

## 5. WHEN ‘KINGDOM OF GOD’ MEANS MONARCHY

OT prophecies about the Messiah and his earthly reign are extensive. Ever since the Sinaitic covenant was made with Israel, they had the promise that if they were obedient to the terms of the covenant, they would be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, because all the earth belonged to the Lord (Exod 19:6). A kingdom of priests is translated by the Septuagint as a royal priesthood, that is, a priestly nation of royal power and glory, not just a nation of priests governed by the Lord. They were to be God’s nation who would govern the world for him.

But Israel didn’t keep the covenant, their idolatry and disobedience disqualified them. This came to a head when they rejected Jesus as their Messiah and handed him over to Pilate. Jesus then conferred the kingdom on his followers; Christian believers from all nations would now reign with him (1 Pet 2:4-5, 9, Rev 1:6, 5:9-10). Daniel is the only prophet who foresaw the exaltation of the saints to the extent that they would rule with the Messiah. They are called the saints of the Most High or the saints of the high places (Dan 7:18, 21-22, 27).

The following verses make it clear that Israel forfeited their right to the kingship, and that it was subsequently given by Jesus to his followers who consist of redeemed people from every tribe, language, and nation. This is the church that Jesus is building for himself. As children of God through the new birth, they are members of God’s family (Jn 1:12), which makes them heirs, heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17). They and their Lord are only heirs because they have not begun to rule yet. Jesus will be king, and his followers will constitute his monarchy. They’ll all inherit the kingship.

Forty-four percent of ‘kingdom of God’ verses refer to believers, teaching them about their relationship to the kingdom from God and their position in the monarchy. One aspect of the church’s glorification is to rule with Christ after his return to Earth as his government during the millennium.

The Messianic monarchy *belongs* to the humble (Mt 5:3, 10, 19:14, Mk 10:14-15, Lk 6:20, 12:32, 18:16-17, Col 1:12-13, Jas 2:5).

Believers are *entering* the monarchy now (Mt 13:38, 16:19, 19:23-24, 21:31, 43, 22:2, 9-10, 23:13, Mk 4:26, 10:15, 23-25, 12:34, Lk 9:62, 12:32, 14:15, 16:16, 18:17, 24-25, Jn 3:3, 5).

The monarchy is characterized by righteousness, justice, joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17), and power (1 Cor 4:20).

The Messiah calls individuals from *all nations* into the monarchy in a largely unnoticed process (Mt 13:24, 38, 47, 22:2, 9, Mk 4:26, 29, Lk 13:20, 29).

The monarchy grows from a small number to a multitude (Mt 13:31-32, Mk 4:30-32, Lk 13:18-19).

When the kingdom from God refers to the saints, it teaches us about their present position in Christ. The kingdom from God is theirs in the sense that they are heirs. They will not exercise their kingship until Jesus returns. Because of their present status, many scholars have mistakenly concluded that the kingdom from God has been inaugurated. Even Jesus is only an heir; his Messianic reign has not begun. When the seventh trumpet is blown, the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of our Lord (Rev 11:15). That is the beginning of his reign. The hallelujah chorus “Hallelujah, for the Lord God Almighty reigns” (Rev 19:6) does not become reality until Jesus returns and the world kingdom, ‘Babylon,’ falls. Most versions simply translate ‘reigns,’ but the verb is aorist and should be translated “has become king,” or “has begun to reign” as is appreciated by several of them.

In the following kingdom from God verses, kingdom means kingship and refers to the *monarchy*. It is the Messianic kingship (government) that believers inherit. They are qualified to share in the inheritance of God’s holy people in the kingdom of light, the kingdom of the Son he loves, in contrast to being in Satan’s dominion of darkness from which they came (Col 1:13).

Entering or inheriting the kingdom from God is not about the lordship of Christ as some teach. Entering the kingdom is entering the kingship,

the Messianic government. The kingdom of the Son he loves is the Messianic kingdom which Jesus called the kingdom from God.

Unbelievers will not inherit this kingdom. This does not mean they won't be there; it means they have no chance of inheriting the kingship and being part of the ruling class. They are rejected as unbelieving Israelites were. Both Israel and surviving unbelievers will be subjects of the kingdom. That is why the Messiah will rule with a rod of iron.

There are different *status* levels within the monarchy. Not everyone is equal; the saints will be rewarded according to what they have done.

Believers *enter* God's family when they are born again. They become God's children. When Jesus returns, they'll inherit the monarchy. One day while translating the Boko Bible, I asked my African translation team what it meant to enter a kingdom in their language. Without hesitation, they said it meant to enter the government. That transformed my way of thinking about the kingdom from God. Many Bible verses speak about entering or not entering the kingdom now. Although the Messianic reign is future, believers can rejoice in their present status. They are saved, they have eternal life, their names are written in the Lamb's book of life, and they are heirs of the kingdom.

## **Metonymy in the parables**

Many of Jesus' parables are about the saints who will possess royal authority in the Messianic monarchy that God will establish on Earth. Most relate to their present status and circumstances, while the next chapter concentrates on the Messiah and his monarchy's future reign. In Matthew 13, the parables teach us about the present formation and nature of the monarchy.

### **1. The poor in spirit possess the kingship**

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingship from heaven (the Messianic monarchy) (Mt 5:3).

Every king has a monarchy and Jesus will have one too. He confers kingship on his disciples (Lk 22:29), they will reign with him for a thousand years (Rev 20:4-6), and they will reign over the Earth (Rev 5:10). The poor in spirit are those who know their need of God. In Luke's parallel passage, Jesus said to his disciples: Blessed are you

who are poor. In contrast to world politics, Jesus confers kingship on the poor and the weak who believe in him. It is important to realize that the kingdom belongs to them. They are not subjects; they are heirs, and they will be rulers over the Earth. Blessed are the meek, for they'll inherit the earth (Mt 5:5). Christians will inherit the Earth when they rule it with Christ during the millennium. Daniel was the only prophet who saw these things in his visions. He wrote: As I watched, this horn (Antichrist) was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the high places, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom (Dan 7:21-22). And again: Then the sovereignty, power, and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the saints of the high places (Dan 7:27).

## **2. The persecuted possess the kingship**

Blessed are those who are persecuted for doing what is right, for theirs is the kingship from heaven (the Messianic monarchy) (Mt 5:10).

The righteous are persecuted for identifying themselves with Jesus and doing God's will. Their reward is the kingship that comes from God. As sons of God, they are heirs of the Messianic kingdom. They have not yet begun to reign, but the kingship is assuredly theirs. Salvation, eternal life, resurrection, and inheriting the kingdom are different aspects of their glorification.

## **3. The least in the monarchy is greater than John the Baptist**

I'm telling you the truth, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist, yet whoever is least in the kingship from heaven (the Messianic monarchy) is greater than he (Mt 11:11).

The person who is least in the kingdom is still very privileged. He is saved, he has eternal life, and he is part of the monarchy who, after the resurrection, will rule with the Messiah. The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since then the good news of the kingship from God is preached (Lk 16:16). The *status* or privilege of one who is a member of God's royal family through

being born again is greater than the status of John as a herald of the kingdom. John, as a believer in Jesus, will also be part of the monarchy after the resurrection, along with the Jewish patriarchs. We are not greater than him.

#### **4. The parable of the sower (Mt 13:3-9, 18-23)**

In this parable, the seed is the message being preached by Jesus about the Messiah and his kingdom (13:19). The parable tells us different ways people respond to the Messiah. Some people don't get enough information (the seed on the path) and Satan comes and removes what they hear before they can thoughtfully respond to it. Other people's thinking is too shallow (the seed that fell on rocky places), and they don't allow the message to go deep and change their lives. Others respond to the message positively, but due to worries and the love of money, they don't persevere (the seed that fell among thorns). But when the message about Jesus is accepted by those who have a noble and good heart, they are converted and embrace the teaching about the Messiah and his coming kingdom and become fruitful to varying degrees.

#### **5. The parable of the mustard seed**

Jesus said: What will we say the kingship from God (the Messianic monarchy) is like, or what parable will we use to describe it? It's like a mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds when sown, yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of garden plants, with big enough branches for birds to perch in its shade (Mk 4:30-32).

The mustard seed is very tiny, but its tree grows big enough for birds to perch in. Compare the Messianic passage of Ezekiel 17:22-24, in which the Lord plants a sprig from a cedar tree, and all kinds of birds come to dwell and nest in it. The birds that come and perch in the tree are believers who become the monarchy in the Messiah's kingdom, not mere subjects. The Messiah is planting seed in his garden; the whole world. It began with the small band of Jesus' disciples, but on the day of Pentecost, 120 believers gathered and soon multiplied to 3000 and then 5000. Over the centuries, people from all nations and ethnic groups have responded. One-third of the world's population

presently claims some adherence to the Christian faith, and only the Lord knows those who are his; now, a very large number from all nations. The Jewish audience expected the Messiah to come in power and defeat their enemies; they weren't expecting the kingdom to start like this.

## **6. The parable of the wheat and the weeds**

Jesus told them another parable: The kingship from heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field (Mt 13:24).

In this parable, the Messiah is again sowing seed, but this time, the good seed he sows is not the message. The 'seed' stands for the sons of the kingdom (13:38), the righteous, those who will constitute the monarchy in the coming kingdom. It would not be surprising to Jesus' Jewish audience to hear that the seeds he is sowing turn out to be people. See the 'The sons of the Kingdom' section in chapter 11.

The field is the world, meaning that the kingdom from God is not only for the Jews as his hearers would have expected, but for all nations. The sower's enemy, the devil, also sows seeds, the weeds, which stand for the sons of the evil one; evildoers in general. Satan is also winning many souls to his side. The righteous and the wicked are mixed up in the world and can't be separated until the harvest (judgment) at *the end of the age*. This harvest at the end of the age is not the last judgment, but the time of judgment at the Messiah's coming, as described in Revelation 14:14-20. The weeds are destroyed at the battle of Armageddon, that great winepress of God's wrath, and from there cast into hell. The good seed inherit the monarchy so they are resurrected and receive the kingship.

This scenario is reminiscent of the people Daniel referred to when he said that many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awaken, some to everlasting life and some to disgrace and everlasting contempt. Those who manifest wisdom will shine like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who turn many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever (Dan 12:2-3). These are the saints who receive the kingdom, inheriting it forever (Dan 7:18).

## **7. The parable of the yeast**

He told them still another parable: The kingship from heaven is like yeast that a woman took and hid in sixty pounds of flour until it worked through all the dough (Mt 13:33 ).

This time, the Messiah's monarchy is compared to a woman mixing yeast into three measures of flour until it permeates the whole. The amount of yeast is tiny and inconspicuous, but it permeates all sixty pounds of flour. The powerful influence of the gospel message is invisible, just like yeast, a fungal substance that causes fermentation. The unbelieving world pays little attention to this spiritual activity, but when the task is finished, it will have permeated the whole world, transforming people from every tribe, people, language, and nation, all of whom become the monarchy in the Messiah's kingdom. It is a powerful and penetrating message; wherever it is faithfully preached, there are results.

## **8. The good seed are the monarchy**

The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the the sons of the kingdom (the Messianic monarchy) (Mt 13:38).

In explaining the parable of the weeds, Jesus said the good seed is sown by the Son of Man and the weeds are sown by the evil one. The good seed the Messiah sows is not the message here; the seed are the sons of the kingdom, not the citizenry. This is a Jewish idiom. In Matthew 8:12, it is the sons of the kingdom (the Jews) who are thrown outside. They were meant to be the rulers, but they forfeited the kingdom. In 2 Kings 11:1, Athalia destroyed the whole royal family (Heb: all the royal seed), the heirs. The good seed are the monarchy, the weeds are the sons of the evil one who will be punished in hell. The process is not visible, but the world population is polarized into two groups who will be judged and separated by the Messiah at the end of the age. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the Messianic reign established by their Father (Mt 13:43).

## **9. The parable of the fishing net**

Once again, the kingdom from heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish (Mt 13:47).

The lake is the world, and the fish are people of every tribe and nation. Just as a net cast into a lake catches fish of every kind, the preaching of the good news about Jesus attracts many different kinds of people, and they don't all turn out to be good. At the end of the age, judgment begins with God's household. The angels will separate the righteous from the wicked and assign them to their eternal destinies. The righteous are resurrected for eternal life, while the wicked are judged and condemned to hell. This is a warning to Christians to ensure that they are genuine God-fearers and not nominal Christians to whom the Lord will say, I never knew you.

## **10. The keys of the kingdom of heaven**

I'll give you the keys of the kingship from heaven (the Messianic monarchy). Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven (Mt 16:19).

The key to the house of David is mentioned in Isaiah 22:22 and again in Revelation 3:7 where Jesus is the one who has the authority to open and shut, to admit or exclude people from his monarchy. He gives these keys to Peter, and then to all the apostles (Mt 18:18) and tells them to go and make disciples of all nations. The keys represent the authority they have to preach the gospel and enable people to enter the monarchy. He was talking to the apostles, but by analogy, this authority passes down through the ages to all believers. Through preaching the gospel, they open the door to people to enter the Messianic monarchy. Those who respond to evangelistic ministry become God's children and heirs of the kingship. The future perfect aspect of the verbs indicates that the apostles will be fulfilling what God has already decided. The binding and loosing are best interpreted in the light of John 20:22-23: When he said that, he breathed on them and said: Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive people's sins, they'll be forgiven. If you don't forgive them, they won't be forgiven.

## **11. Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?**

At that time Jesus's disciples came to him and asked: Who is the greatest in the kingdom from heaven (the Messianic monarchy) ... And he said: I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like children, you'll never enter the kingdom from heaven. The person who humbles himself and becomes like this child is the greatest in the kingdom from heaven (Mt 18:1, 3-4).

The kingdom of heaven is not the Church; it is the monarchy, genuine believers who will rule with Christ during the millennium. To become a true believer, one needs to display the humility and trusting nature that children exhibit, to be born again and become a new creation in Christ. Jesus often said the first will be last and the last first. Status in this age will not be recognized in the next. The poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers will be exalted. Not everyone will have equal status in the monarchy but worth will not be decided by worldly standards.

## **12. The parable of the unmerciful servant**

Therefore, the kingdom from heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants (Mt 18:23).

The parable is in response to Peter's question about how often he should forgive his brother. Brother refers to someone with a close tie, like a fellow believer. Jesus's parable about a king and his servants teaches that forgivingness should also exist between members of his monarchy. They are brothers and should forgive each other from their heart. Although the word used for servants is literally 'slaves', it refers to the king's officials; slaves would not owe the king such a great amount of money. God has shown such love to us in forgiving us all our sins that we must respond in like manner toward each other.

## **13. Only the humble will possess the monarchy**

Jesus said: Let children come to me, do not hinder them, for the kingship from heaven (the Messianic monarchy) belongs to people like this (Mt 19:14).

Similar to the above, this verse expresses the need for humility to enter the monarchy. God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble (Jas 4:6, 1 Pet 5:5). Even children can enter the monarchy and should be encouraged to trust God. Many believers, if not most, find the Lord in their youth. The KJV translation: “of such is the kingdom from God” is a possible translation. The Messianic monarchy consists of people like this and is possessed by people like this. God gives them eternal life and kingship that begins with a thousand-year reign on Earth. His salvation is a gift, so they should receive it humbly with wonder and gratitude.

#### **14. It is hard for rich people to enter the monarchy**

Then Jesus said to his disciples: I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich person to enter the kingship from heaven (the Messianic monarchy). Again, I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingship from God (Mt 19:23-24).

Humility is needed for someone to surrender their life to Jesus and be born again. It is an admission that their life is not what it should be and it involves submission. Without the new birth, nobody can enter the Messianic monarchy. Only those who believe in Jesus and receive him in humility can become children of God and co-heirs with Christ.

This is the first of many verses that speak about entering the kingship, the basic meaning of the Greek word for kingdom. Entering the kingship means joining people who have royal authority, the royal family or monarchy. Christians are never referred to as subjects in the Messianic kingdom.

Jesus was responding to an inquiry about what must be done to get eternal life. Jesus spoke about entering the kingship, and the disciples then said: “Who then can be saved?” Salvation, eternal life, and life in the Messianic monarchy are different ways of looking at the destiny of the righteous. All who are saved have eternal life and are members of God’s royal family.

## **15. The parable of the workers in the vineyard**

The kingship from heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard (Mt 20:1).

The parable is about a landowner and the workers he hires to work in his vineyard. The landowner represents the Messiah, and the workers are his monarchy. The parable teaches the king's generosity toward his people, his grace, which transcends human ideas about fairness. Nobody receives less than they deserve, and so nobody should despise the generosity shown to those who get saved and don't seem to do much. All are saved by grace. At Christ's judgment seat, everyone will receive what is due for the things done in the body, whether good or bad (2 Cor 5:10), but this parable is not to do with rewards for faithful service; it is about the important social position or status each one receives when they are saved. As God's children, they are *all* heirs of the monarchy.

## **16. Readiness to do God's will a prerequisite**

Jesus said to them: I tell you the truth, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingship from God (the Messianic monarchy) ahead of you (Mt 21:31).

Jesus told a parable about two sons to Jewish leaders: chief priests and elders. When given work to do, the first son said he didn't want to go, but he went later. The second son said: I'll go, sir, but he didn't. The Jewish leaders agreed that the first son did better, then Jesus applied it to them, saying tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the Messianic kingship ahead of them. He came to his own people, and they didn't receive him, but to those who did believe in him as the Messiah, he gave the right to become God's children (Jn 1:9).

## **17. The monarchy to be taken away from Israel**

Therefore, I tell you that the kingship from God (the Messianic monarchy) will be taken away from you and given to another group of people who will produce its fruit (Mt 21:43).

In the parable of the tenants, Israel fails in its task to run God's vineyard. They stoned the prophets and killed the Son, who was the heir of the vineyard. When the Jewish leaders rejected the Messiah and handed him over to the Romans, even the crowds chose Barabbas and told Pilate to crucify him. So, Israel lost their right to the kingship, and God gave it to a new group of people called out from all nations who would be fruitful believers.

The parable of the two sons, the tenants, and the wedding banquet all teach that the Jews, for the most part, would reject the gospel, and the kingship which was originally meant to be theirs would be given to other tenants, the believing Gentiles. Messiah's kingdom is a future reign on earth, but the monarchy is being developing now in a secret, unseen way, until that day when God reveals who his children are; millions of men, women, and children from every nation, tribe, people, and language.

The true church consists of born-again believers, who will be the monarchy in Messiah's kingdom. The government is on the Messiah's shoulders, but he doesn't rule alone. In God's plan to glorify his saints, he has adopted them into his royal family, a royal priesthood who know him, serve him, and worship him.

## **18. The parable of the wedding banquet**

The kingdom from heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son (Mt 22:2).

The parable of the wedding feast has the same teaching as the parable of the tenants. Through unbelief, Israel forfeits the kingship, and people of all nations are invited to replace them. In this parable, God is the king who invites the guests (Israel) to a wedding feast for his Son, Jesus the Messiah. The parable focuses on the attitude of those who are invited. Being too busy with the affairs of the world, they reject the invitation. The king deems them unworthy and tells his servants to go and invite whomever they can find. Believers in Jesus are not only guests at this Messianic banquet, which takes place when Jesus returns, as the resurrected and glorified Church, they will be the bride who rules with her husband (Rev 19:6-9, 21:2, 9-10).

The significance of the Church, as far as the kingship from God is concerned, is that they are the people being called out from every tribe and nation to be heirs of Messiah's monarchy. All the Matthew 25 parables (bridesmaids, talents, sheep and goats) relate to the kingdom's establishment at the second coming. Some of the bridesmaids weren't ready and didn't make it into the monarchy. Those who received talents were rewarded according to their faithfulness in service, but one was excluded from the monarchy and cast into hell because of his lack of faith. The sheep and the goats were judged and separated according to their attitude towards the Messiah's brethren (Christians), which points to their faith in Jesus, or their lack of it. Christians should do good to all people, but especially to those who belong to the household of faith (Gal 6:10).

### **19. The Pharisees were closing the door to the monarchy**

Woe to you, rabbis and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You close the door of the kingship from heaven (the Messianic monarchy) in people's faces. You don't enter, and you prevent those who are entering from doing so (Mt 23:13).

The rabbis (Jewish teachers) and the Pharisees had the keys to the monarchy. By teaching God's word, they could enable people to find faith and enter the kingship, but they failed in their commission to teach people faithfully. They didn't believe in the Messiah themselves, and they persecuted those who wanted to follow him. So Jesus gave the keys to the apostles, and preaching the gospel to the lost is now the church's major mission. It is those who believe in Jesus and are born again who enter the kingship, as Jesus explained to Nicodemus. When Jesus returns, they will reign with him on Earth (Rev 5:10).

### **20. The parable of the ten virgins**

At that time, the kingship from heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom (Mt 25:1).

This parable, like the others in Matthew 25, concerns the return of the Messiah and is a warning for Christians (represented here by ten virgins) to be ready. Five of them are not ready when he returns, and

the door to the marriage feast and the Messianic reign is shut. When they ask the Lord to open the door, he says he does not know them. The wise virgins are not only bridesmaids, they are the bride of Christ and are resurrected and raptured to meet their Lord in the air. The unready virgins can be compared with the unfaithful servant who was entrusted with the Messiah's property in the parable of the talents. He was rejected also. Not all Christians are genuine. True believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit, symbolized here by the oil.

## **21. The parables of the bags of money**

It (the kingship from God) will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them (Mt 25:14).

This parable of the bags of money is similar to the parable of the ten minas (Lk 19:11-27), but here, instead of a man of noble birth going to a far country to be appointed king, it is just a man going on a journey. Both parables are about the Messiah and his servants (Christians). When the Messiah returns, he settles accounts with his servants, two of whom have been faithful and one not. He congratulates the faithful servants and says: As you were faithful with a few things, I'll put you in charge of many things. Enter into your Master's happiness. In Luke's Gospel, the faithful servants are put in charge of ten and five cities, respectively. In Matthew 24:47 the Master rewards his faithful servants by putting them in charge of all his possessions. They will reign with Christ.

## **22. The parable of the sheep and the goats**

Then the king will say to those on his right: You who my Father has blessed, come and take your inheritance, the kingship he prepared for you since the creation of the world (Mt 25:34).

The king is the Messiah, the inheritance is the monarchy that God has prepared for the righteous (Cf. Mt 20:23). God's original purpose for the world will now be fulfilled by those who are saved. Redeemed mankind will rule the world as the Messianic monarchy, just as Daniel prophesied: Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the saints of the Most

High (Dan 7:27). They will reign over the Earth for a thousand years (Rev 5:10, 20:6). When expressing reign or authority, *over* is a preferable preposition to *on*. The saints will not live on Earth during the millennium; they will reign over it from New Jerusalem in the sky (Rev 21:10-11).

This parable is notoriously hard to interpret. For centuries, scholars have found it hard to harmonize with other scriptures. The first clue is that Matthew 24 & 25 are concerned with the end of this age, the Messiah's return to earth, not with the end of the world. This passage is a parable, like the other two passages in this chapter, the parable of the ten virgins and the parable of the talents. The sheep and the goats symbolize the righteous and the wicked. The good shepherd, Jesus, is giving his reason for how he'll distinguish between them and judge them. He is not talking about the great white throne judgment that will take place at the end of the world.

The bulk of the passage concerns the attitude people have toward Jesus in this world, as illustrated by their attitude toward his *brethren*. The parable has nothing to do with caring for the poor, as it is often portrayed as doing. Jesus made it clear who his brethren were in Matthew 12:48-50, when he said: Who is my mother, and who are my brothers? Pointing to his disciples, he said: These are my mother and my brothers, for whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, sister, and mother. This is a parable about the people living on Earth at the end of the Great Tribulation when Christ returns. There will be the elect, the true followers of Jesus, and the remainder, who choose to align themselves with the Antichrist.

When the Messiah comes in his glory with all the angels, he'll sit on *his* glorious throne, the throne of his ancestor David. As king, he judges, and his judgment begins at his return. It is premillennial because the elect are invited to take their inheritance, *the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world*. Two major events that occur at his return are the resurrection and rapture of the righteous, and the defeat of the nations who have gathered to fight against God's people, Israel, at Jerusalem. This is the separation of the sheep from the goats that takes place; the righteous are resurrected to inherit the

kingdom, while the wicked are condemned and destroyed at the battle of Armageddon.

Jesus' disciples may have thought about the prophet Joel, who prophesied that the Lord would *gather all nations* and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat and judge them there (Joel 3:2, 12). This parable is about these very nations. Why do *the nations* conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The Earth's kings take their stand, and the rulers gather together against the Lord and his Messiah. The Lord rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying: I've installed my King on Zion, my holy mountain (Ps 2:1-2,6). All people will be polarized in this way in the last days.

Jesus is teaching here about two destinies: eternal punishment and eternal life. There are two kinds of people, the sheep and the goats, the saved and the lost, those who have aligned themselves with Jesus, and those who haven't; instead, they chose the Antichrist. The basis of judgment is their attitude towards Jesus and his *brethren*. The righteous are saved because of their faith, resulting in an affinity with Jesus's brethren, which has a practical outcome (Mt 10:41-42). They are invited to come and inherit the Messianic kingship (cf. the good seed in Mt 13:43). The goats, who come to attack Jerusalem, have no concern for Jesus and his brethren, they are fighting against them, persecuting and killing them. They have no love for Jesus's brethren. They are consigned to hell; their destiny is now sealed (cf. the weeds in Mt 13:40-42).

The righteous will receive their rewards at the resurrection, while many of the wicked will be killed and all of them will receive their condemnation at Armageddon and their eternal punishment after their resurrection at the last judgment. There will be no need for prolonged legal proceedings with prosecutors and lawyers. The Lord knows everything, and his decision will be final.

### **23. The parable of the growing seed**

He also said: This is what the kingship from God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground (Mk 4:26).

This parable is about seed that a man scatters on the ground. It sprouts and grows day and night, producing first a stalk, then a head of grain

full of seed, then, when the crop is ripe, it is harvested. The man represents the Messiah, and as in the parable of the weeds, the seed that he sows are the sons of the kingdom, hearers of the word who become members of his royal family. The growing seed teaches us about the mysterious way in which a believer is born again, matures, and is finally glorified. After they are born again as God's children, they develop and become fruitful and when the condition of the whole crop permits, it's harvested by the Messiah at the resurrection of the righteous. It all happens unobtrusively, much different from the way the Jews were expecting the Messianic reign to arrive.

#### **24. The enquirer who was not far from the kingdom**

You are not far from the kingdom from God (the Messianic monarchy) (Mk 12:34).

When Jesus heard that one of the scribes gave a wise answer, he could see that he was sincere and told him that he wasn't far from the kingdom. He was close to entering the Messianic monarchy, that group of believers, the community that he was building, who would one day reign with him. There was no kingdom nearby for him to enter, but this could be a case of metonymy where Jesus was simply telling him that he wasn't far from the Messiah.

#### **25. The enquirer who is not fit for the kingdom**

Jesus replied: No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingship from God (the Messianic monarchy) (Lk 9:62).

This enquirer wanted to say goodbye to his family before he followed Jesus as his disciple. Saying goodbye to his family may seem innocent enough, but how many enquirers have been sidetracked by their family or friends? The decision to follow Jesus must be enthusiastic and show definite commitment, otherwise, the enquirer is not worthy to serve in the Messianic monarchy.

## **26. The Father gives his children kingship**

Don't be afraid, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingship (Lk 12:32).

Jesus' group of disciples was only a 'little flock,' but they were not to be afraid, because it was the Father's pleasure to confer kingship on them. The Father predestined them for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ (Eph 1:5) and they were sealed by the Holy Spirit, who is the guarantor of their inheritance (Eph 1:13-14). They should not be afraid; they are members of the royal family.

## **27. Feasting in the Messianic monarchy**

When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus: Blessed is the person who will feast in the kingdom of God (the Messianic monarchy) (Lk 14:15).

The Jewish guest may have believed that only godly Jews would have the privilege of eating at the king's table during the Messianic reign, so Jesus taught him through the parable that many Jews invited to this banquet would be found unworthy of the privilege and that others from outside would be brought in to replace them.

## **28. Those who enter the kingship suffer violence**

Moses Law and the Prophets remained until John. Since then, the good news about the kingship from God (the Messianic monarchy) was being proclaimed, and everyone entering was suffering violence (Lk 16:16).

The ISV translation of this difficult verse makes good sense. It interprets the Greek as saying "everyone entering it is under attack," rather than "everyone forces his way into it" which is followed by most translations. The early Ethiopic translation has, "everyone entering it is oppressed for it." No one, let alone everyone, can force his way into the Messianic monarchy. Cf. Mt 11:12 (Ch. 3) where it is the Messiah who is being mistreated.

## **29. Jesus confers kingship on his disciples**

Just as my Father conferred kingship on me, I confer it on you, that you may eat and drink at my table in my monarchy and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Lk 22:29-30).

Jesus had already told his disciples that the Father was pleased to give them the kingship (Lk 12:32), and now at the Passover meal, he tells them that he is assigning kingship to them. He is bestowing royal power on his disciples as they are to be his monarchy during his future reign. Their special responsibility will be to judge or rule over Israel when Jesus sits on his glorious throne at the renewal of all things (Mt 19:28). Israel, having forfeited their right to kingship, will be among the subjects of the kingdom. The disciples will eat and drink at the king's table, and that same promise is given to all the victorious saints (Rev 3:21). The Messianic feast should not be spiritualized. Isaiah said that on Mount Zion the Lord will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples (every tribe, language, and nation) and swallow up death forever (Isa 25:6-8). The apostles, as Jews, will rule over Israel. Other Christians will likely rule over the nations where they came from or where they served God.

## **30. Entrance to the monarchy is via the new birth**

I'm telling you the truth, unless a person is born again, he cannot discover the kingship from God (the Messianic monarchy) ... Jesus answered: I'm telling you the truth, unless a person is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingship from God (Jn 3:3, 5).

Seeing the kingship from God in this context would seem to mean discovering it, with the parallel meaning of entering it. God confers kingship on believers so that one day, they'll reign with Christ. The entry point is through being born from above of the Holy Spirit, being born again into God's family (Jn 1:12). Being born again is a status, the state of being a true Christian, an adopted child of God, and an heir of the Messianic kingdom. Entering the kingship is entering the monarchy, which happens through being born into a royal family. Nicodemus, being a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, may have aspired to reign with the Messiah when he came (Ex 19:6). He didn't

have a problem with the concept of entering the kingship but he wasn't sure about the concept of being born from above, which is a fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecies (Ezek 11:19-20, 36:25-27).

**31. Messianic monarchy personnel should not argue about trivial matters**

For the kingdom from God (the Messianic monarchy) is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17).

The context here is about how Christians should deal with food laws. Are they to follow the Jewish food laws, or does the Messianic monarchy have different emphases? Yes, the monarchy is about righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, and that being the case, the Roman Christians should not be quibbling about food laws. Some claim that this verse shows that the kingdom from God has already been inaugurated, but it is not the Messianic reign that has been inaugurated but the monarchy. Messianic values should guide Christians in their present behavior.

**32. The Messianic monarchy is not just talk but power**

For the kingship from God (the Messianic monarchy) is not a matter of talk but of power (1 Cor 4:20).

Jesus will rule the world with an iron rod, and so will his monarchy (Rev 2:26-27). Paul is making the point that just as Jesus and his monarchy will rule with authoritarian power rather than argument, he too, as their father, will do so in the present situation if they do not respond in the right way to his letter.

**33. The saints have been rescued from Satan's dominion of darkness and transferred to the Messianic monarchy**

Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the destiny of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingship of the Son he loves (Col 1:12-13).

God rescues his people from Satan's dark domain and enables them to have a share with all the saints, including OT saints, in the Messianic monarchy. Such great light will shine from the Messiah's glorious throne that nations from all over the world will be drawn to it, but at present it is only an inheritance. In Christ, we are saved, we have eternal life, our sins are forgiven, and we are God's children. We are seated with Christ in the heavenly realm and are heirs of his monarchy. After the resurrection, we'll enter his millennial reign, which is characterized by light without and within.

### **34. Paul's co-workers have the Messianic monarchy in mind**

These are the only Jews among my co-workers for the kingdom of God (the Messianic monarchy) (Col 4:11).

While imprisoned in Rome, Paul had only three Jewish fellow-workers, which was disappointing for him. Paul continually proclaimed the kingship from God, the Messianic kingdom which was the goal and purpose of his work. His whole ministry involved bringing people into a relationship with Jesus, saving them from their sin, bringing them into the monarchy as God's children, and ensuring them a glorious future in the Messianic kingdom, the climax toward which all Christian work is heading. He doesn't say they are working for the Church, that is too broad a term, their service has the Messianic monarchy in view, those whom God is calling into his royal family.

### **35. The saints inherit an unshakable monarchy**

Therefore, since we are receiving an unshakable kingship, let us be thankful, and worship God acceptably with reverence and awe (Heb 12:28).

Receiving the kingship is equivalent to inheriting it. The kingdoms of the world all crumble and fall but the saints will possess a kingship that cannot be shaken. We should thank God for making us rulers over a world that will have a stable, permanent government under the rule of Christ.

### **36. God chose the poor to inherit the monarchy**

Listen, my dear brethren: Hasn't God chosen the world's poor to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingship he promised those who love him? (Jas 2:5).

The promise may refer to the beatitudes, especially: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingship from heaven (Mt 5:3 ). It is the poor rather than the rich who respond to the gospel and who will possess the coming kingship from God.

### **37. The Church are the monarchy during the Messiah's reign**

He (Jesus) has made us to be a monarchy and priests to serve his God and Father. To him be glory and power forever! Amen (Rev 1:6).

Jesus has made us to be a monarchy, a royal household, those who will reign with Christ and serve God as priests. The nation of Israel was called to be a kingdom of priests (Exod 19:6), but they failed. Believers are a holy priesthood even now (1 Pet 2:5), they offer themselves to him, they praise him, and they intercede for others.

### **38. The saints share in present sufferings and future kingship**

I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering, kingship, and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of God's word and testifying about Jesus (Rev 1:9 ).

John wrote Revelation while he was imprisoned on the island of Patmos because of his Christian testimony and his commitment to the Bible. He saw himself as a brother and colleague of his fellow Christians in both the suffering they are enduring, and in their common status as in Jesus's monarchy. Many Christians will be martyred during the coming tribulation, and they need to endure faithfully to the end (Rev 6:9-11, 7:3, 12:17, 13:7-10, 14:12, 16:6, 17:6, 18:20, 24, 20:4).

### **39. The saints will reign over the Earth**

You have made them to be a monarchy and priests to serve our God, and they will reign over the earth (Rev 5:10).

The kingship from God has its origin in heaven, but the Messiah and his royal household will rule the earth together. The saints constitute his monarchy and will have royal authority as they serve as intermediaries between God and the kingdom's subjects. They will reign *over* the earth from their home in New Jerusalem (Rev 21:2), appearing on earth in their resurrection bodies as necessary, just as Jesus did after his resurrection.