

“The Arrival of the Kingdom” (Acts 1:3-8)

We’re in a new series “Living in the in-between.” We are living in the in-between time after Jesus’s cross and resurrection, and before his second coming, which is a very unique period actually.

Last time we looked at the new covenant, that is, God will put his Spirit in us, and the Spirit will move us to live out his word (Ezekiel 36:25-28). God showed Ezekiel a vision, in which he experienced that by the power of the word of God, dry bones were restored into the form of human, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, they were revived and became an army, an exceedingly great one.

In Jesus, we are part of this new covenant. God signed the covenant with the cross of Jesus. So this covenant will be never changed, nor cancelled. It will be surely fulfilled.

Why did God make this covenant? It was for the sake of His Holy name. And by doing this to us, he is revealing to the nations that He himself is the Lord.

What is our assignment? What is the purpose of our lives? What are the things God is calling us to do? It’s to be his witness, not to do witness. To be his witness is first, then, since we live as his witnesses, all we do is witnessing for him. We as a church are not imitating, nor trying to be more like the world. But we church want to be more like the Gospel. We are imitating Christ. We are reflecting the character and nature of God. The key for this is the power of the Holy Spirit.

Today, we will look at the connection between the power of the Holy Spirit and the arrival of the Kingdom of God.

1. When is the arrival of the Kingdom?

Jesus was crucified, and on the third day he was raised to life. For 40 days he appeared to the apostles from time to time and gave them many convincing proofs that he was actually alive. On these occasions he talked to them about the Kingdom of God.

Then they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” Then He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when

the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:3-8)

Let’s examine this text closely.

Firstly, what was the question? What did they ask about? They asked if it was the time that Jesus was going to restore the kingdom. Their question was about the time. Then, Jesus replied. In short, he talked about how the kingdom would be realized.

I used to think he didn’t give them the answer. I thought he just spoke to them what he wanted to teach. But I was totally wrong. He actually answered their question.

He said, the times or dates are not for you to know. Even Jesus himself didn’t know it. Then the following part, Jesus didn’t sound like answering the question, but he was actually giving the answer to them.

He talked about how the kingdom would be realized in the world. In other words, when they see these things happening, this will be when they will know that the kingdom is there.

Acts 1:7-8

“He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Jesus actually talked about the time, that is “when the Holy Spirit comes on you.” When the disciples of Jesus are filled with the Holy Spirit, they receive the power to show the Lordship of Jesus in their everyday lives, then through them the kingdom of God is recognized everywhere in the world.

2. His Reign

The central message of Jesus was the kingdom of God. He began his ministry saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. (Mark 1:15 ESV)” And he not only talked about the kingdom of God, but he also demonstrated that the kingdom of God had come to the earth with him. He said, “But if I drive

out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. (Luke 11:20)” And he actually drove out demons, and healed the sick.

Where is the kingdom of God? It is right here where his presence is, it’s right here. But the Kingdom is not completed yet, which means the kingdom of God is advancing and expanding.

The primary meaning of the word “Kingdom” is God’s reign, not his place, not his people. Wherever Jesus is surely acknowledged as king and is obeyed as lord, then the kingdom is present. It’s about his reign, his rule, his lordship.

The Kingdom of God is “the reign of God dynamically active in human history through Jesus Christ, the purpose of which is the redemption of his people from sin and from demonic powers, and the final establishment of the new heavens and the new earth.”¹

The kingdom of God is in the future, in the sense of the Kingdom’s completion and perfection, but the Kingdom is also a present reality, a Kingdom which is not completed and perfected yet. It began with Jesus’ incarnation, his first arrival as a human baby, and has been expanding, and will be fully established when he returns. We are living in the in-between.

The kingdom is the sovereignty of the king. In his kingdom, in his reign, in his rule, in his lordship, he creates a place, and the kingdom creates people. Therefore, the kingdom of God is God’s people in God’s place under God’s plan and power and authority.²

3. May Your Kingdom Come

Where is the kingdom of God? When will it come to us?

In Matthew 6, Jesus taught us a prayer. It begins with, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

We pray, “May your kingdom come. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Where is the kingdom of God? When will it come to us? Do we have to wait until we die and go to heaven?

The prayer goes on like this. “Give us today our daily bread.” It’s about today. Jesus taught us to pray and seek, “Your kingdom come today. Your will be

¹ Anthony Hoekema, quoted by Edmond Teo, “Global Gospel to the Global World,” Notes for GCGW 2019, p13

² Edmond Teo, “Global Gospel to the Global World,” Notes for GCGW 2019, p13

done today, on earth today, as it is in heaven today.” In the prayer we are speaking to God, “Your kingdom is under your rule. You’re ruling my day today and I’m dependent on you. My life is in you. My hope is in you. Because you’re my king, and I’m yours, I’m in your kingdom.”

If we look at the whole Lord’s prayer, we can see that God wants to make the earth, which is our everyday more like heaven, and make people more like Jesus. “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” What do you see here? Forgiveness and reconciliation. Grace and righteousness. Love and peace. Freedom from sin and Satan. When this prayer is answered the earth will be like heaven, and people will be like Jesus! That is the kingdom of God!

How is it possible? What is God’s answer?

The simplest answer is Jesus Christ.

John 1:29, 32-34

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

³² Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. ³³ I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴ I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.”

Here John the Baptist testified for Jesus about three things: No. 1, he is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. No. 2, he will baptize people with the Holy Spirit. And no. 3, he is the Son of God.

These three things are the answer to our prayer, “May your kingdom come.” In other words, we are asking God, “May your will be done in my life today on earth as it is in heaven.”

Because of Jesus, we are set free from sin and Satan. Because of Jesus, grace and righteousness come to us. Because of Jesus, forgiveness and reconciliation are ours. Because of Jesus, we are in love and peace.

And, through Jesus, we can come to know about God’s reign, God’s authority, and God’s kingdom because he is the Son of God.

And, Jesus is the one who baptizes us with the Holy Spirit, which is the essential key for the arrival of the Kingdom of God.

Disciples asked Jesus, “When is the arrival of the kingdom?” He said, the times or dates are not for you to know. Even Jesus himself didn’t know it. Then, he told them how the kingdom would be recognized in the world.

Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

When is the arrival of the kingdom? The answer is this: When the followers of Jesus are filled with the Holy Spirit, they receive the power to show the Lordship of Jesus in their everyday lives, then through them the kingdom of God is recognized everywhere in the world. Because the kingdom is about his reign, his rule, his lordship.

4. The Power of the Holy Spirit

What does the Holy Spirit do in us so that our everyday testifies the Lordship of Jesus to the world? What will our life be like when we are filled with the Holy Spirit?

1) The Holy Spirit enable us to show the Lordship of Jesus through our living.

- When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are free from sin.

“For the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death. (Rom 8:2 NLT)”

- When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we live right.

“So I advise you to live according to your new life in the Holy Spirit. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves. (Gal 5:16 NLT)”

-When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we demonstrate the truth.

“when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth. (John 16:13 NASB)”

- When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we care life and peace.

“For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, (Rom 8:6 NASB)”

- When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we glorify Jesus as the Holy Spirit does.

“He [the Holy Spirit] will glorify Me [Jesus], for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. (John 16:14 NASB)”

2) The Holy Spirit makes us be like Jesus. Wherever we are, we release the fragrance of Jesus. People around us may feel something about Jesus. Because he dwells in us, fills us, and flows from within us.

- When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we reflect the characters of Jesus.

“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18 NIV)”

“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. ¹⁵ For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing;” (2 Corinthians 2:14-15 NIV)

- When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we have Jesus dwelling in us.

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. (Gal 2:20 NIV)”

Wherever we are, we bring the presence of Jesus because of the Holy Spirit in us. That is, in the place where we are, the kingdom of God is revealed. Because his presence is there. The king is there. His rule is there. The kingdom is there.

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we have the power to show the Lordship of Jesus in our everyday lives, then through us the kingdom of God is recognized everywhere in the world.

5. Be Filled with the Holy Spirit

On the day of Pentecost, the promise was fulfilled.

The disciples gathered together, and prayed together, waiting for the promise of the Father, the baptism of the Holy Spirit as Jesus commanded.

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. (Acts 2:1-4 NIV)”

And Peter explained it this way. “This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:¹⁷ “ ‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. (Acts 2:16-18 NIV)”

What does it mean? The prophesy has come true. The promise of the Father was fulfilled. The Holy Spirit was poured out. The waiting is over, the Holy Spirit is here, right here.

So the Bible says, “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. (Gal 5:25 NASB)” “Be filled with the Spirit. (Eph 5:18 NIV)”

The early Christians had been filled with the Holy Spirit. And in the difficult time, they prayed to God, and God answered their prayer. God poured out the Holy Spirit again and filled them with the Holy Spirit again. It is not that they were filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and that’s all. The early Christians continuously asked to be filled with the Holy Spirit. God answered their prayer and continuously filled them with the Holy Spirit.

You and I may have been baptized with the Holy Spirit somewhere, sometime, somehow. You might have had a dramatic experience of the power of the Holy Spirit. But that doesn’t mean anyone can say, “I have had enough of the Holy Spirit, I don’t need the Spirit anymore.” You might have experienced wonderful spiritual events, but it’s in the past. We live today, now.

We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit every moment of our life. It's like you're breathing. One breath is only enough for the moment. You need to take next breath to fill your body with new air constantly. That's how our body works. Likewise, we always need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. That is how a Christian life works.

Isaiah 58:11

The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

Do you have a feeling that you are crossing through a sun-scorched land? Dose any of you need strength to live in a dry land? Do you like to live abundant life like a well-watered garden, not like a desert? Do you want to have a spring inside of you whose waters never fail while you are in the wilderness?

John 7:37-38

...Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

For closing, let me ask you one question. Are you longing to be filled with the Holy Spirit today?

I am not asking you if you have been born again. Are you seeking to be filled with the Holy Spirit? If you are not filled continuously, though you may have been born again, you may revert back to being a slave to sin as time goes on, and you won't bear fruit. We Christians always need to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Are you thirsty to be filled with the Holy Spirit? I am not asking you what kind of spiritual experiences you have had. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit constantly. If you are not filled, you're losing living water in you. And other things are filling your heart, your mind, your body and your life. Instead of streams of living water, what will begin to flow from within you then? Words of blame, words of judgement, words of attach, words of complain.

We, Christians always need to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Are you desiring to be filled with the Holy Spirit? I am not asking you what kind of church programs and activities you are taking part in and what's

happening there. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit every moment. If you are not filled, you will lose the presence of God. You will lose peace and joy of salvation. You will forget the purpose of God's sending you to the world, and cannot accomplish the call God has given you as the one redeemed through the life of Jesus. We, Christians always need to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the Father's promise. It's His will for every Christian who living in the in-between.

For Lifenet groups and personal reflection

The primary meaning of the Kingdom of God is God's reign. Why is it essential for us to be filled with the Holy Spirit for the Kingdom to be recognized in the world?

John the Baptist testified three things about Jesus (John 1:29, 32-34). How can the Lord's prayer (Matt 6:9-13) be answered in our daily life through Jesus?

Which state of being filled with the Holy Spirit do you most long for?

- Being free from sin (Rom 8:2)
- Living right (Gal 5:16)
- Demonstrating the truth (John 16:13)
- Caring for life and peace (Rom 8:6)
- Glorifying Jesus as the Holy Spirit does (John 16:14)
- Reflecting the characters of Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:18: 2:14-15)
- Having Jesus dwelling in us (Gal 2:20)

Read Isaiah 58:11 and John 7:37-38. What do these words mean for you?