

Matt 5: Quotations, Resources, etc

Kingdom.

The dynamic reign of God as sovereign over creation. Although the roots of the term lie in the OT, the Christian understanding arises more specifically from Jesus' proclamation of the inbreaking of God's rule. Hence the kingdom is God's divine, kingly reign as proclaimed and inaugurated by Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection, and the subsequent outpouring of the Spirit into the world. In this sense Christ is reigning now, and the kingdom of God has arrived. At the same time the church awaits the future consummation of the divine reign. This "already" and "not yet" dimension of the kingdom of God implies that it is both a given reality (or the divine power at work in the present) and a process that is moving toward its future fulfillment or completion.¹

Kingdom of God.

God's rule over the people of God and the entire created order. During the second temple period, Jewish thought regarding the kingdom focused on God becoming King and vindicating the Jewish nation by vanquishing their enemies and ushering in a period of peace. The kingdom (reign) of God was a major focus in Jesus' teaching (Mt 6:33; Mk 1:5; Lk 6:20) where the kingdom is present in the person and teaching of Jesus (Lk 10:9; 17:21) even though it awaits a future consummation (Lk 13:29; 22:18).²

The Message of the Sermon on the Mount – John Stott (InterVarsity Press, 1985)

"Jesus is making an objective judgment about these people. He is declaring not what they may feel like ('happy'), but what God thinks of them and what on that account they are: they are 'blessed'. What is this blessing? The second half of each beatitude elucidates it. They possess the kingdom of heaven and they inherit the earth. The mourners are comforted and the hungry are satisfied. They receive mercy, they see God, they are called the sons of God. Their heavenly reward is great. And all these blessings belong together. Just as the eight qualities describe every Christian (at least in the ideal), so the eight blessings are given to every Christian. True, the particular blessing promised in each case is appropriate to the particular quality mentioned. At the same time, it is surely not possible to inherit the kingdom of heaven without inheriting the earth, to be comforted without being satisfied or to see God without receiving his mercy and being called his children. The eight qualities together constitute the responsibilities, and the eight blessings the privileges, of being a citizen of God's kingdom. This is what the enjoyment of God's rule means." pp33-34

A Theology of the New Testament. – George Eldon Ladd (Eerdmans, 1993)

"The Kingdom of God is the redemptive reign of God dynamically active to establish his rule among human beings, and that this Kingdom, which will appear as an apocalyptic act at the end of the age, has already come into human history in the person and mission of Jesus to overcome evil, to deliver people from its power, and to bring them into the blessings of God's reign. The Kingdom of God involves two great moments: fulfillment within history, and consummation at the end of history. It is precisely this background which provides the setting for the parables of the Kingdom." pp89-90

The Divine Conspiracy – Dallas Willard (Harper, 1998)

"Jesus came among us to show and teach the life for which we were made. He came very gently, opened access to the governance of God with him, and set afoot a conspiracy of freedom in truth among human beings. Having overcome death he remains among us. By relying on his word and presence we are enabled to reintegrate the little realm that makes up our life into the infinite rule of God. And that is the eternal kind of life. Caught up in his active rule, our deeds become an element in God's eternal history. They are what God and we do together, making us part of his life and him a part of ours." p25

¹Grenz, Stanley ; Guretzki, David ; Nordling, Cherith Fee: *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Downers Grove, Ill. : InterVarsity Press, 1999, S. 71

²Patzia, Arthur G. ; Petrotta, Anthony J.: *Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies*. Downers Grove, Ill. : InterVarsity Press, 2002, S. 70

Willard (cont)

"Now God's own "kingdom," or "rule," is the range of his effective will, where what he wants done is done. The person of God himself and the action of his will are the organizing principles of his kingdom, but everything that obeys those principles, whether by nature or by choice, is within his kingdom.

Accordingly, the kingdom of God is not essentially a social or political reality at all. Indeed, the social and political realm, along with the individual heart, is the only place in all of creation where the kingdom of God, or his effective will, is currently permitted to be absent. That realm is the "on earth" of the Lord's Prayer that is opposed to the "in heaven" where God's will is, simply, done. It is the realm of what is cut out "by hands," opposed to the kingdom "cut out without hands" of Daniel, chapter 2.

Thus, contrary to a popular idea, the kingdom of God is not primarily something that is "in the hearts of men." That kingdom may be there, and it may govern human beings through their faith and allegiance to Christ. At the present time it governs them only through their hearts, if at all. But his kingdom is not something confined to their hearts or to the "inner" world of human consciousness. It is not some matter of inner attitude or faith that might be totally disconnected from the public, behavioral, visible world. It always pervades and governs the whole of the physical universe – parts of planet earth occupied by humans and other personal beings, the satanic, slightly excepted for a while.

So when Jesus directs us to pray, "Thy kingdom come," he does not mean we should pray for it to come into existence. Rather, we pray for it to take over at all points in the personal, social, and political order where it is now excluded: "On earth as it is in heaven." With this prayer we are invoking it, as in faith we are acting it, into the real world of our daily existence.

Within his overarching dominion God has created us and has given each of us, like him, a range of will-beginning from our minds and bodies and extending outward, ultimately to a point not wholly predetermined but open to the measure of our faith. His intent is for us to learn to mesh our kingdom with the kingdoms of others. Love of neighbor, rightly understood, will make this happen. But we can only love adequately by taking as our primary aim the integration of our rule with God's. That is why love of neighbor is the second, not the first, commandment and why we are told to seek first the kingdom, or rule, of God.

Only as we find that kingdom and settle into it can we human beings all reign, or rule, together with God. We will then enjoy individualized "reigns" with neither isolation nor conflict. This is the ideal of human existence for which secular idealism vainly strives. Small wonder that, as Paul says, "Creation eagerly awaits the revealing of God's children" (Rom. 8:19)." pp25-26

IVP Bible Background Commentary in the New Testament. The Beatitudes, or Blessings

Matthew 5–7 is the first block of teaching material in Matthew, dealing with the ethics of the kingdom. In 4:17 Jesus summarizes his message: "Repent, for the kingdom is at hand"; Matthew 5–7 shows in greater detail the repentant lifestyle that characterizes the people of the kingdom. This block is introduced by a common Old Testament literary form called beatitudes: "Happy are those who ..., for they shall ..." (e.g., Ps 1:1). Here the blessings are the promises of the kingdom for those who live the repentant life. Jesus' hearers would have understood them especially as promises for the future time of God's reign; we must read them in the light of the

present aspect of the kingdom as well (see “kingdom” in the glossary). The future kingdom was sometimes defined by images from the creation narratives or from Israel’s exodus from Egypt, which the Jewish people regarded as their original redemption.

Matt 5:1-12

5:1–2. Although one would stand to read Scripture publicly, Jewish teachers would sit to expound it, often with disciples sitting at their feet. Many scholars have compared the “mountain” (cf. Lk 6:17) here to Mount Sinai, where God through Moses first taught his ethics by the law (Ex 19–20; cf. Is 2:2–3).

5:3. Ancient writers and speakers would sometimes bracket a section of material by beginning and ending with the same phrase. These blessings thus deal with the gift of the kingdom (5:3, 10).

Many Jewish people believed that the kingdom would be ushered in only by a great war and force of arms; Jesus promises it for the “poor in spirit,” the “humble” or “meek” (5:5), the peacemakers (5:9). Poverty and piety were often associated in Judaism; the term *poor* could encompass either physical poverty (Lk 6:20), or the faithful dependence on God that it often produced (“in spirit,” as here).

5:4. Mourning was usually associated with either repentance or bereavement; the conjunction with “comfort” means that the second aspect is in view here. It could mean grief over Israel’s sins, but in this context probably refers to the pain of the oppressed. “Comfort” was one of the blessings promised for the future time when God would restore his mourning people (Is 40:1; 49:13; 51:3, 12; 52:9; 54:11; 57:18; 61:2; 66:13).

5:5. Here Jesus cites Scripture (Ps 37:9, 11). Not those who try to bring in the kingdom politically or militarily but those who humbly wait on God will “inherit the earth.” The Hebrew of the psalm could mean “inherit the land” in a narrower sense (Ps 25:13), but in Jesus’ day Jewish people expected God’s people to reign over all the earth, as some other Old Testament passages suggest.

5:6. Jewish people understood that God would also satisfy his people’s needs in the future kingdom (Is 25:6; 41:17–18; 55:2), as he had supplied for them in the exodus when he first redeemed them (Deut 6:11; 8:7–10). But the greatest object of longing should be God (Ps 42:1; 63:1) and instruction in his righteousness (Ps 119:40, 47, 70, 92, 97, 103; Jer 15:16).

5:7. Some later rabbis uttered similar statements (cf. also Prov 11:17). Like the peacemakers (v. 9), the merciful are not those who seek to bring in the kingdom by force. The mercy Jewish people generally hoped to receive was expected in the day of judgment (cf. Mic 7:18–19).

5:8. The “pure in heart” (Ps 73:1) were those in Israel whose hearts were “clean,” or undefiled, those who recognized that God alone was their help and reward (Ps 73:2–28). The righteous would see God on the day of judgment (e.g., Is 30:20), as in the first exodus (Ex 24:10–11).

5:9. Both the Jewish people and the righteous were called “sons of God” in Jewish tradition; the ultimate declaration of that fact would be made in the sight of the nations on the day of judgment. Those Pharisaic rabbis who prevailed in Palestinian Judaism after the war of A.D. 66–70 were the ones who emphasized the way of peace rather than the way of revolt espoused by others. But most other Jewish leaders, including all groups in Jerusalem except the Christians and some of the Pharisees, had joined in the spirit of revolt and were killed or came to be viewed as illegitimate leaders after the revolt’s failure.

5:10–12. Many of the Old Testament prophets suffered in bringing God’s word to Israel (e.g., Jer 26:11); Jewish tradition amplified the number of prophetic martyrs further and made it a major emphasis. The burden of proof was always on the prophet who spoke what people wanted to hear (Jer 28:8–9; cf. 6:14; 8:10–11; 23:17). Most Jewish people did not believe that prophets still existed in the Old Testament sense, so Jesus’ comparing his followers to the prophets indicated that they would have an extraordinary mission. To suffer for God was meritorious (Ps 44:22; 69:7), and Judaism highly honored martyrs for God’s law; yet no other rabbi called disciples to die for his own teachings or name.³

³Keener, Craig S. ; InterVarsity Press: *The IVP Bible Background Commentary : New Testament*. Downers Grove, Ill. : InterVarsity Press, 1993, S. Mt 4:25-5:10