

## KINGDOM OF GOD / KINGDOM OF HEAVEN<sup>1</sup>

C.C. Caragounis, in J.B. Green, S. McKnight, and I.H. Marshall, (1992). *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (417). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

The term “kingdom of God” or “kingdom of Heaven” signifies God’s (*see* God) sovereign, dynamic and eschatological (*see* Eschatology) rule. The kingdom of God lay at the heart of Jesus’ teaching. As proclaimed by Jesus the kingdom of God had continuity with the OT promise as well as with Jewish apocalyptic thinking, but differed from them in important respects. For example, it denoted God’s eternal rule rather than an earthly kingdom, its scope was universal rather than limited to the Jewish nation, and it was imminent and potentially present in him rather than a vague future hope, being inextricably connected with his own person and mission.

1. Terminology
2. Old Testament Antecedents
3. Judaism
4. Jesus and the Kingdom of God
5. The Gospels
6. The Kingdom of God and the Church Today

### 1. Terminology.

The Gospels use three terms to express the idea of the kingdom of God: *hē basileia tou theou* (“the kingdom of God”), *hē basileia tōn ouranōn* (“the kingdom of [the] Heaven[s]”) and the absolute *hē basileia* (“the kingdom”). The equivalence of the first two expressions is indicated by their content, context and interchangeability in the Gospels. (The distinction between the kingdom of God as God’s sovereignty, and the kingdom of Heaven conceived as an otherworldly, future reality, the former of which is the condition for entering the latter [Pamment], is without exegetical basis). The Greek for “the kingdom of (the) Heaven(s)” is a literal translation of the later Jewish *mal’kūt šamayim* (e.g., 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 73; 3 *Apoc. Bar.* 11:2; *As. Mos.* 10; *Pss. Sol.* 17:4; 1QSb 3.5; *m. Ber.* 2.2, 5; *y. Ber.* 4a; 7b), where

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<sup>1</sup> Green, J. B., McKnight, S., & Marshall, I. H. (1992). *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (417). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

2 *Apoc. Bar.* Syriac *Apocalypse of Baruch*

3 *Apoc. Bar.* Greek *Apocalypse of Baruch*

*As. Assumption of Moses* (or *Testament of Moses*)

*Pss. Sol. Psalms of Solomon*

1QSb Appendix B, *Rule of Benediction*, to 1QS from Qumran Cave 1

*m. Mishna*

*Ber. Berakot*

“Heaven” replaces “God” out of reverence, as 𐤁𐤏𐤍𐤏𐤓 (“lord,” “master”) had replaced *Yahweh* (“Lord”) and *mākôm* (“place”) in due time replaced *šamayim* (“Heaven”) (Dalman, 91–101). The kingdom of God is also referred to by the absolute “kingdom” when the reference is obvious.

The primary meaning of the Hebrew *mal’kūt* (with synonyms), Aramaic *malhū* and Greek *basileia* is abstract and dynamic, that is, “sovereignty” or “royal rule.” This is almost always the case in the OT and Jewish literature when the term is applied to God. The sense of realm—a territorial kingdom—is secondary, arising out of the necessity for a definite locus as the sphere for the exercise of sovereignty.

### 2. Old Testament Antecedents.

The Gospels introduce the ministries of John the Baptist (*see* John the Baptist) and of Jesus by stating that they proclaimed the nearness of the kingdom of God. No word of explanation is ever offered, and the conclusion must be that the idea of God’s kingdom was well known.

In contrast to this is the total absence in the OT canonical books of the expression “kingdom of God.” (The expression occurs once in Wis 10:10). Yet though the term is absent, the idea is present throughout the OT. In a number of instances *Yahweh* is presented as king (Deut 9:26 [LXX]; 1 Sam 12:12; Ps 24:10 [LXX 23:10]; 29:10 [LXX 28:10]; Is 6:5; 33:22; Zeph 3:15; Zech 14:16, 17). At other places he is ascribed a royal throne (Ps 9:4 [LXX 9:5]; 45:6 [LXX 44:7]; 47:8 [LXX 46:9]; Is 6:1; 66:1; Ezek 1:26; Sir 1:8) while occasionally his continuous or future reign is affirmed (Ps 10:16 [LXX 9:37]; 146:10 [LXX 145:10]; Is 24:23; Wis 3:8). In fact Psalm 22:28 (MT 22:29; LXX 21:29) says “the kingdom” (*hamm’lūkā*; LXX *basileia*) belongs to the Lord.

The idea is not, however, confined to these texts with explicitly royal attributes; it underlies *Yahweh*’s whole relation to Israel. The demand presented to Pharaoh to let Israel go is the demand of the lawful king over against the usurper. The covenant with Israel is the covenant which affirms the suzerainty of *Yahweh* over his people. In the conquest of Canaan *Yahweh* as king apportions to his people a country; a country, moreover, which he, as the creator and king of the earth, can dispose as he pleases. The rule of God over Israel is especially exemplified in the time of the Judges, who functioned as his representatives. A crisis emerged with Israel’s demand for a king (1 Sam 8:4–5), a demand that was interpreted as a rejection of *Yahweh*’s rule (1 Sam 8:6–8). With the accession of David to the throne, however, the situation was somewhat normalized and the king was understood to reign as *Yahweh*’s representative and be under *Yahweh*’s suzerainty. In other words, the monarchy was looked upon as the concrete manifestation of *Yahweh*’s rule.

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*y.* Jerusalem Talmud

LXX Septuagint

MT Masoretic Text (of the Old Testament)

This explains the (authoritative) role of the prophets at the court (e.g., Nathan, Gad, Elijah). The promise to establish David's throne forever, despite the rejection of Solomon (1 Kings 11:11–14), led to the focus upon a future Messiah (*see* Christ) who would rule over David's kingdom in righteousness and prosperity (*see* Son of David). Thus the Davidic kingdom was somehow conflated with Yahweh's rule. The great ethical prophets portrayed Israel's unfaithfulness against the Creator and king (Lord) of the universe, who had been pleased to identify himself with Israel. The crisis became especially acute when the last vestiges of David's kingdom were swept away by the Babylonian captivity. The promise made to David for an everlasting kingdom was now in some circles radically reinterpreted.

No other writing of the OT has more to say about the sovereignty of God than Daniel, where the kingdom of God is the central theme. However, the conception of the kingdom of God by Daniel is transformed under the impact of the new situation. The divine sovereignty is set vis á vis human kingdoms. These are described as being under the control of the God of heaven, who allots the sovereignty in accordance with his will. In Daniel 2 the kingdom of God is described as a direct divine intervention. Its agent, in the form of a stone cut without hands, crushes the various human kingdoms, here symbolized by various metals (and clay), and grows until it (i.e., the kingdom, king and kingdom being interchangeable in Daniel) fills the whole earth. In Daniel 7 the symbolism changes to one of wild beasts portraying the ungodly character of the human kingdoms. The agent for the kingdom of God is a figure described as "one like a son of man" (*see* Son of Man). This figure assumes the royal rule of the spiritual powers at work behind the earthly potentates, and his saints are given the kingly rule of the monarchs under the whole heaven (i.e., the earthly potentates).

Thus Daniel not only portrays the kingdom of God divested of its Davidic, earthly, political character, but also depicts its agent as a heavenly, transcendental being. The new situation has brought about not only a new concept of the kingdom of God but a transformation of its agent (*see* Caragounis 1986, 61–80). These new ideas were of decisive importance in shaping future messianic thought and eschatology, not only in Judaism but also in Jesus' teaching.

### 3. Judaism.

The concept of the kingdom of God in early Judaism was shaped principally by three factors. At the basis was the OT idea of Yahweh's eschatological epiphany in judgment to punish the wicked (i.e., Israel's enemies) and reward the just (i.e., Israel). This was coupled with the idea of God's reign through his elect messianic king of Davidic descent, bringing in a time of untold bliss for the Jewish people. The second factor was Daniel's new understanding of the kingdom and its agent as transcendental, heavenly realities and the consequent deliverance of God's people in primarily dynamic terms. The third factor was the centuries-long Gentile rule over Palestine which intensified the longing for liberation, national identity and happiness (*see* Revolutionary Movements).

Although the term "kingdom of God" is rare in Judaism, the idea is almost ubiquitous, either explicitly as the kingdom of the Messiah or implicitly in descriptions of the messianic age. The two lines of messianic expectation to which Judaism was heir are reflected in the ambivalent descriptions of the messianic kingdom. This ambivalence, besides defying a strictly systematic presentation of kingdom teaching, also implies that motifs from both lines of thought are blended together to various degrees. The result is a variety of messianologies and kingdom conceptions, which are not always clearly demarcated from one another. In general, however, we may distinguish between two main tendencies in kingdom thinking: an earlier, political, this-worldly conception of a temporary, Davidic kingdom with Jerusalem as the center and the Jews as the primary beneficiaries—though sometimes encompassing the whole world—and a later, apocalyptic conception of an ultra-mundane, transcendental and everlasting kingdom, conceived in universalistic terms.

When the kingdom of God is considered as temporary, usually a judgment follows and a new world is posited, and a reign of God is looked for in heaven with greater bliss than that of the messianic kingdom. This view is sharply contrasted with the apocalyptic view, according to which the kingdom of God comes by a direct intervention of God and is transcendental and everlasting under a similarly transcendental and pre-existent Messiah, described as Son of man (Daniel, the so-called Parables of *1 Enoch* 37–71, *2 Ezra*). In this case the Messiah takes part in the judgment, which thus precedes the messianic kingdom. This kingdom is the final kingdom of God which is to last forever.

But as is natural, even the later expectation for the most part utilizes the messianic categories of the earlier expectation, and this makes it more difficult to isolate the traits of the one from those of the other. The following is an attempt to illustrate briefly some of the main lines of thought in Jewish expectations of the kingdom of God without attempting to draw a strict demarcating line between the early and the later forms of the expectation or between the different standpoints within early Judaism.

Especially in works evincing Danielic influence, the inbreaking of the kingdom of God is preceded by a time of tribulation and upheaval both in heaven and on earth (*Sib. Or.* 3:796–808; *2 Apoc. Bar.* 70:2–8; *4 Ezra* 6:24; 9:1–12; 13:29–31; *1QM* 12:9; 19:1–2; cf. *Mt* 24:7–12 par.). In rabbinic literature this came to be called the birth pangs of the Messiah (*b. Sanh.* 98b.; *Str-B* I.950). The Messiah's appearance is sometimes preceded by the coming of Elijah (*Mal* 3:23–24; *Sir* 48:10–11; cf. *Mt* 17:10

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*1 Enoch* Ethiopic *Enoch*

*Sib. Or. Sibylline Oracles*

*1QM Mil m h* or *War Scroll* from Qumran Cave 1

par. parallel passage in another/other Gospel(s)

*b.* Babylonian Talmud

*Sanh. Sanhedrin*

*Str-B* H. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*

par.; *m. Ed.* 8:7; Justin *Dial. Tryph.* 8) or of the prophet-like-Moses (Deut 18:15; 1QS 9:11; 4QTestim 5–8; Jn 1:21).

The Messiah himself is conceived variously. The traditional view of a fully human, Davidic Messiah (*Pss. Sol.* 17:5, 23; *Sib. Or.* 3:49) who conquers the wicked (*Sib. Or.* 3:652–56; *Pss. Sol.* 17:23–32) is frequent, while in works belonging to the Danielic tradition the Messiah is a pre-existent, supernatural being with powers to judge the kings and the mighty, in short, all the enemies of God, and to vindicate the righteous (*1 Enoch* 46:1–6; 48:2–6; 62:5–7; 4 Ezra 12:32). Another difference is that according to *1 Enoch* 90:16–38 the Messiah will appear after the judgment, whereas in most other works (*Sib. Or.* 3:652–6; *Pss. Sol.* 17:14–41; *1 Enoch* 46:4–6; 62:3–12; 69:27–9; 4 Ezra 13:32–8; cf. Mt 25:31–46) he actually conquers or judges his enemies.

Echoing the sentiment of Psalm 2:1–3 a number of works presuppose a final assault by the ungodly against the Messiah (*Sib. Or.* 3:663–68; *1 Enoch* 90:16; 1QM 15–19; 4 Ezra 13:33–34) in order to thwart the establishment of the messianic kingdom. These powers are annihilated sometimes by God (*T. Mos.* 10:2–7; *1 Enoch* 90:18–19) or more often by the Messiah himself (4 Ezra 12:32–33; 13:27–28, 37–39; *2 Apoc. Bar.* 39:7–40:2), who is occasionally presented as a warrior (*Tg. Isa.* 10:27; Gen 49:11), and sometimes in judicial categories (*1 Enoch* 46:4–6; 45:3; 52:4–9; 55:4; 61:8–10; cf. Mt 25:31–46).

The establishment of the Messiah's kingdom involves the gathering of the scattered Israelites (LXX Bar 4:36–37; 5:5–9; Philo *Praem. Poen.* 28; 4 Ezra 13:39–47) and the restoration of Jerusalem (*Pss. Sol.* 17:25, 33; *1 Enoch* 53:6; 90:28–29; 4 Ezra 7:26). The messianic kingdom is understood to imply the ultimate reign of God over his people (*Sib. Or.* 3:704–6, 756–59; *Pss. Sol.* 17:1–4; 1QM 19:1; Šēmōneh *Ḥšrēh*, 11 *b<sup>e</sup>rākā*), thus fulfilling the OT idea of God being king over Israel. The kingdom is centered on Palestine, with Jerusalem being “the jewel of the world” (*Sib. Or.* 3:423), though Jubilees (mid-second century B.C.) probably presents the first instance of a temporary messianic kingdom of 1,000 years. This is brought about gradually by man's moral or spiritual development, and during this time the powers of evil are restrained (1:29; 23:26–30).

Similarly, the third book of the *Sibylline Oracles* (second century B.C.) 762–71 exhorts to righteous living as the condition for God “to raise up his kingdom for all ages over men.” The Messiah is described in book 5 (c. A.D. 100) 414 as “a Blessed Man” from “the plains of heaven,” perhaps reflecting Danielic influence. Under his

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*Ed. Eduyyot*

*Dial. Tryph. Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo*

1QS *Serek hayya ad or Rule of the Community, Manual of Discipline* from Qumran

Cave 1

4QTestim *Testimonia* text from Qumran Cave 4

*T. Mos. Testament of Moses (or Assumption of Moses)*

*Tg. Isa. Targum of Isaiah*

*Praem. Poen. De Praemiis et Poenis*

reign there will be peace (3:702), fruitfulness and prosperity (3:744), in which even the animal world will share (3:788–95).

According to the *Testament of Moses* (first century A.D.) 10:1, God's kingdom “shall appear throughout his whole creation.” However, the kingdom seems to be earthly and appears to lack a Messiah, being introduced by repentance (1:18; 9:6–7). The awaited kingdom will spell glory for Israel and punishment for the Gentiles (10:7–10).

The *Second Apocalypse of Baruch* describes the messianic kingdom especially in three visions (considered pre-70 A.D.). In the first vision (27–30) the revelation of the Messiah will bring a time of prosperity for “those who are found in this land” and “have arrived at the consummation of time.” In the second vision (36–40) the Messiah will annihilate his enemy the fourth empire (reflecting Dan 7) and reign “until the world of corruption has ended ... and the times ... have been fulfilled.” In the third vision (53–74) prosperity and bliss follow the Messiah's annihilation of Israel's enemies. The kingdom is related to Israel's long-cherished hope, though the Messiah has super natural status.

The two works bearing the clearest influence of the Danielic Son of man, the Parables of *1 Enoch* and the book of 4 Ezra, follow their source in associating the concepts of kingdom and Son of man. At several points in the Parables the Son of man is portrayed as exercising the functions of judge and universal ruler (46:4–6; 62:3–12; 63:4; 69:27–29, and the book closes with a description of the messianic age (71:15–17, cf. 62:12–16) (see Caragounis 1986, 84–119).

The book of 4 Ezra conflates the earthly with the transcendental Messiah (12:32), who dies after reigning for 400 years (7:28–29, other versions have variously 1,000 and 30 years). The Davidic descent of the Messiah is perhaps his way of stressing continuity in messianic thought, though the content is that of a transcendental Messiah, as seen from (e.g.) 12:32–34; 13:26 (see Caragounis 1986, 119–31).

In the Qumran scrolls the term *mal'kūt* occurs over a dozen times, but probably only once of God's kingdom (1QM 12:7), most of the rest referring to Israel's kingdom. The idea of God's kingdom is, however, latent in the sectarians' belief that they constituted God's true people who were to fight the eschatological battle against God's enemies (see Dead Sea Scrolls; on Judaism generally, see Schürer II.492–554).

#### 4. Jesus and the Kingdom of God.

In the teaching of Jesus the discussion of the kingdom of God revolves around two questions: (1) the character and (2) the imminence of the kingdom of God. These two questions are interrelated and have been at the center of scholarly discussion during the past hundred years.

**4.1. Jesus' Dynamic View.** Jesus' conception of the kingdom of God had continuity with the OT promise as well as shared certain features with apocalyptic Judaism, particularly Daniel, but went beyond them in certain important respects: (1) the kingdom of God was primarily dynamic rather than a geographical entity; (2)

it was connected with the destiny of the Son of man; (3) entrance into it was not based on the covenant or confined to Jewish participation and (4) whereas in apocalypticism it was a vague future hope, in Jesus it is definite and imminent; in fact it demands immediate response.

With the apocalypticists Jesus held that the kingdom of God was no human achievement but an act of God. However, unlike them he did not expect the kingdom of God to follow on upheavals and catastrophes, but to appear in a gentle, quiet and unobtrusive manner. The catastrophic element for Jesus lay in the upheaval his call caused to his followers' relations with their family, friends and even their own self. Jesus' followers should be willing to "hate" their own life in order to be worthy of him, worthy of the kingdom of God (*see* Discipleship).

**4.2. The Kingdom As Present or Future—The Modern Debate.** In modern discussion the kingdom of God in the teaching of Jesus has actualized three questions: (1) What is its essence? (2) How is it related to Jesus' person and work? (3) When does it come?

In the past hundred years since the work of A. Ritschl and J. Weiss the kingdom of God has been at the center of discussion and the three questions above have received a variety of answers. Ritschl, influenced by Kant's idealistic philosophy, conceived of the kingdom of God in primarily ethical terms as the organization of redeemed humanity, whose actions are inspired by love (*see* Historical Jesus).

The interest generated by Ritschl's work gave rise to several interpretations of the kingdom of God, principally: (1) the individualistic, spiritual and non-eschatological interpretation (which located the kingdom of God in the experience of a person's own heart, an interpretation which was associated with the liberal school, for which the essence of Christianity lay in certain general principles taught by Jesus, as e.g., the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all people [e.g., A. von Harnack, 1886, and W. Herrmann, 1901]); (2) the Social Gospel movement in Germany (C. Blumhardt, c. 1900, and L. Ragaz, 1911) and especially in America with its emphasis on a present social order based on love and solidarity (S. Mathews, 1897; F. G. Peabody, 1900; and particularly W. Rauschenbusch, 1912).

But the most important interpretation for the continued scholarly discussion was given by Ritschl's own son-in-law, J. Weiss, in his epoch-making work *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes* (1892, ET *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, 1971). Weiss reacted strongly against Ritschl's interpretation, emphasizing the future, eschatological and apocalyptic character of the kingdom of God which is opposed by the kingdom of Satan. The kingdom of God would erupt suddenly, be solely the work of God and sweep away the present order. The work of Weiss aroused a storm and with it an unprecedented interest in the theme of the kingdom of God. In the hands of A. Schweitzer the line Weiss had struck out became known as *Konsequente Eschatologie* ("consistent," "futuristic" or "thoroughgoing eschatology"). In due time this found its opposite pole in Dodd's realized eschatology. In the meantime Dalman (1898), by means of philology demonstrated

the dynamic character of the kingdom of God in Judaism and the NT, which has been the basic assumption of almost all subsequent discussions. According to Dalman the idea of kingdom of God has no territorial or geographical reference but expresses dynamically the kingly rule of God which is basically eschatological. However, the theological interpretation was given by A. Schweitzer.

In his landmark works *Das Messianitäts und Leidens geheimnis* (1901, ET *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God*, 1925) and especially in *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* (1906, ET *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 1910), Schweitzer interpreted not only Jesus' teaching (as Weiss had done), but also Jesus' whole ministry in consistently eschatological terms. Jesus was understood as an apocalyptic figure who expected the end to come during the mission of the Twelve (Mk 6:7–13 par.), wherefore he did not expect to see the disciples again. In this he was, however, mistaken. The end, and with it the kingdom of God, did not come. Having staked everything on this expectation and been proved wrong in his prediction of the end, Jesus decided to cast himself headlong to death in a final, heroic attempt to force God to set up his kingdom. Schweitzer's impact, particularly in Germany, can be gauged from the fact that his futuristic eschatology became the characteristic German line.

As a reaction to the one-sidedness of this German position, a number of British scholars like A. T. Cadoux (1930) and T. W. Manson (1931) (and even Germans like E. von Dobschütz and H. D. Wendland) laid emphasis on the present element of the kingdom of God in the teaching of Jesus. Like Schweitzer, R. Bultmann thought that Jesus expected the kingdom of God to begin at his death and went up to Jerusalem to purify the Temple in preparation for it. The kingdom of God is conceived by Bultmann as a future, eschatological, supra-historical and supernatural entity, which places a person at the position of decision. But differently from Schweitzer, in Bultmann's demythologizing interpretation the kingdom of God is ever coming and thus ceases to be a future event that is and can be hoped for. Since the decision is a continual decision, the kingdom of God is not an event in time. Thus the kingdom of God, emptied of its content, transcends time without ever entering it. In short, Bultmann sees the kingdom of God primarily in existentialist fashion as the hour for the individual's decision.

However, the scholar who gave definitive form to this reaction was C. H. Dodd. In his important little book *The Parables of the Kingdom* (1935), Dodd interpreted the *engiken* of (e.g.) Mark 1:15 and its parallels in light of the *ephthasen* of Matthew 12:28 (par. Lk 11:20). His claim was that LXX usage translating the Aramaic of Daniel, Modern Greek idiomatic usage and the parables of the kingdom all lent their united support to his thesis that the kingdom of God was already a present reality during Jesus' ministry. The decisive event had occurred in the coming of Jesus. Jesus' healings, particularly his casting out of demons (*see* Demon, Devil, Satan), were proof that in Jesus' person and works the divine sovereignty had dealt the decisive blow to the kingdom of Satan and was indubitably a wholly present reality. In a sense Dodd identified the kingdom of God with the person of Jesus. This opened the way to viewing the kingdom of God as a timeless reality. "The absolute, the 'wholly other', has entered into time and space" (Dodd, 81). "The

inconceivable had happened: history had become the vehicle of the eternal; the absolute was clothed with flesh and blood" (147). In Dodd's interpretation of the kingdom of God, "futurist eschatology disappears, and all that is left is 'the eschaton' as the Eternal" (Lundström, 121). To achieve this Dodd played down the Gospel statements which presented the kingdom of God as future.

Dodd's influence has been far-reaching, forcing significant modifications upon the futuristic interpretation. This has led in the last forty-five years to a number of mediating positions according to which the kingdom of God is conceived as both present and future (with the German side inclining more toward the future and the British more toward the present aspect), e.g., Kümmel in his important *Verheissung und Erfüllung* (1945, *Promise and Fulfillment*, 1961), G. R. Beasley-Murray (1954, 312–16; 1986, 75–80), E. Jüngel, Schnackenburg, N. Perrin, D. C. Allison (99–114). In a similar vein J. Jeremias, at the suggestion of Haenchen, speaks of the kingdom of God as *sich realisierende Eschatologie* ("an eschatology in process of realization"), a term preferred by Dodd but apparently never allowed to change his basic viewpoint. R. H. Fuller (25–27) interprets *ephthasen* as "has come," but understands it by way of the prophetic device of speaking of an event proleptically as though it had already taken place. For Fuller the powers of the kingdom of God were already making themselves felt in the deeds of Jesus by operating in advance, and his viewpoint received the label of proleptic eschatology. G. Florovsky and A. M. Hunter (94) speak of inaugurated eschatology, while G. E. Ladd argues from a rendering of *ephthasen* as "has come," for a fulfillment of the kingdom of God in history (i.e., in Jesus' ministry) as well as a full consummation at the end of history, and calls his position an eschatology of biblical realism.

Kümmel has been described as the scholar who came closest to a "genuine synthesis of realized and futurist eschatology in the teaching of our Lord" (Beasley-Murray 1954, 103). Thus, while duly recognizing the future character of sayings admitting an interval between the passion and the Parousia (Mk 2:18–20; 8:38 par. Lk 12:8–9), he understands the *ephthasen* of Matthew 12:28, with Dodd, as "has come" and as implying that the eschaton was already active in Jesus. In Jesus' person and actions the future was already realized since he who was to usher in salvation at the end was already present. In this way the future of the kingdom of God and its coming were linked closely with the present, which had Jesus as its center. The kingdom of God was present in the person, teaching and works of Jesus. By faith in him people received the kingdom of God and the guarantee of its appearance. This guarantee implied that the kingdom of God is to be fulfilled in him. Thus promise and fulfillment are insolubly connected with each other. Ladd (123–24) criticizes Kümmel for failing to define precisely what the kingdom of God is. According to Grässer (7) what is understood as present by Kümmel is not the kingdom of God itself, but its imminence.

Morgenthaler, Schnackenburg and Beasley-Murray (1986) all take *ephthasen* as "has come" though for Morgenthaler it only implies that the kingdom of God is around here but not actually present. For Schnackenburg it means that the kingdom of God is "connected with his [Jesus'] person and his work" (109). Although

he speaks of the kingdom of God as something entirely eschatological and wholly supernatural, he also conceives of it in its salvific character as present and active in Jesus. The miracles of Jesus were "the kingdom of God in action." On the other hand, it would be an overstatement to claim that the presence of the kingdom of God indicates something completed; the present kingdom functions as a precursor of the coming, perfected kingdom of God.

Beasley-Murray thinks that the meaning of "has come" for *ephthasen* in Matthew 12:28 and parallel is "unambiguously plain" and criticizes the defenders of futuristic eschatology for looking for "ways of muting its testimony" (1986, 75–76). The miracles of Jesus, especially his driving out demons, speak eloquently of the presence of the kingdom. However, the arrival of the kingdom of God spoken of in Matthew 12:28 and parallel was not the same thing as its consummation, which Beasley-Murray, like Schnackenburg, Kümmel, Ladd and others, considers as future.

A basically similar position is that of D. C. Allison. He follows the usual interpretation of *ephthasen* and thus subscribes to the present consensus that the kingdom of God is both present and future. The relation between present and future is explained by appealing to Jewish thought which "could envision the final events—the judgment of evil and the arrival of the kingdom of God—as extending over a time and as a process or series of events that could involve the present. When Jesus announced that the kingdom of God has come and is coming, this means that the last act has begun but has not yet reached its climax; the last things have come and will come" (105–6). And again, "For Jesus, the kingdom of God, the eschatological establishment of God's kingly rule, was due to come in its fullness soon" (114).

It may then be concluded that those who emphasize the presence of the kingdom of God in Jesus' works of power also allow for a future perfection or consummation of the kingdom of God, while those who advocate the futurity of the kingdom of God allow for some kind of effect which the imminently near kingdom of God exercised in the ministry of Jesus. Both of these positions are attempts to explain important elements in the Gospel data.

Of rather different nature is the more recent work of Perrin, who has retreated from his earlier positions (1963). Receiving impulses from literary critics like P. Wheelwright (1962), P. Ricoeur (1969), A. N. Wilder (1964), R. W. Funk (1966), D. O. Via (1967) and F. D. Crossan (1973), Perrin has suggested that "kingdom of God" is not an idea or a conception, but a mythical symbol (1976, 33). He adopts Wheelwright's distinction of steno-symbol, which has fixed meaning—a one-to-one correspondence between symbol and referent as in apocalyptic language—and tensive symbol, which is open and multi-significant, having an inexhaustible set of meanings. Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God involved the tensive symbol, which, however, his followers turned to an apocalyptic steno-symbol, making the kingdom of God lose its rich variety of reference and instead refer to a particular event of universal experience. Perrin thinks that Jesus' whole teaching claimed "to mediate an experience of God as king, an experience of such an order that it brings

world to an end” (Perrin 1976, 54). Though the symbolic and metaphorical aspects of the kingdom of God and its parables should be profitably explored, Perrin’s analysis and claims can hardly be said to do justice to the biblical data or to have led to a deeper or more valid understanding of the kingdom of God. Not infrequently Perrin’s position involves self-contradictions, and his categories are plainly inapplicable to the Gospel texts (see further the criticism of Beasley-Murray 1986, 338–44 and Allison, 107–12).

**4.3. The Imminence of the Kingdom.** From the above it must have become clear that the interpretation of *ephthasen* of Matthew 12:28 and its parallel Luke 11:20, which is normally accepted as an authentic saying of Jesus, has played a most crucial role in discussions of the kingdom of God. This is so because it is the only kingdom saying in the Synoptics that apparently describes the kingdom of God as having arrived. Dodd was so certain of this meaning that he let it determine his interpretation of the *ēngiken*-type of sayings. The claim that the kingdom of God had arrived in Jesus’ person and that it consisted of, or at least was active in, his driving out demons is hardly a satisfactory answer to the three questions regarding the essence, the arrival and the relation of the kingdom of God to Jesus’ person and work. If the kingdom of God had come already, say, by the time Jesus uttered the saying in Matthew 12:28 and Luke 11:20, how is the remainder of Jesus’ earthly existence to be understood? And what about the Son of man’s duty “to give his life a ransom for many”? What is the significance of his death? And how did Jesus relate his death to the kingdom of God? To speak of a final or full consummation at a future point of time does not satisfactorily answer these questions. And to emphasize the coming of the kingdom prior to the time of the *ephthasen* saying raises the question of whether the death of Jesus is superfluous to that coming. Any viable solution must take account of (1) the language used and (2) the relation of the kingdom of God to the Son of man (4.5. below).

**4.3.1. Ephthasen (Mt 12:28/Lk 11:20).** The most indubitable fact is that the Synoptics present Jesus as having spoken of the kingdom of God as imminently near (*ēngiken*), just as John did (Mt 3:2). The problem which the *ephthasen* saying raises is due to its being interpreted in a dubious way. The *ephthasen* saying makes excellent sense if understood according to a well-attested but little-known and generally misunderstood Greek idiom. The aorist tense is sometimes used to emphasize the certainty and immediacy of an action that properly belongs in the future by describing it as though it had already transpired (Caragounis 1989, 12–23). In comparison with the *ēngiken*-type of sayings the *ephthasen* logion implies an advance, but not quite the presence of the kingdom of God which, in the context of Matthew 12:28 and Luke 11:20, is still future. What Jesus is saying in effect is, “If it is by the Spirit/finger of God (rather than by Beelzebul, as you claim) that I drive out the demons (i.e., preparing for the coming of the kingdom of God by defeating the forces of evil), then the kingdom of God is about to break in upon you (and overtake you in your obstinate and unrepentant state)” (see Holy Spirit).

*Ephthasen* implies that the coming of the kingdom of God is so imminent that the kingdom of God may be considered as being virtually here. This means that the

force of the saying is not purely informative, in which case the force of *ephthymas* (“upon you”) would have been lost, but one of warning, almost threat. This threatening force of *ephthymas* shows clearly that the kingdom of God has not yet arrived. The relation of the miracles (see Miracles and Miracle Stories) of Jesus to the kingdom of God is that they bear witness to the warfare of the Son of man (i.e., the agent of the kingdom of God) against the powers of evil for the establishment of the kingdom of God. But the kingdom of God does not consist of those miracles. Jesus’ miracles are only the preliminaries, not the kingdom of God itself (contra Dodd). The kingdom of God is the dynamic reign of God over his people. The saying looks forward to the cross.

**4.3.2. Entos Hymōn Estin (Lk 17:21).** Another saying often adduced as evidence of the presence of the kingdom of God is Luke 17:21. Here Jesus is represented answering the Pharisees’ question about the time of the coming of the kingdom of God by saying, “the kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you” (*entos hymōn estin*) (NIV). The basic meaning of *entos* is “within,” “inside,” being the opposite of *ektos*, “with out” (i.e., “outside”). This meaning is borne out by the entire Greek literary corpus including the papyri and Modern Greek. The attempt has sometimes been made to construe *entos hymōn* in the sense of “in your midst,” “among you,” “in your domain,” “within your grasp,” etc. in accordance with whether *hymōn* is interpreted of the Pharisees or of eventual followers of Jesus, in which case the *estin* (“is”) is taken with future significance (i.e., “the kingdom of God will suddenly be among you,” etc.).

An examination of the ancient Greek texts that have been appealed to for these meanings (e.g., Herodotus, Xenophon, Symmachus’ translation of the OT, Papyri) shows that the meaning is regularly “within” and that the sense of “among” has been based on a few (sometimes obscure) instances in Aquila and Symmachus. On the other hand, P. Oxy 654, 16 (which is parallel to the *Gospel of Thomas*) has a saying similar to Luke’s, where the meaning is unambiguously “the kingdom (of God) is within you.” Luke’s usage must be considered decisive. The sense of “among” occurs a good many times in Luke-Acts, but the expression is always *en (tōi) mesō hymōn*, never *entos*. The *entos hymōn* is the opposite of *meta paratē-rēseōs* (“with (apocalyptic?) signs that can be observed”) with its amplification “‘Here it is’ or ‘There it is.’” Therefore any interpretation that fails to set *entos hymōn* in its intended contradistinction to *meta paratē-rēseōs* fails to do justice to Luke’s intention. Jesus is here trying to discourage (apocalyptic) speculations and calculations based on observable signs (see Apocalyptic Teaching). “Within you,” therefore, seems to be Luke’s way of expressing the inward nature and dynamic of the kingdom of God, rather than refer to any actual presence in or among the Pharisees.

In the Synoptics there does not seem to be a single kingdom of God saying which unequivocally demands to be taken in the present sense. The kingdom of God is

presented either timelessly (notably in the parables), or as the object of proclamation, or in its demands (Mk 9 [10]x; Lk 17 [19]x; Mt 25 [31]x) or as something future from the standpoint of the utterance (Mk 5 [6]x; Lk 19 [21]x; Mt 19 [25]x; the figures in [ ] fitting either category).

**4.4. The Kingdom in Jesus' Teaching.** The Synoptics present Jesus from the start as charged with one message, compelling and irresistible, the message that the kingdom of God was at hand. The impression is that the eschaton has drawn near, the long-promised kingdom of God is about to appear, and the hour of decision has come. The kingdom of God is presented in two ways: (1) it forms the heart of Jesus' teaching and (2) it is confirmed by his mighty works (see e.g., Mt 4:23; 9:35). A third component is that the kingdom of God is inextricably connected with Jesus' person as Son of man (see 4.5. below).

**4.4.1. The Conditions and Demands of the Kingdom.** The first condition is to "repent and believe the gospel" (see Repentance; Mk 1:15; Mt 4:17). A childlike (see Children) faith is a presupposition for entering into the kingdom of God (Mt 18:3; Mk 10:14 par.). The gospel is the good news about the sovereignty of God. God's eschatological, salvific act demands an undivided heart (Mk 12:29–30 par.). Therefore, it is not lip service or even the use of Jesus' name in performing miracles, but the performance of God's will that opens the door to the kingdom of God (Mt 7:21–23). Nothing may stand in the way of the kingdom since no one who has put his hand on the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God (Lk 9:62). The kingdom may demand the sacrifice of marriage and family (Mt 19:12) as well as of possessions (see Rich and Poor; Mk 10:21–27 par.). At the other end it holds the promise of repaying to a hundredfold (Mk 10:29–31 par.). The demand is radicalized still further when the would-be disciple is given the choice of either letting the tempting hand be cut off or the tempting eye plucked out for the kingdom of God, or keeping them and being cast into Gehenna (see Heaven and Hell; Mk 9:47 par.). The kingdom must be preferred to everything. All this illustrates the seriousness with which people must act with regard to the kingdom of God rather than superior moral attributes qualifying for entrance into it. In other words, they must seek to enter in by the narrow gate (Mt 7:13–14); in fact they must actively storm the kingdom (Mt 11:12).

**4.4.2. The Ethics of the Kingdom.** The ethics of the kingdom of God (see Ethics of Jesus) are the ethics that God expects from those who are set to do his will. The ethical demands are scattered throughout Jesus' teaching but occur in more concentrated form in the Sermon on the Mount (see Sermon on the Mount; Mt 5–7; cf. also Lk 6:17–49). Here we see a continuation with the ethical teaching of the OT, although Jesus' requirements go beyond it by penetrating behind the letter to the spirit and intent of it. In the end Jesus lifts up a performance motivated by pure love and devotion to God and love to one's neighbor. Thus, for example, the commandments "Do not murder," "Do not commit adultery," "Do not break your oath" are only partial and particular aspects of the greatest commandment of all, namely undivided love toward God and neighbor. Love is the fulfilling of all the

commandments (cf. Mt 22:40), in fact the logical conclusion would seem to be that love makes commandments superfluous.

**4.4.3. The Parables of the Kingdom.** Jesus spoke about the kingdom of God also through the medium of parables (see Parable). After centuries of allegorical interpretation of the parables (in which every detail was given a particular significance), A. Jülicher demonstrated that the parables had one essential point, the other details being the necessary trappings of the story. (Jülicher's principle should not be applied rigidly as there are occasions when more than one point may have been intended.)

The parables of the kingdom have been regarded as the most authentic element in Jesus' teaching (see Form Criticism) and occur in concentrated collections in Mark 4 and Matthew 13. These parables illustrate different aspects of the kingdom of God: people's response to the message of the kingdom of God (the sower, Mk 4:3–9; Mt 13:3–9), the unobtrusive character of the kingdom of God as contrasted with the apocalyptic expectation of upheaval (the seed growing quietly, Mk 4:26–29), the immense growth of the kingdom from an insignificant beginning (the mustard-seed, Mk 4:30–32; Mt 13:31–32, and the leaven, Mt 13:33), the mixed nature of those presently involved in the kingdom of God, who will be separated at the end (the weeds, Mt 13:24–30, with its probably later allegorical interpretation, Mt 13:36–43, and in all probability the dragnet, Mt 13:47–50) and the inestimable value of the kingdom of God, for which people must be prepared to give up everything (the treasure and the pearl, Mt 13:44–46).

Jesus' use of parables raises the question of their purpose or function. Matthew has the disciples raise the question (Mt 13:10). Jesus' answer, "to you it is given to learn the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, but to those it is not given" (Mt 13:11), has given rise to many interpretations. The point of the explanation seems to be that, having rejected the message of Jesus when exposed to it, these "outsiders" (Mk 4:10) have willfully chosen to keep their eyes shut and their hearts hardened, that the continued message is now given in the form of half-revealing, half-concealing parables. But though the interpretation—and therewith the precise meaning—is denied to them, they still perceive their gist sufficiently well (cf. Mk 12:12 par.: "they knew he had spoken the parable against them"). It is not therefore an exaggeration to say that sometimes the parables have a polemical tone in addition to their usage to illustrate the kingdom of God.

**4.5. The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man.** The kingdom of God should not be dissociated from the Son of man, who in Jesus' teaching, as in Daniel, is its agent. The destiny of the Son of man is therefore directly connected with the coming of the kingdom of God. The present activity of the Son of man, especially his casting-out of demons, is an integral part of the proclamation of the kingdom of God, but they should be seen not so much as indicating the actual occurrence of the decisive event of the kingdom of God, but as the preliminary warfare of the Son of man against the evil powers in his work of making possible the entrance of the kingdom of God in human history. This warfare, the Son of man's attacks on the kingdom of evil, ought not to be construed in terms of the Hellenistic or Jewish

exorcist's activity, but rather be connected with the Son of man's mission to "serve and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45 par.), otherwise the link between the kingdom of God and the cross becomes illegitimately obscured.

We would thus submit that it was the near prospect of a violent death (*see* Death of Jesus), to which Jesus attributed atoning significance (*see* Ransom Saying), that led him to change the *ēngiken* to *ephthasen* and thus characterize the coming of the kingdom of God as unprecedentedly certain and imminent. Viewed from this perspective, though the kingdom of God had come nearer than in the *ēngiken* type of sayings, it had not arrived, as the last pre-passion occurrence(s) of kingdom of God in all three Synoptics would seem to testify.

**4.6. Potential Eschatology.** By way of conclusion it may be said that during Jesus' ministry the kingdom of God is spoken of always as a future event. It is expected, hoped for and prayed for. But it is never said explicitly to have arrived, not even at the Last Supper (*see* Last Supper). What is present is the agent of the kingdom of God, Jesus. But because the agent of the kingdom of God is present and active through his teaching and mighty works, the kingdom of God may also be said to be potentially present. However, the decisive event for its coming, that is, for the release of its powers in salvific blessings, still lies ahead.

The term *potential* does not qualify the term "kingdom of God," but only the term "present in Jesus." Thus, it should not be construed as in any way implying uncertainty as to the kingdom's coming. *Potential* simply means that the kingdom of God in Jesus' ministry is not present in any absolute or independent sense but only in so far as it is represented by Jesus. Its arrival and presence in its own right is depicted as a future event. Thus if we are to speak of eschatology in connection with the kingdom of God during Jesus' earthly ministry at all, then it is more accurate to speak of *potential eschatology*. This is an eschatology that has not yet begun to unfold itself in final, catastrophic events, but the eschaton is, nevertheless, in principle present in Jesus, because he, as Son of man, is the agent of the kingdom of God. Nonetheless, the ministry of Jesus and his teaching look forward to the awful and more immediate event of the cross, the event in which the Son of man fulfills his God-given mission for the arrival of the kingdom of God.

**4.7. The Consummation.** But even this decisive event (the cross-resurrection complex) does not exhaust the entire content or expectation of the promise. It seems to be the key event that makes possible the arrival of the kingdom of God in time, but also in principle its full manifestation and consummation which lies at the end of history (*see* Ladd 1966, 307–28). In this regard the concept of the kingdom of God is parallel with the Johannine concept of eternal life (*see* Life) and the Pauline concept of salvation. Precisely as those who put their faith in the atoning work of Christ are said to possess eternal life, to be in Christ or to be saved, in spite of the fact that eternal life or salvation (*see* Salvation) are essentially eschatological concepts, so also believers may be said to have entered into the kingdom of God despite the fact that the kingdom of God, like eternal life and salvation, can be properly experienced only at the end of time.

## 5. The Gospels.

The Synoptic Gospels contain 76 different kingdom sayings, or 103, including the parallels:

(1) *Mark-Matthew-Luke* (Mk 4:11 par. Mt 13:11 and Lk 8:10; Mk 4:30 par. Mt 13:31 and Lk 13:18; Mk 9:1 par. Mt 16:28 and Lk 9:27; Mk 10:14 par. Mt 19:14 and Lk 18:16; Mk 10:15 par. Mt 18:3 and Lk 18:17; Mk 10:23 par. Mt 19:23 and Lk 18:24; Mk 10:25 par. Mt 19:24 and Lk 18:25; Mk 14:25 par. Mt 26:29 and Lk 22:18);

(2) *Mark-Matthew* (Mk 1:15 par. Mt 4:17);

(3) *Mark-Luke* (Mk 15:43 par. Lk 23:51);

(4) *Matthew-Luke* (Mt 5:3 par. Lk 6:20; Mt 6:10 par. Lk 11:2; Mt 6:33 par. Lk 12:31; Mt 8:11 par. Lk 13:29; Mt 10:7 par. Lk 9:2; Mt 11:11 par. Lk 7:28; Mt 11:12 par. Lk 16:16; Mt 12:28 par. Lk 11:20; Mt 13:33 par. Lk 13:20);

(5) *Mark* (4:26; 9:47; 10:24; 12:34);

(6) *Matthew* (3:2; 4:23; 5:10, 19 [bis], 20; 7:21; 8:12; 9:35; 13:19, 24, 38, 41, 43, 44, 45, 47, 52; 16:19; 18:1, 4, 23; 19:12; 20:1, 21; 21:31, 43; 22:2; 23:13; 24:14; 25:1, 34);

(7) *Luke* (1:33; 4:43; 8:1; 9:11, 60, 62; 10:11; 12:32; 13:28; 14:15; 17:20–21; 18:29; 19:11; 21:31; 22:16, 29–30; 23:42);

In addition, Matthew has one more reference to "kingdom of God" (7:21) and one to "kingdom" (6:13) in part of the textual tradition. The Gospel data on the distribution of the various expressions is as follows:

	Mt	Mk	Lk	Jn
Kingdom of God	5	14	32	2
Kingdom of Heaven	32	—	—	—
Kingdom	13	—	7	3
<b>Total</b>	50	14	39	5

The Johannine sayings have no parallels in the Synoptics. The three expressions "Kingdom of God" (KG), "Kingdom of Heaven" (KH) and "Kingdom" (K) are distributed as follows:

Gospel	Total	Peculiar	Mt-Mk-Lk	Mt-Mk	Mt-Lk	Mk-Lk
Mt	50	32:20 KH	8: 5 KH	1 KN	9: 6 KH	—
		2 KG	1 KG	—	2 KG	—
		10 K	2K	—	1 K	—
Mk	14	4 KG	8 KG	1 KG	—	1 KG
Lk	39	21:17 KG	8 KG	—	9: 7 KG	1 KG
		4 K	—	—	2 K	—

**5.1. Mark.** Mark (*see* Mark, Gospel of) introduces the public ministry of Jesus with the summary statement that Jesus proclaimed the gospel of God saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel" (1:15). The position of the statement within the structure of Mark indicates that the proclamation of the kingdom of God was at the heart of Jesus' preaching. The saying announces the fulfillment of the time for the arrival of the kingdom of God.



The kingdom of God is still future, but has drawn near and already makes its demands for preparation to receive it: these are repentance and believing (*see* Faith) acceptance of the gospel. This saying does not give any clear indications whether “kingdom” refers to the national or to a more apocalyptic type of hope. The collocation of “repent” and “believe” might favor the second alternative, but even for the national hope Israel was expected to keep the Law flawlessly for at least one day (*see b. Ta’an.* 64a).

In Mark 4 Jesus’ parabolic teaching is concerned with the mystery of the kingdom of God which is given to the group of Jesus’ inner disciples, while to the outsiders the kingdom of God is being conveyed in dark, unintelligible parables (4:11). The description of the kingdom of God as seed sown, shooting up and growing quietly (4:26) implies that the kingdom of God here is conceived neither in nationalistic terms of open revolt and warfare for liberation, nor in the style of apocalyptic upheavals. The emphasis in the similar idea expressed at 4:30 is on the contrast between the insignificant beginning and the immense growth of the kingdom of God.

In an isolated logion at 9:1 the kingdom of God is described as imminent, to occur within a generation or two. At 9:47 in the context of resisting various temptations, the importance of entering the kingdom of God at any price—even losing one’s eye—is underlined, and entering the kingdom of God is compared to entering “life” (9:43–44).

According to 10:14 children should be allowed access to Jesus because the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. In fact the kingdom of God demands a childlike faith (10:15).

In the group of sayings at 10:23, 24 and 25, love of possessions is a hindrance to entering the kingdom of God, which demands the sacrifice of everything and implies being “saved” (10:26).

The scribe who recognized that the heart of Hebrew/Jewish religion lay in undivided devotion to God was told that he was not far from the kingdom of God (12:34). In the Last Supper (14:25) the kingdom of God is eschatological. In traditional Jewish imagery Jesus will feast with his own (*see* Table Fellowship). Finally, at 15:43 Joseph of Arimathea is described as awaiting the kingdom of God, presumably in the sense of the traditional hope of Israel.

**5.2. Matthew.** As implied above, Matthew (*see* Matthew, Gospel of) offers a richer and more nuanced picture of Jesus’ teaching on the kingdom of God than Mark. For in addition to his nine Markan and his nine Q sayings, he has another thirty-two sayings peculiar to himself.

At the very outset of his Gospel Matthew describes the preaching of John as being one of repentance in view of the nearness of the kingdom of Heaven (3:2). The wording—probably stylized by Matthew to bring out the continuity—is placed on Jesus’ lips by way of a summary of his proclamation from the time of John’s arrest onwards (4:17). The summary character of Jesus’ preaching is repeated at 4:23 (and

again at 9:35) along with the information that Jesus’ preaching was accompanied by healing. The same emphasis occurs in the mission of the Twelve (10:5–8).

The kingdom of God figures at the first and last beatitude (5:3, 10), thus framing the collection of Beatitudes (an *inclusio*) and suggesting that they must be understood within its thought-compass (note: *autōn estin* [“theirs is”] occurs only in these two beatitudes. The beatitude of 5:11 is in different form [second person]). Humility and righteous suffering are necessary presuppositions for possessing the kingdom.

The three logia at 5:19–20 teach that even the least commandments affect people’s relation to the kingdom of God and that scribal or Pharisaic (i.e., Jewish) religiosity is insufficient for entrance into it. The centrality of the kingdom of God is seen also in the Lord’s Prayer (*see* Prayer), where its future coming constitutes the first petition (6:10). Some textual witnesses end the Lord’s Prayer with the mention of the kingdom. If this uncertain reading were original, it would imply that here too, as in the case of the Beatitudes, the prayer occurs within the frame of the kingdom of God.

The radicalism associated with the kingdom of God is underscored at 6:33 where the interests of the kingdom of God are to go before all other interests. The Sermon on the Mount actually closes by emphasizing that entrance into the kingdom of God will depend not on mere lip-service, but on a faithful performance of God’s will (7:21). Indeed, not only will there be a distinction among the Jews as far as entering into the kingdom of God is concerned, but with faith rather than descent as a condition the door to it will be opened to many Gentiles, while many of the “children of the kingdom” (i.e., physical descendants of the Patriarchs) will be excluded (8:11–12; 21:43; 22:2).

In a dispute concerning John, Jesus declares him to be the greatest of those born, but still lesser than the least in the kingdom of Heaven (11:11), the kingdom being pictured as the final eschatological reality. John’s crucial role in salvation history is underscored by the statement that his day marks a new period in the realization of the kingdom. From his time on the kingdom of God is proclaimed and is being stormed by those who are eager to get in. His coming has given the signal that the kingdom of God has now drawn near and people can prepare themselves by repentance and baptism (11:12). From 21:31 we understand that those most eager to enter the kingdom of God are precisely the ones considered furthest from it. The imminence of the kingdom of God is expressed in unprecedentedly strong terms at 12:28, where Jesus’ miracles, wrought by the Spirit of God, are interpreted as a sign of it.

The chapter on the parables of the kingdom contains no less than twelve kingdom logia (*see* 4.4.3. above). The point made in 16:19, where Peter is given the keys of the kingdom, is probably in polemic against the Jewish dispensers of God’s truth, who according to 23:13 not only would not enter the kingdom themselves, but also closed the door to those who wanted to enter. The logion is often understood as the Christian counterpart to the Jewish way of speaking of authority in teaching as binding and loosing.

Matthew ascribes a kingdom to the Son of man (16:28; 20:21), which is thought of as being future. The disciples' questions as to who is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven (18:1) elicits from Jesus the statement that a condition for entering into the kingdom and being greatest in it is childlike faith and humility (18:3–4). In fact the kingdom belongs to such (19:14).

The kingdom of God illustrates God's forgiveness (*see* Forgiveness of Sins) and demands a spirit of forgiveness from those who would enter it (18:23). It may demand abstinence from marriage (19:12), and it certainly demands being taken seriously and loved more than possessions (19:23–24).

The rewards of the kingdom are apportioned by different principles. Personal achievement is of little importance. In God's evaluation scheme the last can become first and the first last (20:1).

In the Olivet discourse the kingdom of God is presented in future, apocalyptic terms. Those who persevere faithfully to the end will be saved. But the end will not come until the gospel of the kingdom has been proclaimed throughout the world. The parable of the ten virgins (25:1) was intended to teach perseverance and watchfulness. This finds its fitting sequel in the great judgment, when the Son of man invites the faithful to inherit the kingdom which had been prepared for them from the time of the foundation of the world (25:34). The righteous are to go into its bliss, while the unjust are to go to everlasting torment. This picture bears the well-known features of apocalyptic thought.

The last occurrence of kingdom in Matthew is in connection with the Last Supper, when Jesus, looking forward to the eschatological feast in the Father's kingdom, promises to abstain from wine until that day.

**5.3. Luke.** Luke's (*see* Luke, Gospel of) presentation of the kingdom of God is richer than Mark's but less nuanced than Matthew's, having no less than twenty-one sayings peculiar to himself.

The first mention of kingdom occurs at 1:33 and is put on the angel's lips, when he brought Mary the message of the birth of the Messiah who was to sit on the throne of his father David, reigning forever as the definitive Messiah (*see* Birth of Jesus).

The first clear reference to kingdom in connection with Jesus' ministry occurs at 4:43, in which Jesus' mission consists of the proclamation of the kingdom of God. This gives the saying the character of a summary statement and implies that Jesus' previous ministry too was concerned with the kingdom of God. The same is repeated at 8:1.

In his Sermon on the Plain Luke has a logion similar to Matthew's first beatitude, but the saying is here directed to the poor rather than the humble (6:20). This is in line with Jesus' sermon in Nazareth (4:18) and Luke's sociological interests. Luke also has the saying on the least in the kingdom of God being greater than John (7:28). In interpreting the parable of the sower Luke too affirms that the knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God are given to Jesus' disciples, but the rest must be content with unexplained parables (8:10).

Luke has both a mission of the Twelve and a mission of the Seventy-Two. The Twelve were to proclaim the kingdom of God (9:2), while the Seventy-Two were to proclaim that the kingdom had drawn near (10:9, 11). The preaching of both groups was to be accompanied by healing. And the crowds (*see* People, Crowd) that followed Jesus were instructed by him in the kingdom of God (9:11).

Luke connects the death of the Son of man with the coming of the kingdom of God and envisages the latter event as taking place within the lifetime of some who were present on the occasion (9:27). This indicates not only that the kingdom is thought of as future, but also that its coming is fairly imminent. The urgency of the kingdom makes it imperative that those who aspire to it do not let anything stand in the way—even the death of relatives (9:60)—but must devote themselves wholly to it, never looking back (9:62).

As in Matthew the coming of the kingdom figures prominently in the prayer Jesus taught his disciples (11:2). In the Beelzebul controversy Jesus' works of power accomplished through the finger (Mt: "Spirit") of God are a strong indication of the imminence of the kingdom (11:20).

The concerns of the kingdom of God are to affect all attitudes toward life. Undue worry about worldly matters is to be laid aside and the interests of the kingdom to be given priority. Then God will see to it that all legitimate needs are supplied (12:31). Trust rather than fear is to characterize Jesus' followers since God has been pleased to give them the kingdom (13:18, 20). Like Matthew, Luke too makes it clear that entrance to the kingdom of God is not based on physical acquaintance with Jesus or physical descent, but it is based on accepting the conditions of the kingdom—entering through the narrow gate. This, while leaving out many descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, will open the door for many Gentiles to feast with the Patriarchs in the kingdom (13:28–29).

The comment made by an outsider as to the blessed state of those who feast in the kingdom of God (14:15) leads to the parable of the great banquet, in which, with a view to the Jewish rejection of Jesus and his message, the point is made that those called first were not worthy and were replaced by the sordid mob of Gentiles. Luke does not record the incident of the man who had no wedding gown.

Luke too considers John's ministry as the beginning of a new era distinguished from that of the Law and the Prophets. It is the era of the proclamation of the kingdom of God when everyone has the chance to force their way into it (16:16). This shows that Luke does not share the apocalyptic view of the kingdom of God as being introduced suddenly following great eschatological upheavals. The subject is broached by the Pharisees. The answer is that the kingdom does not come in a way open to physical observation (17:20). No one will be able to point to it as being here or there. The kingdom of God is "within you" (17:21; *see* 4.3.2. above). The view of the kingdom advocated here is one in which God is at work quietly in those who have accepted his claims and faithfully take on them the yoke of his will.

The kingdom of God must be accepted in childlike trust (18:16–17). On the other hand, those who put their trust in their riches will not be able to enter into it

(18:24–25). But to those who forsake everything for the kingdom of God a rich reward is promised, not only in the life to come, but even in this world (18:29–30).

By relating the parable of the pounds, Luke has Jesus correct the popular notion that the kingdom of God was about to break out in the apocalyptic way (19:11). The point is that Jesus' hearers had rather see to it that they administer faithfully what was entrusted to them and wait quietly for its full realization than speculate on the time of its full arrival. Luke generally discourages such speculation (cf. Acts 1:6–8). Even in the prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem, only general signs are given for the arrival in power of God's kingdom (21:31). It is obvious that Luke thinks of the kingdom of God as something that in a way has drawn near, so that from John's time onward people can prepare for it and be actively engaged in it, while in its full power it is something future, promised to appear after the fulfillment of certain events. Thus the apocalyptic element is not altogether absent from Luke.

That the kingdom can be spoken of as a future event is confirmed by the Last Supper, where Jesus promises to abstain from further eating and drinking until he can do so in the kingdom of God (22:16, 18).

Occasionally the kingdom is ascribed to Jesus as given to him by the Father (22:29–30). The context is again eschatological.

Finally, the thief on the cross asks to be remembered by Jesus when the latter comes in his kingdom (23:42), and Joseph of Arimathea is described as a man waiting for the kingdom of God (23:51), though it is by no means easy to decide whether his expectation was for a mundane or a transcendental kingdom.

**5.4. John.** The kingdom of God plays no significant role in John's Gospel (*see* John, Gospel of), its place being taken by the typically Johannine concept of "eternal life" (seventeen times) or simply "life" (nineteen times; *see* Life). The equivalence of eternal life with kingdom of God is proved from the occasion of interchange of the two terms in the Synoptics (Mk 9:43–47 par.; 10:17–30 par.; Mt 25:31–46) and has its roots in rabbinic tradition (*see* Dalman, 116–17, 156–58). John's avoidance of the term "kingdom of God" may be owing to his desire to avoid association with current apocalyptic hopes. It may also be due to his writing for non-Jewish readers to whom a typically Jewish conception might pose communication problems, and especially because the term had been in rather rare use in the church, where the emphasis had been laid on Christ's person and work (christology and soteriology) as well as on the church (ecclesiology).

The concept kingdom of God occurs twice in the Nicodemus story and the expression "my kingdom" occurs three times in Jesus' answer to Pilate (*see* Pontius Pilate). In the Nicodemus incident no indication is given that the kingdom of God had been the main emphasis in Jesus' teaching or even a subject of discussion. But with Nathanael's confession, "Rabbi ... you are the king of Israel!" (1:49), the reader is, however, not totally unprepared.

At John 3:3, 5 Jesus tells Nicodemus that spiritual regeneration is the condition to seeing or entering the kingdom of God. From this it becomes obvious that the idea bears no relation to the Jewish national hope. It is the sovereignty of God

under which people place themselves by accepting the message of Jesus in faith and undergoing a spiritual rebirth (*see* New Birth).

In Pilate's interrogation Jesus answers the question "Are you the king of Israel?" (18:33) by explaining that "my kingdom is not of this world" (18:36, "my kingdom" being repeated three times). No clearer statement than this could be made to show that the kingdom of which Jesus thought had very little relation to Israel's national expectation. This accusation, which stemmed from the Jews as well as from the *titulus* on the cross, indicates that in John's Gospel the rejection and condemnation of Jesus depended to a large extent on the Jews' disappointment by Jesus' refusal to accept the role of the national, political messiah (cf. also 6:15, 26).

## 6. The Kingdom of God and the Church Today.

Does the concept of the kingdom of God have any relevance for the present proclamation of the church? Here we are confronted with the kind of dilemma that led R. Bultmann to launch his controversial demythologization program.

In his proclamation of the kingdom of God Jesus was standing firmly on OT ground. At the same time he was proclaiming a subject that made every Jewish heart throb. Yet Jesus took this concept and transformed it from a narrow-minded nationalistic hope to a universal, spiritual order in which humankind could find the fulfillment of its ultimate desires for righteousness, justice, peace, happiness, freedom from sin and guilt, and a restored relationship to God—an order in which God was king. Given the fact that the basic human problem of sin and alienation from God is as true today as it ever has been, the message of the kingdom of God ought to have as great a relevance today as it ever had.

The kingdom of God need not be demythologized (*see* Myth). But it is instructive to note that the early church, addressing primarily Gentile converts, avoided using a term loaded with Jewish national or apocalyptic connotations which might introduce confusion, seeking instead other dynamic equivalents such as "eternal life" or "salvation" as more appropriate, though "kingdom of God" did not disappear entirely from its lips. The church continued to proclaim the legacy of its Master, but in dynamic forms. Every age has to find its own appropriate forms for expressing the ever-relevant message of Jesus on the kingdom of God. The forms may change but the essence remains.

*See also* Apocalyptic; Apocalyptic Teaching; Church; Eschatology; Ethics of Jesus; Gospel [Good News]; Healing; Holy Spirit; Jubilee; Life; Parable; Revolutionary Movements; Sermon on the Mount.

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C. C. Caragounis

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*TynB Tyndale Bulletin*

SBT Studies in Biblical Theology

BZNW Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft

*NTS New Testament Studies*

κτλ και τὰ λοιπά, and the remainder

*TDNT Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*

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## KINGDOM OF GOD<sup>2</sup>

S. Kim, in Martin, R. P., & Davids, P. H. (2000, c1997). *Dictionary of the later New Testament and its developments* (electronic ed.). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Most of the writings under discussion show that the kingdom of God continued to be a vital theme in the preaching of the church. They maintain several characteristics of Jesus’ conception of the kingdom of God, although sometimes they express them in new ways in adjustment to their new salvation-historical and missionary situations.

1. Acts
2. Hebrews
3. General Epistles
4. Revelation
5. Apostolic Fathers
6. *Gospel of Thomas*

### 1. Acts.

**1.1. The Kingdom of God as the Central Theme of Acts.** In the introduction to the book of Acts, the second volume of his two-volume work, Luke summarizes the teaching that the risen Jesus imparted to his apostles during the forty days before his ascension as having been about “the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). Luke concludes the volume with Paul’s preaching of the “kingdom of God” and “about the Lord Jesus Christ” in the heart of the Roman Empire (Acts 28:31; see also Acts 28:23). With this *inclusio*, linking the beginning of the book’s message with its ending, Luke appears to indicate that his central theme in the second volume is the kingdom of God in continuation with that in his first volume, the Gospel of Luke. This is confirmed by his summaries of the messages of Philip and Paul in terms of the kingdom of God in the main body of Acts (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; see also Acts 14:22; 17:7).

Yet Luke’s combination of “the kingdom of God” with “the name of Jesus Christ” and with “the Lord Jesus Christ” as the gospel of Philip (Acts 8:12) and of Paul (Acts 28:23, 31) suggests a shift: in the Gospel of Luke the gospel of Jesus was about “the kingdom of God,” but in Acts the gospel of the apostles includes the Lord Jesus Christ along with the kingdom of God. In his summaries of the apostolic preaching, Luke has as the object of the verb *euangelizomai* not only the kingdom of God (Acts 8:12) but also the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 5:42; 8:35; 10:36; 11:20; 17:18; cf. Acts 15:35). Using the verb *keryssō* to summarize the apostolic preaching, he likewise

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<sup>2</sup> Martin, R. P., & Davids, P. H. (2000, c1997). *Dictionary of the later New Testament and its developments* (electronic ed.). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

cf. compare

specifics as the object of the verb Jesus the Christ or the Son of God (Acts 8:5; 9:20; 19:13; see also Acts 17:3, 7; *see* Son of God) as well as the kingdom of God (Acts 20:25; 28:31). These phenomena, especially those in the various summaries of Philip's gospel (Acts 8:5, 12, 35), suggest that the preaching of the kingdom of God was in effect the preaching of Christ Jesus. As is well known, Jesus' gospel of the kingdom of God in the Synoptic Gospels is generally replaced with the apostolic gospel of Christ in the rest of the NT, and the preacher Jesus in the former becomes the preached Christ in the latter. In Acts Luke also reflects this general change and in his own way shows how and why this has taken place.

**1.2. The Future Kingdom of God.** The final coming of the kingdom of God is expected to be an event in the future, but we are not to be anxious to know its "times or dates the Father has set in his authority" (Acts 1:6–7). It will be the "times of refreshing" or the "times of restoration of all things," and it will take place with the second coming of Christ (*see* Parousia) when all Israel repent (Acts 3:19–21). So the kingdom of God represents the consummation of salvation, and we must maintain faith and bear sufferings patiently "to enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

**1.3. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Present Regent and Savior.** However, Luke is more concerned with the reign of God in the present. God's reign takes place in the present through the exalted Christ and the Holy Spirit. In his earthly existence Jesus was the agent through whom God did miracles, wonders and signs (*see* Signs and Wonders) or displayed his saving reign (Acts 2:22–23). God has raised this Jesus from the dead and exalted him to his right hand to be his viceroy in fulfillment of the promise of Psalm 110:1 (Acts 2:32–35; 5:31). So "God has made this Jesus . . . both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). In Acts the title *Lord* (*Kyrios*) is applied to Jesus as well as to God, with the implication that Jesus Christ now exercises God's lordship on his behalf. This is the reason the apostolic preaching of the kingdom of God regularly involves preaching Jesus' messianic kingship or lordship or occasionally is replaced by the latter.

In the OT it is Yahweh as the *Kyrios* who forgives the sins of his people and saves them, but now it is Jesus the *Kyrios* who exercises this divine prerogative. In the OT it was by calling on the name of Yahweh the Lord that one was saved (e.g., Joel 3:5 cited in Acts 2:21), but now this Lord is none other than Jesus Christ, so it is through the name of "Jesus Christ who is Lord of all" (Acts 10:36), "the judge of the living and the dead" (Acts 10:42), that forgiveness of sins or salvation is obtained (Acts 10:43; see also Acts 3:16; 4:12, 30; 16:18; 22:16).

The exalted Lord Jesus Christ's exercise of divine kingship or lordship is manifested in his direction of the church's mission. As the Son of Man or the Lord standing at the right hand of God, he receives the spirit of his martyr Stephen (Acts 7:56, 59). He arrests Saul/Paul near Damascus and calls him to be his apostle to the

Gentiles (Acts 9:1–19; 22:3–16; 26:9–18), assures Paul of his protection (Acts 18:9), redirects his mission (Acts 22:17–21) and leads him to Rome (Acts 23:11). The Lord Jesus Christ opens Lydia's heart to appropriate Paul's gospel (Acts 16:14–15), makes Christian mission in Antioch successful and leads a great number of people to turn to himself by faith (Acts 11:21). In his exercise of divine lordship, Jesus Christ uses the agency and power of the Holy Spirit and the ministry of his apostles.

**1.4. Through the Agency and Power of the Spirit.** God's exaltation of Jesus at his right hand involved not only mandating him with his lordship but also giving him his Holy Spirit and making him the dispenser of the divine Spirit: "Exalted to the right hand of God, [the Lord Jesus Christ] has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured [the Spirit] out" (Acts 2:33). So, if through his exaltation God the Father made Jesus his vicegerent to exercise his kingship or lordship on his behalf, at Pentecost the Lord Jesus Christ poured out the Holy Spirit to be his agent and execute his kingship or lordship on his behalf. While the Lord Jesus Christ remains at the right hand of God in heaven until his second coming for "the restoration of all things" or the consummation of the kingdom of God (Acts 3:19–21), on earth the Holy Spirit exercises his lordship on his behalf. Thus there is a trinitarian structure in the present manifestation of the kingdom of God: God the Father reigns through his Son (Acts 9:20) Jesus Christ, who in turn reigns through the Holy Spirit. Hence the direction of the church and the mighty saving acts that are ascribed to the Lord Jesus Christ are also ascribed to the Spirit. They are the Lord Jesus Christ's exercise of God's reign through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Therefore they may be ascribed to the Spirit as well as to the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the Lord Jesus Christ's direction of the church is through the agency and power of the Spirit. Before his ascension he gave instructions to his apostles through the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:2). But after his ascension the apostles received the Holy Spirit given by the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit empowered and directed their mission (Acts 1:5, 8; 2:33). While there are references to the Lord Jesus Christ's directing and empowering the apostles' mission, there are parallel references to the Spirit's directing and empowering the apostles' mission: Acts 8:29; 10:19; 11:12, 28; 13:2, 4; 15:28; 16:6, 7; 19:21; 20:22, 23; 21:4, 11. That the two kinds of statements refer to the same reality is suggested in Acts 16:6–7: the Holy Spirit who directed Paul to leave Asia for Macedonia is explicitly identified as "the Spirit of *Jesus*." Paul concludes from this experience "that *God* had called [him] to preach the gospel" to the Macedonians (Acts 16:10). Thus Acts 16:6–10 implies the trinitarian structure of divine lordship exercised in regard to the church's mission.

During his earthly existence Jesus actualized God's saving reign through his exorcism and healing ministry that he wrought through the power of the Holy Spirit (Lk 11:20 par. Mt 12:28; Acts 2:22; 10:38). Now, as the exalted Lord, he has poured out the Holy Spirit to his church (Acts 2:33). Those who believe in him and are

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NT New Testament  
OT Old Testament  
e.g. *exempli gratia*, for example

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par. parallel passage in another/other Gospel(s)

baptized in his name are given the Spirit (Acts 2:38; 9:17–18; 10:43–44; 11:16–17; 19:5–6; see Baptism) and thus are made to enjoy the blessings of the eschatological power of God in the sphere of Jesus Christ's lordship.

Further, the exalted Lord Jesus' dispensing the Holy Spirit to his apostles had the purpose of empowering them (Acts 1:8) to preach the gospel effectively and to perform many exorcisms and healing miracles as demonstrations of the eschatological salvation. Such "signs and wonders" are often said to have been performed by the apostles "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 3:6, 16; 4:30; 8:6–12; 16:16–18; cf. Acts 19:13–20) or are attributed directly to God (Acts 15:12; 19:11–12) or to the Lord (Jesus?) (Acts 14:3). However, not only from Acts 1:8 and Acts 2:33 but also from Acts 4:29–31, Acts 6:8 and Acts 8:5–19 the clear implication is that the apostles performed the healing miracles through the power of the Holy Spirit given by the Lord Jesus Christ. So the Holy Spirit is the agent who actualizes the Lord Jesus Christ's saving reign, which is in reality God's saving reign. We are to respond affirmatively to the rhetorical question of J. D. G. Dunn: "If the Kingdom's presence in Jesus was determined by the coming of the Spirit upon Jesus at Jordan, then may we, indeed must we not say that the Kingdom became present in the disciples by the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost in the same way?" (Dunn, 40).

**1.5. The Lord Jesus and His Apostles.** Along with the Holy Spirit, the church, especially the twelve apostles, is also the agent that actualizes the kingdom of God or Christ in the present, or to be more precise, the church led and empowered by the Holy Spirit fulfills this role. In his Farewell Discourse, the earthly Jesus promised to vest by way of a covenant (*diatithemai*) the kingdom to the Twelve, just as the Father had vested it by way of a covenant (*dietheto*) to him, so that they might participate in Christ's kingdom and become rulers and judges over Israel (Lk 22:29–30). Through his death, which was the sacrifice for establishing the new covenant (Lk 22:20), Jesus fulfilled this promise and created a new people of God with the Twelve as the nucleus, in typological correspondence to Israel with the twelve tribes. Thus by way of a covenant he constituted a new people of God, a new people under God's kingship. Then the risen Christ taught them about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3), empowered them with the Holy Spirit and commissioned them to bear witness to the kingdom of God or Christ (Acts 1:8; 2:1–36).

The twelve apostles, represented by Peter, and others like Stephen, Philip, Paul and Barnabas go to Judea, Samaria and the Gentile world as far as Rome, proclaiming the kingdom of God or the lordship of Christ and demonstrating the salvation of the kingdom ("signs and wonders" of exorcism and healing) through the power of the Holy Spirit. Those who respond to their gospel by repentance and faith are incorporated into the sphere under the lordship of Jesus Christ (i.e., the kingdom of God) by being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they receive the blessings of the kingdom, the forgiveness of their sins and the eschatological power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 19:5–6; 22:16). Thus through the mission of the church the kingdom of God or Christ is extended.

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i.e. *id est*, that is

**1.6. The Messiah, the Kingdom of David or Israel, and the Twelve.** Along with the title *Kyrios*, the "Christ" (= Messiah) is used to designate Jesus as the regent in the kingdom of God: God has exalted the crucified Jesus to his right hand and made him both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:33, 38). This exaltation as the Messiah means Jesus' enthronement on the throne of David in fulfillment of God's promise to David (Acts 2:30; 13:23, 32–39; cf. 2 Sam 7:12–14). As such it represents the restoration of "David's fallen tent" (Acts 15:16), and "the remnant" of the Jews who "seek the Lord" and "all the Gentiles who bear [Christ's] name" are the eschatological people of God, the restored kingdom of David or Israel, over which Jesus the Davidic Messiah reigns (Acts 15:17). The twelve apostles are set as his representatives so that they may rule and judge them in his name (Lk 22:30). However, this restored kingdom of David, or Israel, is not to be thought of in terms of a Jewish nationalistic political system, as it was in some of the contemporary Jewish parties (Acts 1:6), but rather in terms of a community of the Jews and the Gentiles who call on the name of the Lord (i.e., submit to the kingship of Jesus the Messiah, who represents the kingship of Yahweh [Acts 2:21]).

**1.7. Conclusion.** In Acts Luke records the salvation history of God's exaltation of Jesus at his right hand to execute his lordship and kingship, of the Lord Jesus Christ's execution of God's kingship or lordship through the Holy Spirit and his church and of the Jewish and Gentile believers being brought into the kingdom of God or Christ for salvation. Luke concentrates on the present manifestation of the kingdom but views it as a process toward the consummation, "the restoration of all things," at the Parousia of Christ.

## 2. Hebrews.

**2.1. The Kingdom of God.** In Hebrews there is only one explicit reference to the kingdom of God: "Since we are receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us be thankful and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe" (Heb 12:28). Here "kingdom" does not seem to refer to God's kingly reign, and the verse does not seem to have in view either our submitting to it or our sharing in it.

Throughout the epistle there is little teaching about God's kingly rule. Rather, "kingdom" seems to be used as a synonym for "the city of God" (Heb 11:10, 16; 12:22), "the city that is to come" (Heb 13:14), "Mount Zion" or "the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb 12:22) and the "fatherland" (Heb 11:14). Like these terms, "kingdom" seems to denote the place where God reigns and the believers are to obtain the blissful rest (*katapausis*, Heb 3:11, 18; 4:1, 3, 5, 10–11; *sabbatismos*, Heb 4:9), the consummation of their salvation.

To be sure, God's heavenly "throne" is referred to (Heb 4:16; 8:1; 12:2). In the formulation "the throne of the Majesty" (*megalōsynēs*) in heaven (Heb 8:1) there may be a connotation of divine power or sovereignty, and from the contrast between the cross Jesus endured and the divine throne Jesus eventually obtained (Heb 12:2) we may discern a similar connotation of the divine throne. However, in both cases the connotation cannot be said to be strong. In Hebrews 8:1 as well as in Hebrews

4:16 the cultic meaning of the divine throne is much more prominent than is its political meaning.

**2.2. *Jesus Christ Exalted to the Right Hand of God's Throne.*** A similar phenomenon takes place with reference to Jesus Christ. It belongs to the central theme of Hebrews that Jesus Christ was exalted to sit at the right hand of God or his throne in fulfillment of Psalm 110:1 (Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2). Besides the fact that in several books of the NT Psalm 110:1 functions prominently to substantiate the lordship or kingship that the exalted Jesus Christ has come to exercise on God's behalf, several factors in Hebrews point to a political connotation of the theme. (1) It is accompanied by references to God's appointment of Jesus as his Son, his "heir of all things" in fulfillment of Psalm 2:7–8 (Heb 1:2, 5; 5:5; 7:28) and 2 Samuel 7:14 (Heb 1:5), which were interpreted as prophecies for the messianic king in Judaism and in the early church. (2) Psalm 45:6–7 and Psalm 8:4–6 are applied to Christ respectively in Hebrews 1:8–9 and Hebrews 2:6–8 to emphasize his exaltation to universal kingship or lordship. Note especially the language of the former:

Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.

You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.

(3) Christ is said to be "faithful as a son over God's house," in contrast to Moses, who was faithful as a servant (Heb 3:5–6). (4) The name *Melchizedek* is interpreted in terms of "king of Salem [or peace]" and "king of righteousness" (Heb 7:1–3), in whose order Christ is supposed to have been appointed the high priest (Heb 5:6; 7:13–28). These factors clearly indicate that in Hebrews there is an understanding of Jesus Christ as the messianic king who exercises divine kingship on God's behalf. Here may be involved something more than a simple reflection of the primitive church's common kerygma. The statement in Hebrews 2:3–4 appears to reflect Jesus' ministry of kingdom preaching and healing (e.g., Mt 12:28 par. Lk 11:20), and further it is possible that the presentation of the consummation of salvation in terms of the sabbath rest in this epistle (Heb 4:9) reflects Jesus' ministry of healing on the sabbath as a proleptic actualization of the sabbath perfection or the restored creation in the kingdom of God.

However, it can hardly be said that the theme of Jesus' messianic kingship is expounded in the epistle. As little is said about the reign of the exalted Lord Jesus Christ over his people or the world as is said about God's reign. Since his exaltation to the right hand of God, Christ waits for his enemies to be made his footstool (Heb 10:13; cf. Ps 110:1). Beyond affirming his exaltation to universal kingship, this is all that is said about the exalted Christ's current political activity. Instead the exaltation of Christ to the right hand of God is expounded almost exclusively in terms of his ministry as the high priest (cf. Davies, 388–89), just as God's throne in the heavenly sanctuary is almost exclusively interpreted in its cultic significance. Having entered the holy of holies once for all by his own blood, obtaining eternal redemption for us (Heb 9:12) and mediating the new covenant (Heb 8:6–13; 9:15–

22), Christ now serves in the heavenly sanctuary as the high priest, interceding for us (Heb 2:17–18; 4:14–16; 7:25; 8:1–2; 9:24; 10:19–22).

**2.3. *Based on the Jesus Tradition?*** Hebrews's exposition of God's throne in the heavenly sanctuary and of Christ's exaltation to the right hand of it chiefly in terms of their cultic significance, while retaining their political significance in the background, is based on the common conception of the temple both as the sanctuary where God is worshiped and as the palace from which God reigns (cf. Hengel and Schwemer). Jesus also combined the concept of the kingdom of God and the temple: he sometimes pictured the former in terms of the latter (cf. Aalen) and concluded his kingdom preaching with a sign-act for God's impending destruction of the Jerusalem temple and for his building a new temple (Mk 11:15 par.; Mk 14:58 par.).

Even if *cheiropoiētos* ("made with hands") or *acheiropoiētos* ("not made with hands") in Mark 14:58 should be inauthentic, the appearance of the vocabulary in Acts 7:48 and Hebrews 9:11, 24 as well as Mark 14:58 suggests that it was part of a common early church tradition to express with the vocabulary a contrast between the Jerusalem temple and the new cult made possible by Jesus Christ. Then it appears that the idea of Christ's entering "the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with hands" (Heb 9:11), the heavenly reality of which the Jerusalem temple or its predecessor (the wilderness tabernacle) "made with hands" was only a copy and a shadow (Heb 8:2, 5; 9:24), reflects this common tradition.

Since Hebrews shows some awareness of the Jesus tradition (e.g., Heb 2:3–4; 5:7–8; 13:12), it is possible that beyond the common tradition the author was aware of Jesus' negative attitude to the Jerusalem temple and his claim to build a new temple as part of his kingdom preaching. Thus the genius of the author may lie in his systematic exposition of the cultic element at least secondarily present in Jesus' kingdom preaching (cf. Gaston, 65–243) in the light of Psalm 110:1, 4. If so, his gospel is also based ultimately on Jesus' gospel of the kingdom of God.

**2.4. *Already But Not Yet.*** The believers are to receive "an unshakable kingdom" (Heb 12:28), that is, "the heavenly Jerusalem," "the city of God." In the "kingdom," "city" (e.g., Heb 11:10) or sanctuary (Heb 6:19–20) of God there is to be the sabbath rest (Heb 4:9) and the festival that God's people celebrate with myriads of angels. They are at present on pilgrimage toward it, and they must press forward by faith and with perseverance, following Jesus Christ, "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Heb 12:2; see Endurance). Yet by appropriating Christ's atonement and new covenant, in a real sense they "have [already] come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" to celebrate the sabbath in the festal gathering of angels and saints (Heb 12:22–23). Besides the tension between the "already" and the "not yet," a tension that is characteristic of NT eschatology as a whole, we may observe that this imagery is not far from Jesus' favorite picture of a feast for the kingdom of God and from his actualization of the salvation of the kingdom of God through his healing ministry on the sabbath.

### 3. General Epistles.

In the rest of the General Epistles, the term “the kingdom [of God]” appears only in James 2:5 and 2 Peter 1:11; related concepts are found in 1 Peter 2:4–10.

In 2 Peter 1:11 the readers are exhorted to cultivate Christian virtues so that they may be “provided with an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” It is possible that in 1 Peter 2 the ideas of the church as the “spiritual house” or the temple founded on the cornerstone or a foundation stone (1 Pet 2:4–8) and as “a chosen race, a royal house, a priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s possession” (1 Pet 2:9; Exod 19:6) reflect what Jesus aimed at in his kingdom preaching and temple saying: to create a new, eschatological people of God or to build a new “temple.”

Reminding the readers that God has chosen the poor “to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised to those who love him” (Jas 2:5), James urges them to keep “the royal law” (*nomos basilikos*), “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Jas 2:8). He also warns them with a contrasting picture of the rich: they are those who exploit others and slander the name of God (Jas 2:6–7). Here Jesus’ language is clearly echoed in the idioms “the poor” (Lk 4:18; Mt 5:3 par. Lk 6:20) and “to inherit the kingdom” (e.g., Mt 5:5; 25:34).

Jesus’ teaching is also clearly reflected: Jesus gave as the law of the kingdom the double command of love: love your God with your whole being and your neighbor as yourself (Mt 22:34–40 par.) and concretized it (e.g., in the Sermon on the Mount or Plain [Mt 5–7 par. Lk 6:20–49]). The rich violate this law of the kingdom, or “the royal law”: instead of loving God, they slander the name of God and love rather the idol Mammon (cf. Mt 6:24 par. Lk 16:13) and so inevitably exploit their neighbors. In consequence they are excluded from the kingdom of God. In contrast “the poor” are rich in faith: they rely on God and love him, and so they love their neighbors too. Thus they prove themselves to be people of the kingdom of God, and they are to “inherit the kingdom” when it comes in its consummation. The contrast between the poor and the rich echoes closely the Beatitudes in the Lukan form (Lk 6:20–26). The poor will inherit the kingdom, it is implied, when the Lord comes as the judge, and so they are to wait patiently, as “the Lord’s Parousia is at hand” (Jas 5:7–9).

### 4. Revelation.

“The kingdom of God” is the theme of Revelation, and so to study it is to survey the whole content of the book (see Revelation, Book of).

**4.1. The Kingdom of God in Heaven.** God, as “the Alpha and the Omega” and “the First and the Last,” is the Creator and goal of all things and, as the *pantokratōr* (“all-sovereign” or “almighty”), is the sovereign Lord of the whole universe. He is “the One who sits on the throne” in heaven, and from there he directs the course of history. This fact is dramatically presented to the seer John in a vision described in Revelation 4.

In the vision John sees God sitting on the heavenly throne and receiving the worship of the “four living creatures” and the “twenty-four elders.” In the heavenly

throne room, the prototype of the holy of holies in the earthly temple, the four living creatures, appearing respectively like a lion, an ox, a human being and an eagle, as representatives of all creatures worship God on the throne. In their hymn the holiness of the eternal and sovereign God is highlighted. God the Creator and Ruler of the whole universe is properly hallowed (Rev 4:8). The “twenty-four elders,” the angelic beings who make up the heavenly council and rule the heavenly sphere on God’s behalf, also worship God, acknowledging the sovereign will and power of the Creator (Rev 4:11). So John sees that in heaven God’s name is hallowed, he reigns, and his will is done (cf. Mt 6:9–10).

**4.2. The Kingdom of Satan.** However, on earth Satan (the dragon or serpent), the primeval adversary of God and the supernatural source of all evils, reigns, misleading all the nations with falsehood to worship him instead of the true God (Rev 12). John sees this reign of Satan taking a concrete form in the tyrannical and exploitative Roman Empire: the Roman imperial power incorporated in the emperor is the beast or sea monster that rules the world on behalf of the dragon (Rev 13; 17). The dragon, the beast and the second beast or land monster that persuades nations to worship the beast are a parody of the triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The satanic trinity forces the nations to submit to the imperial cult by deceiving them with the wine of the harlot of Babylon (i.e., the ideology of *pax romana*, Rev 17), as well as by overwhelming them with the apparently invincible power of the Roman Empire (Rev 13).

Thus on earth the Roman emperor masquerades as god, and so the name of the true God is not hallowed, his reign is usurped, and his will is not done.

**4.3. The Kingdom of God on Earth: The Christ Event (Already).** God, “who is and who was,” “is to come” to earth in order to establish his rightful kingship, destroying the satanic forces. This is the main message of Revelation. John is sure of this because he saw in a vision the heavenly reality of God’s triumph through Jesus Christ, which is to be unfolded on earth (Rev 5). In a real sense God has already come and triumphed in Jesus Christ. As the one who bears his names (“the First and the Last,” “the Alpha and the Omega” and “the Beginning and the End”) and shares his throne, Christ is the agent of God who establishes God’s kingship on earth. He is the one who turns “the kingdom of the world” into “the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ” (Rev 11:15). Christ is completely identified with God, so that God’s future coming for salvation and judgment is none other than Christ’s (Rev 22:12, 20).

This Christ has already come and conquered the satanic forces and is now enthroned in heaven (Rev 3:21). For Christ’s conflict with the satanic forces and his redemption of humankind, John uses two metaphors: the messianic war and the exodus. Jesus is the Messiah, “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David” (Rev 5:5; 22:16) and has overcome the rebellious nations (cf. Ps 2:8–9) with a sharp two-edged sword issuing from his mouth (cf. Is 49:2; Rev 1:16; 2:12, 16; 19:11, 15, 21). Jesus is the Passover Lamb (Rev 5:6, 9–11) who by his blood has ransomed a people from all the nations of the world and “made them a kingdom and priests to serve God” (Rev 5:9–10; cf. Exod 19:5–6).



Jesus Christ has conquered the satanic forces by bearing a faithful witness to God and then by his death (*see* Death of Christ). Jesus Christ was “the faithful and true witness” to God even unto his death (Rev 3:14; cf. Rev 1:5; 12:17; 19:10). This must refer to Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom of God during his earthly life. But the decisive victory was by his death. This is made clear in the vision of Revelation 5 (Bauckham): in Revelation 5:5 it is declared that Jesus as the Davidic Messiah has triumphed, but in the subsequent verses this triumphant Messiah appears as a Lamb slaughtered, standing in the center of the divine throne and receiving the worship of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders. Then a myriad of angels and eventually all creatures in the universe are seen joining in their worship and praising him for his triumph won through his sacrificial death. In Revelation 12:5–12 Christ’s decisive victory over Satan through his death is depicted in two vivid pictures: Christ is enthroned in heaven while Satan is driven out of heaven and cast down to the earth.

This is in complete agreement with Jesus or the Gospels: Jesus Christ has triumphed over the satanic forces through his preaching of the kingdom of God and his sacrificial death on the cross. Again in full agreement with Jesus’ own teaching or the testimonies of the Gospels, the result of Jesus’ victory over the satanic forces is the creation of the people of God, a people he has ransomed from the kingdom of Satan and made “a kingdom and priests to serve God” (Rev 5:10). They are the people over whom God reigns as King, or they are the kingdom of God that has already come into being. In this way Jesus Christ has already brought about the kingdom of God.

Thus Jesus has fulfilled the OT or Jewish expectation of the Davidic Messiah. However, again in agreement with Jesus or the Gospels, John also reinterprets messiahship: Jesus’ messianic victory was a victory over the evil forces of Satan (Rev 12:7–9) rather than the Gentile nations as such; the means of his victory was his witness to truth or to the true God and his sacrificial death rather than military conquest; and the people gathered into the kingdom of God to share in God’s reign was not the Jewish nation but a new people of God who would hold faithfully to “the testimony of Jesus” or faithfully adhere to the kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed (Rev 12:17; 17:6; 19:10).

By describing the vision of God enthroned in heaven and of Jesus Christ as the Lamb slain to establish his kingdom on earth (Rev 4–5), John presents an image of God who rules in self-giving love and righteousness over against the satanic forces, who rule by self-assertion and oppression. Because God reigns in love, his kingship means salvation for humankind, and the message of his coming to establish his kingship is the gospel. Thus the message of John is the same as the gospel of Jesus, the Evangelists and Paul.

**4.4. *The Kingdom of God in or Through the Church (Now).*** The church or the people of God ransomed from the kingdom of Satan through Christ’s sacrificial death is the kingdom of God present on earth (Rev 1:6; 5:10). The Christians make Christ’s triumph over the satanic forces effective on earth. In parallel to the work of Christ, this role of the church is pictured in terms of the messianic war. The dragon,

which has been conquered at Christ’s death and cast down from heaven, now tyrannizes the world through the sea beast and the land beast. With Satan’s authority and at his behest, the emperors and the local rulers of the Roman Empire make war against the church (Rev 12:13–13:18). The church is the army of the Messiah (numbering 144,000) drawn from the twelve tribes of Israel (Rev 7:4–8; i.e., 12 x 12 x 1,000—all symbolic ciphers). The risen Christ, the victorious Lamb, is present with his church (Rev 1:13; 2:1) and leads it as his army (Rev 14:1, 4; 17:14) into the battle against the satanic trinity, empowering the church with the Holy Spirit, which is his power operating in the world (Rev 3:1; 5:6).

Again in parallel to the work of Christ, the church’s holy war against the satanic forces is cast in terms not of a military conquest but a witness to the kingship of God or Christ and Jesus’ sacrificial death (Rev 11:1–13; 12:11). The Christians are an army, but an army of the Lamb slain (Rev 14:1–5). As such they participate in the Lamb’s victory over the satanic forces through their martyrdom, which is their participation in the Lamb’s sacrificial death (Rev 7:14). Their holy war consists in continuing the “testimony of Jesus” to the kingship of the true God (Rev 12:17; 19:10) and resisting the idolatry of the false god, the beast.

The persecution of the beast (the Roman imperial power) is fierce, and the deception of the harlot of Babylon (the ideology of *pax romana*) is seductive. Yet the church is empowered by the Spirit of prophecy (Rev 11:3–6; 19:10), and its faithful witness to the kingship of the true God and the Lamb unto death among all the nations brings about the conversion of the nations from idolatry to the worship of the true God (Rev 11:13; 15:2–4). Thus God’s kingship is made effective over the nations at present through the church’s witness.

**4.5. *The Consummation of the Kingdom at the Parousia of Christ (Future).*** However, there remain those who neither heed God’s warning judgments (the two series of judgments: Rev 6:1–17; 8:1, 3–5; 8:2, 6–11; 11:14–19) nor accept the church’s witness. They continue to be under the rule of the satanic trinity so long as the latter exist, blaspheming against God and coercing and deluding nations into their worship. The saints continue to suffer under their tyranny, and even the souls of those who have already been martyred must wait for the consummation of their salvation and the judgment of the wicked (Rev 6:9–11).

The consummation of salvation and judgment is to take place with the Parousia of Christ. Christ will come as “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Rev 17:14; 19:16) and finish off the holy war against the satanic forces. There will be the final judgment (Rev 15:1, 5–16:21), in which Babylon, the satanic regime, will fall (Rev 16:16–18:24), the rulers of the world allied with it will be destroyed (Rev 19:17–21) and the wicked will be condemned (Rev 14:17–20; 17:12–14; 19:15). The satanic trinity of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet themselves will be destroyed (Rev 19:19–20:10). But the saints will be harvested into Christ’s kingdom (Rev 14:15–16).

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x times (2x = two times, etc.)

John depicts the destruction of the dragon, Satan, in two stages and accordingly the consummation of the salvation of the saints also in two stages. The dragon is first to be captured and locked in the abyss for a thousand years, and during that period only the martyrs are to be resurrected to participate in Christ's reign. Then Satan is to be released to muster Gog and Magog (from Ezek) for the final battle against God's people, only to be cast into the lake of fire forever. Together with Satan, death and hades are to be destroyed. This results in the general resurrection and the last judgment of all the dead (Rev 20:1–10). It is disputed whether this picture of the millennial kingdom of Christ should be interpreted in such a way as to be identified with any objective period in the eschaton (e.g., premillennialism and postmillennialism), beyond making the theological point that unlike the paradise of the *Urzeit*, the universe restored under God's kingship at the *Endzeit* is no longer vulnerable to Satan (Bauckham).

Then John depicts the consummation of the kingdom of God in terms of a new creation, "a new heaven and a new earth" and "the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God" (Rev 21:1–22:5). The new creation is more than just a restoration of the original creation. In it there will be "no longer any sea" (Rev 21:1), whereas in the first creation the "sea," the primeval source of evil (cf. Rev 13:1), remained as the potential threat to the cosmos (Gen 1:2; 7:11).

Filled with God's presence, the new creation will be the city of God, the new Jerusalem, and also the temple where God and the Lamb will be enthroned. There God will dwell with his people, and those who "conquer" by faith in Christ will be his people and will dwell with God. There will be no more death but only the fullness of life, as the "river of the water of life" will flow from the throne of God and the Lamb and the fruits of "the tree of life" will be available. There will be no more darkness (*see* Light), but the glory of God and the Lamb will enlighten the whole city. There will be no more satanic deception and impurity (Rev 21:27), but God's Word and his truth will prevail (Rev 19:11, 13). God's people as his children will inherit all these blessings and participate in God's reign, and the nations will come with their treasures to worship God and walk by his light, in fulfillment of the prophecies of the OT prophets and Jesus. So will the kingdom of God be consummated and God's intent in his creation and covenant be fulfilled.

**4.6. Conclusion.** Revelation presents a faithful interpretation of Jesus' gospel of the kingdom of God in the light of Christ's death, resurrection and exaltation and a creative contextualization of it to the latter half of the first century in which the Roman Empire appeared as the incarnation of the satanic kingdom.

## 5. Apostolic Fathers.

According to H. M. Herrick, in the apostolic fathers there are fifty-two references to the kingdom, of which ten are quotations from the NT; the full phrase "kingdom of God" occurs twenty-seven times. These references maintain several features of Jesus' and his apostles' preachings as well as beginning to enunciate some new features.

**5.1. The Coming Kingdom of God.** The main emphasis is put on the eschatological or futuristic nature of the kingdom of God. Having been commissioned by the risen Lord Jesus Christ, "the apostles went forth in the assurance of the Holy Spirit and preached the gospel that the kingdom of God was about to come" (1 Clem. 42.3). In contrast to the mean and brief life in this world, "the promise of Christ, namely, the rest of the coming kingdom and of eternal life, is great and wonderful" (2 Clem. 5.5). We must "await anytime the kingdom of God in love and righteousness, since we know not the day of God's appearing" (2 Clem. 12.1). With regard to the kingdom of God that is coming, the NT language of entering into the kingdom of God (e.g., 2 Clem. 9.6) and inheriting the kingdom of God (e.g., Ign. Eph. 16.1; Ign. Phld. 3.3; Pol. Phil. 5.3) is also used.

We cannot enter into the kingdom of God by ourselves but only "by God's ability" (*Diogn.* 9.1). God loved humankind and sent his only Son to them, and he promised them the kingdom in heaven and will give it to them (*Diogn.* 10.2). The Son of God is "the rock and the gate" of the kingdom of God; the entrance into the kingdom is only through him or by receiving his name (Herm. Sim. 9.12-15). Yet in order to enter or inherit the kingdom we must live a life of love and righteousness (2 Clem. 6.9; 9.6; 11.7; 12.1; Barn. 21.1) and avoid sins (Pol. Phil. 5.3).

**5.2. The Kingdom of Christ Future and Present.** Sometimes the coming kingdom of God is identified as the kingdom of Christ: the righteous dead "shall be manifested at the visitation of the kingdom of Christ" (1 Clem. 50.3). The Lord Jesus will come to redeem the believers and condemn the unbelievers, who will regret bitterly seeing Christ having the sovereignty over the world (2 Clem. 17.4-7). Those who desire to attain to his kingdom must receive him through suffering (Barn. 7.11).

Yet the kingdom of Christ is already a present reality. "The kingdom of Jesus is on the cross," and "in his kingdom there shall be evil days, in which we shall be saved" (Barn. 8.5-6). These sentences seem to express the tension of "already but not yet." It is implied that we have been redeemed out of the kingdom of Satan and transferred into the kingdom of Christ when we are exhorted not to slumber over our sins, lest "the prince of evil should gain power over us [again] and thrust us out of the kingdom of the Lord" (Barn. 4.13; cf. Ign. Eph. 19.3). So Christ is the king who reigns forever (*Mart. Pol.* 9.3; 17.3; 21.2). Further, *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 22.1, 4 may indicate the beginning of the doctrine of the kingdom of Christ as the present reality in heaven into which the believers enter at death.

**5.3. The Kingdom and the Church.** In *Didache* 9.4 and *Didache* 10.5-6 there are prayers for the Lord to gather the church from the four corners of the earth into

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1 Clem. *1 Clement*

2 Clem. *2 Clement*

Ign. Eph. *Ignatius Letter to the Ephesians*

Ign. Phld. *Ignatius Letter to the Philadelphians*

Herm. Sim. *Shepherd of Hermas, Similitude(s)*

Barn. *Epistle of Barnabas*

his kingdom. So the kingdom of God is distinguished from the church. However, in the *Shepherd of Hermas* we begin to see a close association of the church and the kingdom, which is achieved apparently with the help of the conceptions of the temple in Jesus, Paul (1 Cor 3) and 1 Peter 2:4–8: Christ is the rock upon which is built “the building of the tower” (i.e., the church; Herm. Vis. 3.3; Herm. Sim. 9.13) or “the house of God” (Herm. Sim. 9.14). Christians are stones for the building (Herm. Vis. 2.4). They enter into the building through its gate, which is Christ, and entrance into it is entrance into the kingdom of God (Herm. Sim. 9).

**5.4. The Millennial Kingdom.** Papias is said to have thought of Christ’s millennial kingdom to be set up on earth after the resurrection (Eusebius *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39; Jerome *Vir.* 18).

## 6. Gospel of Thomas.

There are twenty-two references to the kingdom of God or heaven in this Gnostic apocryphon. Some of them have parallels in the canonical Synoptics: logion 20 (mustard seed); 22 (entrance as children); 46 (one in the kingdom is superior to John the Baptist); 97 (leaven); 99 (those who do the will of God are Jesus’ brothers and mother and will enter the kingdom of God); 107 (a shepherd seeking one lost sheep); see also 113. The others are quite disparate, but all the kingdom sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas* tend to emphasize the wisdom motif, minimize the apocalyptic motif and understand the kingdom in terms of the community of Thomas.

See also Creation, Cosmology; Eschatology; Exaltation, Enthronement; Glory; God; Heaven, New Heaven; Land in Early Christianity; Lord; Millennium; Parousia.

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Herm. Vis. *Shepherd of Hermas, Vision(s)*

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S. Kim

## KINGDOM OF GOD/ KINGDOM OF HEAVEN<sup>3</sup>

Ryken, L., Wilhoit, J., Longman, T., Duriez, C., Penney, D., & Reid, D. G. (2000, c1998). *Dictionary of biblical imagery* (electronic ed.) (478). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

The kingdom of God is a governing motif of the NT, with the term itself appearing well over a hundred times. It is particularly prominent in the Synoptic Gospels, where it serves as a leading image of Jesus’ mission. Although the phrase “kingdom of God” does not appear in the OT, the theme of the kingship, or kingly rule, of God runs in the same vein and is a favored motif of poets and prophets.

**Kingship of God in the Old Testament.** The psalmist declares, “The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all” (Ps 103:19 NRSV). And the faithful in Israel “shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and tell of your power ... your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations” (Ps 145:11–13 NRSV; cf. Ps 22:28; Dan 2:44; 4:3; 4:34; 7:27). The so-called enthronement psalms (Ps 45; 93; 96; 97; 98; 99) provide a fertile and verdant field of imagery for understanding Jesus’ message of the kingdom of God. The repeated declaration that “the Lord is king” is imaginatively greeted with a joy and singing that envelopes the entire created order, with human praise and music making joined with the roar of the sea, the clapping of the floods, and the singing of the hills and the trees of the forest. The

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<sup>3</sup> Ryken, L., Wilhoit, J., Longman, T., Duriez, C., Penney, D., & Reid, D. G. (2000, c1998). *Dictionary of biblical imagery* (electronic ed.) (478). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

NT NT. New Testament  
OT OT. Old Testament  
NRSV NRSV. New Revised Standard Version  
cf. cf.. compare

earth and all within it rejoices, for God's kingdom extends over the entire created order. These psalms celebrate the fact that God is king but also anticipate that he will "become king" in the sense of manifesting his transcendent kingship in the concrete world of people, nations and nature.

God is praised for having manifested his kingship in epochal events of Israel's history, the archetype being the exodus and the crossing of the sea. The Song of Moses (Ex 15:1–18) recalls the mighty act of God's deliverance of his people. Israel's Lord demonstrates that he is "a warrior" (and by implication greater than the gods of Egypt, the superpower of that day; see Divine Warrior) and "will reign forever and ever" (Ex 15:3, 18). God is king over all the creation (1 Chron 29:11), but a particular expression of his kingship is found in his relationship to his chosen people Israel (Ex 19:6; 1 Chron 28:5). Zion and temple are important symbols of this kingship of God, for they speak of his dwelling in the center of Israel's sacred space and are conceived as the point where heaven and earth meet.

God's kingship or kingdom is the prevailing pattern in the fabric of Israel's identity. When Israel goes into exile and Ezekiel sees the glory of God departing from the temple (Ezek 10:18–19), it symbolizes the withdrawal of God's kingship from Israel. Israel under the judgment of exile longs for God to "be king" again, to renew his people and bring to full expression the visions of renewal unfurled in the prophets. Isaiah's visions of renewal are intimately tied to the reassertion of God's kingship in Israel and on Zion. Israel's future will include a day in which "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it" (Is 2:2 NRSV). Like many similar visions, this one speaks, without even uttering the term *kingdom of God*, of the reign of God coming to full flower in Israel. In Isaiah 52:7–10 the return from exile is imaged as a day in which a fleet-footed messenger will carry good news across the mountains of Judah, announcing salvation to Zion: "Your God reigns!" The victorious Lord, who has "bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations" returns to Zion (cf. Is 59:15–21; 60:1–3; Ezek 43:1–7; Zech 2:4–12; 8:2–3). The establishment of God's kingship in Israel is a near synonym for salvation. It is the good news that Israel longs to hear.

**Jesus and the Kingdom of God.** When Jesus proclaims the kingdom of God, he evokes this complex backdrop of Israel's story and symbols. In Luke we find pious Israelites longing for the kingdom under the parallel images of the "consolation of Israel" (Lk 2:25) and the "redemption of Jerusalem" (Lk 2:38). The coming climax of Israel's hope is signaled and the expectation aroused that Israel's judgment will be ended, her sins will be forgiven, her enemies will be subdued, and a renewed people will be gathered with the divine and kingly presence returned to the sacred center of Zion. Kingdom of God is an emblem intricately interwoven with Israel's story and future hope.

Matthew's favored term, "kingdom of heaven" (literally, "heavens"), is synonymous with "kingdom of God." It is a characteristic Jewish substitution of "heaven" for the sake of avoiding the divine name. It is the kingdom of the One who

is in heaven; it is not a "heavenly" and "spiritual" kingdom in contrast with an "earthly" and "physical" kingdom.

Although the kingdom of God is not a political term in the usual sense, from the Jewish perspective—where religion and politics are not neatly divided—it bears political implications. If God is king, then Caesar is not (cf. Acts 17:7), nor is his client—king Herod. Jesus points out that the kingdom "is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, 'Look here it is!' or 'There it is!' " (Lk 17:20 NRSV). Instead, he says, "the kingdom of God is *entos hymin*" (Lk 17:21), that is "in your midst" or "within your grasp" (*not* "within you," as if to say "in your heart"). The kingdom is mysteriously and even quietly present in the ministry of Jesus, that is, in comparison with a revolutionary uprising or the arrival of the heavenly army. Again, when Jesus says that his kingdom is "not of this world" the contrast is with a militant, revolutionary uprising in which Jesus' followers "would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews" (Jn 18:36). When Paul writes that the kingdom "is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17 NRSV), he is reminding the "strong" and the "weak" at Rome that the life of a community under the kingdom of God is not constituted on exclusionary food laws or ascetic practices but on the formative values of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Jesus declares the kingdom to have arrived. We thus read here and there in the Gospels about the kingdom as something that has *come near* (Mt 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Mk 1:15; Lk 10:9, 11) and that has *come to you* (Mt 12:28; Lk 11:20). This kingdom is something that is accordingly *proclaimed* to prospective citizens (nine references). Since it is a kingdom of which one becomes a citizen not by natural birth but by new birth, it is something that needs to be *entered* (16 references). Four times it is pictured as something that is *inherited* (1 Cor 6:9, 10; 15:50; Gal 5:21). The kingdom of heaven is a *secret* that is revealed (Mt 13:11; Mk 4:11; Lk 8:10), and it is heralded as *good news* (six references), just as the victory and accession of a king would be heralded (cf. Is 52:7–8). Once a person has entered the kingdom, it is something that they "possess," as in the repeated declarations in the Beatitudes of Jesus (Mt 5:2–12; Lk 6:20–26) that the kingdom is *yours* or *theirs*.

How, then, does one enter the kingdom of heaven? Whereas the theological theme of the Bible is that the kingdom is something that is conferred by God's grace through the agency of human faith, the actual imagery surrounding entry into the kingdom has an ethical slant. The Beatitudes of Jesus, for example, paint a family portrait of those who inhabit the blessed realm of the kingdom of God: the poor of spirit, the mourners, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers and those who endure persecution. To enter the heavenly kingdom, one's righteousness must be sincere (Mt 5:20). Instead of speaking the well-worn platitudes of religious devotion, one must *do* the will of the Father in heaven (Mt 7:21). It is not the proud and sophisticated but the childlike, those who recognize their dependence on the Father, who qualify for entering the kingdom (Mt 18:3–4; 19:14; Mk 10:14–15; Lk 18:16–17). Conversely, when two passages in the epistles inform us regarding who is excluded from the kingdom, it is not unbelief that is

cited but the immoral behavior that manifests unbelief (1 Cor 6:9–10; Gal 5:21). We are not, of course, to understand that people can earn their way into the kingdom of God. The divine initiative in bringing people into the kingdom is vividly captured in the Johannine metaphor of “being born from above” (Jn 3:3; cf. Jn 3:5).

The general picture that emerges is that entry into the kingdom of God requires conscious decision. Rich people can scarcely enter it at all (Mt 19:23–24; Mk 10:23–24; Lk 18:24–25). It is open only to people who repent (Mt 21:28–32) and who produce the fruits of the kingdom (Mt 21:43). To enter the kingdom one must abandon other allegiances in single-minded devotion to the kingdom (Lk 9:59–62). People enter the kingdom “through many persecutions” (Acts 14:22), which implies opposition to the kingdom and a willingness to pay the price of suffering for the immeasurably higher value of the kingdom.

Jesus himself is the one who most regularly and boldly pictures the kingdom in images, often as signaled by the formula “the kingdom is like,” and several clusters of images and metaphors emerge. One cluster emphasizes the largeness and expansiveness of the kingdom that emerges from a small beginning, as though both individually and corporately this kingdom is the most dynamic thing we can imagine. Here we find images of the kingdom as seed that is sown and yields a harvest (Mt 13:18–23, 24–30; Mk 4:26–29), as a tiny mustard seed that grows fantastically into a gigantic tree (Mt 13:31–32; Mk 4:30–32; Lk 13:18–19), as a small amount of yeast that leavens a lump of dough (Mt 13:33; Lk 13:20–21), and as a drag net that captures an abundance of fish (Mt 13:47–48), though some must be thrown out.

Another cluster of images captures the festive and abundant nature of the kingdom, especially in its eschatological manifestation. Here we find multiple parables built on the image of the kingdom as a great feast, whether a wedding feast (Mt 22:1–14; 25:1–13), a worldwide feast attended by Israel’s ancestors and people from east and west (Mt 8:11–12; Lk 13:28–29), or a lavish banquet to which many are invited (Lk 14:15–24). In the feeding of the five thousand and four thousand the feasting image of the kingdom is symbolized (Mk 6:39–44; 8:1–9). Eating bread (Lk 14:15) and drinking wine (Mk 14:25; Lk 22:18) are images of the kingdom of God (cf. Is 25:6). It is not a time for fasting (Mk 2:18–20), a practice associated with Israel’s exile and longing for redemption. John the Baptist came “eating no bread and drinking no wine” (Lk 7:33–34), but Jesus “has come eating and drinking,” and those who do not perceive the presence of the kingdom call Jesus “a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and ‘sinners’ ” (Mt 11:19 NIV; Lk 7:34).

Other images express the way in which the kingdom of God includes some and excludes others. For example, there are keys to the kingdom that open and close it (Mt 16:19). The motif of judgment reappears in parables comparing the kingdom to a king’s settling accounts with his servants (Mt 18:23–35) and a master who

assesses the behavior of stewards to whom he has entrusted his wealth (Mt 25:14–30).

Other qualities of the kingdom are captured in single metaphors. To show that God’s kingdom is based on divine grace rather than human merit, Jesus pictures it as the practice of the owner of a vineyard to pay all workers equally, regardless of gradations in the quantity of effort they have exerted (Mt 20:1–16). The extreme value of the kingdom is captured in images of its being a treasure discovered hidden in a field (Mt 13:44) or a pearl of great value (Mt 13:45–46).

The “coming” kingdom of God, like the establishment of human kingdoms, implies the displacement of other kingdoms. It comes with the violence of conflict and triumph over an enemy. The conflict is vividly imaged in the parable of the strong man: “How can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his property, without first tying up the strong man? Then indeed the house can be plundered” (Mt 12:29 NRSV; cf. Lk 11:21–22). Jesus in his exorcisms of evil spirits is engaged in a conflict with the prince of demons, Satan. This conflict and Jesus’ victory is a clear sign of the kingdom: “If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you” (Mt 12:28 NRSV; Lk 11:20). Jesus’ enigmatic statement that “from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force” (Mt 11:12 NRSV; Lk 16:16) suggests an assault and intensity on the front lines as the kingdom makes its incursion into the dominion of this age. There is more of a hint of God on the march, Jesus as the divine warrior wresting Israel from the hands of the enemy. The climax of the conflict occurs at the cross, where Satan and the authorities claim their victory over Jesus. But in fact this is the paradoxical victory of the kingdom. There, accompanied by the darkness and quaking of the Day of the Lord, Jesus takes upon himself the violence and death that was due Israel and the world. It is a victory validated by his resurrection from the dead, the intrusion of the new creation in the old.

The kingdom of God is a metaphor that evokes the grand theme of the restoration of Israel. Thus in Acts 1:6 the disciples ask their resurrected Lord, “is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” But Israel is restored in an unexpected manner. Ethnic Israel for the most part rejects the kingdom and undergoes severe judgment (e.g., Lk 13:33–34; 21:20–24), while the Gentiles enter the kingdom and form a new people of God that is neither “Jew nor Greek” (Gal 3:28). By the end of Acts we find Paul, a prisoner in Rome, proclaiming the kingdom of God. While most Jews reject this “salvation of God,” many Gentiles accept it and enter the kingdom (Acts 28:17–30). The seed of the kingdom of God is rooted and growing under the unwitting guardianship of the great Roman Empire where Caesar is king. Here is an anticipation of the time when “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ” (Rev 11:15 NIV).

*See also* Jesus, Images Of; Divine Warrior; God; King, Kingship; Mustard Seed; Throne; Triumph.

## KING, KINGSHIP<sup>4</sup>

L. Ryken; J. Wilhoit; T. Longman; C. Duriez; D. Penney; D.G. Reid (2000, c1998). *Dictionary of biblical imagery* (electronic ed.) (476). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

There is scarcely a grander or more widespread image used in the Bible than king. Impressive in physical appearance, honored and respected by his people, the king was the dispenser of protection, justice and mercy and a symbol of power and authority. In the Bible two royal images are found—God as king and humans as kings. It is important in the Bible's theology that the latter reflects the former and that ultimately, the two merge into one.

The Hebrew-Aramaic word for king (*melek*) is one of the most commonly used words in the OT, occurring almost 2,700 times. The same is true in the NT; the Greek word for king (*basileus*) occurs more than 125 times. When the verbal and other noun forms of these and related words are added (i.e., to reign, kingdom, etc.), we find an important biblical motif woven throughout the entire fabric of the Bible's message.

**Human Kingship.** By far the most common reference in the Bible is to human kings and kingdoms. The first citation is found in Genesis 14:1, referring to four Mesopotamian kings who did battle against kings near the Dead Sea, and the final citation is in Revelation 21:24, referring to the kings of the earth who will honor the heavenly Jerusalem by bringing their splendor into it. Between these we see human kings of all varieties: Solomon in all his glory (and yet self-destructing in the end); David, Hezekiah and Josiah as models of faith and righteousness; Jeroboam, Ahab, Manasseh and dozens of others as embodiments of wickedness in Israel and Judah; even foreign kings and emperors, most of whom are symbols of evil.

The trappings surrounding kings were the most rich and ostentatious of any group in society. Solomon's palace took almost twice as long to build as did the temple, and his wealth and fame were astonishing. His court consumed astounding amounts of foodstuffs each day; he had thousands of horses (1 Kings 4:22–28 [Mt 5:2–8]); he maintained a vast fleet of trading ships (1 Kings 9:26–28); and his wisdom, wealth and fame spread far and wide (1 Kings 10).

The king was anointed into his office. We are told specifically about the anointing of Saul, David, Solomon and Jehu (see especially the account of Jehu's anointing [2 Kings 9:1–13]). His personal symbols of royalty included royal robes (1 Kings 22:10, 30; 1 Chron 15:27), a scepter (Gen 49:10), an ornate throne (1 Kings 10:18–20), a crown (2 Sam 1:10; 2 Kings 11:12), unparalleled wealth (1 Kings 10:14–29; 2 Chron

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<sup>4</sup> Ryken, L., Wilhoit, J., Longman, T., Duriez, C., Penney, D., & Reid, D. G. (2000, c1998). *Dictionary of biblical imagery* (electronic ed.) (476). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

OT OT. Old Testament  
NT NT. New Testament  
i.e. i.e.. that is

32:27–30), a personal army of troops (2 Sam 23:8–39) and burial in the royal tombs in Samaria (2 Kings 13:13) or Jerusalem (2 Kings 9:28; 2 Chron 32:33).

As rich as the pictures are of the Israelite and Judahite kings in the Bible, however, larger empires such as the Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Hellenistic and Roman empires exceeded those of Solomon and other kings in their wealth and luxury. Throughout the ancient Near East the king's power, wealth and stature were a symbol of the nation's.

The monarchy in Israel was supposed to contrast with that of the surrounding nations. Although it arrived relatively late on the scene in Israel's history in comparison with the offices of priest, judge or prophet, kingship nevertheless had early roots in God's promises to Abraham. Among the many blessings he was promised was that kings were to come from his line (Gen 17:6, 16; 35:11). This promise is placed into sharper focus in Jacob's blessing on his twelve sons, where royal authority is promised to Judah (Gen 49:8–12). Here Judah is to receive the obeisance of his brothers (not Joseph, as earlier is the case [Gen 37:5–11]), and the scepter, the ruling staff, belongs exclusively to Judah.

This promise comes to fruition in the establishment of the Davidic monarchy (since David was from the tribe of Judah) and in God's promise to David that his will be an everlasting dynasty (2 Sam 7:11–16). In Chronicles the eternal aspect of this kingdom is repeatedly found (e.g., 1 Chron 17:12, 14, 17, 23–24, 27; 2 Chron 9:8; 13:5, 8; 21:7), as well as the important assertion that the earthly kingdom represented by the Davidic line is to be identified with God's kingdom: 2 Chronicles 13:8 mentions “the kingdom of the Lord in the hand of the sons of David” (RSV) and 1 Chronicles 28:5 and 29:23 mention Solomon sitting on “the throne the kingdom of the Lord” (cf. 2 Chron 9:8). Israel itself was to be a “kingdom of priests” (Ex 19:6), an idea applied in the NT by Peter and John to the entire body of believers (1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:6; 5:10).

The Israelite king was to meet several strict criteria, according to Deuteronomy 17:14–20: (1) he was to be chosen by God; (2) he was not to be a foreigner; (3) he must not accumulate horses (i.e., build up and trust in military might); (4) he must not accumulate many wives, lest his heart be turned aside; (5) he must not accumulate wealth for himself; (6) he must write a copy of the law for himself; and (7) he must read it and obey it.

The king, then, was not a law unto himself but rather was subject to God's law. His major function was to be an example of a humble servant of Yahweh leading the people in keeping the law. Concerning national security (a major concern in Israel and in all surrounding nations), it was Yahweh himself who was to be Israel's Divine Warrior. Thus when Israel asked for a king like the nations to lead them in fighting their battles (1 Sam 8:5, 20), this represented a deposing of Yahweh as Israel's warrior. The same issue is at stake in the Israelites' request of Gideon to

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e.g. e.g.. for example  
RSV RSV. Revised Standard Version  
cf. cf.. compare

rule over them because he—and not Yahweh—had supposedly defeated the Midianites, at least in the Israelites' minds (Judg 8:22–23).

Kings were accountable to Yahweh, and the prophets were his representatives to confront them when they sinned. Over and over again prophets such as Nathan, Gad, Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos and others confronted the kings. This contrasts dramatically with ancient Near Eastern conceptions of kingship where, for example in Egypt, the kings (pharaohs) were considered to be gods themselves. The norm in the ancient Near East—and often in Israel and Judah—was that prophets were beholden to the kings and told them what they wanted to hear (see Ahab and the 450 prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18 and later his 400 advisory prophets in 1 Kings 22).

The special relationship of the Davidic king to Yahweh in the OT is represented well in the royal psalms (e.g., Ps 2; 18; 20; 21; 45; 72; 89; 101; 110; 132; 144). In Psalm 2, for example, the king is God's anointed one (Ps 2:2) and his own adopted son (Ps 2:7; cf. 2 Sam 7:14). The king is to be loyal to Yahweh, to establish justice and righteousness and to help the needy (Ps 72; 101). His abode is at Zion, Yahweh's holy hill (Ps 2; 132). Yahweh gives him victory over his enemies (Ps 2; 20; 21; 110; 144).

Non-Israelite kings in the OT are almost uniformly presented in a negative light as adversaries to God's people and obstructions to God's plan. Whether they were the great Egyptian pharaohs, petty Canaanite "kinglets" (i.e., kings of small city-states) or Assyrian or Babylonian warrior-kings, they were consumed with their own power and importance and thus were opposed to Yahweh. Among the notable exceptions are several Persian kings. For example, Cyrus was Yahweh's instrument to redeem his people from exile (Ezra 1:1–4), and God called him "my shepherd" and "anointed one" (Is 44:28; 45:1). Darius was kind to Daniel (Dan 6) and Ahasuerus (Xerxes I) dealt well with Esther and Mordecai.

In the NT also, human kings are usually seen as setting themselves against Yahweh and his anointed one: Pharaoh, the Herods, Aretas and the Roman emperors are all presented thus. Such kings are known as "kings of the earth" (e.g., Mt 17:25; Rev 1:5; 6:15), "the kings of the Gentiles" (Lk 22:25) or "kings of the whole world" (Rev 16:14). Only David and Melchizedek receive a positive treatment in the NT: David, because of the promises to him about his perpetual dynasty, which Jesus Christ fulfilled completely (cf. Mt 1:1); and Melchizedek, the king of Salem (Gen 14), because of his priestly position (cf. Heb 7).

**Divine Kingship.** *God as King.* One of the most important ways in which the Bible speaks of God in both OT and NT is that he rules as king. We first encounter this in the song of Moses and Miriam, which affirms that "The Lord will reign for ever and ever" (Ex 15:18 RSV). This idea of God's eternal reign as king in the future is repeated numerous times (e.g., Ps 10:16; 29:10; 66:7; 146:10; Jer 10:10; Mic 4:7; 1 Tim 1:17). It is also affirmed as extending into time immemorial in the past (e.g., Ps 74:12; 93:2).

Yahweh's kingship is over his own people, including the Israelite king (e.g., Num 23:21; 1 Sam 12:12; Ps 44:4 [MT 5]; 74:12; 145:1; 44:6; Is 33:22; Ezek 20:33).

However the biblical vision of Yahweh's kingship extends to the nations as well. He is sovereign over them, and they will worship him in the end (e.g., Ex 15:18; Ps 22:28; 47:2 [3], 7 [8], 8 [9]; 93:1; 96:10; Mic 4:7; par. 1 Chron 16:31; 2 Chron 20:6; Ps 97:1; 99:1; 146:10; Jer 10:7, 10; 46:18; 48:15; 51:57; Zech 14:16, 17; Mal 1:14). Beyond this, God's sovereignty extends to the elements of nature and to the gods worshiped among the nations (*see esp.* the kingship of Yahweh psalms: 47; 93; 96–99; 145). It is here that Yahweh as Creator-King is prominent as well.

God's rule is in the heavens, but his throne in OT times was depicted as being the ark of the covenant (1 Sam 4:4; Ps 99:1). Isaiah saw a glorious vision of the Lord sitting on his throne, high and exalted, surrounded by worshipping seraphs (Is 6:1–5). To him is due the worship of the nations (Zech 14:16, 17).

*Jesus as King.* The NT speaks often of Jesus as king as well. This has its roots in the OT Davidic kingship (Jesus was the son of David [Mt 1:1; Rom 1:3]) and in the OT messianic idea. The English word *messiah* comes from the Hebrew *māšīaḥ*, which mean "anointed one." These terms were taken into Greek as *messias* or translated as *christos*. Jesus the Christ is thus the anointed king par excellence from the line of David, and numerous messianic prophecies in the OT look ahead to him. Jesus was the Son of God ontologically, as the second person of the Trinity (see Jn 1:1–18) and also as the son of David, since any Davidic king was God's "son" (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7). It is in the person of Jesus Christ, then, that the images of human and divine kingship are finally and uniquely merged.

In the Gospels Jesus is called "Son of David," "King of the Jews" or "King of Israel" primarily by his opponents during his trial before Pilate (Mt 27; Mk 15; Lk 23; Jn 18–19). He did acknowledge his kingship openly in response to the high priest, however, in glorious language: "I am [the Christ], and you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Mk 14:62 NIV).

The culmination of Jesus Christ's kingship is found in Revelation. Here he is the "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev 19:16; cf. also 17:14); that is, occupying the same place that Yahweh occupies in the OT passages that speak about his kingship. The Lord God himself is the "King of the nations" (Rev 15:3 NRSV) or the "ages" (NIV). Indeed, most of the book of Revelation is devoted to declaring God's victory over the powers of evil.

The OT offices of prophet, priest, judge and king all coalesce in the NT in the person of Jesus Christ, who is the exalted king over all and to whom every knee will bow (Phil 2:9–11).

*See also* Authority, Human; Christ; Chronicles, Books of; Court, Royal; Crown; David; Jerusalem; Kingdom of God; Kings, Books of; Scepter; Solomon; Throne; Zion.

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par. par.. parallel passage in another/other Gospel(s)

*esp. esp.. especially*

NIV NIV. New International Version

NRSV NRSV. New Revised Standard Version

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