

# **LESSON 52 - ADVANCING GOD'S KINGDOM**

## **What is the Kingdom of God and How Can We Advance it?**

By Brian S. Holmes

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In Matthew 6:9-10 Jesus says to pray, *"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."* Our Heavenly Father wants us to know that the reason the world is evil, broken, dying, suffering, lacking and yearning for fulfillment is due to its sinful rebellion against Him. The solution to all these consequences is to receive forgiveness and restoration through Jesus, and to pursue God's presence and rule over every other sphere of life. The primary mission of Christians (that encompasses all others) is to advance the Kingdom of God on earth. This lesson covers: 1) What is the Kingdom of God?, 2) Attributes of God's Kingdom, 3) How to advance the Kingdom of God.

**1. What Is The Kingdom of God?** There is a distinction between the Kingdom of God and the Church. A lowercase C church is a localized group of followers of Jesus meeting regularly together. This congregation could be a legal organization with a church building, or it could simply be two or more people meeting in a home or anywhere else. The uppercase C Church is the universal, global collection of all God's children who have been born again by the Holy Spirit. The Global Church is called the Body and Bride of Christ because it's the collection of all *people* who belong to Him. The Kingdom of God *includes* all the people in the Church but it's not limited to them. God's Kingdom includes not only whoever but also wherever and whatever is under the headship, dominion, presence, and influence of God. In John 18:36, *"Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.'"* God's Kingdom's presence on earth isn't a physical empire like those on earth. His physical empire is in Heaven where His throne is. When Jesus bodily returns to earth He will bring the Kingdom of Heaven there with Him. But for right now God's Kingdom's presence on earth is *spiritual*. It's everything God reigns over having influence and dominion. Luke 17:20-21 says, *"On being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, 'The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst.'"* God's Kingdom exists wherever the LORD is glorified, Jesus is honored as King, and the Holy Spirit's presence is manifested. We bring God's Kingdom to wherever we are whenever embracing His truth and manifesting His attributes of righteousness, justice, mercy, and love. Everything in opposition to the only alternative spiritual kingdom on earth: Satan's (Colossians 1:12-14).

**2. Attributes of God's Kingdom.** God is an eternal king and His kingdom is eternal (1 Timothy 1:17; 2 Peter 1:11). God's Kingdom can be "seen" (*experienced*) through the spiritual senses He's given us (Luke 9:27), but because we're sinful we're not able to inherit—or even "see," it—without His help. We must first be born again by the Holy Spirit and given a new spirit nature (John 3:3-5; 1 Corinthians 15:50). You can know this has happened when you have: 1) childlike faith in Jesus (Mark 10:13-15); 2) humility, trust and

love of God (James 2:5); 3) a life of fruitfulness as evidence of repentance and faith (Matthew 21:42-44); and 4) a life marked by righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 warns: *“Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”* God’s Kingdom members aren’t known for legalistic obedience to God’s rules but for total devotion to Jesus. In Luke 9:59-62 Jesus said to a man, *“Follow me.”* But he replied, *“Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”* Jesus said to him, *“Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”* Still another said, *“I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.”* Jesus replied, *“No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”* God’s Kingdom requires great sacrifice but it offers a great reward!

**3. How To Advance the Kingdom of God.** Kingdom advancement happens through the efforts of current members. Jesus gave the blueprint for Kingdom mission in Luke 9:1-2 and 5-6, *“When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick... If anyone does not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that town, as a testimony against them. So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere.”* Mark 6:12 adds, *“They went out and preached that people should repent.”* His instructions weren’t only for the twelve. In Luke 10:1-24 Jesus sent out seventy two others with the same mission. Jesus says in Luke 10:9, *“Tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’”* In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus gave further instructions for advancement. So, this is our blueprint. Go to people in every nation and: 1) preach the truth of God and the judgment to come, 2) encourage all to repent of their sins and believe the good news about salvation through Jesus; 3) minister to their temporal needs, cast out demons, and pray for the healing of their diseases; and 4) make disciples of Jesus from all nations, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey everything He commanded. Remember, God is for us, with us, and in us. He’s advancing His Kingdom *through you!* Your personal testimony and life are meaningful. God will use your conversion story, struggles, experiences, prayers, words, and actions to reach the hearts and minds of others. 1 Corinthians 4:20 says, *“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.”* Believe that God is working through you and pray daily that He use you more. Let the presence of Jesus in you affect the atmosphere of everything around you: your marriage, family, business, career, politics, media, volunteer work, hobbies, and goals. Everything around you that’s sinful or broken is an opportunity waiting to be transformed by the Gospel to bring into God’s Kingdom’s dominion. Are you a musician? Make music that advances God’s Kingdom. Are you a business owner? Treat your employees like Jesus would and offer goods/services that advance His Kingdom. Are you a laborer? Be like Jesus towards your employer and influence them for the Kingdom. Let God advance His Kingdom in and through you!

Let’s pray. Heavenly Father, thank You for allowing me to be in Your Kingdom. Help me represent it well in Spirit, truth, and righteousness. Help and use me to advance it for Your glory. In Jesus’ name. Amen.