

Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About the New Testament
Living the Message 2021-2022
November 2021 Study Guide for Participants and Facilitators

November Question: “What Is the Kingdom of God, and Why Does Jesus Talk about it so Much?”

[Click here to watch the video.](#)

Focus Statement and Summary

The “kingdom of God” or the “kingdom of heaven” is arguably the most prolific proclamation and purpose of Jesus in the first three books of the New Testament. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, known as the *synoptic gospels* for their similar exposition of Jesus, all point to Jesus as the one who reveals and bestows God’s “kingdom.” In this session, we explore what the Kingdom of God is, how it is communicated, and where and when it is revealed, made known, and enacted.

Opening Prayer

Dear God, show us your kingdom, your reign, in Jesus Christ. Teach us to see it, to live in it, to enact it, and to take hope and faith in it now and into eternity, that we are held in all its wonder, power, and love. Amen.

Opening Questions

In all three of the synoptic gospels Jesus proclaims his being and purpose and mission as the kingdom of God brought near. See Mark 1:15: *“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”*

- How have you thought about the “Kingdom of God/Heaven”? What is it? Where is it? How is it made known?
- Has what you thought about heaven changed throughout your life?

Further Questions

In the main presentation, Pastor Ruud suggests that the kingdom of God/heaven may best be described as God’s action, will, and witness to the world in Jesus Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, often giving us a vision, hope, and purpose for our lives now and hoped for into the future.

- How are you a part of God’s kingdom?
- How are we collectively a part of God’s kingdom?
- How does this idea of the kingdom of heaven challenge us in our lives?
- How does it bring hope and comfort in the gift of God’s love transcending above all things?
- Please share (or think about) a time when you felt the kingdom of God fully alive in your life.

Going Deeper into the Word

After the main presentation, Pastor Lose takes a “Deeper Dive” into this lesson through parables found in the three synoptic Gospels. He reminds us that the kingdom of God is not so much a place, rather it is how God reigns... however and wherever we are brought into the presence of God. He speaks about how the kingdom of God is discussed most often in the parables Jesus taught, often in surprising ways. We are so often entrenched in the kingdom of the *world* that Jesus uses parables to help us wrestle with and call into question our values of what this world is and what it should be. Read aloud the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31-45) and wrestle with these questions--either in your personal study or with your small group.

- What do you notice? What surprises you?
- This is one of Jesus’ better known parables, in part because of how stark it can seem. How have you heard it interpreted? How does the presentation affirm, extend, or challenge that interpretation?
- What does this parable say about what this world is--about what it could be?
- How does this parable help shape our behavior and experience the presence of God?

³¹“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.

³⁴Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’

³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ ⁴⁰And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’

⁴¹Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴²for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’

⁴⁴Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ ⁴⁵Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’

Closing Question

- What is one way you can actively participate in bringing the kingdom of God to this world this week?

Closing Prayer

Holy and gracious God, we praise you because in Jesus you reveal and gift us with your kingdom, here and now, and yet to come. In Jesus you enact your reign of love in our lives. In Jesus you make us bearers of your heavenly realm of compassion, forgiveness, goodness, and mercy. Continue to inspire and direct us in love toward our neighbors and ourselves for the sake of your work on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.