



## Questionary series: jesus and the kingdom of god

(edition: December 19, 2024)

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Mark 1.<sup>14-15</sup> & Matthew 4.<sup>17</sup>— Jesus and the kingdom of God (questionary 1)

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<sup>14</sup>Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.”

<sup>17</sup>From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Jesus speaks of kingdom of God<sup>1</sup> some forty times in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus’ announcement of the kingdom were Jesus’ first words as recorded in the Gospel of Mark. In the idea of God’s kingdom, Jesus found a primary and motivational principle and value. It was a central feature of his ministry. In this series of questionnaires entitled, “Jesus and the Kingdom of God,” we examine Jesus’ sayings about the kingdom of God and what he hoped and intended to happen as a consequence of his focus and teachings on God’s kingdom. This questionnaire is the first in this series.

1. In introducing Jesus’ ministry, Mark characterizes Jesus as “preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.” We might translate, “preaching the positive proclamation about God’s kingdom.” Matthew not only introduces the beginning of Jesus’ ministry as one focused on “heaven’s kingdom,” but says that “*from that time* Jesus began to preach... the kingdom of heaven,” suggesting that the kingdom of God/heaven remained a central feature of Jesus’ teachings and intentions throughout his ministry. We will discuss the meaning and nature of the kingdom of God in this series of questionnaires.
  - ? What does the kingdom of God mean to you and what is its nature?
  - ? How does speaking of “the *rule* of God” impact/ alter/ amplify the way you think of “the *kingdom* of God”?
  - ? How do you think and feel if you think of the kingdom of God as that group or society that adopts God’s rule over them, i.e. accepts and lives by the principles and values by which He, Himself lives and governs?
  - ? What do you think and feel when you consider that the inauguration or establishment of God’s kingdom was at the very heart of Jesus’ ministry and intentions?
  - ? What other principles and intentions do you place at the very heart of Jesus’ ministry?
  - ? How do these other principles and intentions relate to the idea of the inauguration or establishment of God’s kingdom?

(edition: December 1, 2024)

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<sup>1</sup> Where the other Gospel writers speak of the “kingdom of God,” Matthew speaks of the “kingdom of heaven.” It is generally thought that Matthew speaks of the “kingdom of *heaven*” rather than the “kingdom of *God*” out of a disinclination to refer to God directly out of respect for God, much as Jews avoid speaking the name of Yahweh, replacing it with LORD. Therefore Matthew’s “kingdom of heaven” should be understood as being precisely the same as the “the kingdom of God” spoken of elsewhere.

Mark 1.<sup>14-15</sup> & Matthew 4.<sup>17</sup>— Jesus and the kingdom of God (questionary 2)

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<sup>14</sup>Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.”

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In our first questionnaire, we suggested that the kingdom of God should be thought of as that group or society that adopts God’s rule over it, i.e. accepts and lives by the principles and values by which He, Himself lives and governs and by which individuals and societies endure.

1. In Jesus’ initial proclamation about God’s kingdom or rule, he announces that “the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand,” or, put differently, “the time has come, and God’s kingdom is imminent” (author’s translation).
  - ? This seems to suggest that the kingdom of God is not something that is far off in time or space, but that it is to be found on earth, not only in heaven, and that it is to be part of earth’s history not of some far-off hereafter.
  - ? How do you feel about this observation? If this does not jive with your view of the kingdom of God, why not? What is your view?
  - ? Did Jesus really hope to change the world, or was he merely hoping to set things up for a life hereafter? Why do you answer as you do?
  - ? To what statements or actions of Jesus would you point to either assert or deny that Jesus hoped and intended to now only save souls in the great beyond but that he hoped and intended to change the world as he found it?
  - ? How are things going with the inauguration or the establishment of God’s kingdom or rule on earth? Why do you answer as you do?
  - ? Is the world any closer to adopting God’s principles and values and living a life consistent with those principles and values than it was in Jesus’ day? Why do you answer as you do?

(*edition: December 1, 2024*)

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Mark 1.<sup>14-15</sup> & Matthew 4.<sup>17</sup>— Jesus and the kingdom of God (questionary 3)

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<sup>14</sup>Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.” [“The time has come, and God’s kingdom is imminent. Transform your views and actively believe this positive proclamation.” author’s translation]

<sup>17</sup>From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

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In introducing Jesus’ ministry, Mark characterizes Jesus as “preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.” We might translate, “preaching the positive proclamation about God’s kingdom.” Matthew not only introduces the beginning of Jesus’ ministry as one focused on “the kingdom of heaven,” but says that “*from that time* Jesus began to preach... the kingdom of heaven,” suggesting that the kingdom of God remained a central feature of Jesus’ teachings and intentions throughout his ministry.

In our first questionnaire, we suggested that the kingdom of God should be thought of as that group or society that adopts God’s rule over it, i.e. accepts and lives by the principles and values by which He, Himself lives and governs and by which individuals and societies endure.

In our second questionnaire, we attempted to show that in proclaiming the kingdom of God Jesus hoped and intended to change this world and the principles and values by which it governed and by which it lived. The kingdom of God on earth was in preparation for a kingdom of God in heaven, but he always intended that life on earth be improved and that the kingdom of God become an experience of human history on earth.

1. In announcing the gospel or good news about God’s kingdom, Jesus suggests two things that he wants his audience to do in response to the announcement.  
? What are those two things?

In the traditional KJV translation, Jesus firsts asks his audience to “repent.” In my translation, Jesus asks his audience to “transform your views.”

- ? What does this suggest about the nature of repentance?
- ? This world has certain “views,” certain values, and certain behaviors and actions that flow from these views/ values. What are some of those views/ values that must change if we are to abide a life after that of God and characterized as “the kingdom of God”?
- ? What are some examples of Jesus’ teachings in which Jesus transforms the views/ values of this world into something entirely new and thus make it possible to inaugurate the kingdom of God?

Jesus’ second request is that his audience “believe the gospel,” or “believe this positive proclamation”

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that the time has arrived, and the kingdom of God is imminent.

- ? How difficult or easy to believe that the world can be transformed into something entirely new and godly?
- ? What is meant by “imminent”?
- ? What is the status of the kingdom of God today?
- ? What do you do with the difference that seems to exist between Jesus’ expectation of an imminent change and the realities of a largely unchanged world as we have it today?
- ? What role do you play today in being part of a transformed world and the inauguration of God’s kingdom?
- ? What can you do to carry out that role?

*(edition: December 1, 2024)*

## Matthew 4.<sup>23</sup>; 9.<sup>35</sup> & Luke 4.<sup>43</sup>— Jesus and the kingdom of God (questionary 4)

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<sup>23</sup>And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

<sup>35</sup>And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

<sup>43</sup>And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent.

Jesus speaks of kingdom of God<sup>1</sup> some forty times in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus' announcement of the kingdom were Jesus' first words as recorded in the Gospel of Mark. In the idea of God's kingdom, Jesus found a primary and motivational principle and value. It was a central feature of his ministry. In this series of questionnaires entitled, "Jesus and the Kingdom of God," we examine Jesus' sayings about the kingdom of God and what he hoped and intended to happen as a consequence of his focus and teachings on God's kingdom. This questionnaire is the fourth in this series.

In introducing Jesus' ministry, Mark characterizes Jesus as "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God." We might translate, "preaching the positive proclamation about God's kingdom." Matthew not only introduces the beginning of Jesus' ministry as one focused on "the kingdom of heaven," but says that "*from that time* Jesus began to preach... the kingdom of heaven," suggesting that the kingdom of God remained a central feature of Jesus' teachings and intentions throughout his ministry.

In our first questionnaire, we suggested that the kingdom of God should be thought of as that group or society that adopts God's rule over it, i.e. accepts and lives by the principles and values by which He, Himself lives and governs and by which individuals and societies endure.

In our second questionnaire, we attempted to show that in proclaiming the kingdom of God Jesus hoped and intended to change this world and the principles and values by which it governed and by which it lived. The kingdom of God on earth was in preparation for a kingdom of God in heaven, but he always intended that life on earth be improved and that the kingdom of God become an experience of human history on earth.

In our third questionnaire, we focused on the two things that Jesus encourages people to do in response to the good news of the imminent inauguration of the kingdom of God: repent, or change their perspectives/world view, and believe the good news.

1. We saw in our first reading that Jesus' ministry was characterized as being focused on the kingdom of God and its imminent inauguration. In Luke 4.<sup>43</sup>, Jesus expresses his belief that God sent him for the very purpose of proclaiming God's kingdom or rule.  
? What do you think and feel when you contemplate that the proclamation and inauguration of the kingdom of God was one of, if not the most central aspects and purposes of Jesus' ministry?
2. In both 4.<sup>23</sup> and 9.<sup>35</sup>, Matthew pairs Jesus' proclamation of God's kingdom or rule with his healing all manner of sickness and... disease.

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- ? What, do you think, is the significance of this pairing?
- ? How does God's kingdom or rule relate to healing?
- ? We can think of God's kingdom or rule in terms of His taking control over things formerly out of control or things controlled by other agents—individual or societal. How do healings demonstrate God's control?

*(edition: December 1, 2024)*

<sup>36</sup>Jesus answered, my kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

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In our third questionnaire, we focused on the two things that Jesus encourages people to do in response to the good news of the imminent inauguration of the kingdom of God: repent, or change their perspectives/ world view, and believe the good news.

In our fourth questionnaire, we heard once more Jesus' own belief that God sent him for the very purpose of proclaiming the good news about the imminent inauguration of God's kingdom. We also saw that Jesus' healing of the sick was paired with and related to the kingdom of God and his proclamation of it.

1. In this reading from John, Jesus is undergoing trial/ interrogation by Pilate. Because of rumors swirling around Jesus and the accusations that Jewish leaders make against him, Pilate asks Jesus, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" This is Jesus' reply.  
? What do you learn about the kingdom of God from Jesus' response to Pilate?
2. We have asserted that in proclaiming the kingdom of God, Jesus thought not only of existence in an afterlife but of fundamentally changing the world as it is. In answering Pilate, Jesus says, "my kingdom is not *of* this world."  
? What does this mean to you?  
? Does this response seem to confirm or challenge our assertion? Why do you answer as you do?

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Consider the words, “*of this world.*” Elsewhere, Jesus says, “If ye were *of the world*, the world would love his own: but because ye are *not of the world*, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (Jn. 15.<sup>19</sup>). Consider too, Jesus’ intercessory prayer offered in behalf of his disciples.

“I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are *not of the world*, even as I am *not of the world*. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are *not of the world*, even as I am *not of the world*” (Jn. 17.<sup>14-16</sup>).

- ? After reading these passages, how do you understand the prepositional phrase, “of the world”?
- ? How would you feel about understanding it to mean something like, “like the world,” “after the manner of the world,” etc.? Why do you answer as you do?

Jesus reminds Pilate how the subjects of a worldly kingdom, with the king’s blessing, would respond to an attack on its king.

- ? What is that response?
- ? How is the response of those in Jesus’ kingdom different?
- ? How do you feel about the nonviolent response to threats and attacks against Jesus?
- ? What does it have to say about the way in which Jesus’ kingdom “is not of this world”?
- ? How, then, does this passage confirm rather than challenge our assertion that the kingdom of God as Jesus envisioned it was an alteration to the ways of this world and could serve to change and improve the world?
- ? How does the following passage relate to Jesus’ statement to Pilate and his expectations that his kingdom could operate in this world to change and improve it?

“Therefore, be not afraid of your enemies, for I have decreed in my heart, saith the Lord, that I will prove you in all things, whether you will abide in my covenant, even unto death, that you may be found worthy. For if ye will not abide in my covenant ye are not worthy of me.

Therefore, renounce war and proclaim peace, and seek diligently to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers, and the hearts of the fathers to the children; and again, the hearts of the Jews unto the prophets, and the prophets unto the Jews; lest I come and smite the whole earth with a curse, and all flesh be consumed before me” (dc 98.<sup>14-17</sup>).

So, Jesus’, we submit, could and did hope and intend that his kingdom would exist on earth and in time. It would be very different from the kingdoms of this world. For example, it would, we learn in Jesus’ answer to Pilate, be very different in its use or non-use of violence and violent resistance.

- ? In what other ways is the kingdom of God different from the kingdoms of this world? (This question is one that the reader should keep in mind throughout our explorations of Jesus and the kingdom of God)

(edition: November 30, 2024)

Luke 6.<sup>20</sup> & Matthew 5.<sup>3</sup>— (part 1) Jesus & the kingdom or rule of God (questionary 6)

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<sup>20</sup>Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.

<sup>3</sup>Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus speaks of kingdom of God<sup>1</sup> some forty times in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus' announcement of the kingdom were Jesus' first words as recorded in the Gospel of Mark. In the idea of God's kingdom, Jesus found a primary and motivational principle and value. It was a central feature of his ministry. In this series of questionnaires entitled, "Jesus and the Kingdom of God," we examine Jesus' sayings about the kingdom of God and what he hoped and intended to happen as a consequence of his focus and teachings on God's kingdom. This questionnaire is the sixth in this series.

In introducing Jesus' ministry, Mark characterizes Jesus as "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God." We might translate, "preaching the positive proclamation about God's kingdom." Matthew not only introduces the beginning of Jesus' ministry as one focused on "the kingdom of heaven," but says that "*from that time* Jesus began to preach... the kingdom of heaven," suggesting that the kingdom of remained a central feature of Jesus' teachings and intentions throughout his ministry.

In our first 5 questionnaires, we have attempted to show that 1) the kingdom of God should be thought of as that group or society that adopts God's rule over it, i.e. accepts and lives by the principles and values by which He, Himself, lives and governs, and by which individuals and societies endure; 2) in proclaiming the kingdom of God, Jesus hoped and intended to change this world and the principles and values by which it governed and by which it lived. The kingdom of God on earth was in preparation for a kingdom of God in heaven, but he intended that life on earth be improved and that the kingdom of God become an experience of human history on earth; 3) Jesus expected a personal response to his message of the kingdom, that response being repentance/ a change in one's perspective and world view, and belief in Jesus' message of the imminent coming of the kingdom of God; and 4) that God sent Jesus for the express purpose of proclaiming the good news about the kingdom and that the healing of the sick was an integral part of the kingdom of God since it demonstrated God's taking control of things previously out of control.

The passages of this questionnaire are the first of several from the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus speaks of the kingdom. In the case of Matthew, the passage begins both the sermon and Jesus' Beatitudes.

1. In these two passages, Jesus identifies the poor as those who possess and inhabit the kingdom of God. It might seem that Matthew and Luke have slightly different takes on this first Beatitude and what is meant by "poor." Some read Matthew's version in a spiritual sense and Luke's in a temporal sense.
  - ? Do you think Matthew and Luke understand Jesus' statement differently or can you harmonize the two? Why do you answer as you do?
  - ? If you harmonize them, do you harmonize to the spiritual or to the temporal? Why?
  - ? How would you feel if we harmonized the two so as to understand Luke's "poor" and Matthew's "poor in spirit" as both referring to those who experience temporal poverty? Why do you feel this way?
  - ? What attitudes or beliefs would one have toward poverty, real destitution, and those who experience it that they would reject the consolation ("invitation" or "comfort") that Jesus offers

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the poor when he says that they are the kind of people who inherit the kingdom of God/ heaven?

Consider the following.

The Greek word used for “poor” in Matthew’s “poor in spirit” and Luke’s “poor” is *ptōchos*. It means “destitute, impoverished, mendicant.” Related verbs are *ptossō*, “to crouch, be prostrate, bow down timidly,” and *ptōcheuō*, “to become a beggar, be indigent.” While another word, *penes*, for “poor” “denotes one who has to earn his living because he has no property, *ptōchos* denotes the complete destitution which forces the poor to seek the help of others by begging... It is the fate of a *ptōchos* to have nothing... but that of a *penes* to live frugally” (*TDOT*).

Now, consider the word, “spirit.” We sometimes speak of “school spirit.” We also speak of someone having their spirit broken. When we speak of someone having “school spirit” we mean that they have enthusiasm and are energetic and active for their school. When we speak of someone having their “spirit broke,” we mean their will to continue is weakened; they have become discouraged.

- ? How might you apply these observations to the idea of being “poor in spirit” or “poor in relation or relation to spirit”?
- ? Is it accurate to say that those who are temporally poor—truly poor, beggaredly so— often experience a serious lack of zest for life; that they can feel a lack of vitality and hope; that they can struggle to find a will to go?
- ? How do you respond to the assertion that all of this is what Jesus means when he speaks of the “poor in spirit”?

(*edition: December 4, 2024*)

Luke 6.<sup>20</sup> & Matthew 5.<sup>3</sup>— (part 2) Jesus & the kingdom or rule of God (questionary 7)

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<sup>20</sup>Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.

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The passages of this questionnaire are the first of several from the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus speaks of the kingdom. In the case of Matthew, the passage begins both the sermon and Jesus' Beatitudes. In our first questionnaire in which we explore these two passages from the Sermon on the Mount, we asserted that Matthew's "poor in spirit" and Luke's simple "poor" both reflected the same class of people: those who were *temporally* poor, financially and economically destitute and beggarly.

1. Jesus' statement to the poor may be read as "consolation." Consolation can mean both "invitation" and "comfort"—it is easy to see how they are related since invitation often brings the one receiving the invitation a sense of comfort.
  - ? How do you feel about Jesus inviting the poor into "the kingdom of God/ heaven?"
  - ? How do you feel about Jesus offering the poor/ those discouraged and hopeless through temporal destitution comfort through this kingdom of God statement?
2. Jesus says to the poor, "yours *is* the kingdom of God." The verb is in the present tense.
  - ? What do you make of this observation?

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- ? Do you think of Jesus' invitation to enter the kingdom of God/heaven as an invitation to enter into the kingdom at some far off, future, perhaps even other worldly time and place or as an invitation to enter immediately? Why do you answer as you do?
- ? Consider both these possibilities. What do you learn from each of them? How does each impact the way you think of the kingdom of God? Of the poor?
- ? What does it say about God and His kingdom that it is very specifically a place in which the poor are invited and where they can find comfort?

Jesus', "yours is the kingdom of God," could be read as descriptive rather than invitation. We might accurately translate Jesus' statement as, "the kingdom of God belongs to you." The poor are not simply invited out of compassion, but because they are the very kind of people who belong in the kingdom, the very kind of people for whom it was created.

- ? What do you think and feel when you contemplate this possibility?

*(edition: December 7, 2024)*

Luke 6.<sup>20</sup> & Matthew 5.<sup>3</sup>— (part 3) Jesus & the kingdom or rule of God (questionary 8)

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<sup>20</sup>Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.

<sup>3</sup>Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus speaks of kingdom of God<sup>1</sup> some forty times in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus' announcement of the kingdom were Jesus' first words as recorded in the Gospel of Mark. In the idea of God's kingdom, Jesus found a primary and motivational principle and value. It was a central feature of his ministry. In this series of questionnaires entitled, "Jesus and the Kingdom of God," we examine Jesus' sayings about the kingdom of God and what he hoped and intended to happen as a consequence of his focus and teachings on God's kingdom. This questionnaire is the eighth in this series.

In introducing Jesus' ministry, Mark characterizes Jesus as "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God." We might translate, "preaching the positive proclamation about God's kingdom." Matthew not only introduces the beginning of Jesus' ministry as one focused on "the kingdom of heaven," but says that "*from that time* Jesus began to preach... the kingdom of heaven," suggesting that the kingdom of remained a central feature of Jesus' teachings and intentions throughout his ministry.

In our first 5 questionnaires, we have attempted to show that 1) the kingdom of God should be thought of as that group or society that adopts God's rule over it, i.e. accepts and lives by the principles and values by which He, Himself, lives and governs, and by which individuals and societies endure; 2) in proclaiming the kingdom of God, Jesus hoped and intended to change this world and the principles and values by which it governed and by which it lived. The kingdom of God on earth was in preparation for a kingdom of God in heaven, but he intended that life on earth be improved and that the kingdom of God become an experience of human history on earth; 3) Jesus expected a personal response to his message of the kingdom, that response being repentance/ a change in one's perspective and world view, and belief in Jesus' message of the imminent coming of the kingdom of God; and 4) that God sent Jesus for the express purpose of proclaiming the good news about the kingdom and that the healing of the sick was an integral part of the kingdom of God since it demonstrated God's taking control of things previously out of control.

The passages of this questionnaire are the first of several from the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus speaks of the kingdom. In the case of Matthew, the passage begins both the sermon and Jesus' Beatitudes. In our first two questionnaires in which we explore these two passages from the Sermon on the Mount, we asserted that 1) Matthew's "poor in spirit" and Luke's simple "poor" both reflected the same class of people: those who were temporally poor, indeed destitute and beggarly; 2) that Jesus statement could be seen as both invitation and comfort to the poor; 3) that Jesus invitation was for the poor to enter the comfort of his kingdom in the here and now as well as in some distant, future, post-mortal time and place; and 4) that even more than invitation and comfort, Jesus' statement reveals that the kingdom of God belongs naturally to the poor because of their own suffering and the nature of the Kingdom of God itself.

1. Consider the following passage.

"Behold, verily I say unto you, for this cause I have sent you... that a feast of fat things might be prepared for the poor; yea, a feast of fat things, of wine on the lees well refined, that the earth may know that the mouths of the prophets shall not fail; yea, a supper of the house of the

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<sup>1</sup> Where the other Gospel writers speak of the "kingdom of God," Matthew speaks of the "kingdom of heaven." It is generally thought that Matthew speaks of the "kingdom of *heaven*" rather than the "kingdom of *God*" out of a disinclination to refer to God directly out of respect for God, much as Jews avoid speaking the name of Yahweh, replacing it with LORD. Therefore Matthew's "kingdom of heaven" should be understood as being precisely the same as the "the kingdom of God" spoken of elsewhere.

Lord, well prepared, unto which all nations shall be invited. First, the rich and the learned, the wise and the noble; and after that cometh the day of my power; then shall the poor, the lame, and the blind, and the deaf, come in unto the marriage of the Lamb, and partake of the supper of the Lord, prepared for the great day to come” (DC 58.<sup>6, 8-11</sup>).

- ? How does this passage relate to the idea of the poor being especially invited to enter the kingdom of God and there find comfort from their destitution and the worries, discouragements, and hopelessness that deep poverty so often brings?

2. Take a few minutes to consider one of Jesus’ kingdom of God/ heaven parables—this one the parable of the wedding feast found in Matthew 22.<sup>2-14</sup>.

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, ‘Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.’

“But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.’

“So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, ‘Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?’

“And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.’”

- ? How does the DC passage relate to this parable?
- ? How do they both relate to the two verses explored in this questionnaire?

In the DC passage, “First, the rich and the learned, the wise and the noble were invited to the “feast of fat things” and the “marriage of the Lamb.” In the parable found in Matthew, the same class, the wealthy—represented in the parable by landowners and merchants (vs. 5)—were first to be invited.

- ? What was the response of the landowners and merchants?
- ? Could we understand the DC’s “rich and the learned, the wise and the noble” to have similarly responded negatively to the invitation? Why do you answer as you do?
- ? What do you think and feel when we suggest that in both passages, those who are mentioned as having been invited “first” were not invited first because they were preferred or spiritually privileged—rather, the mention of their having been invited first is focused on the fact that they rejected the invitation?

3. In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus offered a contrast to his, “blessed be ye poor.” That contrast was, “But woe unto you that are rich! For ye have received your consolation [comfort or invitation or both]” (Lk. 6.<sup>24</sup>).

- ? How do you feel about Jesus’ statement toward the rich?
- ? How does Luke’s contrast clarify the nature of the poverty and the poor to which Jesus speaks?

One could understand that the rich have already been consoled in this life through their ease. One could understand that the rich have already been invited into the kingdom and refused the invitation. Or, finally, one could understand that the kingdom of God simply wasn’t created for the rich; that

they were not the type of people who belonged in the kingdom; or the type of people to whom the kingdom of God and the ideals and principles by which it existed appealed or to which they would conform.

- ? Consider each of these. What does each teach you about the poor? About the rich? About the nature of the kingdom?
- ? As you think of the last possible meaning—that the kingdom of God simply wasn't created for the rich; that they were not the type of people who belonged in the kingdom; or the type of people to whom the kingdom of God and the ideals and principles by which it existed appealed or to which they would conform—what would it be about the kingdom and its ideals and principles that the rich might find unappealing? (This question is one to keep in mind as we continue to explore the meaning and nature of the kingdom of God.)

*(edition: December 11, 2024)*



## Matthew 5.<sup>10</sup>— Jesus & the kingdom or rule of God (questionary 9)

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<sup>10</sup>Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus speaks of kingdom of God<sup>1</sup> some forty times in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus' announcement of the kingdom were Jesus' first words as recorded in the Gospel of Mark. In the idea of God's kingdom, Jesus found a primary and motivational principle and value. It was a central feature of his ministry. In this series of questionnaires entitled, "Jesus and the Kingdom of God," we examine Jesus' sayings about the kingdom of God and what he hoped and intended to happen as a consequence of his focus and teachings on God's kingdom. This questionnaire is the eighth in this series.

In introducing Jesus' ministry, Mark characterizes Jesus as "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God." We might translate, "preaching the positive proclamation about God's kingdom." Matthew not only introduces the beginning of Jesus' ministry as one focused on "the kingdom of heaven," but says that "*from that time* Jesus began to preach... the kingdom of heaven," suggesting that the kingdom of remained a central feature of Jesus' teachings and intentions throughout his ministry.

In our first 5 questionnaires, we attempted to show that 1) the kingdom of God should be thought of as that group or society that adopts God's rule over it, i.e. accepts and lives by the principles and values by which He, Himself, lives and governs, and by which individuals and societies endure; 2) in proclaiming the kingdom of God, Jesus hoped and intended to change this world and the principles and values by which it governed and by which it lived. The kingdom of God on earth was in preparation for a kingdom of God in heaven, but he intended that life on earth be improved and that the kingdom of God become an experience of human history on earth; 3) Jesus expected a personal response to his message of the kingdom, that response being repentance/ a change in one's perspective and world view, and belief in Jesus' message of the imminent coming of the kingdom of God; and 4) that God sent Jesus for the express purpose of proclaiming the good news about the kingdom and that the healing of the sick was an integral part of the kingdom of God since it demonstrated God's taking control of things previously out of control.

In our sixth, seventh, and eighth questionnaires we examined the first Beatitude found in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with its statement concerning the kingdom of God. Here, we found that 1) Matthew's "poor in spirit" and Luke's simple "poor" both reflected the same class of people: those who were temporally poor, indeed destitute and beggarly; 2) that Jesus statement could be seen as both invitation and comfort to the poor; 3) that Jesus invitation was for the poor to enter the comfort of his kingdom in the here and now as well as in some distant, future, post-mortal time and place; and 4) that even more than invitation and comfort, Jesus' statement reveals that the kingdom of God belongs naturally to the poor because of their own suffering and the nature of the Kingdom of God itself.

In today's questionnaire, we consider the eighth Beatitude as found in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and its relation to Jesus' teachings about the kingdom of God.

1. First, we should understand what Jesus means by being "persecuted *for righteousness' sake*."
  - ? What does this "for righteousness' sake" mean to you?
  - ? How do you feel about reading "persecuted *on account of righteousness/ goodness*"?

The words, "righteousness/ righteous" have been loaded down with all sorts of meaning and assumptions.

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- ? What, do you think, did these terms mean to Jesus' audience at the time he delivered it?
- ? What did they mean to Jesus, do you think?
- ? What do you think and feel when you consider that individuals might be persecuted precisely because they seek to live by good and proper values?

Now, consider the word, "persecuted."

- ? In your view, what does it mean to be persecuted?

We most often think of it in religious terms, but the word has a broader meaning. It can be to "harry, harass, pursue, exclude, accuse." Many classes of people can be "persecuted." The promise of the first beatitude was "the kingdom of heaven." The promise of the 8<sup>th</sup> beatitude is the same.

- ? What does this suggest about the relationship between those "persecuted, harassed, excluded, etc. because they seek to live by good and proper values—the condition of the 8<sup>th</sup> beatitude—and being "poor"—the condition of the first beatitude (It might be helpful to review the questionnaire for the 1<sup>st</sup> beatitude)?
2. Jesus promises/ comforts those persecuted, harassed, excluded, etc. because they seek to live by good and proper values with the words, "theirs is the kingdom of heaven/ God" [see footnote 1].
    - ? What does it tell you about the kingdom of God that it is made up of people who are victims of harassment, exclusion, and prosecution because they seek to live by good and proper values?

*(edition: December 14, 2024)*

Matthew 6.<sup>10</sup> & Luke 11.<sup>2</sup>— Jesus & the kingdom or rule of God (questionary 10)

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<sup>10</sup>Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

<sup>2</sup>Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

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In our ninth questionnaire, focused on Jesus' eighth Beatitude, we found that those who are persecuted are part of the kingdom of God. Indeed, we suggested that it might very be, in fact, their desire for the

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kingdom of God that makes them targets of persecution.

In this questionnaire, we remain in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and consider the kingdom of God in light of his instruction on prayer, often called The Lord's Prayer. Traditionally, the prayer is seen as having seven pleas. In this questionnaire, we consider the second and third.

1. After the first plea of the Lord's Prayer that God's "name" be "hallowed," or His "power" be held as "preeminent" (the most basic idea of holiness is the fact of uniqueness, of being set apart, of being unusual, and, in the case of God, of being unmatched, unparalleled, preeminent), Jesus suggests that his disciples pray for the coming of God's kingdom.
  - ? What is one asking for when they make this plea that God's kingdom might come?
  - ? Is a discussion of and desire for the coming of God's kingdom are significant part of your prayers? Why do you answer as you do?
  - ? How is the desire to see God's kingdom come and the plea that it be so manifest in your prayers?
2. The next plea is "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."
  - ? To what degree is the will of God done in heaven?
  - ? How does the idea of God's will being done on earth relate to the plea that "Thy kingdom come"?
3. We have suggested that Jesus' intention was not only to prepare his followers for entrance into the kingdom of God in the next life, but to provide principles and laws by which humans could establish a kingdom in the mortal life of humans. When we read the plea, "May thy kingdom come," we hear, "May thy kingdom come here and now."
  - ? Do you feel that the two pleas found in this reading confirm in any way our previous assertions? Why do you answer as you do?
  - ? How do these two requests from the Lord's Prayer suggest that Jesus did indeed hope to establish God's kingdom in the mortal life of humans?
  - ? How is the doing of the will of God on earth indicative of the kingdom of God?

*(edition: December 18, 2024)*