

**Mark 1:14-20 NASB**  
**“How near is God’s kingdom?”**

“Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’

“<sup>16</sup>As He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup>And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.’ <sup>18</sup> Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. <sup>19</sup> Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. <sup>20</sup> Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.”

**Except when folks talk of Jesus’ Second Coming, you hear little about God’s kingdom.**

**It’s odd that preachers don’t talk much about the kingdom, because Jesus spoke often of it.**

- **In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus used the term “kingdom” at least 50 times; in *Luke*, 44 times.**
- **In all the Gospels, it appears about 120 times.**

**Can you guess how many times the word “church” occurs in the Gospels?**

**Only three times in the Gospels, does the word “church” appear.**

**How important did Jesus consider the Kingdom?**

**Some time ago, while Norma was fixing our evening meal, I was fixated watching newscasters tell about the U.S. economy.**

Suddenly I heard Norma’s voice above the news din.

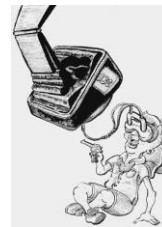
**The unusual irritation in her tone got my attention:**

**“I’ve asked you twice, if you’d put water on the table and you haven’t answered me. Are we going to have to get you a hearing aid?”**

**She was “happily” filling the water glasses.**

**Norma mentioned water twice and considered it important.**

If she’d had to say it 120 times, she might have looked for a new husband.



**Jesus and the *New Testament* writers used the term *Kingdom* more than 150 times and *kingdom* appears numerous times in the *Old Testament*.**

**In Mark 9, Jesus stated: “Some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.”<sup>1</sup>**

---

<sup>1</sup> Mark 9:1 NIV

### What did Jesus mean?

**Some accuse Jesus of being badly mistaken.**

They scoff: **“We don’t see God’s kingdom anywhere. We see only war, greed, cheating, sexual excess, and lawlessness. We see no evidence of God’s kingdom.”**

Concerning Jesus’ statements that the kingdom is “at hand” and will come with power, others scratch their heads.



King Louis XI of France

**Critics see the problem this way:**

- About 27 AD, Jesus told his disciples that the kingdom would come during the lifetime of some of them, and that the kingdom would arrive with power.
- Most see no kingdom; goodness seems absent.

### Are the scoffers right?

**In the battle between good and evil, evil seems to win big-time.**

**Suppose I call some of my contemporaries; we put on our old helmets, cleats, and pads and we challenge the Chiefs or 49ers to a game.**

Imagine that by some miracle, one of those championship teams accepts our challenge.

**You know the “game” would be laughably, dreadfully lopsided.**

**If we survived, our offense would register only negative yardage; our defense, no stops.**

Good seems to always lose that badly to evil.

**If good triumphs, it’s always short-lived.**

**Was Jesus mistaken?**

**How could he miss so badly?**

“An astrologer correctly predicted that a lady in King Louis XI’s court would die within eight days. The King a devout believer in astrology, was duly impressed.

But the king was convinced that the too accurate prophet was dangerous, so he plotted to have the man killed. ‘You claim to understand astrology and to know the fate of others,’ Louis said to the astrologer as he was being restrained. ‘Any last prediction about your own life?’

**‘I shall die three days before Your Majesty,’** answered the astrologer. The king decided not to execute him.”<sup>2</sup>

Whether they predict accurately or not, the Lord warns us about consulting astrologers or reading horoscopes.

**Was that astrologer more accurate than Jesus?**

**Jesus predicted that within the lifetimes of his contemporaries, his kingdom would come with power.**

<sup>2</sup> Louis XI (1423-1483), French king, The Ultimate Reference Book, p - 310

“If the kingdom came, where is it?” many ask.

“If Jesus meant that good would prevail in the world, that hasn’t happened,” they reason.

“If Jesus meant that the end would come and he’d take his followers to heaven, that hasn’t happened either.”

Let’s review some truths about God’s kingdom.



Jonas Salk

But after Drs. Salk and Sabin invented and perfected polio vaccinations, polio rarely occurs in this country.

In a sense, because those who are vaccinated have little to fear, the doctors cast out polio. Drs. Salk, Sabin, and associates ended polio’s reign of dread.

1. First, Jesus spoke of the kingdom in more than one way.

A) He spoke of the kingdom as a present reality. In *Matthew 12*, Jesus discussed what it meant if he could cast evil spirits out of troubled people.<sup>3</sup>

“If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, Jesus said: then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”<sup>4</sup>

The fact that Jesus could cast out evil spirits signaled that God’s kingdom had arrived.

In the 1940s & 50s, two of my older siblings were stricken with polio—a disease that once permanently crippled many people.

Back then, folks feared polio as much as people fear cancer now.

In the same way, Jesus’ ability to cast out demons ended their domination:

“If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

During his stay here, Jesus spoke of the kingdom as a present reality because he overcame Satan, king of evil and all his reps.

Jesus accomplished that by fully complying with God’s will and his Spirit.

B) Yet in *Matthew 25*, Jesus spoke of the kingdom as something in the future, which comes after the Judgment:

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

<sup>3</sup> Some other time, we’ll talk about what those demons were.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 12:28 NIV

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.’”<sup>5</sup>

**Here, Jesus spoke about the kingdom as something we inherit at his return—in the future.**

**So which is it?**

**Is the kingdom a present reality or does it begin in heaven after the Judgment?**

**2. In Luke 13:19, Jesus compared the kingdom to a mustard seed.**

**You are familiar with seeds.**

**Compared to the plants that sprout from them, seeds are tiny.**

When I was a boy in Oregon, water ran down a ditch near the road in front of our house.

The area had many springs and in Oregon, it rains a lot. Water ran in that ditch year-round.

Someone gave my mother a willow sprig and she asked me to set it out.

I first planted the sprig about a foot from that ditch. It began to grow. Later, my dad advised me to move it because he could foresee



Daughters Steph and Jan, while young, sitting on branches cut from the willow tree that grew from a sprig that Bob planted when he was a boy.

how big it would grow.

I replanted that little willow sprig in the back yard about fifty feet from the house. That sprig became a huge tree that often needed trimming. We have pictures of family members standing near it. Our kids played under the tree that dominated the back yard. They enjoyed posing on trimmed branches.

**When that willow sprig became a tree, I’m not sure.**

**But every botanist, farmer and gardener knows:**

**The cells of that sprig contained the necessary elements for it to become a giant tree.**

**When Jesus came to the earth, he brought the seed and the sprig of God’s kingdom.**

**The Kingdom won’t be full-grown until God’s people are numerically complete on the last day.**

**Yet the kingdom’s full potential was present in Jesus because he fully complied with God’s will.**

**Where is the kingdom now?**

**People asked Jesus the same question.**

**Jesus told us in Luke 17:20, 21 (Williams Translation):** “Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come . . .”

“Jesus replied, “The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, “Here it is,” or “There it is . . .””

<sup>5</sup> Verses 31-35 NIV



You won't be able to measure the Kingdom or say it ranges from the "Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea," or from the "Atlantic to the Pacific."

**"Why not," you ask.**

**Because "the kingdom of God is within you."  
If Jesus manages your life, his kingdom is in you.**

**The question is: "Is the seed of God's kingdom growing and living in you?"**

**3. The kingdom comes when God's Spirit and his word control us as Jesus modeled for us. The church is supposed to be the kingdom.<sup>6</sup>**

**Yet church people too often don't allow God's Spirit and Word to control them.**

Too many of us want to control others.

A church usher was instructing a young successor in the details of his office. "And remember, my boy," he concluded, "that we have nothing but good kind Christians in this church until you try to seat someone else in their pew."



Get out of my pew!

**Churches should consist of caring, forgiving folks, who are ruled by God's word and Spirit.**

**Too often they aren't.**

If religious leaders in Rome, Nashville, Wheaton, Salt Lake City, Brooklyn or anywhere else modify God's Word and you live by what they say, please heed Jesus' warning: **Matthew 15:8, 9 NLT:**

"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God."

**Want Bible evidence that God's kingdom already exists? To the church in Colossae, Paul wrote:**

**"He has saved us from the kingdom of darkness. He has brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves," Colossians 1:13 NIRV.**

**Kingdom people also look forward to being raised from the dead as Christ was:**

"By the power that enables him (Christ) to bring everything under his control, he will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body," **Philippians 3:21.**

**Just as Jesus said, God's kingdom has come with forgiving, death-conquering power. If Christ rules you, you share in God's growing eternal kingdom.**

Robert Blair  
PO Box 176  
Cleghorn, IA 51014 [www.robertblairbooks.com](http://www.robertblairbooks.com)

<sup>6</sup> See Matthew 16:16-19