

SEVEN PROOFS

God's Kingdom Is *Not* Here Yet

Is the Kingdom of God on Earth today, set up in the “hearts of men?” Is God using His Church to spread His Kingdom, through brotherly love and good works, until it reaches every nation? The Bible teaching is plain. Here is the vital truth of this commonly misunderstood doctrine!

BY DAVID C. PACK

MANY PROFESSING Christians misread Luke 17:21 and Colossians 1:13 and conclude that the Kingdom of God is here with us now, either in the form of the Church or “in the hearts of men.” They then conclude that it is their “Christian duty” to spread it worldwide, through brotherly love, tolerance, and so forth.

As sincere as this belief may be, it does not come from the Bible. It does not come from the mind of God. Instead, it comes from the minds of carnal men (Mark 7:6-8; Rom. 1:22, 25, 8:7), as influenced and misguided by the “god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4; Rev. 12:9), and his servants. “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” II Cor. 11:13-15).

So, how did people jump to this false conclusion?

First, they don't let the Bible interpret itself. Instead of heeding II Peter 1:20, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private inter-

pretation,” they assign their own preconceived ideas to Scripture. Also, they don't allow the Bible to teach, reprove, correct or instruct them (II Tim. 3:16-17).

Second, they limit their understanding on a subject by reading only one or two verses, taking them out of context. They also ignore many other verses that would give the “big picture” of what the Bible actually teaches. To understand the Bible on any doctrine, you must search all the scriptures on the subject. No single verse, chapter or book is enough to capture the entire meaning and understanding of any subject. Isaiah 28:9-10 states, “Whom will He teach knowledge? And...make to understand the message?...For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.” In a sense, God designed the Bible to be like a jigsaw puzzle: You must always piece together all related verses found throughout the Bible to get the “big picture.”

Here are seven proofs that God's Kingdom is not on Earth now.

One: Is the Kingdom Within You?

In Luke 17:20-21 Christ said, “The kingdom of God comes not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! Or, lo there! For, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” Many read this verse and conclude, “Aha! God's Kingdom is within me.” But is that what the verse really says?

To whom was Christ speaking? The first part of verse 20 gives the answer: “And when He was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said...” Christ was talking to the Pharisees—not to His disciples! The Pharisees asked Him, “When will your kingdom come?”

Here's Christ's answer: “The kingdom of God is within you.” Could Christ have meant that His Kingdom was within the Pharisees—men He called “hypocrites” and “blind guides,” who “omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith,” who were “full of extortion and excess,” who were like “whited sepulchers [whitewashed tombs], which appeared beautiful outward, but... within [were] full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness” (Matt. 23:21, 23-27)?

Of course not!

Careful study will show you that the phrase “within you” is a mistranslation. The New King James margin says, “in your midst.” The New English Bible says, “is among you.” The Revised Standard Version says, “in the midst of you.” Christ was telling these carnal men that His Kingdom was in their presence.

How could this be?

Christ was referring to Himself. As the only “true citizen” (see point Five), with the Spirit of God inside Him, He alone represented God's Kingdom—His government. While Jesus was a flesh and

blood man, He was also the Messiah, born to become a king. He never sinned or went against His Father's will. He was the perfect representative of God's government.

Two: Defining a Kingdom

All kingdoms must consist of four parts: territory, a king (or ruler), subjects, and laws.

If God's Kingdom is already here, whether as the Church or in the "hearts of men," then the entire Earth would be under its rule. "And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and His name one" (Zech. 14:9).

If God's Kingdom is already here, Christ, its King, would be sitting on David's throne (Isa. 9:6-7), ruling from Jerusalem. "Thus says the LORD; I am

Three: Can You See the Kingdom?

In John 3:3, Christ told Nicodemus, a Pharisee, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Confused, Nicodemus replied, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered...Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (vs. 4-5). To see and enter God's Kingdom, you must become like spirit. But people are physical. They cannot enter the Kingdom because "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 15:50)!

Christ further explained in John 3:8 that Spirit is like wind—it is invisible. You cannot see it. But human beings are flesh and blood, and can be seen.

The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end."

Watch the TV news, read national news magazines and newspapers. Is this world enjoying peace? Do you believe the Father would allow murders, rapes, child molestation, riots, and wars under His divine rulership administered by Christ?

No! Obviously, God is not yet ruling His Kingdom on Earth today.

Five: What About Colossians 1:13?

Many Bible commentaries cite Colossians 1:13—"Who [the Father] has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son"—to "prove" that God's Kingdom is here now among men. Here are some examples:

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returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth" (Zech. 8:3). *Jerusalem* means "City of Peace." Yet today it is one of the most chaotic, terrorized, war-torn cities on this planet! Obviously, Christ is not ruling from there today.

If God's Kingdom is already here, His subjects (all mankind) would live under Christ's loving, yet authoritative rule. "And He shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Rev. 2:27). Even Gentile nations such as Egypt will be required to obey Him—or suffer the consequences (Zech. 14:16-19). This is not the case today.

If God's Kingdom is already here, His laws would be known by every man, woman and child throughout the Earth. All people would at least be moving toward obedience. No one would be able to claim ignorance of God's commandments, statutes and judgments (Isa. 30:21; Jer. 31:34). This has not yet happened.

Also, those who are "born again" shall resemble Christ (I John 3:2). No physical man looks like Him as He is in heaven today: "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters...and His countenance was as the sun shines in [its] strength" (Rev. 1:13-17). Do you know of anyone who looks and sounds like this now?

We should also consider that God's servants being "born again" won't happen until Christ returns to sit on the throne of David (I Cor. 15:23). If this had already occurred, the whole world would know it. No one could possibly miss such an event.

Four: World Peace Now?

Isaiah 9:6-7 says of God the Father, "The government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God,

■ "Nor is the kingdom to be interpreted in a territorial sense. That is to say, it is not an area that may be designated on a map; it is the sovereign rule of the Lord Christ over human hearts" (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*).

■ "He [God] has thoroughly changed our state, brought us out of the dark region of vice and impiety, and placed us in the kingdom under the government of his dear Son" (*Clarke's Commentary*).

■ "The idea that Paul understands the kingdom in the eschatological sense, and that the aorist 'transferred' is prophetic, is untenable. For this kingdom goes back to Adam and is now present wherever the gospel power rules" (*Commentary on the New Testament*).

■ "[God has] brought us into the gospel-state, and made us members of the church of Christ, which is a state of light and purity" (*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*).

■ "...the age to come has come. What was future has begun to be pres-

ent. The two ages, so to speak, overlap. While the world apart from Christ is still under the sway of the powers of darkness, for those who are 'in Christ' the new age is already here. The night is past and the dawn has come" (*The Abingdon Bible Commentary*).

As you can see, rather than simply letting the Bible interpret itself, these writers relied on their own interpretation. As a result, they have kept themselves from understanding the plain and true meaning behind Colossians 1:13.

Just what is the "power of darkness" that God delivers His people from? Acts 26:17-18 sheds some light: "...delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send you, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God..." Satan and his demons rule this Earth today. This is why Paul wrote that Christians do not "wrestle...against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world" (Eph. 6:12). It's also why Christ said, "My kingdom [government] is not of this world: if [it] were...then would My servants fight...but now is My kingdom not from here" (John 18:36). When God delivers His people from the "powers of darkness," He calls them out of this world (II Cor. 6:17), out of its Satan-inspired (Eph. 2:2-3) system and ways of life—its government. And He "has translated [margin: transferred] us into the kingdom [government] of His dear Son." God delivers His servants from the government, laws and ways of Satan to His government at conversion.

Christians are citizens of God's Kingdom, though it isn't here. For example: You are an American traveling abroad. Though you are not in the United States, you are still an American citizen. Your citizenship is in America. In the same way, a Christian's citizenship is in heaven, though he does not live there. "For our conversation [greek: *citizenship*] is in heaven; from where also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20).

Now consider Romans 4:17 as it speaks of Abraham: "God, who quickens [gives life to] the dead, and calls those things which be not [do not exist] as though they were..." When God said

to Abraham, "A father of many nations have I made you" (Gen. 17:5), Isaac was not even born until a year later (compare 17:1-5 with 21:5). His offspring did not grow into a single nation until hundreds of years later in Egypt! God knew that their descendants would become prosperous nations centuries later. Since nothing can stop God from fulfilling His plans, to Him they are as good as done. Though His people are not yet born into His Kingdom, He knows that they will be. Nothing can stop this from occurring. In His mind, it is as good as done.

Six: Why Pray Thy Kingdom Come?

If the Kingdom is here now, either as the Church or "in the hearts of men," why would Christ command His servants to continually pray, "thy kingdom come" (Matt. 6:9-10; Luke 11:2)? If at least the beginnings of the Kingdom were here, or if the Church is the Kingdom, wouldn't Christ have commanded His followers to pray "thy kingdom grow and spread?"

Seven: Why Seek the Kingdom?

If God's Kingdom is here now, why would Christ tell His followers, "But seek you first the kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:33)? If church members are already in the Kingdom, why seek it? Again, would not Christ have told them to "first spread the kingdom?"

The Great Domino Effect

The Bible says Satan is the "god of this world." He rules it. He deceives it (II Cor. 4:4; Rev. 12:9). And his mission is to deceive *you*. He knows that if he can indoctrinate you with just *one* false teaching—heresy—it will soon lead you to believe *other* heresies.

The devil knows that if he can convince you that God's Kingdom is here now, then, you'll reason, you must be "born again." And if you are "born again," you must be "saved." If you are "saved," you cannot sin. If you cannot sin and break God's law (I John 3:4), you do not need to keep the law. This is wrong understanding.

If you do not keep God's law—which defines His way of life (Rom. 13:10)—then you will no longer be a Christian. Christ said: "Abide in Me, and I in you.

As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in Me. I am the Vine, you are the branches: he that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing. If a man abides not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned... As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you: continue you in My love. If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love... You are My friends, if you do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:4-6, 9, 10, 14).

God's Word says that sin is like leavening—it spreads. "Know you not that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" (I Cor. 4:6). And since heresy is sin, just one false teaching is enough to poison your entire biblical understanding.

This is exactly what Satan, your enemy, seeks!

Carefully examine the Bible for *everything* it says on *every* subject. Let the Bible interpret itself. Only then will you grow in true biblical understanding. □

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