

Catechism Sec. 20: The Kingdom Of God

by B. S. Poh

Q91. How does God's kingdom extend on earth?

A91. God's kingdom extends by souls being brought under the rule of Christ¹⁻³, as the gospel is proclaimed to all nations⁴⁻⁶, by His people who are gathered in visible and orderly churches⁷⁻⁹.

Notes: This question connects with the previous one on the kingdom of God. It is added to inject a needed note on missions, which characterized the Particular Baptists of the 17th century, but missed out when they modeled their Catechism after the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

- 1. Mark 1:14-15, Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."*
- 2. Luke 17:20-21, Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."*
- 3. John 3:3, 5, Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."*
- 4. Rom. 10:14-17, How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "LORD, who has believed our report?" So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."*
- 5. Luke 13:29, They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God."*
- 6. Luke 16:16, The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it."*
- 7. Matt. 28:18-20, And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen."*

8. *Luke 9:60, Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God."*
9. *Acts 13:2-3, As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.*

Comments

1. The kingdom of God is not to be confused with any political entity or physical country. Rather, it is the rule of God in the hearts of men (Luke 17:21). It is the duty of individual Christians (Luke 9:60) and local churches (Rom. 10:15) to be involved in the Great Commission of extending the kingdom of God (Matt. 28:18-20). Local church growth must go hand-in-hand with wider church planting (2 Cor. 10:15-16). The gospel must be brought to hearers, regardless of whether it is to one (John 4:7ff.; Acts 8:34-35; 9:11-12) or many (John 4:28-29, 39; 16:13), and whether publicly or from house to house (Acts 20:20-21). There should be persistence in preaching to the same people, until they are saved or the preachers are unwanted (Mark 6:6; Acts 19:8-10).
2. The gospel of "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" is to be preached from all the Scriptures (Luke 24:27, 44-45; 1 Pet. 1:23). It is the Lord's will that a living soul be the instrument to communicate spiritual life to those "dead in trespasses and sins" (Matt. 28:18-20; Eph. 2:1). Secondary helps such as tracts, books, Bible portions, radio, television, and the internet may be used, but not to supplant the physical presence of gospel preachers. Social concerns have their legitimate place, but not to the extent of supplanting the primary place of proclaiming the gospel (Matt. 5:13-14; Mark 14:7). Note that meeting social needs should begin with God's people (Rom. 15:26; Gal. 2:9-11; 6:10).

Q92. What is the duty of those brought under the rule of Christ?

A92. Those brought under the rule of Christ are to seek baptism and be added to the membership of some visible and orderly church of Jesus Christ^{1, 2}, that they may walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless³⁻⁵.

Notes: Keach's Catechism includes a similar question, retained by Spurgeon, on the duty of those baptized to become members of some visible church.

1. *Matt. 28:18-20, And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*
2. *Acts 2:38, 41, 46-47, Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*
3. *Luke 1:6, And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.*

4. *Matt. 7:21, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.*

5. *Heb. 10:24-25, And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Comments

1. Apart from exceptional situations (Acts 9:38-39), baptism involves being added to the membership of a local church (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:41; 9:18-19). It is in the local church that one grows “in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 3:18; Matt. 28:20). The oneness of the local church as a body and a temple cannot be fully applied to those who are not members (1 Cor. 12:25-26; 1 Pet. 2:5). The teaching on church discipline and service to God cannot be properly applied to non-members (1 Cor. 5:12; Rom. 12:1).
2. It is the duty of all believers to be members of some local church somewhere. Membership involves responsibilities, privileges, and liabilities (2 Cor. 7:3; 8:5; Heb. 10:24-25). We should be the New Testament equivalents of Zacharias and Elizabeth, “righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless” (Luke 1:6).

Q93. What is the visible church?

A93. The visible church is the organized society of baptized believers who are bound to one another and to the Lord by voluntary covenant¹⁻³, to worship God and to serve the Lord Jesus Christ in accordance to the Scripture⁴⁻⁷.

Notes: Keach’s Catechism includes the question on the visible church, left out by Spurgeon, which we have thoroughly revised and split into two.

1. *1 Cor. 12:12, For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.*
2. *2 Cor. 7:3, I do not say this to condemn; for I have said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together.*
3. *2 Cor. 8:5, And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.*
4. *Matt. 28:18-20, And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.*
5. *Acts 2:42, And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*
6. *Acts 20:7, Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.*
7. *Eph. 4:11-12, And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*

Comments

1. The local church is “visible” because the members may be known, in contrast to those who are not members (1 Cor. 14:23-24). What gives form to the local church is its membership, which consists of baptized believers who have voluntarily covenanted together to worship and serve God in accordance to the Bible.
2. The centrality and uniqueness of the local church in gospel work should be noted (Matt. 28:18-20; Rev. 1:12-13, 20). Believers should serve the Lord in and through the local church - not through para-church organizations, or as independent individuals.

Q94. What are the marks by which a visible church may be recognized?

Q94. The visible church may be recognized by its submission to Christ as prophet, priest and king, seen in the three marks of the gospel being truly preached¹, the special ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s supper being rightly administered^{2, 3}, and church discipline being correctly practised⁴⁻⁶.

1. *Gal. 1:8-9, But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.*
2. *Matt. 28:18-20, And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.*
3. *1 Cor. 11:23, 26-27, For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread. Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.*
4. *1 Thess. 5:12-13, And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves.*
5. *2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15, But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*
6. *1 Cor. 5:4-5, 12, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside?*

Comments

1. The three offices of Christ have wider applications than gospel preaching, the administration of the special ordinances, and church discipline. However, at the minimum, a true church may be recognized by the three marks preaching the true gospel, the right administration of the special

ordinances, and the correct practice of church discipline. No church is perfect, but a believer should always seek out a true church to join with.

Q95. What is the invisible church?

A95. The invisible church is the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ as head¹⁻⁴.

Notes: This is from Keach's Catechism, which was left out by Spurgeon.

1. *Eph. 1:10, 22-23, That in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*
2. *Eph. 5:25-27, Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.*
3. *John 10:16, And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.*
4. *John 11:52, And not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.*

Comments

1. Landmarkism denies the existence of the invisible, or universal, church. Its other peculiarities include the non-recognition of those who are not Baptists, the practice of close-communion (i.e. limiting the Lord's table to members of the local church), the rejection of alien immersion (i.e. immersion not authorized by a certain type of Baptist churches), and adherence to the theory of church succession through believer's baptism. Paedobaptists (including the Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist churches) believe in a "visible universal church", consisting of believers and their children, who are "baptized" by sprinkling. They also practise some forms of church government beyond the local church.
2. We believe that the universal church is invisible in the sense that the work of grace in the lives of believers cannot be seen. Furthermore, it is practically impossible for us to know all believers in heaven, on earth, and those who will be saved in the future. The universal church may be regarded as consisting of *the church triumphant* (i.e. of believers already in heaven) and *the church militant* (i.e. of believers who are on earth). The universal church manifests itself in the world as visible local churches. Entry into the universal church is by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3, 5), while membership in the local church is by baptism (Acts 2:41).

Q96. What will become of the kingdom of God?

A96. The kingdom of God will reach its climax in God's plan with the salvation of all God's elect¹⁻³, the punishment of the wicked^{4, 5}, the transformation of the all creation⁶⁻⁸, and the everlasting reign of Christ in the new heaven and new earth, subject to the Father, in full Trinitarian glory⁹⁻¹¹.

Notes: This is added to our Catechism for completeness.

1. *Matt. 24:31, And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*
2. *John 10:16, 28, And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.*
3. *Rom. 8:38-39, For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
4. *Matt. 13:41-43, The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*
5. *Matt. 24:50-51, The master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*
6. *2 Pet. 3:10, 13, But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*
7. *Rom. 8:21, Because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*
8. *Rev. 21:1, 4, Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.*
9. *1 Cor. 15:28, Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.*
10. *Eph. 1:22-23, And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*
11. *Rev. 22:1-3, And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.*

Comments

1. The universe as it is now will end when all the elect are called into the kingdom of God by the gospel. All the dead will be raised, and judged together with the living, at the return of Christ. All creation will be made new, in which righteousness dwells (1 Pet. 3:13). Earth will be in heaven, and heaven will be on earth (Rev. 21:1-3). Sin and its effects will no longer trouble God's people (Rev. 21:4). The place of eternal torment for the wicked will not be part of the new heaven and

the new earth (Rev. 21:8). God's people will serve the Lord and worship Him perfectly (Rev. 7:15; 22:3). The Lord Jesus Christ will reign for ever, in full Trinitarian glory. To the Trinitarian God we sing, "For to Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen (Rom. 11:36)."

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