

## STANDARD C - WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A PART OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD?

# Lesson 8: How Will Jesus Complete His Kingdom?

### Introduction

After the angel Gabriel had announced to Mary she would be the mother of the Messiah, she sang a beautiful song (Luke 1:46-55). The song is filled with hope and excitement about what God was going to do soon. The long-expected Messiah would be born. So, with great expectation, Mary magnified God and rejoiced in Him. God was about to establish His kingdom of righteousness on the earth. Mary thought this was good reason for the world to rejoice.

The same mood of hope and expectancy fills the prophecy spoken by Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist. He blessed the Lord God of Israel because God had looked favorably on His people. God was about to redeem them by raising up a mighty Savior (Luke 1:67-79). When the angel of the Lord spoke to the shepherds on the night of Jesus' birth, his mood was one of joy and hope. He spoke of peace among persons that God favors (Luke 2:8-14).

When Jesus preached His first sermon, He spoke about promises God had made that would now be fulfilled. God would fulfill His promises in Jesus. Long ago, God had made promises through the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 61:1-2). Now, true to His promises, God had anointed Jesus "to preach good news to the poor." He was "to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind" (Luke 4:18).

The coming of Jesus was cause for great joy and hope. In Jesus, God established His long-expected Kingdom of righteousness among the nations. So, let the whole world rejoice. This is why Christians sing such beautiful carols during the Christmas season, such as, "Joy to the world! the Lord is come." The coming of Jesus meant the world did not have to be bound in evil. People did not have to live in fear. They did not have to be bound as slaves to sin. People would no longer need to guide their lives according to hate and violence. A new and better world had dawned in Jesus the Messiah. He was God's Good News. Jesus is all about hope for a world in need of hope. He is God's Word and help for a broken humanity.

### A. The Kingdom of God Has Come.

In Jesus, God established His eternal and universal Kingdom. In Jesus, the Kingdom of God came with authority and power. In the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus cast out demons and set people free. He healed the sick and raised the dead. But most importantly, He forgave sins.

One day Jesus told some people that His Heavenly Father is like a shepherd who looks for and finds lost sheep. He is like a father who rejoices when a sinful son repents and returns home (Luke 15:11-24). Jesus gave hope to many hopeless people. He gave hope to a woman who was a sinner (Luke 7:36-50) and a man possessed by demons (Luke 8:26-31). Jesus gave hope to grieving parents (Luke 8:40-56) and to people who were victims of anxiety and fear (Luke 12:22-34).

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus said many things about the Kingdom of God. Jesus said the preaching of the Kingdom of God began with the preaching of John the Baptist (Luke 16:16). He told us the coming of the Kingdom of God should be received as good news (Luke 8:1). He sent His disciples out to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal as a sign of its coming (Luke 9:2). He told His hearers the Kingdom of God had come near to them. To His critics, Jesus said when He cast out demons that meant the Kingdom of God was present. It was by the hand of God He showed absolute authority over the demons (Luke 11:20).

**Question:** How do we know the Kingdom has come in Jesus Christ?

### **B. The Kingdom Is Among Us.**

One day Jesus told His hearers the Kingdom of God doesn't look like other kingdoms. People should not look for the kinds of physical, political, or even military signs identifying early kingdoms. Instead, the Kingdom of God is present in the person of Jesus. The Kingdom looks just like Him. The Kingdom does not come with show or arrogance. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God does not come visibly, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20-21).

After Jesus said all of these wonderful things, His enemies killed Him on the Cross. It seemed as though all He had said about the Kingdom of God had been defeated. Jesus was dead.

Then on Easter morning, God confirmed all Jesus had said about the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom had indeed come in Jesus. God also confirmed the Kingdom had begun when He sent the Holy Spirit as Jesus had promised (Luke 24:44-49; Acts 2:1-13). The Holy Spirit came upon the disciples. They were filled with the Holy Spirit. He clothed the disciples with the power of God that made it possible for them to preach repentance and forgiveness of sin in Jesus' name to all nations.

All people who have eyes to see can see that the Kingdom of God is indeed among us. Many, many signs of redemption are among us. In the name of Jesus, many Christians are doing the work of Christ. In Jesus' power they are giving the Good News that brings hope. They are performing many acts that achieve justice for the victims of injustice. In the name of Jesus they help people gain release from hatred and violence. In the name of Jesus, Christians preach the Good News of repentance and forgiveness. They perform acts of love and compassion. Christians show mercy to those who cannot help themselves. They care for the dying and for children whose parents died of AIDS. They care for the children of mothers or fathers who are in prison. These are just some of the things Christians do in Jesus' name. They do all these things in Jesus' name to show that the Kingdom of God began in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

**Question:** What does the Kingdom of God look like?

**Question:** Did the Kingdom of God end when Jesus died on the Cross? Explain your answer.

**Question:** How do people show the Kingdom of God is among us now?

### **C. The Kingdom of God Will Come.**

Jesus established the Kingdom of God people had been waiting for. And the disciples were to proclaim this Kingdom as Good News. Before His death, Jesus told His disciples what He had begun would be completed in the future. The beginning of the Kingdom looks forward to a completion. Jesus said the completion of the Kingdom had not yet happened. The completion is yet to come. Christians live in expectation of the time when Jesus will return. Even now the Kingdom of God is growing because of Jesus' presence. The Church is the sign of the Kingdom of God. The existence of the Church is also a sign of what Jesus has yet to complete in the world.

## **1. The Second Coming of Jesus.**

When we speak of the completion of the Kingdom of God, we speak of Jesus' Second Coming. The New Testament tells us one day Jesus will be revealed to all the world as the Son of God. The world that crucified Him will see that they crucified the Son of God, who is also the Son of Man (Luke 17:30).

In the beginning of the Kingdom of God, Jesus said God had anointed Him to "preach good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18). Jesus did just that. The hope that was born in Jesus' first coming is the peace that will come upon all the earth. No one who looks at Jesus' life and resurrection should ever doubt what God began to do in Jesus He will surely complete in Jesus.

**Question:** When will the completion of the Kingdom of God come?

## **2. Christians long for Jesus Christ to complete the Kingdom of God.**

All Christians do in Jesus' name anticipate the time Jesus will complete His Kingdom at His Second Coming. He will finish the creative and redemptive activity of God (1 Corinthians 15:20-28). Christians hope and pray for the coming of God's Kingdom (Matthew 6:10). They await "the resurrection of the body and life everlasting" (Apostle's Creed). They look for a "new heaven and a new earth" (Revelation 21:1).

The whole creation looks forward to the completion of Christ's Kingdom (Romans 8:18-25). We see much in the world that tells us Christ's work is not yet complete. Here are some examples of things that tell us the Kingdom is not yet complete: wars that kill mothers and children, hatred between races, adults who abuse children, and people who misuse and abuse God's world. In the meantime, Christ gives hope, confidence, and victory to His people (1 Corinthians 15:51-58).

Christians long for their beloved Christ to come and to complete His Kingdom. All through the New Testament, Christians express their longing for Jesus to come again. All through the long history of the Church, Christians have longed for Jesus to return (Revelation 1:4-7; 22:20). The Second Coming has two parts: (1) Jesus Christ will be revealed to the world in all His power and glory. (2) The righteous dead will be raised to new life. The mortal natures of Christians will be changed. They will become immortal. Thus, the Second Coming is a source of hope for Christians (1 Corinthians 15:35-57).

Every time Christians participate in the Lord's Supper, they witness the Kingdom of God that began in Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). But they also bear faithful witness that Jesus will return to complete His Kingdom. The bread and the cup are signs Jesus will return, and Christians joyously await His coming again.

Sometimes Jesus' disciples wanted to know the details of Jesus' Second Coming. They wanted to know exactly what to expect. Jesus did not satisfy their desires. Instead, He told them to be faithful and to leave the details to the Heavenly Father. Christians should just faithfully do the work of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. They should be faithful and leave the details to God. Sometimes Christians become more interested in details than in faithfully doing Jesus' work.

**Question:** What are the two parts of the Second Coming?

**Question:** What should Christians do until Jesus Christ comes again?

### **3. Christ's Second Coming is cause for joy and hope.**

Christians long for their Lord's coming even as a bride longs to see her bridegroom. Jesus' disciples need not fear His Second Coming. Those in whom the Spirit of God lives are the beloved children of God. Their sins have been forgiven by Christ. They are His beloved disciples. They love Jesus Christ, and He loves them. Love casts out fear and replaces it with joy and hope.

So, Christians should live in the hope of the Second Coming. Their hope is a particular kind of hope. They do not hope for something about which they are uncertain. Instead, they hope on the basis of what they already know with certainty. They already know who Jesus is and what God is like. They already know the Kingdom of God has been established. They already know God raised His Son from the grave.

Christians already know hell and the grave are defeated foes and God has had the final word. They already know the Heavenly Father will complete what He began in His Son. And they already know what the future will look like. They know what the completed Kingdom will look like. True, they don't know all the details. But they live with certainty that the completed Kingdom will look like Jesus who is their Redeemer.

Death does not have the last word for Christians. They do not fear it. Their hope is in the resurrected Christ, not in physical life. Christians know that "neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:37-39).

So, Christians live in confidence, joy, and hope. This fact should decide how they live in the world. They must never be found acting as those persons who have not hope. They should never treat hatred and violence as though they have the world's last word. They should never treat God's creation as though it is hopeless. Christians should never treat

money or materials things as though they are absolute. War, greed, rape, child abuse, and disease will not be God's last word for the world. Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, is God's last word. And Christians must live in Him.

Judgment is associated with the Second Coming of Jesus. Christians should not fear this judgment. It is judgment against all that stands against God's Kingdom of love, peace, and righteousness. Nothing, not even our greatest foes, will finally prevail against the resurrected Christ. The completion of the Kingdom of God means all the evil forces in the world will be destroyed forever.

**Question:** On what do Christians base their hope?

**Question:** Why should Christians look with expectation, instead of fear, for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ?

**Question:** What is meant by the Judgment?

## **Conclusion**

Christians, lift up your heads! The Book of Revelation is one of the most important books in the New Testament. It is important for it teaches about Christian hope. It teaches us that all evil will finally be destroyed. Even when there appears to be no hope in the world, Christians should lift their heads and hearts in hope and confidence. Their redemption will soon come. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who was dead now lives. And He lives forever more.

The New Testament ends with a promise from Jesus: "Yes, I am coming soon." And the Church responds: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20). That is the covenant the Church holds and by which Christians live. Hallelujah!

**Activity:** Think about this question: How should Christians live in the present world as they await the completion of God's Kingdom? Discuss the answer with your discipleship group.

**Activity:** Plan to do something during the next week in the name of Jesus.