KINGDOM COME

1. Introduction

a. In our consideration of the Kingdom we have mostly been looking in Matthew's gospel since his gospel's main focus is the Kingdom and the King. Matthew wrote for the Jewish community who were familiar with the biblical prophesies of a coming King and emphasises Jesus as the Son of David and hence heir of Israel's throne—He is the rightful king of the Jews. Matthew presents Christ as the One who fulfilled the Old Testament promises and prophecies related to Israel's Messiah. The word "fulfilled" occurs in Matthew fifteen times, and there are more quotations from the Old Testament in Matthew than in the other three Gospels combined.

b. We have looked at

i the coming kingdom as it was announced by Jesus, and John before him, primarily in chapters 3 and 4 of Matthew.

ii the kingdom that "has come," as described in the parables of 13.

iii kingdom living, as Jesus explained it in chapters 5 through 7 in the Sermon on the Mount and later in chapters 18 and 19.

c. However, in chapters 24 and 25 Jesus returns to teaching on the Kingdom as he speaks to his disciples shortly before his crucifixion. Here he speaks of the consummation of the kingdom when He will usher in the millennial reign.

2. The Consummation of the Kingdom

a. Although Jesus's teachings during the first part of his ministry, as recorded in Matthew, focused on the presently inaugurated aspects of the kingdom, Jesus certainly did not neglect the topic of fulfilment of the kingdom. For example, in Matthew 8:11-12, Jesus foreshadowed the fact that, in the millennial kingdom, Gentiles would be included while the Jews who rejected their Messiah would be left out.

Matt.8:11-12 *[11] I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, [12] while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

b. This same teaching was repeated in Matthew 21:42-43.

[42] Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; [1]this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes'? [43] Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.

c. As Jesus's death grew closer, his teachings on the end of the age grew more prominent. Hence, Matthew 24 through 25 contain the Olivet Discourse, a discourse about the coming culmination of the kingdom given by Jesus during His last week before the crucifixion.

d. This millennial reign will be the consummation of all that had been promised. It is at this point that many of the Old Testament prophesies will be fulfilled as Jesus will return as a righteous Judge and slaughter his enemies and establish His earthly Kingdom. It is at this point that Israel will step into her destiny and Messiah shall rule from Jerusalem.

e. Jesus desires that we would understand this progressive nature of His Kingdom and be prepared for His second coming. Hence, he includes in his teaching on the signs of the end of the age three parables that help us to know how to be prepared for the consummation of the Kingdom.

   i **The parable of the faithful and wise servants** (24:45-51) exhorts us to be faithful and wise servants who work diligently, with good motives, as we give spiritual food to others in a way that is appropriate to each season. Jesus contrasted faithful servants with evil servants. This parable highlights that Jesus' delay may be shorter than expected.

   ii **The parable of the ten virgins** (25:1-13) alerts us to the fact that faithful service can only be sustained by cultivating a heart connect with Jesus as our Bridegroom God. We can serve with good motives but work with a wrong spirit by inadvertently neglecting to maintain our intimacy with God. Jesus defined the essence of wisdom as prioritising this. This parable highlights that Jesus' delay may be longer than expected.

   iii **The parable of the talents** (25:14-30) alerts us to the fact that faithful service is sustained by cultivating the fear of God or knowing that the Lord is watching us and that there are serious consequences to our actions. Faithful service is defined as not quitting but persevering with diligence in small and hard tasks even when some of God's promises are delayed (25:21, 24). This parable highlighted that Jesus' delay may be harder than expected.

f. From the teachings on the kingdom in Matthew's gospel we see a kingdom that is:

   i Unified and holistic. All at the same time, it is spiritual, material, ethical, social, political, physical and ecclesiastical.

   ii At the same time, the kingdom has temporal components.

   iii The kingdom's nearness was tied to the first phase of Jesus's earthly ministry. In proclaiming that the kingdom was "near," Jesus suggested "not that the kingdom has arrived in fullness but that signs of its initial stages have come."

   iv The kingdom began to arrive with Jesus's ministry (Phase 1). It was present in the person of the King and the dynamic power that He exercised over demons, disease and death.

   v The kingdom advanced, and continues to advance, in its mystery phase (Phase II) during the inter-advent age. It is played out through the work of kingdom citizens during this present age. The Sermon on the Mount and other standards of kingdom living articulated by Jesus apply completely and directly to kingdom citizens in this inter-advent age.

   vi The consummation of the kingdom of God on earth in the form of a thousand year millennial reign (Phase III) is the ultimate goal in biblical history. This event ushers in the final eternal state.

g. The kingdom came in the presence of Jesus Christ as King. It advances through the lives of kingdom citizens in the present age. It will come fully and completely with the second advent of Jesus Christ. To be satisfied with this present age and not yearn for the age to come is like being content with the conception and growth of a baby in the womb and not long to see the birth of that child and meet him face to face!!!

h. We want to live in the fullness of all that is ours in this present age but there should be a yearning in us to see the full consummation of this Kingdom which was inaugurated by Jesus 2000 years ago.

The vast majority of Old Testament prophecies have not yet been fulfilled. There is a day coming when a real man will ride out on a real white horse and remove all evil from this earth overthrowing the Deceiver and sitting on a real throne in earthly Jerusalem and rule the nations. And we shall rule with Him.

i. So when we pray "thy Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven" I believe we are asking for both the growth of that Kingdom as many come to salvation and carry that Kingdom in them with power and the coming of Messiah to set up His millennial rule. It is the Maranatha cry.

3. A Maranatha mindset

a. The 18th Century evangelist George Whitfield describes what I am calling a "Maranatha Mindset".

Let that cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh," (Mt 25:6) be continually sounding in your ears, and begin now to live as though you were assured that this night you were to go forth to meet Him. (And all God's people cry "Amen!")

b. Maranatha is used only once in the Bible by Paul who closes his first letter to the Corinthians with a surprisingly strong statement

1 Cor.16:22 *If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed (*anathema*). Our Lord, come (*Maranatha*)*

c. Similar to Hosanna, Hallelujah, and Amen which are transliterated Hebrew words, Maranatha is a transliterated Aramaic word, which has one of two meanings: "Our Lord has come" or "Our Lord, come!" It is strange to meet with an Aramaic phrase in a Greek letter to a Greek Church. The explanation is that this phrase had become a watchword and a password. It summed up the vital hope of the early Church, and Christians whispered it to each other, identified each other by it, in a language which the heathen could not understand."

d. In short, "Maranatha" became the early church's mindset. The apostle John clearly had a *"Maranatha Mindset"* when he prayed "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus" in response to Jesus' promise "Yes, I am coming quickly."

Rev 22:20 *He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! (Maranatha)*

e. The majority of modern Bible versions and commentaries interpret Maranatha as a prayer beseeching the Lord Jesus Christ to return quickly/soon! Indeed, every time we pray "Thy Kingdom come" we are in a sense crying "Maranatha," asking for the return of the King of the Kingdom.

f. Paul writes that those with a "Maranatha Mindset" have a sense of urgency and know

Rom 13:11-12 ***11*** *Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep (*from spiritual slumber, apathy, backsliding!*). For salvation is nearer to us now(* Our Saviour and our final redemption and glorification) *than when we first believed.* ***12*** *The night (*spiritual darkness of this present world*) is far gone; the day (*of His Return) *is at hand (*we are standing on the "edge of eternity"!). *So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light.*

g. The famous hymn writer Fanny Crosby, although physically blind, had a vibrant "Maranatha Mindset" which gave her "vision" and passion to pen words like

"Take the world but give me Jesus--In His cross my trust shall be; Till, with clearer, brighter VISION, Face to face my Lord I SEE!"

h. One scholar has noted that in the 260 chapters in the NT, there are 318 references to the Second Coming of Christ which means that about 1 of every 30 verses refers to the return of the

Bridegroom. It is also notable that for every prophecy describing Jesus' First Coming, there are eight which look forward to His Second Coming! Surely the Spirit desires to stir up in the Bride a "Maranatha Mindset" which causes us to long for our Beloved, much like Solomon's bride who cried out

Song 8:14 *Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices.*

i. So it is fitting that James encourages us to live with a "Maranatha Mindset"

James 5:8 *You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand*

j. Augustine said "*He who loves the coming of the Lord is not he who affirms it is far off, nor is it he who says it is near. It is he who, whether it be far or near, awaits it with sincere faith, stead-fast hope and fervent love."* Ready, prepared and awake and Jesus instructed us:

Luke 21:36 *But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."*

k. Paul who ministered with a "Maranatha Mindset" continually *looking "not at the things seen, but the things unseen, remembering that the things seen are temporal, while the things unseen are eternal*"(2Cor 4:17-18) encouraged Timothy (and us) with his very last words (always important words):

2Tim 4:7-8 *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.* [8] *Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.*

l. If we are looking for Christ to return at any time, this "uplook outlook" will be a powerful incentive to spur us on to fight the good fight of faith (1Ti 6:12) necessary for godly living and bold proclamation of the Gospel (2Cor 3:12; Ep 6:19).

m. Am I living with a "Maranatha Mindset?" Do my day to day choices reflect the reality of my expectant attitude? "Expectant looking" is always a great "antidote" for "apathetic living." The certainty of the Coming Kingdom should touch and impact on every part of our daily behaviour.

n. As we have considered this Kingdom I pray that we will be those who

i live as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 5-7)

ii as we see the mystery of the Kingdom expand in this age (Matthew 13)

iii and prepare and long for the consummation of the Kingdom with the coming of our Bridegroom King to rule over His Kingdom on the earth (Matthew 24 & 25)

Phil.3:17-21[17] *Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.* [18] *For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.* [19] *Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.* [20] *But* ***our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ,*** [21] *who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.*

4. A final reflection

Are You Looking Up? - Are you so eager for Christ's return that you hope it will take place today? I wouldn't be honest if I answered an unqualified yes to this question. You see, I'm enjoying life right

now. I love what I'm doing. My wife and I are having fun watching our grandsons grow toward manhood. There are still people and places we would like to visit during our retirement years.

Does this mean that I'm not "looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing" of Jesus Christ? (Titus 2:13). No, it doesn't. I believe that His return is indeed "the blessed hope." Earthly pleasures are only temporary and cannot compare with the joys of heaven. Besides, I am troubled by the sin, sorrow, and suffering all around me.

All Christians are thankful for Jesus' promise, "I will come again and receive you to Myself" (Jn. 14:3). But our own circumstances affect how eagerly we anticipate His return. Whether life for us today is a joy or a struggle, we are to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts" and to "live soberly, righteously, and godly" (Titus 2:12).

God wants us to enjoy life. But He also wants us to live each day as if it may be the one in which He will return. Are you looking up? — *Herbert Vander Lugt*