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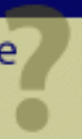
What do you believe is the right interpretation of Luke 17:21: "The Kingdom of God is within you"?

by J.B. Nicholson, Jr.

Note the parallel passage in [Matthew 12:28](#): "The kingdom of God is come unto you." On that occasion and in [Luke 17](#) the Lord was speaking to those who had not believed on Him. "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" ([Luke 17:20-21](#)). By saying that the kingdom of God was within them, He was saying that where the King is, that is where the kingdom is. And as the Pharisees wrangled about when and how the Messiah would come to set up His kingdom on earth, our Lord interrupted their musings to inform them that the kingdom was at that very time right among them. I do not think He was saying that the King was reigning in their inner lives. These men were unbelieving Pharisees. But the Lord was standing right before them, and if they had serious questions about what the future kingdom would be like, all they needed to do for an answer was to look at and listen to the King Himself.

The Lord Jesus was telling them not to expect at that time an outward political kingdom. His kingdom would first be in the region of the inner life. That is why He said that, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." It did not arrive with the outward display of a media blitz, a marching band, a military parade, campaign speeches and massive rallies that would fill a vast convention hall. No, the quiet, inward change that takes place when the King takes up His reign in the individual lives of believers often escapes the observation of network news reporters. Why? Because it is inward. Paul gives instruction about this, saying, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" ([Romans 14:17](#)). Men were to look for the manifestation of His kingdom among those born of the Spirit. Isn't this the point that the Lord Jesus made when He had a private interview with Nicodemus? "Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother"s womb and be

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born?" Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, "You must be born again." The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit" ([John 3:3-8](#)). Jesus was stating that the wind cannot be observed. We can only observe its effects. So it is with the Spirit's work in us.

The mistake that the Pharisees made was this: they wanted outward change, but they refused to admit that there was a far greater need--the inner change of being born again. Our Lord clearly showed that they were wrong on this point. There must be the inward change before there can be the outward change. The Pharisees expected the Messiah to come as an earthly political ruler at that time. But Peter made it clear in [Acts 3:19-21](#) that the restoration that the prophets had spoken of would not come unless they were first repentant. Peter said, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted."

How close is it to a new beginning in your life? As close as a prayer, an invitation to the Lord Jesus to enter your heart as the new management. "But what does [the Bible] say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" ([Romans 10:8-10](#)).

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