

Handout 1: Matthew Lesson 3

In the New Testament, the Greek word *basileia* is translated “kingship” (an abstract noun), “kingdom” (a concrete noun) or “reign” (an action noun). The word “kingdom” is found over 50 times in Matthew’s Gospel.

St. Matthew presents the coming of the Messiah’s Kingdom as a drama in seven acts:

Act I: The preparation of the Kingdom in the birth and early childhood of the child-Messiah (1:18-2:23).

Act II: The formal proclamation of the Kingdom by St. John the Baptist and by Jesus Christ to the Apostles and the people in the Sermon on the Mount (3:1-7:29).

Act III: The preaching of the Kingdom by Jesus and the signs (miracles) that confirm His authority (8:1-10:42).

Act IV: The opposition to the Kingdom by the Jewish authorities that results in Jesus’ continuation of teaching through parables (11:1-13:52).

Act V: St. Peter becomes the Vicar of Christ’s Kingdom; he and the other 11 emissaries (the Apostles) and Jesus’ other disciples are the “firstfruits” of the Kingdom (13:53-18:35).

Act VI: The crisis that prepares the way for the definitive coming of the Kingdom (19:1-25:46).

Act VII: The Kingdom is established through suffering and victory—Christ’s Passion and Resurrection (26:1-28:20).

Salvation history can be divided into four periods of the “Kingdom of God”:

1. Before the Advent of Jesus Christ
2. During Jesus’ earthly ministry
3. In this present (last) age of man
4. In the age to come with the return of Christ to claim His Bride the Church

The New Testament presents three apparently contradictory teachings about the Kingdom of God:

1. The Kingdom of God is at hand/near (Mt 3:2; 24:33)
2. The Kingdom of God is present (Mt 4:17; Lk 17:21).
3. The Kingdom of God is yet to come in the future (Mt 25:1; Jn 18:36; Acts 1:6-7).

In reality there is no contradiction. St. John the Baptist and Jesus announced the coming of the kingdom during their ministries. In this present age, the Kingdom of God comes to all who put their faith and trust in Jesus and His message of salvation—but it comes partially. However, when Christ returns at the end of this the Final Age of man, He will unite the Kingdom of the Church on earth to His Kingdom in Heaven, inaugurating a Kingdom that is complete (Rev 19:5-8).

CCC 2816: The Kingdom of God lies ahead of us. It is brought near in the Word incarnate. It is proclaimed throughout the whole Gospel, and it has come in Christ’s death and Resurrection. The Kingdom of God has been coming since the Last Supper and, in the Eucharist, it is in our midst. The kingdom will come in glory when Christ hands it over to his Father.

Handout 2: Matthew Lesson 3

There we shall rest and see, we shall see and love, we shall love and praise. Behold what will be at the end without end. For what other end do we have, if not to reach the kingdom which has no end?

St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 22,30

1. John was the son of the priest Zechariah.
2. His birth was foretold by the angel Gabriel.
3. He was filled with the Holy Spirit in his mother's womb.
4. He was a kinsman of Jesus through Mary.
5. His mission was to turn the people back to their God, leading them in the "spirit of Elijah," the 9th century BC prophet, to make them "fit for the Lord."
6. Like his father, John was a descendant of Aaron and a chief priest.
7. John was six months older than Jesus.
8. He began his ministry when he was 30 years old (Lk 3:23) in the 15th year of the reign of the Roman Emperor Tiberius (Lk 3:1-2), which was 28 AD (counting as the ancients did with no zero place-value). Therefore, Jesus' ministry lasted three years from 28-30 AD (as the ancients counted).

In St. Matthew's Gospel the dimensions of God's Kingdom are described as threefold: ethical, ecclesial, and eschatological (Mitch and Sri, *The Gospel of Matthew*, page 80).

1. The kingdom is ethical because it demands the human response of repentance and conversion (Mt 3:2; 4:17) followed by humility (Mt 18:1-4), forgiveness (Mt 18:23-35), and in living the new Law of internal righteousness that is demonstrated in external actions as outlined in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:3-6:33).
2. The kingdom is ecclesial because God's power and presence is mediated through the Church's apostolic leaders and their successors (Mt 16:18-19; 18:18-19), and by the faithful of the Church community (Mt 18:20) to whom Jesus has entrusted the mystery of the kingdom (Mt 13:11).
3. The kingdom is eschatological, a word referring to the "end times," because even though the kingdom was coming in Jesus' earthly ministry and is being fulfilled in the present age, it is only when Jesus returns again to claim His Bride, the Church, that the full splendor of God's Kingdom will be revealed at the hour of the Final Judgment (Mt 25:31-46).

Before Christ's second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers ... (CCC 675). The Church still will enter the glory of the kingdom only through this final Passover, when she will follow her lord in his death and Resurrection. The kingdom will be fulfilled, then, not by a historic triumph of the Church through a progressive ascendancy, but only by God's victory over the final unleashing of evil, which will cause his Bride to come down from heaven. God's triumph over the revolt of evil will take the form of the Last Judgment after the final cosmic upheaval of this passing world (CCC 677; see Rev 20:11-21:1-4).