

# Hidden Hills Sovereign Grace Baptist Church

## Sunday Sermon

**Date: July 4, 2021**

**Text: Matthew 24:14**

**Scripture Reading: Matthew 24:14-22**

**Subject: The Kingdom of Heaven**

### Review

- We have seen that our God is a great king, known in the nations of the earth – and that he now reigns over all his creation and has reigned over it and them since the beginning.
- We have seen that God made an if-then promise to Israel that they would be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation – if they kept his words.
  - **Exodus 19:1-8 (KJV)** *In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai. 2 For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount. 3 And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; 4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. 5 Now therefore, **if** ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, **then** ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: 6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. 7 And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. 8 And all the people*

*answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.*

- We know, from scripture, that they did not do what they had promised, therefore the “then” portion of the promise never went into effect.
- In our last message, we reviewed the promise made about the 5<sup>th</sup> kingdom in the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. This dream is recorded in Daniel 2, therefore, we know that Israel was well aware of this promise.

**Daniel 2:31-49 (KJV)** *Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. **32** This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, **33** His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. **34** Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. **35** Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. **36** This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. **37** Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. **38** And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. **39** And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which*

shall bear rule over all the earth. **40** And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. **41** **And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay.** **42** **And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken.** **43** **And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.** **44** **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.** **45** **Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.** **46** Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him. **47** The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret. **48** Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the

*governors over all the wise men of Babylon. **49** Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.*

From this 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Daniel we see that the great King, the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.

1. We also see that this will occur **after** the four great kingdoms represented by the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dreams. These four kingdoms shall have come and gone, viz: Babylon (the head of Gold), Medo-Persia (breast and arms of silver), Greece (thighs of brass), and Rome (Legs of iron, feet part of iron and part of clay). God will set up his kingdom in the days when the kingdom of the whole world is fragmented, since the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken inasmuch as there was in it the strength of iron and the weakness of miry clay. During the days of **these kings** – his kingdom shall be set up.

- a. *"And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. **42** And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. **43** And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay."*

2. The kingdom of Babylon is gone; the Medo-Persian kingdom is gone; Alexander the Great and the kingdom of Greece is gone; the kingdom of Rome is gone having gone into oblivion around 500 AD, but fragments of all these earthly kingdoms still remain within the

nations of the earth to his day. One would have to be willingly ignorant not to see that fragments of Rome remain in the US, Russia, Great Britain, France, Germany and in the smaller and less powerful nations. Remember that the fourth kingdom, Rome was in power when our Lord was present on the earth – when John the Baptist and Jesus both preached, “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” This fact tells us that the last or 5<sup>th</sup> kingdom would be set up after the fall of Rome.

The divided kingdom part of iron and part of clay is what we have in the earth today. All the kingdoms about which Daniel prophesied have come and gone. In this year in which we now live we clearly see a divided kingdom – part of it strong as iron others weak and insignificant like iron mixed with miry clay. The present world is a mingled people but, as the prophecy told us, we shall not cleave one to another. There is division everywhere! Here is an important question: Did the people of Israel know about this prophecy of the fragmented kingdom represented by the feet and toes of Daniel’s prophecy? We assume correctly they were aware of the Holy Scriptures and this prophecy.

### **The Preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom**

*We have seen that John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, the apostles and even Paul, the apostle to the gentiles preached the gospel of the kingdom. In this passage from Matthew 24, we see that gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. This verse is part of the Lord’s answer to the three-fold question posed to him by Peter, Andrew, James, and John. That question was this:*

**Matthew 24:1-3 (KJV)** *And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one*

stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. **3** And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, **1** when shall these things be? and **2** what shall be the sign of thy coming, **3** and of the end of the world (Greek: aion or age – lk) ?

**Matthew 24:14 (KJV) 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 24:14-22 (KJV)** 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. **15** When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) **16** Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: **17** Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: **18** Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. **19** And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! **20** But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: **21** For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. **22** And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

### **Is there a difference in the terms “kingdom of heaven” and “kingdom of God?”**

The terms Kingdom of Heaven and Kingdom of God have the same meaning.

- The term **kingdom of heaven** is found in Matthew only and this exact phrase is used 32 times in these places. Mt 3:2; Mt 4:17; Mt 5:3,10,19-20; Mt 7:21; Mt 8:11; Mt 10:7; Mt 11:11-12; Mt

13:11,24,31,33,44-45,47,52; Mt 16:19; Mt 18:1,3-4,23; Mt 19:12,14,23; Mt 20:1; Mt 22:2; Mt 23:13; Mt 25:1,14

- The term **kingdom of God** is found 69 times in the New Testament and this exact phrase is found in these places: Mt 6:33; Mt 12:28; Mt 19:24; Mt 21:31,43; Mr 1:14-15; Mr 4:11,26,30; Mr 9:1,47; Mr 10:14-15,23-25; Mr 12:34; Mr 14:25; Mr 15:43; Lu 4:43; Lu 6:20; Lu 7:28; Lu 8:1,10; Lu 9:2,11,27,60,62; Lu 10:9,11; Lu 11:20; Lu 12:31; Lu 13:18,20,28-29; Lu 14:15; Lu 16:16; Lu 17:20-21; Lu 18:16-17,24-25,29; Lu 19:11; Lu 21:31; Lu 22:16,18; Lu 23:51; Joh 3:3,5; Ac 1:3; Ac 8:12; Ac 14:22; Ac 19:8; Ac 20:25; Ac 28:23,31; Ro 14:17; 1Co 4:20; 1Co 6:9-10; 1Co 15:50; Ga 5:21; Col 4:11; 2Th 1:5.
- Also, we find that the phrase gospel of the kingdom is found four times in the New Testament and this exact phrase appears in these passages which includes our text:

**Matthew 4:23 (KJV)** *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.*

**Matthew 9:35 (KJV)** *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.*

**Matthew 24:14 (KJV)** *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.*

**Mark 1:14 (KJV)** *Now after that John was put in prison,*

*Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the **gospel of the kingdom** of God,*

All of us have seen in our studies of Matthew that John the Baptist came preaching the gospel of the kingdom, saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Mat. 3:2).

- That Jesus came preaching the gospel of the kingdom, saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Mat. 4:17).
- That Jesus commanded the twelve apostles which he sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel saying, "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Mat. 10:7).
- That the Apostle Paul also preached the gospel of the kingdom.
  - **Acts 28:30-31 (KJV)** *And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, **31** Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.*
- And, as our text tells us, the churches have preached and will continue to preach the gospel of the kingdom for a witness to all nations, then will the end come. (Mat. 24:14).

### **The kingdom of heaven is at hand**

We considered the meaning of the message of both John the Baptist and Jesus which said, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." To say that a thing is at hand means that it is here now. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the term "at hand" as "within easy reach, near, close by." The kingdom of heaven was at hand because the king of the kingdom of heaven was present in the nation of Israel. King Jesus explained to the unbelieving Pharisees that the kingdom was in their midst with these words:

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

It is certain that the Lord did not mean the kingdom of heaven was within the persons of the religiously wicked and unbelieving Pharisees, but that the kingdom was in their midst or among them.

Here are proofs that the kingdom of heaven (kingdom of God) came among those of the nation of Israel. As we study the New Testament, we learn that the gospel of the kingdom was preached initially to the lost sheep of the house of Israel only – not to the Samaritans nor the gentiles. Both the twelve apostles and the other seventy were sent to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel.” We know that for sure, because the Lord sent them into the cities and villages where he himself would come.

King Jesus himself said he was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel as we see concerning his healing of the daughter of a gentile woman:

**Matthew 15:21-28 (KJV)** *Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. **22** And, behold, a woman of Canaan [Mark says this: The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation – Mark 7:26] came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. **23** But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. **24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. **25** Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. **26** But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. **27** And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. **28** Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy***

*faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.*

As our Lord rebuffed the unbelieving Pharisees who charged him that he cast out devils by Beelzebub, he said these words about the kingdom to them:

**Matthew 12:25-28 (KJV)** *And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: **26** And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? **27** And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. **28** But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then **the kingdom of God is come unto you.***

As our Lord instructed the other seventy whom he sent two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come with these words (in part):

**Luke 10:9-12 (KJV)** *And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, **The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.** **10** But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, **11** Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that **the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.** **12** But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.*

Who can seriously doubt that the kingdom was come nigh to the nation of Israel? The king was present and he gave power to those he sent to heal the sick. Then, it is clear that the kingdom was present in Israel because the King and the power of his kingdom was there in those he sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

## **The Lord commanded us to pray that His Kingdom Come.**

In the model prayer of Matthew 6 the Lord taught us to pray in this manner: “Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come...” Therefore, we can see that, in some sense, the kingdom’s coming is future.

**We are told that men pressed into the kingdom and the violent took it by force.** Let’s consider that.

**Matthew 11:12-13 (KJV)** *And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. 13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.*

From the days of John the Baptist, the violent take the kingdom of heaven by force and press into it. Therefore, since the days of John the Baptist the kingdom suffereth violence and the violent take it by force. What does this mean? If it happened in those days, does it not continue unto this present day in the same way? We are told that with John the Baptist was the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the son of God.

**Mark 1:1-2 (KJV)** *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; 2 As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.*

The kingdom of heaven including Jesus Christ, the king of the saints and his forerunner, John the Baptist suffered violence at the hands of the religionists of the day. These were the Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes, Herodians and Lawyers. These self-righteous dissemblers opposed the King and the word of the kingdom at every turn. The Pharisees came to John’s baptism to try and keep the external ordinance of baptism without having repented of their sins or doing any good works worthy of repentance. John called them a “generation of vipers” and asked them “who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” Their

blasphemous questions were put forth to the disciples of our Lord and king saying, "Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners?" These hypocrites seeing Jesus cast out devils with his word charged him saying, "He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils." (Mat. 9:34). As Jesus and his disciples went through the fields of grain and plucked ears with their hands to eat, these adversaries of all truth and righteousness charged his disciples of doing that which was unlawful on the Sabbath day. (Mat. 12:2). The New Testament shows that these hypocrites never ceased to oppose the Lord and his disciples and finally were successful in fulfilling the purpose of God in crucifying Jesus.

The words 'suffereth violence' come from the Greek word: βιάζω *biazo* which appears two times in the NT and is translated as: suffer violence 1 time and press 1 time. This same Greek word is translated as 'presseth' in Luke 16:16.

Speaking on this text on Sunday, May 15, 1859, Charles H. Spurgeon said this: "WHEN John the Baptist preached in the wilderness of Judea, the throng of people who pressed around him became extremely violent to get near enough to hear his voice. Often when our Savior preached did the like scene occur. We find that the multitudes were immense beyond all precedent. He seemed to drain every city, every town, and every village, as he went along preaching the word of the gospel. These people, moreover, not like our common church-and-chapel-goers, — content to hear, if they could, and yet more content to keep without hearing, if it were possible, — were extremely earnest to get near enough to hear anyhow. So intense was their desire to hear the Savior that they pressed upon him, insomuch that they trod one upon another. The crowd became so violent to approach his person, that some of the weaker ones were cast down and trodden upon. Now, our Savior, when he witnessed all this struggling round about to get near him, said, "This is just a picture of what is done spiritually by those who will be saved. As you press and throng about me," said Christ, "and thrust one another,

with arm and elbow, to get within reach of my voice, even so must it be if ye would be saved, 'For the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.'" He pictured to himself a crowd of souls desiring to get to the living Savior. He saw them press, and crowd, and throng, and thrust, and tread on one another, in their anxious desire to get at him. He warned his hearers, that unless they had this earnestness in their souls, they would never reach him savingly; but if they had it, they should certainly be saved. "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." "But," says one, "do you wish us to understand, that if a man is to be saved he must use violence and vehement earnestness in order to obtain salvation?" I do, most assuredly; that is the doctrine of the text. "But," says one, "I thought it was all the work of God." So it is, from first to last. But when God has begun the work in the soul, the constant effect of God's work in us is to set us working; and where God's Spirit is really striving with us, we shall begin to strive too. This is just a test whereby we may distinguish the men who have received the Spirit of God, from those who have not received it. Those who have received the Spirit in verity and truth are violent men. They have a violent anxiety to be saved, and they violently strive that they may enter in at the strait gate. Well they know that seeking to enter in is not enough, for many shall seek to enter in but shall not be able, and therefore do they strive with might and main."

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

The word "violent" comes from the Greek word: βιαστης biastes which is found here in this one place only. It means "strong, forceful or using force."

The word ‘force’ from the phrase “take it by force” comes from the Greek word: αρπαζω harpazo and is variously translated in the NT as: catch up 4, take by force 3, catch away 2, pluck 2, catch 1, pull 1.

**Luke 13:24 (KJV)** *Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

Notice the word “strive” at the introduction of this verse. This word comes from the Greek word: “αγωνιζομαι agonizomai ag-o-nid’-zom-ahee”. This word is found seven times in the New Testament and is translated this way: strive 3 times, fight 3 times, and labour fervently 1 time. Striving to enter in at the strait gate certainly has the idea of force or violence. Let’s look up the other passages where this word is found to see if we can get the right sense of the meaning. Here are the instances:

**Lu 13:24 (KJV)** *Strive <75> to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

**Joh 18:36 (KJV)** *Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight <75>, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.*

**1Co 9:25 (KJV)** *And every man that striveth for the mastery <75> is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.*

**Col 1:29 (KJV)** *Whereunto I also labour, striving <75> according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.*

**Col 4:12 (KJV)** *Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently <75> for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.*

We can see that it took some striving, some force, some violent action for the people in the days of Christ and the apostles to enter into the kingdom of God since the days of John the Baptist – that is, the days

of the beginning of the gospel. Praise be to God that it is a strait gate with a narrow way which leads unto life. Few shall find it as opposed to the many who are now treading the board way that leads to destruction.

**Matthew 7:13-14 (KJV)** *Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: **14** Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

### **The Opposition of the Scribes and Pharisees**

The scribes and Pharisees are said to have shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; moreover, the lawyers are said to have taken away the key of knowledge.

**Matthew 23:13 (KJV)** *But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! **for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men:** for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.*

What does this mean? How was it that the scribes and Pharisees shut up the kingdom of heaven against men? I like [John Gill's](#) comments on this verse. He says,

**“for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in:** they neither believed in the Messiah themselves, nor embraced the doctrines relating to his person and office: have any of the Pharisees believed on him? No; they received him not, they rejected him, and also the counsel of God, against themselves, not being baptized with the baptism of John, the forerunner of Christ; nor would they suffer others, that were inclined to profess their faith in him, and be baptized, to do it; but discouraged them all they could, by their reproachful treatment of the person, miracles, and ministry of Christ, and by their

threatenings and menaces, and by their excommunications of such as made a confession of him.”

Albert Barnes says this:

“They shut it up by their doctrines. By teaching false doctrines respecting the Messiah; by binding the people to an observance of their traditions; by opposing Jesus and attempting to convince the people that he was an impostor, they prevented many from becoming his followers. Many were ready to embrace Jesus as the Messiah, and were about entering into the kingdom of heaven--i.e. the church--but they prevented it. Luke says in Luke 11:51 they had taken away the key of knowledge, and thus prevented their entering in.

**Luke 11:52 (KJV)** *Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the **key of knowledge**: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.*

In taking away the key of knowledge, the lawyers had taken away the right interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies respecting the Messiah, and thus had done all they could to prevent the people from receiving Jesus as the Redeemer. We can see how it would have taken force and even violent action to shun the religionists in order to follow the Lord by entering into the kingdom.

Perhaps we think this: “We are put into the kingdom when we are born again.” Is that true? Let’s study this to be sure. Please turn with me to the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of John and read from verse 1 through verse 8.

**John 3:1-8 (KJV)** *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: **2** The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. **3** Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he*



*cannot see the kingdom of God. 4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

Jesus said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He also said: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." What does it mean that a man cannot see the kingdom of God? To see is to perceive or behold. The Greek word which is translated as "see" in this verse is: "εἶδω eido *i'-do* or οἶδα oida *oy'-da*;" this word is found 667 times in the New Testament. It is translated this way: "know 281 times, cannot tell + **3756** 8 times, know how 7 times, wist 6 times, misc 19 times, see 314 times, behold 17 times, look 6 times, perceive 5 times, etc." Without the new birth, a man cannot know, cannot tell, cannot know how, cannot see, cannot behold, cannot perceive the kingdom of God. In other words, the birth from above gives the man the ability to know, tell, know how, see, behold and perceive the kingdom of God.

How about the fact that a man cannot enter into the kingdom of God without the new birth? Jesus was answering Nicodemus' question in saying, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" So, we understand that he has two births in mind – one of the flesh and one of the Spirit. A man must be born of water (natural birth) and of the Spirit (from heaven) in order to be able to enter into the kingdom of God. To enter is to come in.

If I understand the words of our Lord correctly, the new birth makes him able to both see the kingdom of God and enter into it.

This is precisely the reason that many who heard the words of John the Baptist and Jesus were born from above and begin to strive to enter in at the strait gate. They pressed into and took it by forceful action in the midst of all their antagonists, the religious, but unsaved Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, Scribes, and lawyers. Did all these who strove to enter into the kingdom of God join the church? Apparently not.

Is the church and the kingdom of God the same thing? They are not the same. Each is distinctive. The kingdom of God is larger than the church. Because it is said that men press into the kingdom and take it by force, we believe this means they were taking action to call on the name of the Lord, confess their belief in Christ, be baptized and go on to follow the Lord. I understand the kingdom of God to include all who profess to know Jesus Christ as savior. Many of these, perhaps all of them may have been baptized, but we have no scriptural proof that they all were baptized. We do know that many of them were pressing into the kingdom. They took it by force acting violently to get in. Concerning the church, we know that the church at Jerusalem had 120 members as they met together to choose an apostle to replace Judas (Acts 1). This fact alone leads me to believe that the church is much smaller in number than the kingdom of God. Moreover, I believe the scripture shows us that not all who are born of God are members of the Lord's church.

### **Did Jesus Christ offer the kingdom to Israel?**

Some believe that Jesus Christ of Nazareth offered himself as king to the nation of Israel on the occasion of the triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Whether we conclude this to be the case or not, we do know that Jesus did this to fulfil the prophecy of the Old Testament Scriptures.

**Matthew 21:1-17 (KJV)** *And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives,*

then sent Jesus two disciples, **2** Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. **3** And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. **4** All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, **5** Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. **6** And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, **7** And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. **8** And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. **9** And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. **10** And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? **11** And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee. **12** And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, **13** And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. **14** And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them. **15** And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, **16** And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? **17** And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.

This entering into Jerusalem riding on an ass and the colt of an ass with such a demonstration from the people is also recorded in Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:29-38 and John 12:12-19. It is true that our Lord had avoided all such displays about himself during his personal ministry saying such things as "See thou tell no man" (Mat. 8:4); "See that no man know it:" (Mat. 9:30) "He charged them that they should not make him known." (Mat. 12:16); "tell the vision to no man till the son of man be risen from the dead." (Mat. 17:9). There are more instances which I have not directly pointed out here as all of you well know.

It is clear that the words "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" meant that the king was present with the nation. Also that the power of the kingdom was present in the persons of the twelve and other seventy sent forth in that they healed the sick, cast out devils, healed the lame, gave sight to the blind and raised the dead. There could have been no kingdom established on earth in the biblical sense without the king. It follows, therefore, that to reject its king would be to reject the kingdom. The preaching of John the Baptist, Jesus and his apostles to "repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" had called for a decision on the part of the nation – for as we have already shown, the ministry of John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles up to this point had been to the lost sheep of the house of Israel only. On the heels of the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, we read these words of Jesus regarding Jerusalem:

**Matthew 23:37-39 (KJV)** *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! **38** Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. **39** For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

**Luke 13:34-35 (KJV)** *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! **35** Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

The leaders of the nation, as hypocritical as they were, had totally rejected the king – the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ’s ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel had been met with opposition by the Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes and Herodians from the beginning, and now the nation being led by these wicked religionists was rejected and set aside until they, as a nation, should say: “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” (Mat. 23:39). We have seen this in the Old Testament – that as the leaders of the nation went, so went the nation as a whole. Let us remember that many of the people said that very thing when Christ made his entry into Jerusalem on an ass and the colt of an ass.

**Matthew 21:7-9 (KJV)** *And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. **8** And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. **9** And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: **Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.***

Israel had rejected the king of the kingdom of heaven, but the words of the cutting off tells us there would be a time when they would, as a nation say, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” Do we have other scriptures which corroborate this idea? Yes, we do. Let’s read them:

**Romans 11:11-12 (KJV)** *I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. **12** Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; **how much more their fulness?***

**Romans 11:25-29 (KJV)** *For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, **until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.** **26** And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: **27** For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. **28** As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. **29** For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*

### **Next – The Kingdom of Heaven established on earth –**

This, will be, as the Lord guides us, the fulfillment of Daniel 2:44 where the stone cut out without hands smites the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream upon its feet that are part of iron and clay, and brakes them to pieces – (This is none other than the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with his saints). Then will the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, become like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind will carry them away, that no place will be found for them: (that is, the rules, policies, and procedures and all else of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome plus the fragmented empire will be taken wholly away) and the stone that smites the image will become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth – this present earth. In other words, when Christ comes, he will destroy all power and authority on this earth and will take up his place as King of kings and Lord of lords.