

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH

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SCRIPTURE: LUKE 19: 11-15, and 27.

And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered unto them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy until I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a messenger after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. (Then follows the report: one man has gained ten pounds, one five pounds, one has hidden up his pound and gained nothing. Verse 27 refers back to the citizens who would not have him to reign over them. as follows:) But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

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God hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

In our last sermon we tried to show that the kingdom of God exists in heaven; that it is the abiding place of those who have lived according to kingdom laws and principles on this earth; but that the heavenly kingdom is not the total kingdom. The kingdom of God exists both on earth and in heaven. God is ruler of the heavenly kingdom, the abode of those faithful souls who have departed after living this life in this world, according to kingdom laws and principles. But God is also ruler of his earthly kingdom, through his Son Jesus Christ. His kingdom exists both in heaven and on earth; his law rules everywhere. There is no space where there is no kingdom, and all the vast reaches of space are included in his kingdom.

The duality of the kingdom, the fact that it exists both in heaven and on earth, is graphically illustrated by Jesus' parable of the pounds, as recorded by Luke. In this respect it is quite different from Matthew's account of the parable of the talents, which is in many respects similar. Matthew omits completely any reference to the kingdom which the nobleman was to receive in the far country to which he went. He also omits any reference to the rebellion of the citizens in the nobleman's realm which he left behind, and deals exclusively with the appraisal and judgment of the three men who had received five talents, two talents, and one talent respectively. In Matthew's parable, the unprofitable servant who had buried his talent was judged, deprived of his talent, and cast into outer darkness. In Luke's parable, there is no punishment of the unprofitable servant mentioned save that his one pound was taken from him and given to the servant who had gained ten. But in Luke's parable all the rebellious citizens of the kingdom, who had refused to accept the nobleman as their ruler the minute his back was turned, were brought before him and slain as traitors and rebels.

Let us note at a little more length some of these significant differences in Luke's account. Luke says that "a certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return," that he then delivered one pound apiece to each of his ten servants, and departed. There was no rebellion among the servants -- only a certain negligence and slothfulness on the part of one. "But his citizens hate him, and sent a messenger after him, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us. The nobleman was legal ruler over the citizens left behind with the ten servants just as surely as he was ruler over the kingdom he went afar to receive. The servants accepted and obeyed him as king, even though they did not have his personal, physical presence. It was only the citizens who rebelled.

It seems clear that his is a representation of the two divisions, or two kingdoms, which are included in the total kingdom of God as we know it -- the kingdom of God in heaven, and the kingdom of God on earth. Jesus is the nobleman of the parable. He is king of the earth, as we have said in previous sermons, by right of creation. This world is his kingdom. As ruler of the earth under God the Father, he has given to each servant -- to each one who has chosen to serve him -- certain endowments and gifts and facilities which are to be used as a stewardship, and accounted for upon his return. In the parable, the servants who had obeyed him and who had been profitable servants were rewarded; the unprofitable servant by reason of negligence, was deprived of his stewardship.

Jesus came into his earthly kingdom veiled in human flesh. Comparatively few people recognized his deity, or confessed his lordship and his right to rule over them. Others were expecting a different kind of king. He proved his right to rule over the earth by his perfect life, his perfect teachings, and by his triumph over death -- and still comparatively few would accept him as king. He went away into a far country at his ascension, promising to return after he had received the Messianic kingdom from his Father. But from that day to this, those who should be citizens of his kingdom rebel against his rule, and declare, "We will not have this man to rule over us."

There was no argument about the worthiness of the Lord to receive his heavenly kingdom. Luke does not mention any rebellion in the distant kingdom to which the nobleman went -- only in the kingdom he left behind -- the kingdom where his servants were at work trying to improve upon their stewardship. The saints of the heavenly kingdom received him gladly. That the citizens of the heavenly kingdom do the will of God perfectly is indicated by the phrase from the Lord's prayer which petitions, "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven;" making the heavenly obedience the pattern for our earthly obedience.

This parable should teach us two lessons. First, that even those who have confessed Christ as Lord and received his blessings have received them only as a stewardship which will have to be accounted for when our Lord returns bringing his heavenly kingdom. If we fail in that stewardship, we shall have proved our unworthiness to receive greater blessings in the heavenly kingdom -- our inability to manage properly even the limited gifts and blessings which we now enjoy.

The second lesson to be learned from the parable is that those who rebelliously and stubbornly refuse to recognize God and Christ as king on earth, will also be called to accountability when the king returns to claim the kingdom of his original creation. Those citizens who declared "We will not have this man to rule over us," though they were created by him and geographically placed in his kingdom, and owed the King allegiance, were guilty of rebellion and treason, and were worthy of the death they received as a consequence of that rebellion.

The kingdom of God seems to us, perhaps, to be geographically divided. We say that there are two parts -- the kingdom of God on earth, and the kingdom of God in heaven. But they are essentially one. Paul wrote to the Colossians that "God hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Citizens on earth, as well as in heaven, are now a part of his kingdom. Both heaven and earth are rightfully the territory of God. Both have the same king, the same laws. Both are governed by similar government, and similar officers. In the heavenly kingdom are those who have learned to do the will of God to perfection. In the earthly kingdom there are servants who are using their stewardship to varying degrees of perfection, and others who are shirking their stewardship responsibilities. There are also those who dwell in the geographical territory of the kingdom, but rebel against its laws and its king. For all of these, according to the parable, there will come a day of accounting, when the King returns with his perfected heavenly kingdom to claim the earthly kingdom from which he is temporarily absent. What will be your status in that day when the King returns?