

Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.

Series: "The Kingdom of God"



Teaching Sermon: "The Kingdom of God: The Idea"

[Click/Tap to hear live recording on Podbean](#)

Dr. Mary Craig

Live Tele-service, January 10, 2021

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD: THE IDEA

For our message today I will be sharing from the work of George Eldon Ladd. *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1959 Chapter One.

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" ( [Matt 3:2](#) ) John the Baptist

The Biblical idea of the Kingdom of God is deeply rooted in the Old Testament. It is based on the confidence that there is one eternal, living God who has revealed Himself to humanity. Likewise, He has a purpose for the human race which He has chosen to accomplish through Israel. Hope, biblical hope, forms an essential element in the revealed will and the redemptive work of the living God.

Thus the prophets announced a day when people will live together in peace. God shall then "judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa. 2:4). The problems of human society will be solved. The evils of humanity's physical environment shall be no more. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them" (Isa. 11:6). Peace, safety, security; all this was promised by the prophets for the happy future.

Then came Jesus of Nazareth with the announcement, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). This theme of the coming of the Kingdom of God was central in His mission. Jesus designed His teaching to show people how they might enter the Kingdom of God (Matt. 5:20; 7: 21). His mighty works were intended to prove that the Kingdom of God had come upon them (Matt. 12: 28). His parables illustrated to His disciples the truth about the Kingdom of God (Matt. 13: 11). And when He taught His followers to pray, at the heart of their petition come the words, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6: 10). On the eve of His death, Jesus assured His disciples that He would yet share with them the happiness and the fellowship of the Kingdom (Luke 22: 22-30). And He promised that He would appear again, on the earth, in glory, to bring the blessedness of the Kingdom to those for whom it was prepared (Matt. 25:31, 34). (Ladd, George Eldon. *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1959 Chapter One.)

Some identify the KOG as an inward power. Some see it as apocalyptic. Some say it is another term for the Church; some say it is nothing more than an ideal pattern for society, a utopia.

But in this message for now, we look at John the Baptist and his announcement in prophetic manner that the KOG was near.

Centuries had passed during which the living voice of prophecy had been stilled. The true God had not been speaking directly through a human voice to His people to tell them His specific will, to give reasons for oppression, to condemn the sins of the people, to call for some national repentance, to assure impending judgment without repentance, or to promise any kind of deliverance if and when the nation might respond. There was nothing coming from the true God.

So two streams of religious life were pretty much entrenched by the time God started to stir things up. There was a scribal religion which interpreted the will of God strictly in terms of obedience to the written Law as interpreted by the scribes and there were the apocalyptists who in addition to the Law wrote of a future salvation.

Then there were military and political rebellions against Rome meant to spur on the coming of the KOG. People sought national independence and the glory days of David and Solomon. The people yearned for the coming of God's Kingdom, looking for that one, the Messiah, who would bring peace, exercise justice, show forth mercy, and get those Gentiles out of here!

Suddenly, there was John who would be called the Baptist. The Scripture tells us the story. Luke 1.5-25; 1.57-80.

John grew up and “the word of God came to John...in the wilderness.” (Luke 3.2). In response to that word John appeared in the valley of the Jordan announcing that the KOG was near. John wore the hairy mantle and the leather girdle to indicate by his clothing the mark of a prophet (Zechariah 13.4; 2 Kings 1.8). We might think John was imitating Elijah, but John says not. “Then they asked him, ‘What then? Are you Elijah?’ He said, ‘I am not.’ ‘Are you the Prophet?’ And he answered, ‘No.’” John 1.21

John was an OT prophet bringing in the NT. He announced that God was about to take action, to manifest kingly power and that people must repent. As evidence of this repentance, people had to submit to baptism. People came to listen to his message and submit to his demands. We can read what he was telling everyone in Luke 3.1-20; Matthew 3.1-12; Mark 1.1-8; John 1.19-28.

“And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,<sup>4</sup> as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying:

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness,

‘Prepare the way of the LORD;

Make His paths straight.

<sup>5</sup> Every valley shall be filled

And every mountain and hill brought low.

The crooked places shall be made straight

And the rough ways smooth;

<sup>6</sup> And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’ ” Luke 3:3-6

In Is 44:3-5 God promised to pour out His Spirit on the descendants of Jacob in quickening and life-giving power. In Is 32:15 this messianic King would reign in righteousness and prosperity, and justice and peace would prevail. Ezekiel promises the resurrection of the nation when God will put His Spirit within them to give them life (Ezek. 37:14). God was to give His people a new heart and a new spirit, enabling them to walk in obedience to God's will (Ez. 36:37). Cf. Joel 2:28-32. The great and terrible Day of the Lord is to be attended by a great outpouring of the Spirit and by apocalyptic signs in heaven and on earth. John was saying that these promises were about to be fulfilled through One who was to follow him.

“Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ *or* not, <sup>16</sup> John answered, saying to all, “I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>17</sup> His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.” Luke 3:15-17 NKJV

The baptism of fire refers to judgment. The wheat will be gathered into the granary but the chaff will be burned up with unquenchable fire. This speaks of eschatological judgment for it extends the limits of what a fire could do to chaff. (Is 1:31; 66:24; Jer. 7:20) Everyone will be affected. There will be a separation. Judgment is impending, and unfruitful trees will be cut down and thrown into the fire (Mt 3:7-10; Luke 3:7-9). This really sounded drastic to a poor people in a country that normally did not destroy unfruitful trees by burning but at least used them for their wood.

Finally, God will act to fulfill the OT expectation in kingly power for the salvation of the righteous and the judgment of the wicked. (Malachi 4:1; Nahum 1; Is 30:33)

John thought of these as taking place simultaneously. John just says the Coming One (Mt 3:11). This Coming One would be the agent. John’s announcement transcends the usual OT expectation in that the messianic personage is to be both Savior and Judge, whereas in the OT he is a Davidic king who is not the agent for establishing the kingdom.

John says, “Repent.” It means to turn from sin to God. To turn away from idols, to turn away your faces from all your abominations (Ez. 14:6; Is. 55:6, 7). It means to turn or return to the Lord (Is 19:22; 55:7). It means genuine sorrow for sin. The Hebrew idea involves the turning around of the whole person toward God. It is *metanoia* in Greek, conversion. The thing was that many Rabbis taught that repentance was to be understood in the light of the Law, that conversion meant turning to the Law in obedience to the expressed will of God, i.e., doing good works. (But it is not Law-righteousness that saves; it is Christ-righteousness that saves.)

John’s baptism rejected all ideas of nationalistic or legal righteousness and required a moral-spiritual but real turning to God. He did not assume a righteous people. One had to repent and manifest this repentance in changed conduct to escape the impending judgment. A person could not rely on being descended from Abraham. The people thought God’s wrath would fall on the Gentiles. John warned the religious leaders in Israel to flee, like snakes before a fire, from the coming wrath. What!

John’s baptism is not a repentance baptism that results in forgiveness of sin. It is the expression of the repentance that results in the forgiveness of sins. The act of some ritual or rite is not sufficient; there has to be real change.

With John the age of the Law and the prophets has come to its end. Since John, the KOG is working in the world, and the least in the new era knows greater blessings than John did, because such enjoy personal fellowship with the Messiah and the blessings this brings. John the baptizer is the herald.

In the gospel of John, we find a difference from the synoptic gospels. This Coming One is the Lamb of God who will take away the sin of the world (John 1.29).

In John 1 we have John’s own interpretation of his experience at the baptism of Jesus. When Jesus came to John for baptism, John recognized that before him was someone different. Jesus

neither had sins to confess nor a sense of guilt to lead him to repentance. John recognized the sinlessness of Jesus. Instead, John was convicted of his own sinfulness in the presence of Jesus. Jesus insisted on baptism that He might “fulfill all righteousness.” (Mt 3:15) This Jesus was declared by God to be The One. Jesus is God’s chosen One, the Elect One. (Ladd, George Eldon. *A Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B Eerdmans Pub Co, 1991.)

The Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven, is it a political kingdom, or a spiritual kingdom because it is within, or is it a future kingdom? Is it a realized or present Kingdom? Or is it one of those “already, and not yet” positions of Scripture?

### **The Kingdom of God has come; it is now present and has arrived.**

“Jesus declared that his coming marked the end of the old era when he said, “The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached” ( [Luke 16:16](#) ). Here two distinct periods of history are distinguished. The former is referred to as the period of the Law and the prophets. The second is the period of the kingdom of God. John the Baptist is seen as a bridge who both brings the “old” to its conclusion and announces the breaking in of the “new.” This “new” thing, which cannot be mixed with the old ( [Mr 2:21-22](#) ), which gathers the outcasts ( [Matt 11:4-6](#) ) and the lost tribes of Israel ( [Mark 3:13-19](#) ; [Matt 19:28](#) ), which manifests signs and marvels ( [Matt 13:16-17](#) ), which inaugurates a new covenant ( [1 Cor 11:25](#) ), is nothing other than the arrival of the kingdom of God. Jesus also announced that now already the long-awaited messianic banquet had begun ( [Luke 14:15-24](#) ). The kingdom of God was now in their presence ( [Luke 17:20-21](#) — “among” is a better translation than “within” ).” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/kingdom-of-god/>

### **The Kingdom of God is also “not yet.”**

There will be a consummation, which includes the coming of the Son of Man, the final resurrection, and faith turning to sight, e.g. The KOG is peace, joy, and righteousness in the Holy Spirit. One day we will see Jesus as He is, face to face.

Pressing toward the mark by the grace of God,

*Mary Craig, D. Min.*

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: [Matthew 25:34 KJV](#)

© 2021 Mary Craig Ministries, Inc. All rights reserved. [www.marycraig.org](http://www.marycraig.org) [www.mcmntffr.org](http://www.mcmntffr.org)  
P.S. Thank you for giving to MCM! Donate: Mary Craig Ministries, Inc., P. O. Box 4610, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33338-4610 or through PayPal® online at



[www.marycraig.org](http://www.marycraig.org). Go to [marycraig.org](http://marycraig.org) for the latest articles and words received. Take a look and see all that God is doing through this ministry, in world missions, in evangelism, the Barnabas Project, Craighouse® Christian Fellowship, home visitation, Kinetic Koinonia, media, and more. Worship with us 4:30 p.m. Sundays via teleconference. Reach MCM at 954-491-7270. Send in your prayer requests. Follow MCM Bible teachings and Rev. Jim Craig’s sermons; go to [www.marycraig.org](http://www.marycraig.org) and click on “Audio Bible Studies” or “*Divine Appointment*” radio ministry; or go to [www.mcmntffr.org](http://www.mcmntffr.org) for audio sermons and teachings and Friday night handout sheets. Free. Go to [www.marycraigverses.org](http://www.marycraigverses.org) for “Enjoying God for Life,” daily encouragement and growing in your faith. Go to [www.marycraig.smugmug.com](http://www.marycraig.smugmug.com) for some pictures of MCM world missions.

See our new Mary Craig Ministries YouTube Channel here: [www.youtube.com/channel/UCs4c-InXmh2HKF36huJQTOA](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCs4c-InXmh2HKF36huJQTOA). Subscribe for free.

Mary Craig Ministries, Inc. is a USA 501 ( C ) ( 3 ) nonprofit corporation founded in 1993.  
Federal ID 65-0429517.