with no crying, no sickness, no pain, and no death; we will see our King's perfect justice finally, and completely, fulfilled; we will finally enter the true and complete Sabbath rest that we have only enjoyed as a shadow in this life; we will be free to work for and to worship our King with none of the barriers or hindrances of this life; we will live under the eternal reign of our King over the new heaven and the new earth; ultimately, we will experience paradise with our King and His people. The requirements of the 'not yet' Kingdom really are to happen in the waiting. The Word says that we are to live in such a way now that we are not ashamed at His appearing; we are to wait with expectation for the arrival of that day. When that day of the fulfillment of the 'not yet' Kingdom comes, however, we will not have requirements upon us that we are in anyway hesitant or rebelliously unwilling to do. No, on that day

we will be compelled to live as our King calls us, freely and with joy, and the requirements will feel like benefits!

When we consider the benefits and requirements of both the 'already' and the 'not yet' Kingdoms, the benefits certainly outweigh the requirements! Our King is great and benevolent. The gifts He gives to His people far surpass the requirements He places on us. His requirements are not burdensome, and yet He even gives us what we need to fulfill His requirements.

It is a privilege to be a citizen of the Kingdom of God. It is a privilege to be a child of the King! Let us, with joy and reverence, serve our King with gladness, now and forevermore!

The Word says that we are to live in such a way now that we are not ashamed at His appearing; we are to wait with expectation for the arrival of that day.

IN REVIEW

- Like any earthly kingdom, the Kingdom of God also has benefits and requirements.
- The Bible clearly lays out how we ought to live as a citizen of the Kingdom of God.
- The Kingdom of God is 'already' and 'not yet'. The spiritual reality of the Kingdom has been accomplished through Christ's appearing on earth and His work on the cross. The eternal reality of the Kingdom will be fully realized on 'that day' when the Lord returns and establishes His Kingdom in the new heaven and the new earth.
- It is a privilege to be a citizen of the Kingdom of God and we ought to live accordingly as His people.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- Which of the benefits of the Kingdom of God do you most enjoy now? Praise the Lord for His goodness to you in that way.

- Which of the requirements of the Kingdom of God is hardest for you to obey? Pray and ask your King to equip you and to enable you to serve His Kingdom in that way with joy.

- Tell someone today about the Kingdom of God. This is a privilege that is too good to keep to yourself. Tell someone who needs to hear the good news how they too can be a citizen of God's Kingdom.

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