

Episode #425 Kingdom Problem Passages 1 – Has the Kingdom Come?

I. We have established our belief that the Kingdom of God is the theme of the Bible. The Greek word *basilea*, usually translated “kingdom,” means “government,” and the kingdom of God is nothing more nor less than God’s government over this earth and all people living upon it. Yet there are some passages that would seem to contradict that conclusion that many point to. We will now examine these passages and see if they really point to another meaning of the kingdom.

II. Matthew 12:28. The Kingdom of God has come!

A. We will examine the background of this statement.

1. Verses 22-23. The occasion of this statement was the Lord casting a demon out of a man who was blind and mute as a cause of being possessed by it.
2. Verse 24. The Pharisees are jealous of the Lord’s power, and so accuse Him of casting out demons by Satan, rather than by the power of God!
3. Verses 25-26. The Lord makes this excellent argument to show how bankrupt their reasoning was.
4. Verse 27. The Pharisees had their own representatives who cast out demons. The Lord points out their hypocrisy.
5. Verse 28. This is the verse that many use to attempt to show that the kingdom had already come upon these Pharisees, and the way it is translated, it appears to be saying that.

B. This could be true, if we take it as meaning that the King of that kingdom, the Governor of that Government, was already there with them. But let us look deeper.

C. The Greek word for “come” here is an unusual one, is only used seven times in the New Testament, and usually is not translated “come.” The Greek is *phthano*, Strong’s Concordance: “to come before, precede, anticipate.”

1. See I Thessalonians 4:15. Here, the word “precede” is the word *phthano*, the same word that is “come” in Matthew 12:28.
2. Paul explains that those who are alive and remain when Christ’s parousia occurs will by no means go out to meet Him before those who are asleep (have died). Instead, those who are dead shall rise to meet Him first, and then those who are alive will follow them.
3. If we read this meaning into Matthew 12:28, we would make it that “the kingdom of God has preceded upon you.”

D. Acts 1:6-8. The Lord does not tell the disciples that the Kingdom is already present with them. He admits it is still a future event.

E. If we use the example of I Thessalonians 4, the kingdom had gone out before them, and it would meet them (or they would meet it) later. Yet how had the kingdom gone out before them? How had it “preceded upon them”?

1. I believe that there is only one explanation that will fit. The kingdom had, in fact, been previewed before them. The kingdom had actually passed before them in review when they saw a Kingdom miracle: the casting out of the demon. Otis Sellers suggests that this means that the kingdom of God had taken a “step in advance” towards them, which is pretty much the same idea.
2. In the kingdom of God, the power of Satan will be crushed, and his forces will be cast out of the many places in the world into which they have maneuvered themselves. Thus, by them seeing Him cast out a demon, the kingdom had

taken a step in advance toward them, giving them a preview of what it will be like when they meet it later. This does not teach the kingdom of God had already come upon these Pharisees!

III. Matthew 11:12. The Kingdom Suffers Violence!

- A. This is a strange verse that makes little sense regarding the Kingdom.
- B. An examination of the Greek yields little help. The idea of suffering violence seems to be just that, with the idea of being taken by storm or by force implied. The Greek word for violence is *biazo*, and violent is *biastes*. The violent seize upon it eagerly.
- C. Is this seizing good or bad? Most Bible versions are non-committal. A few translate it negatively with the idea that they try to force themselves into it. Others suggested that they eagerly seized upon it as upon a prize, which would seem to be a good thing.
- D. Luke 16:16 might shed a little light on the difficulty. “Is pressing” is the same Greek word as “suffers violence” in Matthew 11:12. Thus, the violence that the kingdom of God was facing was that of men who were pressing themselves into it.
- E. Possible explanation: Many in Israel were coming upon this truth of the kingdom of God. It was forced upon their attention through the miracles and signs that the Lord and His disciples worked. Yet those who saw these things had to make a determined and forceful move of their own in order to gain access to the kingdom. In the future when the kingdom comes to earth in its full manifestation, men will not have to do anything to be brought under it, for it will simply take over. In Christ’s day men had to make their own, determined decision in order to become a part of that government.
- F. At any rate, this passage, though strange, provides no real obstacle to the contention that the kingdom of God is the government of God upon earth.

IV. We have two more passages to examine.

- A. Luke 17:20-21. The kingdom of God is within you.
- B. Romans 14:16-17. The kingdom of God is...righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
- C. We will examine these passages in turn in our next program.

V. Conclusion: Matthew 12:28 does not teach that the government of God was already present as Christ was talking to the Pharisees, but rather indicates that it had taken a step in advance towards them, and they had a preview of it in the miracle they had seen. Matthew 11:12 indicates that people at the time had to make a decisive, determined decision in order to enter God’s government at that time. Neither of these passages, however, would teach us that God’s kingdom is not His government on and over the earth.