



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: LESSON 136

The beginning of Christ’s mediatorial kingdom – The question that people often grapple with is, “When does this kingdom begin?” Though majority of Christians today hold that Christ rules in the hearts of believers, they deny the present reality of the kingdom of Christ, arguing that at the end of this present age Christ will return and usher in His one thousand-year messianic kingdom on earth, and thus assume the throne as King then. Thus, in eschatological terms this view is known as premillennialism, as Christ’s second coming occurs before the establishment of His messianic kingdom. This view is popular today and has had a considerable impact on many doctrines, especially the doctrine of Eschatology.

On the other hand, Reformed tradition teaches that the kingdom of Christ has already been inaugurated with Christ’s first advent. Both John the Baptist and Jesus proclaimed that the kingdom of God had arrived (Matthew 3:2; 4:17). Jesus’ public ministry, His preaching of the kingdom of God, and His miracles were all major signs that the long-awaited kingdom had finally arrived (Luke 4:16-21; 16:16; 17:20-21). Jesus proclaimed that His casting out of demons, and the binding of the strong man (Satan), were evidence that the messianic kingdom of God had come (Matthew 12:28-29).

Christ, as the last Adam and true Israel (Galatians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:45), came to do that which the first Adam and Israel failed to do, namely, to render perfect obedience to the Father; and this He accomplished with His righteous life and sacrificial death, bearing the wrath of God against sin, and accomplishing salvation for His people (John 4:34; 5:30). In doing so He defeated Satan and triumphed over the kingdom of darkness (Colossians 2:14-15).

In 1 Peter 3:22 the apostle writes that “[Jesus] has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to Him” (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 8:1). This harkens back to the great vision of Daniel 7:13-14, which was a prophecy about Jesus Christ’s ascension, who having accomplished His work on earth, ascended to the Father (Ancient of Days) in the clouds (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9-10), and to Him was delivered eternal and glorious authority and kingdom; and who is now seated at the Father’s right hand (Acts 2:33; Ephesians 1:20). Theologians refer to this event as the heavenly coronation and session of Christ as the rightful King (Hebrews 2:9).

Christ’s Great Commission to His disciples is possible precisely because “all authority” has been entrusted to Him, thus His church can go and carry out its mission all over the world (Matthew 28:18-20). God’s promise to Abraham, that he would be the father of many nations and that in his offspring all the nations of the earth would be blessed, finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16), who is calling and gathering His people, the spiritual Israel of God (Galatians 3:29; 6:16), from all the nations of the earth (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6; Zechariah 2:10-11; Malachi 1:11; Luke 2:32; Acts 1:8; 13:47). All over the world, knees are bowing and tongues confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11).

So the Bible clearly declares that the kingdom of Christ is not simply a future hope of the Christian; rather it is a reality that has already come to pass. Jesus is enthroned in heaven as the “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Revelation 17:14; 19:16). And as Christians we are the heralds of this kingdom (Acts 1:8). The mission of the church is to make the invisible kingdom of Christ visible.

Already and not yet – However, Jesus at numerous times also referred to His kingdom as yet future (Luke 22:15-18, 29-30; Acts 1:6-7). Through a number of parables about the kingdom, Christ taught that God’s promised work of restoration had already begun, but was not yet complete; and though it started out small it would grow, and would one day reach completion (Matthew 13:31-33; also Daniel 2:34-35). This is known as the “already but not yet,” where the kingdom of God has already been inaugurated, but it is yet to be consummated. It has come, is coming, and one day will come in its fullness.