

The
ONE
YEAR®

THE ONE YEAR®

HEAVEN ON EARTH

DEVOTIONAL

*365 Daily Invitations
to Experience God's Kingdom Here and Now*



CHRIS TIEGREEN



THE ONE YEAR[®]

HEAVEN
ON EARTH

DEVOTIONAL

The ONE
YEAR®

THE ONE YEAR®

HEAVEN ON EARTH

DEVOTIONAL

*365 Daily Invitations
to Experience God's Kingdom Here and Now*

CHRIS TIEGREEN



*An Imprint of
Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.*

Visit Tyndale online at www.tyndale.com.

Visit Tyndale Momentum online at www.tyndalemomentum.com.

Tyndale Momentum, the Tyndale Momentum logo, *The One Year*, and *One Year* are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. The One Year logo is a trademark of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Tyndale Momentum is an imprint of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, IL.

The One Year Heaven on Earth Devotional: 365 Daily Invitations to Experience God's Kingdom Here and Now

Copyright © 2015 by Walk Thru Ministries. All rights reserved.

Cover photograph of clouds copyright © David M Schrader/Veer. All rights reserved.

Cover illustration of circle copyright © by Summit Avenue/Creative Market. All rights reserved.

Designed by Beth Sparkman

Published in association with the literary agency of Mark Sweeney and Associates, 28540 Altessa Way, Suite 201, Bonita Springs, FL 34135.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007, 2013 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked ESV are taken from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, *New International Version*,® *NIV*.® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® (Some quotations may be from the earlier NIV edition, copyright © 1984.) Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked NKJV are taken from the New King James Version,® copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are taken from the *Holy Bible*, King James Version.

ISBN 978-1-4143-7674-5

Printed in the United States of America

21 20 19 18 17 16 15
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Introduction

WHAT WAS THE major theme of the teaching of Jesus? That question is likely to prompt a variety of answers, most of them centering around what we commonly know as the salvation message. Yet words about salvation occur relatively rarely in the Gospels compared to another term: “the Kingdom.” If we had to pick one dominant message of Jesus’ words and actions, this would be it.

The ministry of Jesus was filled with statements about the Kingdom of God. The phrases “the Kingdom of God,” “the Kingdom of Heaven,” or simply “the Kingdom” occur more than ninety times in the Gospels alone. When Jesus first began to preach, He said the Kingdom of God was at hand (Mark 1:15). As He spent time with the disciples after His resurrection, His primary subject was to teach them about the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). On numerous occasions in between, He began parables with “The Kingdom of Heaven is like . . .” or described the Kingdom ways. And His followers picked up the theme in Acts. All of them demonstrated the Kingdom, some specifically preached about it, and as the book closes, Luke is sure to tell us that the Kingdom message was going forth unhindered. The Gospels and Acts are Kingdom-saturated works.

The idea didn’t begin in the New Testament, of course. Israel saw its existence as a manifestation of God’s Kingdom. Hebrew Scriptures rarely used the word like the apostolic writers did, but the theme is certainly in them. From the very beginning of God’s redemptive history, He has sought to be seen as King over the world that rebelled against Him.

With that in mind, it’s extremely important to think about, meditate on, and pray about the Kingdom message—not only so we can understand it, but so we can also live it and spread it. That’s why the daily readings in this book exist. They are reflections on Scripture through the lens of a Kingdom citizen. They don’t answer all questions or develop a comprehensive theology of the subject; they simply invite us into

Kingdom thinking and a Kingdom lifestyle. As followers of the King who spoke often about His Kingdom, these are issues and questions and ideas worth exploring.

Enjoy these readings as an adventure into the Kingdom of God. Ask Him questions as you read, and listen for His answers. Take each lesson of each passage to heart as you read His Word each day. And may the Kingdom come increasingly and powerfully in every area of your heart, your life, and your world.

The Kingdom Came

“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near.”

Mark 1:15, NIV

IN WORD

In Mark’s Gospel, these are the first words out of the mouth of Jesus. Anyone who expected the end of evil and the beginning of utopia would have gotten excited at first and then grown disappointed in the coming years—especially when evil seemed to win decisively on a cross in Jerusalem. Clearly the coming of the Kingdom of God wasn’t a sudden shift in the ways of the world or an overhaul of government structures. So what exactly did Jesus mean when He said the time had come? In what ways had the Kingdom of God come near?

Theologians are still trying to unpack that statement, but one thing is clear. The Kingdom was near because the King was near. People were healed. Evil was cast out of hearts. Dead people got up and walked around again. And truth astounded seekers and aggravated the keepers of the status quo. These are signs of the Kingdom and evidence that it has indeed begun to flourish. It is not a theory or an unattainable ideal. It is a dramatic intervention on a fallen planet. It is the beginning of a radical restoration.

The Kingdom is still growing and miracles still happen. That’s because the King is still among us. He didn’t come for a while and then leave—what would be the point of that?—or give us a taste we would never be able to experience again. He came to stay. So if the time had come and the Kingdom came near two thousand years ago, and Jesus remained with us as He promised, then the time has still come and the Kingdom is still near. Those who bow to the King have already entered the Kingdom.

IN DEED

What does that mean in the reality of daily life? It means we can still experience the miraculous, still see hearts fundamentally changed, still overcome evil, and still receive wisdom and revelation from the King’s mouth. It means we need to look at the world not as others do but as citizens of another realm. And it means we need to act as though the time has come. Things are changing. Everything is becoming new.

ADDITIONAL READING: Luke 2:29-32

Wherever God rules over the human heart as King,
there is the Kingdom of God established.

PAUL W. HARRISON



MARK 1:9-15

The Reversal

Repent and believe the good news! Mark 1:15, NIV

IN WORD

Repent. It's such a negative-sounding word, a religious term that seems to fit fire-and-brimstone, street-corner sermons better than it fits our image of Jesus. Many who use it freely today mean it in harsh and judgmental terms, and we don't like that. It doesn't sound very loving. It doesn't even sound very helpful.

So what does this word actually mean? It depends. In Hebraic thought—the culture of Jesus—it implies a turning around and a changing of actions. In Greek thought—the language of the Gospel writers—it implies a change of mind, a new way to think. We can probably assume that the inspirer of Scripture, the Spirit who knows all cultures and future applications of His Word, meant it comprehensively. To repent means to have a change of heart and mind that results in a new direction and different actions. It's a reversal of the course we were taking—mentally, emotionally, spiritually, relationally, behaviorally, and in all other ways.

That means that the depressed can be happy. That's repentance. The discouraged can be encouraged. That's repentance too. The apathetic can choose zeal, the angry can choose forgiveness, the judgmental can choose grace, the immoral can choose purity, the dead can choose life. None of that is possible in our own strength—repentance in that context is simply another standard we can't live up to. But now that the King is here with His Kingdom . . . well, that changes everything.

IN DEED

The Kingdom of God is a reversal from earth's status quo. If we want to walk in its fullness, we'll have to accept cross-cultural experiences. The Kingdom is so different from our old way of thinking, feeling, doing, and relating that we'll need new paradigms and perceptions. That's repentance—stepping out of the old and into the new. It's a necessary journey into Kingdom life. And a much more pleasant one than most people think.

ADDITIONAL READING: Romans 12:2

Everyone thinks of changing the world, but
no one thinks of changing himself.
LEO TOLSTOY

Our Focus

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. Matthew 6:33

IN WORD

No one needs to encourage us to focus on our needs or our desires. We do that naturally—and almost constantly. Whether consciously or not, we're relentless about getting our needs and desires met in people, positions, possessions, and more. So when Jesus says to seek first God's Kingdom—to focus on that above all else—He's making a major statement. This is a radical shift in our attention. He wants to turn us outward rather than inward. He wants us to be preoccupied with something much bigger than ourselves.

That means when we do look inward, our number one question should be not about whether we are getting our needs met but whether the Kingdom is being formed in us. When we look at our households, families, friends, and other spheres of influence, we should see ourselves as catalysts for the Kingdom. Are we instigators of the Kingdom culture? Carriers of Kingdom attitudes? Provokers of Kingdom ideas? Vessels of Kingdom solutions? Speakers of Kingdom words?

This doesn't mean we will always be spouting off religious verbiage and annoying those around us. It does mean, however, that we will be influencers of the environment around us simply because we carry the Kingdom nature within us. We are inhabited by the King, after all, if we have believed in Him and therefore been united with Him. Living out that union is a Kingdom expression that cannot be quenched.

IN DEED

If we seek our fulfillment in people, positions, and possessions, we get neither fulfillment nor the Kingdom. But if we seek the Kingdom, we get both. So we can let go of the things we cling to and the desires we desperately want to satisfy, and embrace the Kingdom of God. We are assured that if we do that, we will not be needy, stressed, and disappointed. For a world full of needy, stressed, and disappointed people, that's extremely good news.

ADDITIONAL READING: Matthew 11:28-30

Desire only God, and your heart will be satisfied.
AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO



LUKE 4:42-44

What Kind of Kingdom?

[Jesus] said, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." Luke 4:43, NIV

IN WORD

This is why Jesus was sent—to proclaim the Kingdom of God. That certainly isn't the only reason; He did a lot more than proclaim. But in a moment when He revealed why He kept moving around, this was His reason. And His words were deeply tied to what had just happened.

How did Jesus proclaim the Kingdom of God? He had just healed the mother-in-law of one of His disciples from her high fever, healed numerous people of a variety of other illnesses, and cast out demons and forbade them from speaking. His words about the Kingdom did not mark a shift in His activities; they indicated a continuation of the same thing. Jesus' mission involved getting people well and free from evil. He offered life and wholeness in real situations and in real places.

Somehow we have come up with the idea that the Good News of the Kingdom is nothing more than a message about how to be saved and go to heaven one day. But Jesus' ministry and message were much more comprehensive than that. They were a declaration of the rule and reign of His goodness in every area of life—of the *shalom* that everyone longs for. The government of God was being enforced in a spiritually and materially contrary world. The Kingdom is more than a spiritual ticket to salvation. It's a here-and-now way of life.

IN DEED

Most biblical commentators make a distinction between the gospel of salvation and the gospel of the Kingdom. Salvation is included in the Kingdom, but the Kingdom message is bigger. Jesus didn't just come to get us saved. He came to offer us the fullness of life with God now and forever. Salvation is the entrance. But the Kingdom is the prize. When we realize the difference, our faith grows dramatically. We realize God's kindness toward us. And our expectations of His goodness soar.

ADDITIONAL READING: Luke 4:18-19

Cry the gospel with your whole life.
CHARLES DE FOUCAULD

The Present and Future Kingdom

Because he was nearing Jerusalem, he told them a story to correct the impression that the Kingdom of God would begin right away. Luke 19:11

IN WORD

Jesus made statements that indicated the Kingdom had already arrived. “The time . . . is at hand,” He said (Mark 1:15, *ESV*). “The kingdom of God is in your midst,” He insisted (Luke 17:21, *NIV*). After all, the King was present. Therefore, so was the Kingdom.

But He also spoke of the Kingdom as a thing of the future. Yes, it had come; but it was also coming. And not as soon as the people thought. In fact, He told them a parable about waiting. A nobleman would be going on a journey to be appointed king, and no one knew how long he would be gone. His people would have to manage his resources while he was away, and one day he would return to assume his role as king.

How do we reconcile these statements? Has the Kingdom come, or is it going to come in the future? It isn't hard to imagine both. Anything that's a process involves a beginning and a time of fulfillment. And the Kingdom is certainly a process. The King had come, but He wasn't widely recognized during His ministry. The fullness of His reign would become visible much later.

IN DEED

We live in the midst of the process, and we're tempted by two extremes. One is to think the Kingdom has already come and whenever we have a bad day, to be discouraged that it isn't a very good one. The other view, more prevalent in this era of history, is to think it's entirely future—out there for us to experience one day, but not something we can experience and enjoy now. The truth is that the Kingdom has come, is now coming, and will finally come. The government of the King is ever-increasing (Isaiah 9:7), and it will break into our age with greater frequency and visibility. The Kingdom is wherever the King is. And He is both with us now and waiting to come again.

ADDITIONAL READING: Luke 17:21

In the gospel, Jesus is *autobasileia*, the Kingdom Himself.
ORIGEN OF ALEXANDRIA



LUKE 19:11-27

Kingdom Promotion

To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. Luke 19:26

IN WORD

We like to think God's Kingdom is a perfectly comfortable realm—that it will match every impulse we've ever had about "this is how it should be done," that it will resolve every sense of injustice we observed in this life. But will it? Or will we be offended by God's way of doing things, just as we are by other people? When we see others getting farther ahead and ourselves stuck and stagnating—or even losing ground—will we still be able to rejoice over God's goodness?

In this Kingdom, there's no attempt to even things out. Those who are most trustworthy and fruitful get more, and those who are less trustworthy and fruitful suffer loss even of what they had. Seeing those who have plenty get more and those who have little lose what they have may violate our sense of fairness, but we should understand. It's exactly how we treat people in the workplace, how we invest our resources, and how we value impersonal forces in this world. We approve whomever and whatever proves effective and worthwhile, and we overlook whomever and whatever doesn't. That has nothing to do with our love. It simply fits our goals and purposes.

Likewise, God doesn't love fruitless people less than fruitful ones. But He doesn't promote them out of a sense of fairness. It may be an uncomfortable dynamic, but it's the way of the Kingdom. Trustworthy people are entrusted with more.

IN DEED

This dynamic is not a "one day" Kingdom principle. It's now, already in effect in this age. God loves every one of His people as much as He could possibly love us, and He isn't a utilitarian employer. He'll invest heavily in those who need help. But He doesn't position all of us the same way. Our fruitfulness and responsibilities are contingent on our faithfulness. Small responsibilities lead to greater responsibilities when we handle them well. That's how Kingdom purposes move forward—and how we move forward with them.

ADDITIONAL READING: Matthew 20:1-16

Faithfulness in a little thing is a big thing.
JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Both Ages

I pray that . . . you may know . . . his incomparably great power . . . not only in the present age but also in the one to come. Ephesians 1:18-19, 21, NIV

IN WORD

Much of Christendom today thinks in terms of “this world” and “that world”—life on earth and life in heaven. Perhaps that’s because we see around us so many contradictions to the Kingdom that we assume all things Kingdom must be somewhere else. Or maybe we’ve simply given up on the possibility of the Kingdom coming in any visible way. But the Bible doesn’t defer the Kingdom to some out-of-sight universe. It isn’t a heaven-only thing. It’s a this-world possibility.

Writing of Jesus’ authority, Paul uses a phrase often used by Jesus Himself: this age and the age to come. The difference between that and the this-world-that-world alternative may seem subtle, but it’s significant. Neither Scripture as a whole nor Jesus’ teaching specifically will allow us to defer every good promise of God to another time or place. The mind-set that sees His reign only as “there and then” will lose faith in the “here and now.” That isn’t God’s desire. He wants us to believe in all of His goodness—and expect to see it—now.

That will require a shift in perspective. Our wistful “One day, Lord,” needs to turn into a “Why not now, Lord?” We’ll have to be content with missteps and unanswered questions as we learn to recognize His current work and align our faith with what He’s doing. But if we persist, we will see breakthroughs we once thought were reserved for another world. We’ll see Jesus’ authority in this age and the age to come.

IN DEED

By faith, press in to God to see His Kingdom manifest in your life and the world around you. Certainly it does not come in its fullness until the “age to come,” but plenty of it is available for this age too. And because the issue is ages rather than worlds, we don’t have to look only to heaven. Earth is longing for a revelation of the Kingdom among God’s children (Romans 8:19). God invites us to demonstrate it.

ADDITIONAL READING: Romans 8:19

He who shall introduce into public affairs the principles of primitive Christianity will change the face of the world.
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN