

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

We are continuing our series on the Holy Spirit and today we will be examining the Holy Spirit's involvement in the 'rule' and 'reign' of God's kingdom. Romans 14:16-18 says, ***"Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men."*** In the four Gospels, Jesus referred to the "kingdom of God" or the "kingdom of heaven" 106 times, therefore, it must be important that we gain insight into the operations and governance of God's kingdom.

Note, this is the only place in the book of Romans where Paul uses the word "kingdom." However, he uses it elsewhere, hence we know what he means by "kingdom of God." Primarily, the "kingdom of God" is to do with the 'reign' or 'rule' of a sovereign God. It is not a place, as most people tend to believe, but a realm! You can see that here; when the Holy Spirit brings about righteousness, peace and joy, the kingdom (that is, the *reign* or *rule* of God) is being manifested. The "kingdom of God" also refers to God's saving reign, and not to His total providence over all things. In one sense God does reign over all creation. So you could call everything "God's kingdom," but that is clearly not the way Paul uses the term. The "kingdom of God" is God's redemptive reign. His saving reign! When Jesus said to pray, ***"Hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"*** (Matthew 6:9-10), He meant that the coming of "the kingdom" would be the extent of God's sovereign rule, where His name is hallowed and His will is done the way angels do it - obediently and joyfully. So the "kingdom of God" speaks of God's supremacy in a particular realm. It is His saving, redeeming governance which brings about the hallowing of His name and the joyful doing of His will. Quite simply, "the kingdom" displays God's absolute sovereignty.

However, ***“The kingdom of God is ... righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”*** This means that the Holy Spirit is manifesting these attributes right now! He is continually working in us to make us more righteous, more peaceable, and more joyful. In other words, the working of the Holy Spirit and the advancing of the “kingdom of God” are one and the same thing. Why? Because He is the One who brings about God’s sovereign rule and dominion, and thanks to Him, the gates of hell cannot prevail against the church. This is exactly what we found in the ministry of Jesus. For example, in Matthew 12:28, Jesus said, ***“If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”*** Therefore, the work of the Spirit is confirmation of the presence of the kingdom of God, or to say it another way, the **reign** or **rule** of God is exercised exclusively through His Spirit. He is God, the third person of the Trinity. Without the Spirit the kingdom of God cannot function or even exist. The two are inseparable!

When the Lord Jesus appeared to His disciples over a period of forty days following His resurrection, He spoke about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). As already mentioned, this is no surprise, since Jesus spoke about “the kingdom” all the time, from the beginning of His ministry until the end. But then Luke states, *“On one occasion...”*, meaning, *“On one occasion when He spoke about the kingdom of God...”* He goes on to write that Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promised gift of the Father, the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5). This was definitely one of those occasions when Jesus spoke about the kingdom of God and its rule or reign in the lives of believers. We know this not only from the context that precedes these verses, but also from what follows them. When they met together with Jesus, after He had said this, they asked Him if He was going to restore the kingdom to Israel at that time (Acts 1:6). This is because they heard what He had said about waiting in Jerusalem and being baptised with the Holy Spirit.

The disciples assumed that Jesus was talking about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel with them reigning in power on earth with Him. ***“So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, ‘Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”*** (Acts 1:6-8)

His reply to their question was also very interesting. He did not say that the event they referred to would never happen. He simply told them that it was not for them to know when these things would happen, because they were among the times and dates the Father has set by His own authority. Then He told them that they would receive **power** when the Holy Spirit came upon them so that they could be witnesses in Jerusalem and all over the earth. Therefore, it’s clear from this passage that the “power of the Holy Spirit” is definitely an essential component in the kingdom of God. Without the Spirit’s power the kingdom could not advance!

Notice, this was one of those occasions when Jesus spoke about the kingdom of God, and specifically He was speaking to them about the “baptism” in the Holy Spirit. When we are baptised in the Holy Spirit, we receive **power** to be witnesses for Jesus, as well as live a holy life and do God’s will. What’s more, the Spirit is continually working in us to make us more righteous, more peaceable, and more joyful. That is what the kingdom of God is about; it is His sovereign rule (in us) impacting on the lives of other people! It’s impossible for the kingdom of God to advance in any other way. It happens only by the power of the Holy Spirit. ***“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the Lord of hosts.*** (Zechariah. 4:6)

The “kingdom of God” is not food and drink. It is righteousness, peace, and joy which come by the powerful working of the Holy Spirit in us. Anyone who serves Christ in this way - who depends entirely on the function of the Spirit for everything - pleases God and manifests “the kingdom” in his or her own life, thus extending God’s rule in the world. Ephesians 3:20 declares, **“Now all glory to God, who is able, through His mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.”** His mighty power at work in us is the Spirit establishing and manifesting God’s kingdom. When this transpires, infinitely more than we may ask or think is accomplished.

From what we’ve learnt today, we can safely conclude that the kingdom is manifest in and by the Holy Spirit. So how do we cooperate with God’s Spirit to advance the kingdom? Starting point:

1. Recognise the Holy Spirit is already at work in your life, in your community and in all the spheres of society.
2. Recognise that all Christians are individually gifted by the Holy Spirit to advance the Kingdom into their own world (sphere of influence).
3. Recognise that the workings of the Holy Spirit in bringing the kingdom will be expressed in a great variety of ways. He is called the Spirit of truth, justice, life, grace and supplication, conviction. So don’t restrict Him with your own perceptions or observations.

Personal application:

1. Holy Spirit wants to be involved in every aspect of your life as He was in the life of Jesus – birth, baptism, temptation and ministry. He wants to bring the kingdom rule everywhere you go!

2. Holy Spirit will take you into uncharted, challenging areas – Ethiopian leader (Acts 8:29), Ananias (Acts 9:10), Cornelius (Acts 10:19). So be bold and learn to trust His promptings.
3. When the Holy Spirit speaks you have to take immediate “action” to see the kingdom’s rule established. The kingdom of God is now! It will expressed itself through what is happening at this very moment. The Holy Spirit is spontaneous, and therefore, so is the manifestation of God’s kingdom.

Remember, as the Holy Spirit establishes God’s sovereign rule in your life, He will establish the sovereignty of God everywhere else. This is the way God has chosen to display His might and power to a lost and dying world. For more miracles and greater demonstration of God’s supreme authority to materialise, the ‘realm’ of the kingdom of God must manifest first. For when it does, so too does the “presence” of God’s Spirit. We need more of the manifest presence of the Spirit of God! Now, far more than ever!

Holy Spirit come.... We need you more than ever! Reign in us! Bring about the “rule” of the kingdom of God and let it permeate into every area of our lives. We surrender to you....