

Introduction

In studying "Kingdom Of Happiness: Living the Beatitudes in Everyday Life" by Fr. Jeffrey Kirby, STD, I find it helpful use additional scholarly resources to help me with a better understanding of words and concepts that have meanings often taken for granted by most, but not for me; particularly when it comes to what we are being told in the sermon on the Mount, specifically the Beatitudes.

The following introductory comments come directly from the second chapter of Glen H. Stassen's "Living the Sermon on the Mount: A Practical Hope for Grace and Deliverance intitled **"Participation with Joy in the Reign of God:"**

"The Kingdom of Heaven means the same reality in the Gospel of Matthew as in the Gospel of Mark and Luke, when they say, "the kingdom of God." The difference is simply that Matthew is writing for Jewish Christian, where the name of God is too holy to be expressed often; consequently, Jews substituted the word "heaven" for God. Matthew means what Mark and Luke mean by "the kingdom of God."

Scholars all agree that the kingdom of God in Jesus teaching is not a place but a happening. It means God's reign, God's presence, God's coming to deliver us and reign over us. In our present language, it is probably clearer to speak of "the reign of God."

Jesus said that the reign of God will not be about domination but about mutual servanthood. (Mark 10: 41-45). Scholars agree that the central witness and theme of the Synoptic Gospels is that Jesus' mission and message was 'the good news of the kingdom of God.' But despite emphasis on and frequent reference to it in scripture, the big puzzle and important question (then as well as now) are: what are the characteristics of the reign of God? How do we recognize it when we experience it? How do we know it when we see it? How do our lives fit into it?

The disciples asked Jesus, 'Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom of Israel?' Jesus replied: 'It is not for you to know the time of period that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive

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power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witness in Jerusalem, in all Judah and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ ‘What is important,’ Jesus said, is to do the deeds he teaches so we are ready for it when it comes. If we put our attention on when instead of what its characteristics are, we neglect the practice that prepare for it.

‘ . . . The crucial question is not so much that of the kingdom’s timing as of its content.’ (A quote for N.T. Wright)”

This Web page is a work in progress; inserts are added throughout the table as the study proceeds. The effort is meant to reinforce my own learning, not to teach, so notes will come and go throughout the journey. But these notes could be helpful to others; use as you wish.