

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

“NOW, and NOT YET”

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Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

The LORD'S PRAYER

The Kingdom of God: A government where God reigns over people on earth just as He does in heaven.

Democracy (Greek: the peoples' power) refers to governments where the people rule the land.

Theocracy (Greek: God's power) refers to a government where God rules the people in the land.

God's Kingdom in the preaching of Jesus refers not to escape from this world to another one but to God's Sovereign rule, *“coming on earth as it is in heaven.”* (NT Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus*, 2000).

YOU RESPOND: “Obviously, the Kingdom of God is not on earth yet.”

I ANSWER: “Yes, it is. It's **NOW** (in you) but **NOT YET** (over all the earth).”

The world is filled with violence, greed, lust, and selfishness. Immoral people who obtain power become tyrants and evil dictators. The Bible's theme is *“God brings down the proud and He raises the humble.”*

Throughout history, God humbles the proud in progressive order: ***Disease, famine, war, and death.***

Death is the ultimate end for the proud who think, act, and live as if they are the Supreme God (El).

Immortal life is the gift of God for those who humble themselves and live life trusting God.

The Scriptures teach 10 Principles that Become the Basis for Understanding the Kingdom of God.

1. ***“God alone is immortal”*** (1 Timothy 6:16).
2. **The death of plants, animals, and all created things is natural.**
3. **Humans are physical creatures (mortal) who bear YHWH's image (character).**
4. **Immortal life is a gift from God to humans as a reward for full obedience to God.**
5. **Death (or loss of immortal life) is the consequence of human rebellion toward God.**
6. **God will physically resurrect all human beings to appear before His righteous Judgment Seat.**
7. **Those who trust YESHUA (their names are in the Book of LIFE) had their sins judged at the cross.**
8. **Those who refused to “die to self” in this life and trust YESHUA will have their lives judged then.**
9. **The meek who trusted YESHUA will “inherit the earth,” while the proud will die a second death.**
10. **Then, this earth will have the curse fully reversed, and YHWH will reign over the nations forever.**

“Current orthodox Christianity no longer holds to the belief in the physical resurrection, preferring the concept of the eternal existence of the soul, although some creeds still cling to the old ideas.”

Brian Innes, *Death and the Afterlife* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999)

NOTE: The righteous may be given “imperishable bodies” in the resurrected state” (I Cor. 15:53).

Or it could be access to “eating of the Tree(s) of Life,” a tree with food and leaves that gift immortality (heals wounds, regenerates cells, keeps a person young) is how immortal life is sustained in the resurrection (Rev. 22:2).

The **continuity** between this life and the next is real; the **discontinuity** is also very real (see Malachi 4:3).

THE BIBLICAL TEACHING OF GOD’S KINGDOM IS RADICALLY DIFFERENT FROM POPULAR OPINION

Heaven is somewhere you believe in.... It’s a beautiful place where you can sit on soft clouds and talk to other people who are there. At night you can sit next to the stars, which are the brightest of anywhere in the universe.... If you’re good throughout your life, then you get to go to heaven.... When your life is finished here on earth, God sends angels down to take you up to Heaven to be with him.... [And Grandma is] alive in me.... Most important, she taught me to believe in myself.... She’s in a safe place, with the stars, with God and the angels.... She is watching over us from up there.... “I want you to know [says the heroine to her great-grandma] that even though you are no longer here, your spirit will always be alive in me.” Maria Shriver’s children’s book on heaven (quoted by NT Wright, *Surprised by Hope* (p. 17).

Truth from Scripture:

1. **God alone is immortal** – “I charge you [singular] in the presence of God, who gives life to all things... that you keep the commandment...until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He will bring about at the proper time – He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, **who alone possesses immortality** and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion!” (I Tim. 6:13-16).
2. **Mortality (death) is inherent to all created things** - Bible passages portray predatory animals as part of God’s original plan for creation (Job 38:39-41, Job 39:29-30, Ps. 104:21, Ps 104:21). Thomas Aquinas wrote in *Summa Theologica* “man’s sin did not change the nature of animals.”
3. **Humans are physical creatures (mortal) who bear YHWH’s image (character)** – Genesis 1:27 records that God made humans with Imago Dei as their *moral, spiritual, and intellectual* essence.
4. **Immortal life is a gift from God to humans as a reward for full obedience to Him** – “You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you do, you will certainly die” (Genesis 2:17). “God will repay each one according to his deeds. To those who by perseverance in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, **He will give immortal life** (Romans 2:6-7).
5. **Death (banishment from immortal life) is the consequence of human rebellion toward God** – Adam (man) must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take from the tree of life and eat, and live forever. So the LORD God banished Adam from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken” (Genesis 3:22-23). “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).
6. **God will physically resurrect all human beings to appear before His righteous Judgment Seat.** “For the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice” (John 5:38). “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad” (II Corinthians 5:10).
7. **Those who trust YESHUA (their names are in the Book of LIFE) had sins judged at the cross.** “And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. But another scroll was opened; it is the scroll of life. The dead were judged out of those things written in the scrolls according to their deed” (Revelation 20:12).
8. **Those who refuse to “die to self” in this life, trusting YESHUA, will have their lives judged then.** Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matt 16:24-25).
9. **The meek who trust YESHUA will “inherit the earth,” while the proud will die a second death.** “The meek inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). “Immoral persons... have a second death (Rev. 21:8).
10. **This earth will have the curse fully reversed, and YHWH will reign over the nations forever.** “The wicked will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act” (Malachi 4:3).