

The Disciples' Question in Acts 1:6:

When they therefore were come together, they asked him, saying, Lord,
“
Will you at this time
”
restore again the Kingdom to Israel?

(This handout forms part of the series “The Holy Spirit – God’s Spirit”, specifically accompanying talks about “Pentecost”).

This question that the Lord’s disciples asked comes after He had revealed that they would soon be baptized with the Holy Spirit. The question implies that the Kingdom was once operating in some form. How these events are linked is helped by understanding what led up to that point. A summarised sequence of events relating to “the Kingdom of Israel” is set out in these pages. Dates are approximate, as indicated by the “c.” before each date, so they should be used as a guide only.

The Kingdom of Israel - in brief:

- c.1950-1050 B.C.** – God, the only king of His people, deals with Israel through people like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, the Judges, etc.
- c.1050-605 B.C.** – Human kings (David, Solomon, Hezekiah, etc) reigning over Israelites
- c.605-165 B.C.** – Gentile kings (Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Antiochus, etc) ruling over Israelites
- c.165-63 B.C.** – Independent reign of Israelites (under the Maccabees)
- c.63 B.C. until today** – Gentile rule (the Romans). No true Israelite kings.

God as King

c.1950-1450 B.C.

The family descended from **Abraham, Isaac and Jacob** finds themselves growing number, and living in the land of Egypt. There is no mention of a king over these people, except for the Egyptian rule of Pharaoh. “There arose up a new king over Egypt” (Exodus 1:8).

c.1450-1410 B.C.

The children of Israel are known as God’s people (Exodus 5:1), and are led out of Egypt by His appointed leader, **Moses**, ruling on His behalf (Numbers 12:7,8). In this sense, Moses was like the Judges (or overseers) who were to come after him.

The people are promised that, if they are obedient, they would “be to Me a Kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:5,6).

c.1400-1050 B.C.

Israel begin their possession of the Promised Land under **Joshua and the Judges**. Humanly speaking, they still have no “king” at that stage. God is their king. 1 Samuel 12:12 “The Lord God was your king” (see also Numbers 23:21).

Human Kings of Israel and Judah

c.1050 B.C.

Israel reject God as their king and seek to have a king “like the other nations”. **Saul** is chosen as Israel’s first human king. (1 Samuel 8:5,22; 10:1,16)

c.1010 B.C.

Saul is succeeded by **David** as king of Israel (1 Samuel 16:1,12,13; 2 Samuel 2:4).

c.1000 B.C.

David recognises God as his king (“My King and my God” Psalm 5:2). However, he is promised a Kingdom “forever”¹ (2 Samuel 7:11-16) and thus begins **a line of David’s descendants** reigning in succession over the throne of Israel, beginning with Solomon.

c.930-605 B.C.

The Kingdom **divides** in two, and the line of David’s descendants continue to reign over the southern Kingdom of Judah (not the northern Kingdom known as Israel). 2 Chronicles traces this lineage, and the names listed later in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 1:6-11 were all kings of this line.

During this period, various prophets speak of God as the true King, holding an authority higher than the human king of the nation. (“I recite my composition concerning the King ... You are fairer than the sons of men ... Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever” - Psalm 45:1,2,6; “The Lord, the King of Israel” - Isaiah 44:6; “The Lord is the true God ... and everlasting King” - Jeremiah 10:10.)

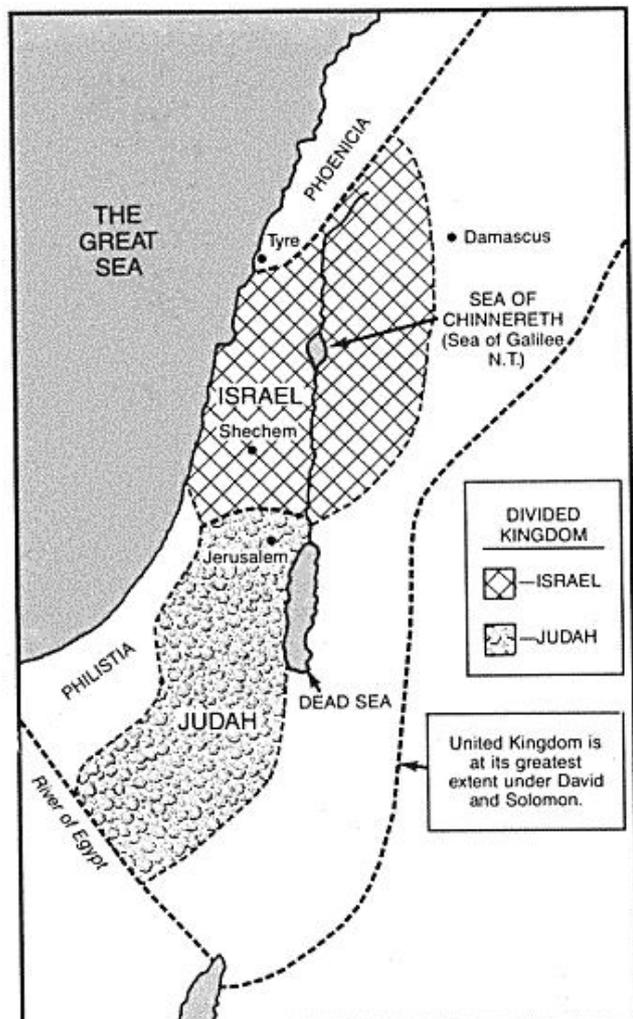
c.722 B.C.

The northern Kingdom of **Israel is taken captive** by the Assyrians. (2 Kings 17:5-23)

c.700 B.C.

The prophet **Micah prophesies** a time when there shall be **a ruler over all of Israel**, who comes from Bethlehem, but **“whose goings forth have been from on old, from everlasting”** (Micah 5:2).

The Divided Kingdom



¹ The Hebrew word here for “forever” is *olam*, a term, in its simplest definition, meaning “a long time”. The prophecy of 2 Samuel 7 has at least two connotations – one is the “very long time” of 400 years that saw David’s immediate descendants rule over Judah; the other is the “very long time” that looks forward to the millennial reign of David’s greatest descendant, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Living under the rule of Gentile Kings

c.605 B.C.

The southern Kingdom of **Judah is taken captive** by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. The last king is deposed and exiled (2 Kings 25:1-7), and the line of Davidic kings comes to a halt. Most Jews are exiled to Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:17-21).

Note: From this point onwards, there has never been another descendant of David reigning as king over any Israelites or Jews.

c.600 B.C.

One of the Jewish exiles, Daniel, reveals something of a future Kingdom established by God (Daniel 2:34-35,44-45).

The prophet Ezekiel speaks of a time when the dispersed of Israel will be gathered back into their own land, with one king placed over them, and the Spirit of God in their lives (Ezekiel 36:24,27; 37:21,22).

c.535-525 B.C

The Kingdom of Babylon is conquered by the Persian Empire. A Jewish descendant of David, **Zerubbabel**, is permitted to return to Jerusalem under the reign of King Cyrus of Persia (Ezra 1:3; 2:2; Matthew 1:12,13). He is appointed as “governor” of this region, but not as its “king”.

c.525-165 B.C.

For the next few hundred years, the land of Judah/Judea is ruled over by a series of **Gentile nations**:

c.525-333 B.C. - Persian rule

c.333-323 B.C. - Greek rule

c.323-204 B.C. - Egyptian rule (Greek descent – the Ptolemies)

c.204-165 B.C. - Syrian rule (Greek descent – the Seleucids)

Independent Jewish Rule

c.165-63 B.C.

Following an uprising of Jewish nationals against the Seleucids, Judah gains independent rule under the **Maccabees**, also known as the Hasmoneans, under which a monarchy was established. These, however, are not descendants of David (1 Maccabees).

Under Gentile Rule

c.63 B.C. – 70 A.D.

Hasmonean rule lasts until 63 B.C., when the Roman general Pompey captures Jerusalem and subjects the region to Roman rule. **Herod**, (an Edomite, not a Jew) marries into the Hasmonean family, allies himself to Roman rule and usurps the role of Jewish kingship. At the time of the New Testament, Judea and surrounding provinces of Galilee, Perea, and Samaria, all loosely of Israelite descent, have a “King of the Jews” in the form of Herod the Great (and, later, his descendants). In reality, however, the gentile Roman Empire is ruling this region.



The Kingdom in the Gospels (and Acts ch.1)

Old Testament Promises:

(a) A Kingdom to be established by God (Daniel 2:34-35,44-45).

(b) A Kingdom ruled over by a descendant of David (2 Samuel 7:11-16), who would come forth from Bethlehem, but “whose goings forth have been from on old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2).

(c) This promised Kingdom would see the dispersed of Israel gathered back into their own land, with one king placed over them (Ezekiel 37:21,22).

(d) The Holy Spirit would be abundant in the lives of the people (Ezekiel 36:24-28).

When the New Testament opens:

(a) The “Kingdom” is being ruled over by Gentiles (the Romans) ...

(b) The token king is a pretender to the throne (Herod), an ungodly man who was not a descendant of David.

(c) The events of the Gospels take place amidst a fractured land, the half-caste nation of Samaria being in the centre of it.

(d) The activities of the Holy Spirit are rare.

However, “in the fulness of time” (Galatians 4:4), God addresses this situation.

“The Kingdom” in the Gospels

- a sequence of events

(there may be others)

- (1) The promise to Mary of a son, who was to be called “Jesus”. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever.” (Luke 1:31,32).
- (2) “Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews?” ... When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled” (Matthew 2:1,2).
- (3) John the Baptist begins to preach that the Kingdom was at hand (Matthew 3:11).
- (4) The Holy Spirit comes upon the Lord Jesus (John 1:32-34), and is soon after hailed by Nathaniel as “the Son of God, the King of Israel”. (John 1:49).
- (5) He begins to preach that “the Kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:15), and accompanies this preaching with signs and wonders enabled by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 4:23,24).
- (6) Christ sends out 12 of His disciples preaching that the Kingdom is at hand, and they are also enabled to accompany their preaching with signs and wonders (Matthew 10:1-8).
- (7) The Kingdom continues to be spoken about, plainly and by way of parables, repeatedly throughout Christ’s earthly ministry. The word “Kingdom” occurs well over 100 times in the Gospel accounts.
- (8) On at least two different occasions, when speaking to His critics and enemies, He tells them that the Kingdom of God is “amongst you” (not “within you”, symbolically, in a person’s heart, but physically there in their presence at that time). Each of these occasions is preceded by a miracle, performed by the Lord, enabled by the Holy Spirit, and are typical examples of what will take place in the future Kingdom (Matthew 12:28; Luke 17:21).
- (9) Sometime into His ministry, the Lord asks the disciples who they think He is. After the reply of “You are the Christ (the anointed One), the Son of the living God”, He began to show His disciples that He must suffer, die and be raised again. Following their disbelief, He tells them that, despite this, there are some standing there who would witness the Lord in His Kingdom. Three of the disciples are then shown a vision of the future Kingdom when the Lord is transfigured on the mount. (Matt 16:13-17:9).
- (10) The disciples are told that they were being bestowed upon them a Kingdom, and that they would sit and judge (rule) the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30).
- (11) At His arrest and trial:
 - He says that “my Kingdom is not from here” (John 18:36).
 - He is asked by Pilate, “are you the King of the Jews?” “It is as you say” (Luke 23:3).
 - The chief priests say to Pilate, “We have no king but Caesar” (John 19:15).
- (12) Upon His resurrection, whilst His identity was still hidden, two people disclose that they “were hoping it was He who was going to redeem Israel” (Luke 24:21).

The forty days of the Lord's post-resurrection appearances

During that time:

- He bestowed the Holy Spirit in some measure upon them, along with a degree of authority (John 20:21-23)
- He opened their understanding of the OT Scriptures concerning Him, including His death and resurrection (Luke 24:44,45)
- He spoke to them of “things pertaining to the Kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3).
 - A Kingdom ruled over by a descendant of David (2 Samuel 7:11-16), who would come forth from Bethlehem, but “whose goings forth have been from on old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2).
 - A Kingdom that would see the dispersed of Israel gathered back into their own land, with one king placed over them (Ezekiel 37:21,22)
 - A Kingdom that would see God's Holy Spirit abundant in the lives of the people (Ezekiel 36:24-28).
 - He promised them that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit soon (Acts 1:5,8).

In brief, from the beginning of the Lord's ministry until just before His ascension:

- The Lord had spoken a lot about the coming Kingdom of God
- He had preached about the nearness of the Kingdom.
- His death and resurrection had been completed.
- The disciples' understanding of the Scriptures had been opened.
- To a degree, they had been given the Spirit and authority to rule.
- They had been promised an outpouring of the Holy Spirit to come soon.
- The Day of Pentecost was approaching, a day at which dispersed Jews would be gathering together.

In light of these events, with all of these things coming together, the disciples then ask the question:

“Lord, will you at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6).

- Their question was not whether it would happen; the question was whether it was going to happen **now**. The Lord's answer was not a rebuke, but simply that they weren't to know the timing.
- Soon, beginning at Pentecost, and continuing for 30 or so years of the Acts Period, the Holy Spirit would minister through the apostles in a way prefiguring what will take place in the future Kingdom.
- The Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 sees the Holy Spirit coming upon those who put their faith in the Lord Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. This produced the “firstfruits of a harvest”, a foretaste of that which is yet to be fully realised in God's earthly Kingdom.