

God's Kingdom Comes

As I study the gospels, I repeatedly encounter events that appear small from a human perspective but loom large from God's perspective.

The Transfiguration (*Matthew 16:28 – 17:9*)

Jesus referred to the Transfiguration as "*the Son of Man coming in His kingdom*" (Matthew 16:28, NASB) and "*the kingdom of God...come with power*" (Mark 9:1, NASB). That's quite a build-up. And to be sure, the transfiguration provided a spectacular glimpse of the true glory of Christ, in the face of His coming humiliation and suffering. But only three disciples experienced it, and apparently only for a few fleeting moments. How is that the powerful coming of Jesus in His Kingdom?

John the Baptist and Elijah (*Matthew 17:10-13*)

The appearance of Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration caused the disciples to ask about Elijah. Prophecy had promised that he would return and prepare the people for the "*great and terrible day of the Lord*" (Malachi 4:5, NASB; read vv.5-6). Jesus said that Elijah would "*restore all things*" (Matthew 17:11, NASB) and that John the Baptist was this returned Elijah. But John the Baptist's ministry was relatively short, and his acceptance was limited. Herod silenced him, bringing his life to a premature and brutal end. To say that John *restored all things* seems a wild overstatement.

The Triumphal Entry (*Matthew 21:1-11*)

Throughout His ministry, Jesus had consistently discouraged any open proclamation of His being Messiah. But then He arranged His own parade, encouraging Jerusalem to welcome Him as their Messiah. When the Jewish leaders protested, Jesus emphasized the absolute necessity and inevitability of such praise, saying that if His followers were silent, the very stones would cry out. But on a human level, all this seems a false promise. In this very city, within the week the civil and religious leaders would arrest, humiliate, execute, and bury this Messiah as a pretender and a criminal.

Cleansing the Temple (*Matthew 21:12-13*)

After triumphantly entering Jerusalem as a conqueror, Jesus went to the temple and cleared it of commercial interests. He did this in fulfillment of Malachi 3:1-3, which foretold that the Lord would come suddenly to His temple and purify it completely. Jesus also connected His actions to Isaiah 56:3-8, where God promised to make His house a house of prayer for all nations, a place where outsiders would be welcomed and

blessed. Yet it is unlikely that Jesus' cleansing of the temple had any lasting effect. It doesn't seem to measure up to the dramatic promises of Malachi and Isaiah.

The Resurrection *(Matthew 28:1-8)*

We Christians make much of the resurrection of Jesus. But apparently the risen Christ appeared only to His followers, not to anyone else. Forty days later He was gone. Meanwhile, this whole world suffers on in the iron grip of death. Every one of us continues to die.

So why did Jesus and why does Scripture make so much of these events? To human eyes, they seem so partial and passing.

But indeed, the changes begun by each of these events are dramatic, deep, and very real:

- The Kingdom of God—the presence and rulership of God—has come to us in Jesus. It has come in power and glory. By faith we see and interact daily with the glorified Christ.
- The repentance and forgiveness preached by John are even now restoring right relationships between God and us and among His people. We are living in the peace of these restored relationships.
- With exuberant praise, we His disciples welcome Jesus as our Messiah, our conquering hero who is delivering us from all oppression.
- Jesus Christ is Himself the holy temple of God among us. He is purifying us to make us part of that holy temple.
- Even now we are breathing the undying, unbounded life of Christ, and we will breathe it forever.

The Kingdom of God has come to us in Jesus Christ! It is growing in and among us through His Spirit. And in Him, it will soon come in all its power and glory.

Jesus' life is a promise of all that soon will be for each and all of His people.

Hymn: [See His Kingdom Come in Power](#)