

Lesson 2

THE KINGDOM: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Write the Key Verse from memory.
- Demonstrate understanding of the Kingdom of God in its past form.
- Demonstrate understanding of the Kingdom of God in its present form.
- Demonstrate understanding of the Kingdom of God in its future form.
- Present basic facts about the Kingdom of God.

KEY VERSE:

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (Matthew 25:34)

INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter introduced the Kingdom of God and the ruler of this Kingdom, the Lord Jesus Christ. This chapter presents an overview of the past, present, and future of the Kingdom of God. It also presents basic facts about the Kingdom.

There is a basic theme that unites both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. That theme is the Kingdom of God and the King. The phrases "Kingdom of God" and "Kingdom of Heaven" do not appear in the Old Testament. These are New Testament terms. But as you will discover as you study the past history of the Kingdom of God, its foundations were laid in Old Testament times. The present and future forms of the Kingdom are built on these Old Testament foundations.

THE PAST KINGDOM: OLD TESTAMENT

The Kingdom of God is eternal. This means it has always existed and will always exist:

Thy Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations. (Psalms 145:13)

God's Kingdom existed first in Heaven. When God created the earth, it was His desire that His Heavenly Kingdom be extended to the world He had created.

A CHOSEN MAN:

To fulfill this desire, God created a perfect environment as an extension of His Kingdom. In this Garden of Eden, He created the first man and woman who were to multiply and populate the earth. By this method of reproduction, they were to extend the Kingdom throughout the world.

The creation of the world marked the preparation of the Kingdom of God to be inherited by man:

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (Matthew 25:34)

The first man and woman, Adam and Eve, were given dominion over the earthly extension of God's Kingdom:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.

And God blessed them and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (Genesis 1:26-28)

God did not want forced servitude from the subjects in His earthly Kingdom. He wanted man to be part of the Kingdom of God by free choice. So, He made a law in the new Kingdom. The law was based on freedom of choice. The choice would determine whether or not man would continue to live in the Kingdom of God:

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. (Genesis 2:16-17)

In Genesis chapter 3 you can read the story of the wrong choice made by Adam and Eve.

When Adam and Eve sinned; they lost their inheritance in the Kingdom of God. They lost eternal life and the beautiful environment of the Kingdom.

Because of sin, certain curses came upon Satan, the earth, and man. You can read about these curses in Genesis chapter 3. The earth was no longer a perfect environment, a flawless extension of the Heavenly Kingdom. Man, no longer had dominion over the earth, and he was separated from the presence of the King because of sin.

God had offered to extend His Kingdom through a man, but the Kingdom had been rejected. Man lost the inheritance prepared for Him by God from the foundation of the world and Satan took control of the earth. But in this darkest hour came the promise of God to restore the Kingdom of God to man. God said to Satan:

**And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.
(Genesis 3:15)**

This was the first promise of a King who would someday come and crush the power of the enemy, Satan. From a woman's body the King, Jesus Christ, would come. Through His death man could be cleansed from sin, reborn into the Kingdom of God, obtain eternal life, and reclaim his rightful inheritance.

A CHOSEN PEOPLE:

After man failed, God chose a nation through which He could extend His Kingdom throughout the world. God raised up Abraham as the man from whom this nation would descend. He made many promises concerning the nation of Israel and their role in the extension of God's Kingdom throughout the world. You can read the story of Abraham and the promises given him and the nation of Israel in Genesis 12 through 25.

The nation of Israel was chosen for purpose, not privilege. They were not chosen because they were better than other nations or God loved them more. It was a choice of responsibility. That responsibility was to extend the Kingdom of God throughout the earth. God gave Kingdom laws to the nation of Israel. Many of these laws are recorded in the book of Exodus.

Earthly kings were later appointed to help govern God's Kingdom. But the nation of Israel failed in its responsibility to extend the Kingdom. Time and time again the nation sinned and turned to false gods. You can read examples of their failures in the book of Judges in the Old Testament.

God compared the nation of Israel to a vine in the natural world. Israel has been chosen to bear the "fruit" of the Kingdom of God. God finally said of Israel:

Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself; according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images.

Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty; He shall break down their altars, He shall spoil their images.

For now, they shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the Lord... (Hosea 10:1-3)

Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me. (Jeremiah 2:21)

Because of their rejection of the Kingdom of God and failure to fulfill the responsibility of its extension, Israel became a divided nation. They were separated into the nations of Israel and Judah. Finally, both of these nations were conquered and ruled by heathen nations.

Despite Israel's failure, God promised that His Kingdom would someday be restored in visible form and Israel would again be part of it. Through the prophets, God gave many promises about the coming King and the Kingdom of God in its future form.

Promises were given to David (II Samuel 7:16; Psalms 22:27-28; 72:7-11; 89:1-4; 96 and 98) and to Jeremiah (Jeremiah 3:17-18; 23:5-6; 31:31-34). Promises were given by the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 2:2-5; 33:20-22; 35; 62:1-2; 65:17-25). Promises were also given to Ezekiel (Ezekiel 26:25-30; 37:22-28), Joel (Joel 2:28), Zechariah (Zechariah 8:20-23; 12:10; 14:9-17), Amos (Amos 9:15), and Micah (Micah 4). There were many other promises given concerning the Kingdom in addition to those listed.

The nation of Israel waited for the coming of a Messiah who would fulfill these great promises. They waited for a King who would free them from the control of other nations. They waited for the Kingdom which they had lost to be restored in visible form.

THE PAST KINGDOM: NEW TESTAMENT

There is a key verse which links together the Old and New Testament accounts of the Kingdom:

The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the Kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. (Luke 16:16)

Old Testament prophecies predicted the coming Kingdom and its King. The New Testament fulfilled these predictions. The Old Testament law laid the foundation for New Testament principles which would govern life in the Kingdom. When Jesus came, He did not do away with the law but fulfilled it and expanded Kingdom principles on this foundation.

When John the Baptist lifted up his voice in the wilderness of Judea and announced, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," he used terms common to his day. These terms were understood by the nation of Israel, for the hope of the promised Kingdom and its King burned in the heart of every Jew:

In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

And saying, Repent ye: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. (Matthew 3:1-3)

A CHOSEN MAN:

In the Old Testament, God selected a man to extend His Kingdom throughout the world. Adam failed in this responsibility. In the New Testament, God sent His own Son, Jesus, to extend the Kingdom to the world. Jesus fulfilled this responsibility, as He made it the central purpose of His life and ministry.

After the imprisonment and death of John the Baptist, Jesus began to share the message of the Kingdom:

Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God,

And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel. (Mark 1:14-15)

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. (Matthew 4:17)

During His earthly ministry, Jesus selected several key men to be His disciples. Jesus instructed them to go and preach saying "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matthew 10:7). What does the term "at hand" mean? Look at the same words of Jesus used in a different context:

Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me. (Matthew 26:46)

When Jesus said the one who was to betray Him was "at hand," He meant the person (Judas) had arrived. The time for betrayal was "at hand." When Jesus said the Kingdom of God was "at hand," it meant the Kingdom had arrived. Jesus spent His entire life telling people the Kingdom

had come, teaching the principles of Kingdom living, and explaining how men and women could enter the Kingdom of God.

Although the Kingdom of God was at hand, it did not come in visible form:

And when He was demanded of the Pharisees, when the Kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation;

Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you. (Luke 17:20-21)

The parables of Jesus about the Kingdom pictured it as seed which was sown, a mustard seed hidden in the ground, a hidden treasure, and a hidden pearl of great price. In all these forms, the Kingdom was present yet not visible.

Israel had expected the Kingdom of God to come in visible form, with great fanfare, ruled over by a visible and powerful King:

And as they heard these things, He (Jesus) added and spake a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear. (Luke 19:11)

The parable Jesus told was of a nobleman who went into a far country and would return to receive his kingdom. As Jesus was approaching Jerusalem, He was preparing the people for His forthcoming death. Through this parable He revealed that the Kingdom in its visible form was to be postponed until another coming. On His return, it would be established.

Israel believed that the true King would immediately establish the Kingdom in all the glory of its previous visible form under King David. God had promised King David:

He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (II Samuel 7:13)

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem, the people thought He was coming to establish the visible Kingdom with Jerusalem as its capitol as had been prophesied since Old Testament times. Because of this, they rejoiced and honored Him as King as He entered the city. They cried:

Blessed be the Kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest. (Mark 11:10)

But the Kingdom was not to be visibly established. Jesus had already given a parable about leaven in a lump of dough to illustrate the spread of the Kingdom (Matthew 13:33). It was to

come through silent, steady growth just as leaven spreads through bread dough.

Jesus had already given the parable of the nobleman who went to a far country and later returned to receive his kingdom. But Israel had not understood these Kingdom parables. Because Jesus did not immediately establish a visible Kingdom, a short time later the same people who had received Him as King rejected Him. They turned against Him and called for His death by crucifixion.

When Jesus came to earth, the Kingdom of God was "at hand." Because it did not come as they expected, the Jewish people rejected both the Kingdom and its King:

He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.

But as many as received Him, to them, gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name:

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:11-13)

Because of this rejection, Jesus announced that the Kingdom of God had been taken from Israel and given to a people who would produce the fruit of righteousness:

Therefore, say I unto you, The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. (Matthew 21:43)

By this, Jesus meant that the message of the Kingdom would be taken to the Gentile nations (all nations other than Israel). They were ready to receive and respond to it.

Jesus said the nation of Israel and Jerusalem, their capitol city, would come under judgment:

And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. (Luke 21:24)

Because Israel rejected the Kingdom and the King, the visible establishment of the Kingdom in its final form was postponed until another coming of the King. That other coming is called the second coming of Jesus Christ.

A CHOSEN PEOPLE:

In the Old Testament, God chose the nation of Israel as the corporate body of people through which the Kingdom could be extended throughout the world. Israel failed in this responsibility. In the New Testament, God selected the Church, those who receive and respond to the Gospel, as

the corporate body through which the Kingdom is to be extended.

The Apostle Paul, chosen of God to bear the Gospel of the Kingdom to the Gentiles, wrote these words:

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

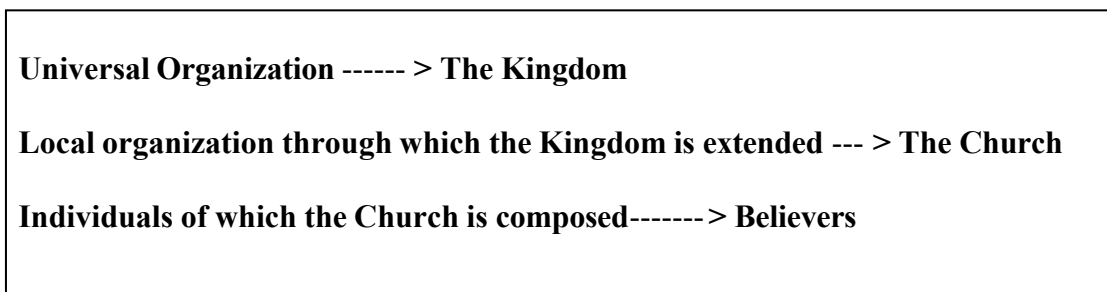
According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Ephesians 3:8-11)

Remember that the Kingdom was prepared for man by God from the foundation of the world. The Church has been chosen by God to reveal this mystery of the Kingdom to the nations of the world. Through this, the eternal purpose of God will be accomplished:

Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which he hath purposed in Himself;

That in the dispensation of the fullness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him. (Ephesians 1:9-10)

The Church is the visible corporate body through which the Kingdom of God is to be extended throughout the world. Study the following diagram:



Jesus left the Church with the responsibility:

**Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.
(Mark 16:15)**

He equipped believers with the power to accomplish the task:

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

In the end, all things will be brought into subjection to the King, Jesus, who will return to establish the visible Kingdom.

THE PRESENT KINGDOM

Jesus taught that "the Kingdom of God is within you." That is, where the King is and where His rule is acknowledged, the present Kingdom of God exists. The Kingdom of God is the sphere of God's rule. The Kingdom in the world is presently the sphere in which, at any given time, His rule is acknowledged.

Remember that from the time of Satan's rebellion in Heaven, war has existed between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan. The earth is the scene of this universal rebellion against God. Through the sin of man, a curse came upon the earth and Satan has taken advantage to try to establish his evil kingdom. It was evident that he controlled the earthly kingdoms when he tempted Jesus:

Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

And saith unto Him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

**Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.
(Matthew 4:8-10)**

But God has not relinquished His sovereignty as King in the face of rebellion of man. He has declared His purpose to establish it:

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a Kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the Kingdom shall not be left to other

people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. (Daniel 2:44)

The Kingdom of God is also here and now. It is not something in the future which we cannot know until it is visibly established at the end of the world. The rule of the King is presently acknowledged in the hearts of individual believers. The rule of the King is acknowledged in the true Church of Jesus Christ. The Kingdom is present wherever people love God, have been born into the Kingdom, adopt Kingdom principles as their lifestyle, and acknowledge the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ as King.

The Kingdom is said to be a "mystery" now (Mark 4:11) because it is not within the range of the natural powers of observation:

The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation... (Luke 17:20)

The Kingdom is presently only spiritually discerned on earth. It has been spiritually, but not yet visibly, established. The present visible Kingdom of God is in Heaven. This is not the heaven of which we speak when we talk of the sky above us. This is the Heaven in which Jesus lived before He came to earth (John 17:5). It is the Heaven to which He ascended after His resurrection from the dead (Acts 1:9-11).

Heaven is the present residence of God, Jesus, and the angels in visible form. Heaven is where Jesus now waits until time for His return to earth to establish the Kingdom in its permanent, visible form. While He waits in Heaven, Jesus serves as an intercessor. He sits at the right hand of God and intercedes for believers still on earth (Hebrews 7:25).

THE FUTURE KINGDOM

Although Jesus told His disciples the Kingdom was at hand and was actually in their midst, He also spoke of the Kingdom in its future form. He told the disciples to pray "Thy Kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10).

The disciples had expected Jesus to establish this "coming" or future Kingdom before Calvary. When Jesus died, their hope was lost. After His resurrection their hope revived. In the period of time between the resurrection and His return to Heaven, Jesus spoke many things about the Kingdom of God. This prompted the disciples to ask, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). Jesus answered:

...It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power. (Acts 1:7)

The coming of the Kingdom is certain, but the timing of its visible restoration rests with the Father. Jesus did share many things which must happen on earth before the Kingdom would be

established in its final form. These signs were revealed to help us recognize when the time is near. You can read of these signs in Matthew chapters 24 and 25, Mark chapter 13 and Luke 17:20-37; 21:8-36. Jesus told the disciples that when these things began to happen, they were a sign that the visible restoration of the Kingdom of God was near:

So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand. (Luke 21:31)

THE GOSPEL TO ALL NATIONS MARKS THE BEGINNING OF THE END:

And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. (Matthew 24:14)

JESUS WILL RETURN TO EARTH:

...This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into Heaven. (Acts 1:11)

JESUS WILL DEFEAT ALL KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD:

Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

For He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under His feet. (I Corinthians 15:24-25)

And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in Heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever. (Revelation 11:15)

SATAN AND RESIDENTS OF HIS KINGDOM WILL BE CONQUERED:

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. (Revelation 20:10)

ALL NATIONS WILL COME INTO THE KINGDOM:

And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven. (Matthew 8:11)

ALL PEOPLE WILL ACKNOWLEDGE JESUS AS KING:

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name:

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)

And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. (Revelation 19:6)

ALL MEN, LIVING AND DEAD, WILL BE JUDGED BY GOD:

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick (living) and the dead at His appearing and His Kingdom. (II Timothy 4:1)

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works...

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:12, 13, 15)

Jesus told a parable about the Kingdom being like a great net cast into the sea which gathered every kind of fish. When the net was drawn in, the good fish were separated from the bad (Matthew 13:47,48).

He also spoke of the Kingdom as tares and wheat growing for a time together. But in the end, the good wheat were separated from the tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-42). By the example of tares among wheat Jesus taught that the Kingdom had come, but evil men were still present. For a time, the two would coexist. At judgment, they would be separated.

Both of these parables concern the separation which will occur at the time of judgment. Those who have entered the Kingdom through the new birth will be accepted into the visible Kingdom in its final form. All others will be cast out of the Kingdom:

There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. (Luke 13:28)

THE KINGDOM OF GOD WILL BE ESTABLISHED IN ITS VISIBLE FORM:

And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a Kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:14)

TRUE BELIEVERS WILL REIGN WITH JESUS IN THE KINGDOM:

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in His throne. (Revelation 3:21)

THERE WILL BE A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH:

You can read the descriptions of the new Heaven and earth in Revelation chapters 21 and 22. Jerusalem will be the throne of the Lord, and all nations will be gathered into it:

At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. (Jeremiah 3:17)

A SUMMARY

Now let us summarize the past, present, and future of the Kingdom of God.

Study the following chart and then study the summary which follows the chart.

<----- THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN HEAVEN ----->



Kingdom Of God On Earth



Return of
the King
End of time



Establishing of Kingdom
of God in its final
visible form

Extended by----->Man----->Israel---->The Church ----->

Note the dotted line at the top of the diagram. It shows that God's Kingdom existed in Heaven before the creation of the earth and will continue to exist eternally.

Note the arrows at the bottom of the diagram. God created the earth as an extension of His Heavenly Kingdom. He chose man as the instrument through which His Kingdom would be extended. Man failed in this responsibility.

Then God chose a nation through which His Kingdom would be extended. But Israel failed in the responsibility. They turned to heathen gods and accepted worldly standards instead of the Kingdom principles.

Then God sent His Son, Jesus Christ. Where the first man, Adam, failed, the second man, Jesus, succeeded. He ushered in the Kingdom of God on earth. Jesus provided a way, through spiritual rebirth, that man could live in the Kingdom of God and that Kingdom exist within him even though he still lived in the natural world. Because the King and His Kingdom were rejected, the visible establishment of the Kingdom was postponed until a second coming.

To extend the message or "Gospel" of the Kingdom, God has now chosen the Church. The Church is the instrument through which the Kingdom message is to be shared with the nations of the world. Where the first chosen people, Israel, failed, the Church will succeed. When the Gospel of the Kingdom has been preached throughout the world, the second return of the King will occur. The Kingdom of God will be established in its final, visible form. All other worldly kingdoms will be defeated.