

Kingdom Come

The Temple

The “idea” of the “Kingdom of God” is often more desirable than the reality. And yet, the Kingdom of God on earth has always been something tangible, concrete, and measurable. When God established Israel as a kingdom, it was not in the abstract. The Kingdom was based on the covenants God had made with this people. Covenants create real and unbreakable family bonds. For Israel, circumcision brought one into the covenant and Temple worship kept one in the covenant. The center of life in the Kingdom was the Temple. For Christians, when Jesus established the “new and eternal covenant”, the sign of this is His Body. His Body is the New Temple. His Body is the Eucharist. This is the food that we pray for every time we pray the Our Father, “Give us this day our daily (super substantial) bread. Life in the Kingdom is centered around the new Temple, Christ’s Body and Blood in the Eucharist.

Discussion Questions

1. What is one thing that you and your family can do together? Any activities or hobbies? Conversations around certain topics or watching certain sports, TV shows, or movies?
2. What do you miss the most about your family when you are away from them? What do you find the most difficult about the “reality” of family?
3. Is the concept of a “tangible” Kingdom new to you? When you hear that the Church is the Kingdom of God on earth, do you have any hesitations to accepting that? What causes those hesitations?
4. The Mass is our participation in the “new and eternal covenant” that God established for all those who follow Him. How do you experience the Mass? Does knowing that your participation roots you more firmly in the Kingdom help? What more might help you get more out of the Mass?
5. The Sacraments of the New Covenant fulfill and surpass the signs of the Old Covenant. Can you see God’s Providence and care working through this? Why or why not?
6. Jesus told the Samaritan woman in John 4 (when she pointed out that Jews worshipped on Mount Zion in the Temple while the Samaritans worshipped in a different place) that “the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem....But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth...”. How does the Eucharist fulfill this prophecy of Christ? What other questions might it raise?
7. If the Mass is what “makes us Christians” (i.e. participants in the Kingdom), why do so many excuse themselves from Sunday Mass?

God in Real Life

- I. Many people feel like they are simply “going through the motions” at Mass. What are three things you can do *this week* to change this in your mind, your heart, and your actions? One thing you can do to prepare your mind for participating in the Mass...One thing you can do to prepare your heart to actively engage in the Mass...and One thing you can change about your actions that might open you up more deeply to this “Center of Gravity” of the Kingdom, the Eucharist?

Be Transformed

The Bible and the Catechism speak about Kingdom, The Temple, and Worship:

- A. The Bible talks about God’s unique Presence in the Temple/Tabernacle: Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. “Moses could not enter the tent of meeting, because the cloud settled down upon it and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Whenever the cloud rose from the tabernacle, the Israelites would set out on their journey. But if the cloud did not lift, they would not go forward; only when it lifted did they go forward. The cloud of the LORD was over the tabernacle by day, and fire in the cloud at night, in the sight of the whole house of Israel in all the stages of their journey.” (Exodus 40:34-38)
- B. Jesus himself honored the Temple: “Jesus went up to the Temple as the privileged place of encounter with God. For him, the Temple was the dwelling of his Father, a house of prayer, and he was angered that its outer court had become a place of commerce. He drove merchants out of it because of jealous love for his Father: “You shall not make my Father's house a house of trade. His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'" After his Resurrection his apostles retained their reverence for the Temple. (CCC 584)
- C. “‘Daily’ (epiousios) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Taken in a temporal sense, this word is a pedagogical repetition of “this day,” to confirm us in trust “without reservation.” Taken in the qualitative sense, it signifies what is necessary for life, and more broadly every good thing sufficient for subsistence. Taken literally (epi-ousios: “super-essential”), it refers directly to the Bread of Life, the Body of Christ, the “medicine of immortality,” without which we have no life within us. Finally in this connection, its heavenly meaning is evident: “this day” is the Day of the Lord, the day of the feast of the kingdom, anticipated in the Eucharist that is already the foretaste of the kingdom to come. For this reason it is fitting for the Eucharistic liturgy to be celebrated each day.” (CCC # 2837)
- D. “Far from having been hostile to the Temple, where he gave the essential part of his teaching, Jesus was willing to pay the Temple-tax, associating with him Peter, whom he had just made the foundation of his future Church. He even identified himself with the Temple by presenting himself as God's definitive dwelling-place among men. Therefore his being put to bodily death presaged the destruction of the Temple, which would manifest the dawning of a new age in the history of salvation: “The hour is coming

when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.” (CCC 586)

To the Heart

Jesus announced to the crowd, “If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water’” (Jn 7:37-38).

He is referring to Ezekiel 47: “I saw water flowing out from beneath the threshold of the Temple toward the East...Wherever the river flows, every sort of living creature that can multiply shall live, and there shall be abundant fish, for wherever this water comes the sea shall be made fresh. Along both banks of the river, fruit trees of every kind shall grow; their leaves shall not fade, nor their fruit fail...”

“Brothers and sisters: You are God’s building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it.

But each one must be careful how he builds upon it, for no one can lay a foundation other than the one that is there, namely, Jesus Christ. Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for the temple of God, which you are, is holy.” (1 Corinthians 3:9-11, 16-17)