

## 946. Keys, Power of, Catholic View of

SOURCE: *Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests*, trans. by John A. McHugh and Charles J. Callan (1958), pp. 281, 282. Copyright 1934 by Joseph F. Wagner, Inc., New York. Used by permission.

[p. 281] Having said so much on contrition, we now come to confession, which is another part of Penance. The care and exactness which its exposition demands of pastors must be at once obvious, if we only reflect that most holy persons are firmly persuaded that whatever of piety, of holiness, of religion, has been preserved to our times in the Church, through God's goodness, must be ascribed in great measure to confession. It cannot, therefore, be a matter of surprise that the enemy of the human race, in his efforts to destroy utterly the Catholic Church, should, through the agency of the ministers of his wicked designs, have assailed with all his might this bulwark, as it were, of Christian virtue. It should be shown, therefore, in the first place that the institution of confession is most useful and even necessary to us.

[p. 282] ... Contrition, it is true, blots out sin; but who does not know that to effect this it must be so intense, so ardent, so vehement, as to bear a proportion to the magnitude of the crimes which it effaces? This is a degree of contrition which few reach; and hence, in this way, very few indeed could hope to obtain the pardon of their sins. It, therefore, became necessary that the most merciful Lord should provide by some easier means for the common salvation of men; and this He has done in His admirable wisdom, by giving to His Church the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

According to the doctrine of the Catholic Church, a doctrine firmly to be believed and constantly professed by all, if the sinner have a sincere sorrow for his sins and a firm resolution of avoiding them in future, although he bring not with him that contrition which may be sufficient of itself to obtain pardon, all his sins are forgiven and remitted through the power of the keys, when he confesses them properly to the priest. Justly, then, do those most holy men, our Fathers, proclaim that by the keys of the Church the gate of heaven is thrown open, a truth which no one can doubt since the Council of Florence has decreed that the effect of Penance is absolution from sin.

## 947. Kingdom of God, Diverse Meanings of

SOURCE: George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1959), pp. 18, 22, 23. Copyright 1959 by The Paternoster Press. Used by permission of the author and of The Paternoster Press, London.

[p. 18] The parables of the Kingdom make it clear that in some sense, the Kingdom is present and at work in the world. The Kingdom of God *is* like a tiny seed which becomes a great tree; it *is* like leaven which will one day have permeated the entire bowl of dough (Luke 13:18–21). Yet on the other hand, when Pilate examined Jesus about His teaching, Jesus replied, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).

The very complexity of the Biblical teaching about the Kingdom of God is one of the reasons why such diverse interpretations have arisen in the history of theology. Isolated verses can be quoted for most of the interpretations which can be found in our theological literature. The Kingdom is a present reality (Matt. 12:28), and yet it is a future blessing (1 Cor. 15:50). It is an inner spiritual redemptive blessing (Rom. 14:17) which can be experienced only by way of the new birth (John 3:3), and yet it will have to do with the government of the nations of the world (Rev. 11:15). The Kingdom is a realm into which men enter now (Matt. 21:31), and yet it is a realm into which they will enter tomorrow (Matt. 8:11). It is at the same time a gift of God which will be bestowed by God in the future (Luke 12:32) and yet which must be received in the present (Mark 10:15).

Obviously no simple explanation can do justice to such a rich but diverse variety of teaching...

[p. 22] Our problem, then, is found in this threefold fact: (1) Some passages of Scripture refer to the Kingdom of God as God's reign. (2) Some passages refer to God's Kingdom as the realm into which we may now enter to experience the blessings of His reign. (3) Still other passages refer to a future realm which will come only with the return of our Lord Jesus Christ into which we shall then enter and experience the fulness of His reign. Thus the Kingdom of God means three different things in different verses. One has to study all the references in the light of their context and then try to fit them together in an overall interpretation.

Fundamentally, as we have seen, the Kingdom of God is God's sovereign reign; but God's reign expresses itself in different stages through redemptive history. Therefore, men may enter into the realm of God's reign in its several stages of manifestation and experience the blessings of His reign in differing degrees. God's Kingdom is the realm of the Age to Come, popularly called heaven; then we shall realize the blessings of His Kingdom (reign) in the perfection of their fulness. But the Kingdom is here now. There is a realm of spiritual blessing into which we may enter [p. 23] today and enjoy in part but in reality the blessings of God's Kingdom (reign).

We pray, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The confidence that this prayer is to be answered when God brings human history to the divinely ordained consummation enables the Christian to retain his balance and sanity of mind in this mad world in which we live. Our hearts go out to those who have no such hope. Thank God, His Kingdom is coming, and it will fill all the earth.

#### **948. Kingdom of God, Present and Future Phases of**

SOURCE: Robert McAfee Brown, *The Bible Speaks to You* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955), pp. 211, 212. Copyright 1955 by W. L. Jenkins. Used by permission.

[p. 211] In the Bible are three interpretations of the Kingdom.

There is *first* the understanding of the eternal and unending sovereignty of God. He exercises his Kingship over all creation "from everlasting to everlasting." God is Lord of all that is, both now and forevermore. His Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, whether we know about it or not.

[p. 212] In *addition* to this, it is plain that to a certain degree this ultimate rule of God is actually manifested in human history. It is partly realized by the Jews when they obey the Torah or Law. It is partly realized in the coming of Christ. After his coming it is spoken of as being "in your midst." It is "at hand"; it has "come upon you."

*Finally*, there are a number of passages that make it plain that the Kingdom, in all its fullness, is still off in the future. If it has partially come, it is also still coming. The consummation of the purpose of God has not yet been completely achieved, but is still to come.

These elements can be combined so as to bring out the distinctiveness of the Biblical position by saying that the Kingdom of God has "broken in" to human history in a decisive way in the coming of Jesus Christ, but that the completion and fulfillment of this mighty act of God still lie in the future. Look at the two sides of this statement.

#### **949. Kingdom of God, a Present and Future Reality**

SOURCE: George E. Ladd, *Crucial Questions About the Kingdom of God*, pp. 66–69. Copyright 1952 by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Mich. Used by permission.

[p. 66] After we have recognized that the Gospels represent the kingdom as both a present and a future reality, we are faced with the problem of the underlying significance of these two aspects of the kingdom...

[p. 67] The Gospel data require us to recognize the future eschatological aspect of the kingdom as the primary temporal orientation and not as merely incidental to the present aspect. In the Sermon on the Mount, the kingdom is repeatedly viewed as something in the future which is yet to come... The situation reflected in these promises of future blessing is that of a future and final world order, displacing the course of the present world, set up by the mighty act of God, consisting essentially in the overthrow of every will resisting God and every power hostile to the good, when God alone and absolutely will rule the world as king.

While the Sermon on the Mount deals with a present righteousness, the possession of that righteousness is viewed as necessary not so much to live in the present world as the necessary prerequisite for entering into the future kingdom. Unless men have such a righteousness which exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, they *will never enter* the kingdom (Matt. 5:20). The kingdom is not something which was [p. 68] come, but something for whose coming men are now to prepare themselves. When it comes, it will involve judgment and a separation between men. "On that day" some will endeavor to enter the kingdom but will be excluded because they have not in this life done the will of God. Jesus himself will then be the one to whom the power of judgment is given (Matt. 7:21–22).

When a gentile centurion manifested faith in Jesus, he received the commendation that his faith would find its fullest recognition in the future kingdom. In that day, many others—gentiles like the centurion—would come from the east and the west to sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—Old Testament saints who apparently at that time have been raised from the dead—while the sons of the kingdom, the Jewish people to whom Jesus came and who ought to occupy those seats because of their religious heritage, will be cast into outer darkness where men will weep and gnash their teeth (Matt. 8:11–12). This again anticipates the coming of the kingdom after a day of judgment.

In the same vein, Jesus taught that those who were then his disciples would not experience the full blessing of their discipleship until the future. Because they had abandoned earthly possessions and relationships to follow Jesus, he promised them that "in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28).

While the parables of the kingdom view it as something present, it is not present in its fullness and perfection. Evil doers will not be gathered out of the kingdom until the consummation of the age, and only then will the righteous shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. 13:38–43). The kingdom of heaven will not be perfectly realized until the division between the good and the evil at the consummation of the present age (Matt. 13:47–50).

[p. 69] At the last supper with the disciples as Jesus anticipated his death, he looked forward to the day when he would drink the fruit of the vine new with his disciples in his Father's kingdom (Matt. 26:29).

When Jesus came to Jerusalem for the last time, the people thought that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. Jesus told them a parable to disabuse them of such expectations. The kingdom was to be long delayed. Jesus, who in the parable is

represented by a nobleman, is to go into a “far country” to obtain his kingly authority and then to return. The coming of the kingdom must await the return of Christ (Luke 19:11–27).

Thus while there is a sense, as we shall see, in which Jesus represented the kingdom as already present, yet he continually looked forward to the coming of the kingdom in the future when the Son of Man would return in glory. The present age must run its course before the kingdom is fully manifested, before the kingdom “comes.” By their acceptance or rejection of Jesus, men prepare themselves for that day when the kingdom is to come. The one group will find entrance into it, the others will be shut out. To this extent the consistent eschatology is correct: *the kingdom in its fullness is consistently future.*

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<sup>1</sup>Neufeld, D. F., & Neuffer, J. (1962). *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Student's Source Book*. Commentary Reference Series. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.