

The Kingdom Is Taken by Force

by Stephen Kaung

The kingdom of the heavens is a call to repentance and a reminder that God's kingdom is near, and people must prepare themselves to live under God's rule.

Duration: 1:01:50

Scripture: Matthew 11:4-6, Matthew 11:12, Matthew 11:28-30, John 1:29, John 1:32

Topics: "Kingdom Living", "Christian Discipleship"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the book of Malachi and the controversy God had with His people. The people of Israel were in darkness and were insensitive to God's law. They polluted His table, despised His name, violated His covenant, and even robbed God of what was due to Him. After 400 years of silence, God spoke again through John the Baptist, calling the people to repent. The preacher emphasizes the importance of discipleship and diligently seeking the kingdom of God, warning that if we do not press on in our Christian life, we may not be qualified to rule with Christ in His kingdom.

Transcript

Will you please turn to the Gospel according to Matthew, Matthew chapter 11, verse 12. Matthew chapter 11, verse 12. But from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of the heavens is taken by violence, and the violent sees on it.

But from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of the heavens is taken by violence, and the violent sees on it. Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee for gathering us together here this morning. We thank Thee for Thy presence with us, and we do look to Thee to speak to us.

Lord, we are all here, waiting to hear from Thee. Pray that Thy Holy Spirit will open Thy word to us, and send Thy word into our very hearts. Do not allow us to just listen with our ears, but Lord, open our understanding that Thy word may fall on good ground, and bear fruits to Thyself a hundredfold.

We ask in Thy precious name. Amen. Now once again, I would like you to join me in meditation.

We need to meditate upon the word of God. Not just read it, or hear it, but ponder upon it before the Lord, and allow the word of God to really be open to us, and sink very deep into our heart. But before we meditate together this morning, I would like to clarify one point.

You know, we are talking about the kingdom of God, the gospel of the kingdom. But brothers and sisters, we need to remember that the gospel of Jesus Christ is only one gospel. There are no other gospels.

The Apostle Paul makes it very emphatically in Galatians. If anyone should preach another gospel of another kind, he is to be cursed. Because there is only one glad tidings, and that glad tidings is our Lord Jesus Himself.

But our Lord Jesus is so full, so rich. So we find as we open the New Testament, you have four gospels. The gospel according to Matthew, the gospel according to Mark, the gospel according to Luke, and the gospel according to John.

Now that doesn't mean that we have four gospels. There is only one gospel. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But our Lord Jesus is so rich. You have to look at Him from different directions. So there in the gospel of Matthew, He is described to us as King.

In Mark, as servant. In Luke, as the perfect man. And in John, perfect God.

And when you look into the nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ, then you will find it has a number of different facets. The gospel of Matthew reveals the gospel of the kingdom. The kingdom of God.

The gospel of Mark shows us the gospel of servanthood. How we should serve as servants of God. And the gospel of Luke shows us the gospel of grace.

How the grace of God through our Lord Jesus has come to us. And the gospel of John shows us the gospel of life. The eternal life of God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

So you find that the gospel of the kingdom is not another gospel of another kind. It is another of the same kind. The gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now as we mentioned before that most believers are familiar with the gospel of Luke. We know Christ Jesus as our Savior. We receive the remission of our sins.

It is grace that comes from our Lord Jesus. But unfortunately, many of God's people do not know the gospel of the kingdom. That our Lord Jesus is more than Savior to us.

He is our King. And what does it mean by being our King? How is it that we are in the kingdom of God? Now so that's the reason why we need to have more meditation on the gospel of the kingdom. Now this morning I would like you to join with me.

I hope that you will not just be here listening. But I want you to join with me in meditating. And we are to concentrate our meditation on just one verse.

Matthew chapter 11 verse 12. But from the time of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of the heavens is to be taken by violence. And the violent sees on it.

Here we are faced with a new term. The gospel of the kingdom of the heavens. We mentioned before the kingdom of God.

Wherever God rules and reigns, there is his kingdom. Therefore his kingdom is from eternity to eternity. But strictly speaking, what is the kingdom of God? The kingdom of God are those who put themselves under the rule of God.

In other words, God rules over all. But there are people who are rebellious. Those who are truly in the kingdom of God, who are obedient, submissive, surrender, put themselves under the rule of God.

And these are really in the kingdom of God. But here you'll find the scripture gives us another new term. The gospel of the kingdom of the heavens.

Now this is a new term. In the whole Bible, probably you can find something close to it in Daniel. Daniel chapter 4 verse 26.

The king, the heavens do rule. Now that is the kingdom of the heavens. And the only other place in the New Testament aside from Matthew is 2 Timothy chapter 4 verse 18.

The apostle Paul said, God will deliver me from every evil and he will preserve me for the heavenly kingdom. Now these are the only two places that are close to this term, kingdom of the heavens. The kingdom of the heavens is a term used exclusively by Matthew.

In Matthew you'll find many times. Some people say it's 32 times. And some say it is 33 times.

But anyway you'll find it is a term used mostly in the gospel according to Matthew. Now we would like to ask the question. Isn't God the God of the heavens and of the earth? If he is the God of the heavens and of the earth, then there is no need.

What is the need of specifically mentioning the kingdom of the heavens? Now you remember the story during the Babylonian captivity of the children of Israel. The Bible says God is the God of the heavens. But during that period he is not addressed as the God of the heavens and of the earth.

Why? It is because during that period he has no representation on earth. Even the children of Israel who were supposed to represent God on earth, they were in captivity. They fell in their testimony.

So far as the world is concerned it is as if God has retreated back to heavens. He is no longer on earth. He has no name on earth because Jerusalem was destroyed.

The place where he put his name there was destroyed. So during that period you remember he is always mentioned as the God of the heavens and never mentioned as God of the earth. Now even though he is, after the remnant came back they rebuilt the temple and yet brothers and sisters you find that very soon they degenerated.

Very soon they departed from God. Even outwardly they still maintain an appearance. They had the temple rebuilt.

They have the priesthood serving. They have the law of God in their midst and even they have Pharisees and scribes who specialize on the letter of the law. And yet so far as their spiritual situation is concerned they departed from God.

So you remember the last book of the Old Testament the book of Malachi. There God had a controversy with his people. His people were in blindness in darkness.

They were insensitive to the love of God. They polluted his table. They despised his name.

They violated his covenant. They even robbed God of his due. That was the situation of the children of Israel so called God's people on earth to represent God on earth.

But what a failure. And the last word of God to his people was return to me that I may return to you. After God has spoken this word for 400 years he was silent.

There was no word from heaven to earth. But after 400 years suddenly God spoke again. John the Baptist he began to proclaim the word of God in the wilderness.

The people flocked to the wilderness to hear him. And his message was repent for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh. The children of Israel needed to repent to turn around not just a little bit correction but an absolute turnaround because that direction was wrong.

They were going the wrong direction. They needed to turn back to return to God. And then God will return to them.

But God gave them a new reason for repentance. And the reason for repentance is the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh. In other words it is as if God said you can go on your own way if you want to.

But remember the time has changed. The kingdom of the heavens is drawing nigh. And if you do not repent and turn around you won't have any part in the kingdom of the heavens.

So you see here repentance is based upon the kingdom of the heavens. Of course we know what repentance is. We need to repent of what we did wrong.

But here you find you need to repent because of something good, excellent, perfect is coming. This is a new reason for repentance. Do not think that you are good enough.

You need to repent because when the kingdom of the heavens comes your good is not good enough to enter it. You need to completely change your course. Change your heart.

Circumcise your heart. Return to God. And then there is hope for you.

So brothers and sisters here you find the term the kingdom of the heavens. So in our meditation the first thing is we need to consider what is meant by the kingdom of the heavens. Is it different from the kingdom of God or is it the same? Now if it is the same why use something different? We mentioned before that kingdom in the scriptural sense in the scriptural sense basically primarily kingdom means kingship.

In other words it is the rule of the king. Not in an external sense but more in an inward sense. That is to say all those who are under his kingship under his rule they begin to take up the character of the king.

So the kingdom is the corporate expression of the king himself. He expresses his nature his character being a people and that people are like him. That is the kingdom.

So the kingdom of God means those people who are under his rule they take up God's character. They are like God. God is able to express himself through these people.

So they are under his kingdom. Now what is meant by the kingdom of the heavens? Now it means that heavens rule over these people. These people are under heaven's rule.

And heaven began to be manifested in their lives. They live a heavenly life on earth. Then they are in the kingdom of the heavens.

Now the kingdom of the heavens and the kingdom of God they are parallel at some point. But not at all times. The kingdom of God is from eternity to eternity.

Because even in the strictest sense from eternity to eternity there is no lack of people or angels that put themselves completely under the rule of God in spite of rebellions. So the kingdom of God is from eternity to eternity. But the kingdom of the heavens is one part in the kingdom of God.

And in that one period the terms are interchangeable. And that's what you'll find in the world of God. But except from that one period of time in eternity you'll find the kingdom of God is bigger than the kingdom of the heavens.

Now to put it very simply the kingdom of the heavens begins with the first coming of our Lord Jesus. He who is in heaven has now come upon this earth. He brings heaven to earth to set up his kingdom upon this earth.

So in this first coming of our Lord Jesus that begins the kingdom of the heavens. And it ends with his second coming. When he shall come and set up his kingdom upon this earth.

The millennium kingdom is the kingdom of the heavens in manifestation. So brothers and sisters to make it simple just keep in mind the kingdom of the heavens is that section in the kingdom of God that begins with the first coming of Christ and ends with his second coming. Now why is it called the kingdom of the heavens? Because he who was in heaven now came down to earth.

He brings heaven to earth. You remember what our Lord Jesus said? He who was in heaven has come upon this earth and yet he is still in heaven. In other words he who is in heaven has come upon this earth and yet he is still in heaven.

He brings heaven with him. He lives a heavenly life. He obeys Father in the heavens.

He is the king of the kingdom of the heavens. But strangely you find when John the Baptist began to preach he said repent for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh. In other words it is coming it is near but it hasn't arrived yet. Now of course because at that time our Lord Jesus was on earth but he wasn't manifested yet.

He was hidden in Nazareth for thirty years. John the Baptist he began his ministry six months ahead of our Lord Jesus' ministry. So when he was proclaiming the kingdom of the heavens he cannot say the kingdom of the heavens is here.

He said the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh because the king is still hidden. He is unknown. He hasn't manifested himself but because it is near.

Therefore there needs to be preparation for the king. That is repentance. The only preparation for the king of the heavens is repentance.

We often think of repentance as something for the unbelievers. For brothers and sisters the children of Israel supposed to be God's people they needed to repent. And today even we who believe in the Lord Jesus we need to repent.

May not be for negative reasons unfortunately even for negative reasons we need to repent but more we need to repent for positive reasons. For the king for the kingdom of the heavens because our life on earth doesn't seem to agree with the heavenly kingdom. We need to repent.

From the time from the days of the John the Baptist even now until now now brothers and sisters we know that John he began his ministry probably around 27 A.D. Six months later our Lord Jesus was baptized and then he began to minister. The Bible said when he heard John the Baptist was imprisoned that was in 28 A.D. Then our Lord Jesus began his public ministry in Galilee. And you find the Bible says when he began his public ministry he said the same thing as John the Baptist repent for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh.

Now why is it so? The king now has come forward. We should think he should say repent for the kingdom of the heavens is here. No he said the kingdom of heavens has drawn nigh.

He preached the same message. Why? It is because the king is here but where is his kingdom? Who are those people who have put themselves under his kingship? Who are those people who begin to take upon themselves the character of Christ? To put it another way where are his disciples? A king without a people doesn't have a kingdom. So even he was the king and yet his message is the kingdom of heavens has drawn nigh.

But then when we come to Matthew chapter 11 we know that John the Baptist was in prison in 27 28 A.D. and this was in 29 A.D. almost two years not quite and it was during the time that John the Baptist would soon be beheaded so he sent two disciples to our Lord Jesus. His faith was so tested. He hadn't lost his faith yet in the Messiah in Jesus but he began to falter.

So he sent his disciples to Jesus and said are you the one are you really the one we are waiting for or shall we wait for another one? Now brothers and sisters John the Baptist had given such a wonderful testimony to our Lord Jesus so sure so clear behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world I saw the Spirit descended upon him and abiding in him and I was told he is the Son of God. Brothers and sisters John the Baptist said now he must increase I must decrease. So clear testimony and yet he was tested to the uttermost in prison and the one whom he testified didn't seem to care.

Why did he do all these miracles to people and not to me? He was almost offended. So you remember when the Lord Jesus heard this he said tell John what I'm doing. Yes I opened the eyes of the blind I got the crippled walk I preached the gospel to the poor I raised people from the dead I'm doing that but I am not doing to you.

Will you be offended? I treat you special. I know you are able to bear it. You will not be offended by me and sure enough John was faithful to the end.

But brothers and sisters it was during that time that our Lord Jesus said from the days of John the Baptist until now now now has come the kingdom of the heavens is to taken to be taken by violence and the violent sees on it. So brothers and sisters during that very particular time there is a change. Instead of the kingdom of heavens has drawn nigh the kingdom of the heavens is now here.

Why? Because at that time the Lord already had his disciples. What do you mean by being his disciples? What do you mean by being disciple to Christ? To be disciple to Christ means you have put yourself completely under his rule. You allowed him to teach you you allowed him to change you you allowed him

to transform you you allowed him to let his character be impressed implanted into you.

That is discipleship. You know in the old days the disciples of the old days are different from the students of today. The students of today you go to the school you go to your teacher you listen to the lectures you try to absorb all that he knows and that's it.

You do not learn from the teacher his life his manner his character it doesn't matter everything is impersonal but in the old days a disciple is different if you want to learn the trade you have to leave your home you have to live with your master you become one of the family of the master you live there and maybe during the first year he won't even tell you about the trade you will be doing different things in the family sweep the floor help the babies serve the master as a slave as a servant but gradually he will begin to allow you to touch the tools and tell you some secret but through the years you learn more than a trade you learn your master you begin to talk like him you begin to think like him you begin to walk like him you begin to take up his manner not only his skill but his

life now that's discipleship and here you find our Lord Jesus he had called some to be his disciples he called Peter Angel John James Philip Nathaniel Matthew these people began to leave everything and stay with him and learn of him so here you find he already has his kingdom he has a people who are under him absolutely brothers and sisters the now begins at that time and it continues even now we are still in the now the kingdom of the heavens is now here it cannot be seen by naked eyes it is still hidden in the world but it is here wherever there are people who put themselves under the absolute rule of the king of the heavens heaven began to appear in their lives thank God when we believe in the Lord Jesus it is more than just a personal forgiveness something much more was done when we

first saved because when we were first saved when we believe in the Lord Jesus even though we do not know much we only know as our savior we do not know him as our king and yet God has already done something to us in Colossians chapter 1 verse 13 it says he has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of the son of his love what is the kingdom of the son of God's love it is the kingdom of the heavens because the son of God's love came from heaven he brought heaven to earth and he is going to set up his kingdom on earth so positionally brothers and sisters we are all in the kingdom of the heavens but the kingdom of the heavens has taken us in but have we taken the kingdom in positionally we are all in the kingdom of the heavens but conditionally

experientially are we really living under the rule of heaven do we still live our old life do we still follow the way of the world have we really walk a heavenly way even though we are a heavenly people on earth and yet are we walking a heavenly life who is our king who is ruling over our lives whose character begins to build up in us and manifested through us brothers and sisters these are questions we shall meditate upon we shall ponder it think over it place ourselves in the light of heaven and allow that light to enlighten us the kingdom of the heavens is now here but who sees upon it our Lord Jesus said the kingdom of the heavens is taken to be taken by violence and a violent seize on it now these are strong words I go over many different versions trying to see if there is any softer

gentler kinder easier words but unfortunately I couldn't find any it may be put in different ways some said violence others say force some say violent some say forceful some say stormy the kingdom of the heavens is to be taken by storms and the eager ones may hold on it in other words all these words are strong words military words militant taken seize storm it just like you are taking a city taking a citadel you storm it you put all your force into it in order to seize it to capture it ah brothers and sisters the kingdom of

the heavens is not to be taken by sitting in sedentia and carried into it that's the way God's people think but it won't happen it is to be taken by violence and the violent seize on it now why is it so? is it easy to go to heaven? yes you don't need to do anything

you are carried to heaven it's all by grace even if you try to do something it may jeopardize you it's better you don't do anything just trust in the Lord Jesus Christ but the kingdom of the heavens is different it has to be seized it has to be taken and if you don't do that it will slip by why?

I believe for two reasons one is a positive reason the kingdom of the heavens is so precious it is a prize beyond measure and because it is so precious it's a treasure so it is not cheap it is something you have to pay a cost to take it isn't our Lord Jesus so precious that in order to win him in order to gain him there is something you have to do isn't the kingdom of the heavens so precious that you have to pay a cost for it there is no cheap gospel cheap grace but grace should embolden us to lay hold of eternal life that's the attitude we should take dear brothers and sisters we cannot afford to be complacent we cannot afford to lay back take it easy as if it will just drop to us no you have to take it you have to seize it you have to storm into it you have to pay a price for it because

it is so precious do you see the preciousness of the kingdom of the heavens do you see the glory of being like Christ do you see the glory of suffering with him that we may reign with him isn't it something so glorious so beautiful so attractive that you are willing to pay any cost to gain it that is the kingdom of the heavens and negatively because the kingdom of the heavens is so different from the kingdom of this world everything is different different rule different law different manner different criteria different standard everything is different and because everything is different from earth so you have opposition resistance persecution there are lots of oppositions you need to overcome not only the temptations of the world most of all you need to overcome yourself because our self

is so selfish so worldly so carnal our thinking our emotion our opinion everything is contaminated by earth by sea by flesh all these are opposite to what the kingdom of the heavens is and these oppositions have to be overcome not easy that is the reason why our Lord Jesus said unless you deny yourself take up your cross and follow me you are not worthy to be my disciple the kingdom of the heavens is not for those cowards they are for those who have a lying heart in the Bible you'll find again and again it says be strong in the Lord and in the might of His strength be courageous be man brothers and sisters it is not for weaklings we cannot afford and for these two reasons the kingdom of the heavens had to be taken by violence but dear brothers and sisters this violence here is a heavenly

violence not an earthly violence we have seen enough violence on earth violent to other people kind to yourself but this heavenly violence is violence to yourself and kind to others are you doing violence to yourself why is it our Christian life is so weak a little something can change our course for a small reason we can leave God behind why we do not do violence to ourselves look at our Lord Jesus His life on earth the heavenly man the man who brings heaven to earth He is so different all together different from the world not only from the worst but also from the best He is different He thinks differently He talks differently He acts and reacts differently He works differently He sees things differently and because He is different He is misunderstood rejected persecuted crucified the

world is not worthy of such man brothers and sisters this is the king of the kingdom of the heavens look at Paul after he was met by the risen Lord he surrendered his life to the Lord did he have an easy life? no how he suffered how he told us he put his body underneath it beat it back and blue so that his body would

not have master over him but he be the master of his body did we do that? for the sake of winning Christ he forsook everything count them as loss in order to win Christ how he pressed on towards the goal to win the prize brothers and sisters that's violence that's seizing the kingdom are we doing that? our Christian life is too easy we do not apply ourselves we are not diligent we are not paying any price and do you think you can enter into the kingdom when it shall be

publicly manifested at the second coming of our Lord Jesus do you think we are qualified to rule with Christ for a thousand years brothers and sisters truth is costly it is not easy if we press on we shall be in glory when he shall return to earth if we do not when his kingdom shall be publicly manifested on earth we will be cast into utter darkness as the bible said even though we are saved but barely saved so brothers and sisters on the one hand we need to be warned the time is near we still have a chance surrender your life to the Lord let him have absolute rule over you and you will discover there are so much lessons you have to learn you will be humbled humiliated beyond measure but thank God if we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God in due time he will exalt us so let us

be encouraged instead of discouraged God bless dear Lord you always means business with us therefore you sacrifice your life pray that I will enable us to mean business with thee that we will be willing to put all on the altar for you it is for your pleasure oh Lord

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