

Kingdom Work

OVERVIEW

The “Kingdom of God” was a central theme of Christ’s public teaching and marks a new chapter in the story of God’s work in the world. As citizens of God’s kingdom, we’re entrusted with the king’s authority, responsibilities, and resources, but what does that mean for our working lives?

DISCUSSION

- Imagine you attend a work-related networking event where someone asks you to tell them about yourself. You offer a brief summary of your resume, but finish by saying, “and I’m a citizen of a heavenly kingdom...”
 - How do you think the person you’re speaking to would respond?
 - What makes your comment so unusual?

The “Kingdom of God” was a central theme of Christ’s public teaching and marks a new chapter in the story of God’s work in the world. We may think of a heavenly kingdom with the stereotypical pearly gates and angels playing harps, but Christ makes clear that “the kingdom of heaven *has come near*” (Matt. 4:17).

Our lives—*and work*—are defined by the fact that we live as citizens of God’s kingdom. In fact, when we are adopted into God’s family we become sons and daughters of the king (Gal. 4:4-5, Rom. 8:16-17) and gain the **authority, responsibility, and resources** of family members.

- As a group, read the following verses and observe what they reveal about God’s kingdom on earth:

Matthew 6:9-10

Mark 16:15

Matthew 28:19-20

Matthew 24:30

- We’re instructed to make God’s heavenly kingdom manifest here on earth – “your kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven”
- Our task is to preach the good news to “all creation”
- We’re given authority to accomplish this assignment
- The kingdom will not be fully realized in this life, but will be fulfilled through Christ’s return

- These verses apply to every area of our lives. At first glance, what relevance do they have for your working life?

Read this excerpt from the Theology of Work Projectⁱ. As you read, consider what it means for your work:

As followers of Jesus Christ, we live in two worlds. We stand with one foot in the human world, where our work may be subject to unspoken expectations that may or not be in accordance with God's ways. At the same time, as Christians we are subjects of God's kingdom, committed to his values and expectations...

We live in what theologians call “the already, but not yet.” The kingdom of heaven has already been inaugurated by Jesus in his earthly ministry, but has not yet been fully realized—not until Christ returns in person as King. Meanwhile, our lives—including our work, our leisure, our worship, our joy, and our sorrows—are framed by the reality of living in a world partly controlled by the old, corrupt ways of the Fall (Genesis 3), yet partly ruled by its true Lord, Christ.

As Christians, we put ourselves wholly under Jesus as Lord. Our habits on earth are now to reflect the coming kingdom of heaven. This is not to boast that we are more godly than others, but to accept the challenge of growing into God's ways. God calls his people to many different roles and occupations on earth. In all these roles and occupations, we are to live out the true reality: the reign of God that is coming from heaven to earth.

Remember, the Kingdom is not a static condition, but an ever-evolving process of God's dominion and priorities being established on earth. All of life is included in this battle between two adversaries. As scholar Al Wolters observes: “The rightful king has established a beachhead in his territory and calls on his subjects to press his claims even further in creation.”ⁱⁱ

Key Questions:

- Based on the principles we've looked at today, what is “kingdom work”?
- Think of various elements of your daily work. Where do you have opportunities to advance the goals or values of God's kingdom?
- How could knowing you have God's authority and resources at your disposal empower your efforts? (Do you know how to access these resources? If not, that would be a great topic for future discussions.)

“When Christians strive to make God's purposes their own, they tilt forward toward God's restoration of all things, the final coming of the kingdom. They think about it, pray for it, study and work in ways that accord it. Thinking personally as well as globally, **they want the kingdom to come in their own hearts as well as in the world.**”

- Cornelius Plantingaⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ Pennington, Jonathan and Alice Matthews. “Matthew and Work” <https://www.theologyofwork.org/new-testament/matthew/working-as-citizens-of-gods-kingdom-matthew-1-4/>

ⁱⁱ Wolters, Al. *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Plantinga, Cornelius. *Engaging God’s World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living*