

2. The metaphor of the kingdom of God as a (first) historical presupposition of the eschatological preaching of Jesus

In his preaching of the kingly rule of God, Jesus revitalizes the traditional Israelite metaphor of the king in the framework of a modified eschatological expectation. The metaphor of the king and 'apocalyptic' are the two presuppositions for the eschatological preaching of Jesus. Therefore we shall first devote a section to each (2 and 3), before describing the characteristic features of Jesus' eschatological preaching.

2.1 The origin of the notion of the kingdom of God

Worship of YHWH as king was added to belief in YHWH only at a relatively late point – along with the rise of (earthly) kingship.

1. Historically, the complex of ideas related to God's kingship comes from the Canaanite world. Here in Israel the static kingship of El (God is king) could have been fused with the dynamic kingship of Baal (God becomes king) and both could have been transferred to YHWH.²³ At all events, from the beginning we find 'timeless' and 'dynamic' statements about God's kingship side by side in Old Testament texts.

2. The *Sitz im Leben* is temple worship in Jerusalem (perhaps an ancient Jebusite²⁴ heritage). The connection with the temple cult which persists down to the Qumran sabbath hymns is attested by:

- Isaiah's vision in the temple at his call: 'I have seen the king, YHWH Sabaoth, with my eyes' (Isa. 6.5; the earliest instance which can be dated with certainty).
- The divine predicate of the cherubic thrones: 'YHWH, God of Israel, you who are enthroned above the cherubim . . .' (II Kings 19.14f. = Isa. 37.14–16; cf. Ps. 47.9; 99.1). Accordingly, the cherubim in the temple of Solomon were regarded as YHWH's throne.
- Numerous allusions in the Psalms attest the close connection between the title of king, the temple and Zion (cf. e.g. Pss. 24.7–10; 29.9f.; 68.17f., 25 etc., and especially the psalms of Zion and the 'YHWH is king' psalms (see below)).²⁵

3. Sociologically, a connection between the emergence of the new picture of God and the introduction of the monarchy as a state form in Israel is probable; here the notion of the kingship of God can and did serve both to confirm the earthly kingship and to exercise a critical function towards it.²⁶

²³ Thus W.H. Schmidt's classical thesis in *Königtum Gottes in Ugarit und Israel*, BZAW 80, Giessen 1960.

²⁴ The 'Jebusites' are the original Canaanite population of Jerusalem. After the conquest of the city by David, the Jerusalem temple became the centre of the fusion of the ancient Israelite and Canaanite heritage. Probably the pre-Israelite city god Zedeq was already worshipped as god-king, cf. the name of the priest-king in pre-Israelite Jerusalem handed down in Gen. 14.18 [Melchizedek]: מלכ־עֶדֶק (= my king is [the god] ֶדֶק).

In Old Testament texts from the exilic and post-exilic period, generally speaking a distinction can be made between a theocratic (2.2) and an eschatological (2.3) notion of the kingdom of God. Theocracy means the acknowledgment of the present rule of God, as distinct from eschatology, which expects the establishment of God's rule in the end-time.²⁷

2.2 The theocratic notion of the kingdom of God in the post-exilic period

The cultic community in post-exilic Jerusalem was regarded as the realization of the kingly rule of God already in the present. Examples of this notion are the 'YHWH is king' psalms, Chronicles and Josephus.

- The post-exilic (?) 'YHWH is king' psalms (47; 93; 96–99): the rule of God over the world is celebrated in the sanctuary in Jerusalem (cf. Ps. 93). However, this notion may be older, even if we assume that the psalms were composed after the exile.
- *I and II Chronicles* were conceived as an aetiology of the cult community of Jerusalem with its theocratic constitution. For example, Solomon sits on 'YHWH's throne' (II Chron. 9.8). There are no tensions between his kingship and that of God.
- Josephus sees the Jerusalem community as a 'theocracy'; here he himself probably coined the term (*Ap* 2, 164–166). By it he means a constitution in which God himself rules, through his laws and a priestly aristocracy. 'Aristocracy is the best . . . in which you have the laws as rulers and do everything in accord with them. For God shall be sufficient ruler for you' (thus Moses to the people according to *Antt.* 4, 223).

2.3 The eschatological expectation of the kingdom of God in the exilic/post-exilic period

In Deutero-Isaiah (Isa. 52.7), Obadiah (21) and Zephaniah (3.15), the kingly rule of God becomes the expectation of salvation after the catastrophe of the exile. According to Deutero-Isaiah the content of the 'good news' (LXX: εὐαγγέλιον) is the proclamation 'Your God has become king' (52.7). Additions to the

²⁷ Cf. J. Jeremias, *Das Königtum Gottes in den Psalmen*, FRLANT 141, Göttingen 1987; B. Janowski, 'Das Königtum Gottes in den Psalmen', ZThK 86, 1989, 389–454; H. Specker, *Heilsgegenwart. Eine Theologie der Psalmen*, FRLANT 148, Göttingen 1989.

²⁸ Cf. N. Lohfink, 'Der Begriff des Gottesreiches vom Alten Testament her gesehen', in J. Schreiner (ed.), *Unterwegs zur Kirche. Alttestamentliche Konzeptionen*, QD 116, Freiburg etc. 1987, 33–86.

²⁹ This distinction is made following O. Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, Oxford 1968, 106–17.

prophetic books show the transformation of this expectation by apocalyptic notions into a growing dualism between this world and a future one.

- The so-called 'little apocalypse' (Isa. 33): God becomes king through judgment on foreign powers and his entry into Zion (Isa. 33.17-22).
- The Isaiah apocalypse (Isa. 24-27) proclaims: 'YHWH Sabaoth has become king on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem' (24.23) – not least by conquering the kings of the earth (24.21f.). But he will give all peoples a feast on Zion. Death will be destroyed (25.6-8).
- Trito-Zechariah (12-14) promises after a judgment on all hostile peoples: 'And YHWH will be king over the whole earth' (Zech. 14.9).
- The Daniel apocalypse (Dan. 2 and 7): the kingdom of God replaces the kingdoms of the world symbolized by beasts! This kingdom of God comes without human collaboration.

In the time of Jesus all these statements stood in what by that time were already canonized scriptures of the Bible. The phrase 'kingdom of God' could therefore arouse expectations of a victory over the Gentiles and the establishment of an eternal kingdom of Israel.

3. Apocalyptic as a (second) historical presupposition of the eschatological preaching of Jesus

The notion of the kingdom of God is transformed by apocalyptic in the intertestamental period (as had already been the case in the Old Testament texts last discussed). The further development of prophecy into apocalyptic is presupposed by Jesus. But in addition to apocalyptic 'kingdom of God sayings', there are still non-apocalyptic statements about the eternal kingship of God over this world. Both are taken up in liturgical passages, e.g. prayers, and are familiar to Jesus and his contemporaries from this context.

3.1 Prophecy and apocalyptic: a comparison

'Apocalyptic' is the expectation in writings containing a secret revelation of a new world in which God consummates his plan for Israel and the creation – against the resistance of evil powers which dominate this world. This new world had been accessible to a few seers and visions in 'primal' prehistory in visions and raptures, and they wrote down their knowledge in books. In the present these books, 'sealed' for the end-time, which have now been opened for privileged circles, communicate secret knowledge about this world, whereas obedience to the Torah to the point of martyrdom bestows the right to belong to it through the resurrection of the dead.

Despite many transitions, ideally prophecy and apocalyptic can be distinguished:

Prophecy	Apocalyptic
<i>Immanent eschatology:</i> Prophecy predicts the consummation of this history by God's action	<i>Transcendent eschatology:</i> Apocalyptic forecasts a new world after this world (the dualism of two ages) in which the just will take part through the resurrection of the dead
<i>Open expectation of history:</i> Prophecy proclaims the will of God which can be revised at any time as a result of the conversion of human beings (cf. Jonah)	<i>Historical determinism:</i> Apocalyptic reconstructs a determined plan (δεῖ γενέσθαι/it must take place, Dan. 2.28f.; Mark 13.7)
<i>Individual prophetic figures</i> proclaim God's will under their own name – supplemented by the (pseudonymous) prophecy of disciples	<i>Pseudonymous secret writings</i> by authors allegedly from prehistory (Adam, Enoch, Moses, etc.) come to light in the present

In substance Jesus presents a variant of apocalyptic expectation, but formally it appears as prophecy – not in the form of an esoteric secret writing from dim prehistory but as a proclamation (in oral form) tied to his person. His preaching is a revitalization of apocalyptic in prophetic form.

3.2 Apocalyptic statements about the kingdom of God in the intertestamental period

The statements about the 'kingdom of God' in the extra-canonical apocalyptic writings of Judaism accentuate the eschatological sayings in the canonical scriptures (see above §2.3) by a dualism between God and Satan.

- TestDan 5.10-13 (the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs were written between the second century BCE and the first century CE) intensifies the dualism. God establishes himself against Satan (= Beliar): 'and he himself will wage war against Beliar and give victorious vengeance over his enemies . . . for the Lord will be in their midst and the holy one will be king over them' (5.10, 13).
- 1QM VI, 6 (c. first century BCE): in a final battle against the enemies of Israel the 'sons of light'²⁸ will be victorious. 'And sovereignty shall be to the God of

²⁸The term that members of the Qumran community used of themselves in contrast to the 'sons of darkness', cf. 1QM 1.1, 3 etc.

Israel. He shall accomplish mighty deeds by the saints of his people.' The battle against Belial runs parallel to the battle against the Gentiles.²⁹

- *AssMos.* 10.1ff. (final version, beginning of the first century CE): after a great religious persecution comes the decisive turning-point: 'And then his (God's) kingdom shall appear throughout all his creation, and then Satan shall be no more, and sorrow shall depart with him' (10.1). There follows a description of the bloody judgment on the Gentiles, accompanied by cosmic signs and the exaltation of Israel in heaven, in God's immediate presence.³⁰
- Sib 3, 767 (second century BCE): in contrast to the expectations supported by nationalistic thoughts, in the third book of the Sibylline Oracles there is also a universalistic conception of the rule of God. After a terrible war there will be a turning point which favours the good: 'And then indeed, he will raise up a kingdom for all ages among men, he who once gave the holy Law to the pious . . .'³¹ The centre of this divine universal kingdom is Jerusalem, and all people will be united by God's law, interpreted by the prophets. A world-wide kingdom of peace is sketched out in utopian fashion. Here, too, cosmic revolutions are indicated as a sign.
- A common characteristic of the apocalyptic statements about the kingdom of God is the dualistic opposition between the kingdom of God on the one hand and the Gentiles and Satan on the other. The apocalyptic background of Jesus' βασιλεία preaching is evident in the contrast between the βασιλεία and the demons (with Satan at their head) as this appears e.g. in Matt. 12.28; Mark 3.23-27. By contrast, in Jesus there is no opposition to the Gentiles.

3.3 Non-apocalyptic sayings about the kingdom of God in the intertestamental period

If Jesus can also speak of the present kingdom of God without further explanation, this will have been familiar to his hearers, as the notion of a timeless kingdom of God in many writings shows.

- Ps. 145.1, 11, 13: this late Old Testament psalm is a prototype of non-apocalyptic statements about a timeless kingdom of God which is evident in God's care for his creatures. The one who gives food to all his creatures in due season (145.15f.) is praised with the words: 'Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations' (145.13).
- Wisdom 6.4; 10.10: all kings are 'servants of his kingly rule' and are subject to God's will and judgment. Wisdom shows the righteous (Jacob) God's kingdom

²⁹Quoted from Vermes, 169.

³⁰Quoted from Barrett, 331.

³¹Quoted from Charlesworth 1, 379.

in a dream at Bethel (exegesis of Gen. 28): 'She showed him the kingdom of God and gave him knowledge of the saints' (Wisdom 10.10).

- PsSol. 17.1-3, 46: in the framework of this messianic psalm there is mention of a timeless rule of God: ' . . . and the kingdom of our God is for ever over the Gentiles with judgment' (17.3). 'The Lord himself is our king for ever and ever' (17.46).
- Jesus' βασιλεία preaching cannot be understood solely in terms of these 'timeless' statements about the kingdom of God. At all events, in Matt. 6.33 ('Seek first the kingdom of God . . . and all this (clothing and food) will be added to you') statements about the kingdom of God as care for God's creatures could be fused with the apocalyptic notion of the kingdom of God.³²

3.4 The juxtaposition of future and present/timeless statements about the kingdom of God in prayer and liturgy

At the time of Jesus the notion of God's present and at the same time future kingly rule was anchored in prayer and liturgy, and in contrast to the esoteric apocalyptic writings it was known to broad strata of the population.

1. In these contexts cultic-present statements often occur about the eternal, heavenly kingdom of YHWH in which a share can be gained through participation in the cult:

- A *berakah* formula (formula of praise or blessing) already customary in the liturgy of the Second Temple as a response to the mention of the name of YHWH ran: 'Blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom for ever and ever (ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד).'³³
- In the Book of Jubilees (c.150 BCE), the sabbath is called a 'day of the holy kingdom' (50.9); here the observance of the sabbath is to be understood as a confession of this kingdom and a place in the heavenly court.³⁴
- In the Qumran sabbath liturgies (c.150-50 BCE), the glory of the kingly rule of YHWH is praised by believers who thus join in the choirs of angels and take part in the heavenly worship. The kingly rule (מלכות) praised here is exclusively located in the heavenly divine sphere. The seventh hymn which forms the

³²Thus M. Hengel and A.M. Schwemer (ed.), *Königsherrschaft Gottes und himmlischer Kult im Judentum, im Urchristentum und in der Hellenistischen Welt*, WUNT 55, Tübingen 1991, 12.

³³Quoted from A.M. Schwemer, 'Gott als König in den Sabbatliedern', in *Königsherrschaft* (n.32), 46 n.3; cf. also 62f. The fixed liturgical connection between the hallowing of God's name and the rule of God which occurs here (see also in the Kaddish) also governs the first two petitions in the Our Father (Matt. 6.9f./Luke 11.2).

³⁴Quoted from Charlesworth 2, 142. There are further indications about interpretation in Schwemer, 'Gott' (n.33), 52-4.

climax of the thirteen hymns begins with the invitation: 'Let the holy ones of the "gods" sanctify the King of glory . . . for in the splendour of praises is the glory of his kingship. In it are (contained) the praises of all the "gods" together with the splendour of all [his] king[ship].'³⁵ However, these sabbath liturgies were known only to the members of the Qumran community.

- According to Pharisaic and rabbinic understanding the confession of monotheism and especially the recitation of the *shema* were known as taking upon oneself the 'yoke of the *malkuth*'.³⁶

2. The petition for the establishment of the kingdom of God in the future appears in two prayers which were possibly already spoken in the time of Jesus. This would suggest that this notion was widely known:

- In the Eighteen Benedictions: 'Restore our judges as before . . . and be king over us, you alone' (Eleventh petition).
- In the Kaddish: 'Magnified and sanctified be His great name in the world . . . may His kingdom be established during your life and during your days, and during the life of all the whole house of Israel, even speedily and at a near time.'³⁷

3. It can be inferred from the examples given that in a liturgical context Jews in the time of Jesus could equally praise the present rule of God and ask for its coming without seeing an irresolvable contradiction here. Evidently the eternal kingdom of God must be regarded as a presupposition and basis for the future realization of the kingdom.³⁸ In doxological language what has still to come in reality is experienced and believed in as already present. The characteristic feature of Jesus' preaching does not then lie in an unresolved juxtaposition of present and future sayings about God's rule, but in the fact that he believed that the *future βασιλεία* had already dawned.

4. The relationship between present and future in the preaching of Jesus

The Jesus tradition contains both future and present statements about the kingdom of God. Those who regard a 'non-eschatological Jesus' as historical

³⁵4Q403 frag. I, 1, 31, 33, quoted from Vermes, 325. For the interpretation see Schwemmer, 'Gott', esp. 94-103.

³⁶Cf. L. Jacobs, 'Herrschaft Gottes/Reich Gottes III', *TRE* 15, 1986, 192f.

³⁷Quoted from Barrett, 206.

³⁸Cf. Schwemmer, 'Gott' (n. 33), 117: 'In heaven what on earth is expected in the future salvation is eternally present.'

must dispute the future statements; those who accept only the 'apocalyptic Jesus' must dispute the present statements. Nowadays both series of sayings are usually accepted as authentic.

4.1 The future rule of God

Sayings about the future rule of God appear in (almost) all currents of tradition: in Mark (e.g. 10.15, 23; 14.25), Q (Luke 6.20; 11.2; 13.28f.; etc.), Matt.³⁹ (cf. 21.31) and Luke⁴⁰ (cf. 14.15). In the Gospel of Thomas the future eschatology is put on the lips of the disciples and is explicitly corrected by Jesus: 'His disciples said to him, "When will the repose of the dead come about, and when will the new world come?" He said to them, "What you look forward to has already come, but you do not recognize it"' (51; cf. 3, 113). Here too a future eschatology is presupposed historically, but it is replaced by the Gnostic identification of the kingdom of God with the true self. In view of this broad attestation we can hardly deny Jesus a future expectation, especially as his forerunner, John the Baptist, similarly put it forward, as did his followers, the first Christians, who lived in it. Some of the examples cited below are certainly authentic.

1. *The petition for the coming of the kingdom of God* (Luke 11.2/Matt. 6.10). The second petition of the Our Father, 'Your kingdom come', is focussed on a future kingdom. The phrase about the 'coming' of the kingdom is new in Jesus. It takes the place of talk of the coming of God (cf. Isa. 35.4; 40.9f., etc.). The primitive Christian expectation is orientated on the coming of the 'Lord' (cf. I Cor. 11.26; 16.22). Therefore this petition of the Our Father can hardly be derived from primitive Christianity. Also in support of the authenticity of the logion is the fact that the New Testament knows a wealth of songs and confessional formulations, but attributes only this one prayer to Jesus and depicts it as having been ordained by him. Had it been usual to attribute primitive Christian prayers to Jesus, we would necessarily have found that in texts much more closely related to the liturgy. Furthermore, had the Our Father not been 'protected' by the authority of Jesus in a special way, it would surely have been assimilated much more markedly to the post-Easter faith of the Christians³⁹ (there is more on the Our Father at 4.3 below).

2. *The three oldest beatitudes* (Luke 6.20f.; Matt. 5.3f., 6). The beatitudes on the poor, the hungry, the sorrowing and the persecuted were in the Logia source. Whereas the last of them could reflect the experiences of post-Easter persecutions, the first may be original in the following form:

Blessed are the poor,
for theirs is the kingdom of God.

³⁹For a detailed discussion of the authenticity of the Our Father see Meier, *Marginal Jew* 2², 294.

Blessed are those who hunger (now),
for they shall be satisfied.
Blessed are those who weep (now),
for they shall be comforted.

Poverty, hunger and sorrow are not positive qualities. Rather, in accordance with an ideal of kingship widespread in the ancient Near East (cf. Ps. 72), God intervenes on behalf of the poor and weak, so that their fortunes soon change for the better. Just as there is a request for food in the Our Father, so here the coming kingdom is associated with the prospect of a (festal?) meal. The 'spiritualizing' of the beatitudes which soon began, and which in Matthew leads to the 'poor in spirit' and 'hunger and thirst for righteousness', shows that in primitive Christianity there was a tendency to understand the specific material promises in a 'spiritual' way. That supports the authenticity of the original beatitudes understood in a concrete way.

3. *The expectation of the pilgrimage of the peoples* (Luke 13.28f./Matt. 8.11). A banquet with the patriarchs also stands at the centre of the future pilgrimage of the peoples to the kingdom of God. Here the Jesus tradition takes up expectations from the pilgrimage of the peoples to Zion (Isa. 2.2ff.; Micah 4.1ff.) with which the expectations of the return from the Diaspora were bound up (cf. Isa. 43.1ff.; Bar. 4.36ff., etc.), except that, contrary to the tradition, neither Jerusalem nor Zion appear as the goal. This logion cannot come from primitive Christianity. There the notion was very soon established that the Gentiles do not find access to salvation only in the future end-time (beyond the frontier of death, as the appearance of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob shows), but already in the present. At a very early stage there was no longer an expectation that God would bring the Gentiles from the ends of the earth in a miraculous fashion; rather, they were canvassed by active mission.

4. *The eschatological eucharistic saying* (Mark 14.25). An authentic saying of Jesus has also been handed down to us from the context of the Last Supper – one of the few sayings of Jesus the original situation of which can be defined:

'Truly, I say to you,
I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine
until that day
when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'

The saying can be understood as a prophecy of death: Jesus is drinking for the last time before he takes part in the meal in the kingdom of God. But possibly he hopes that the kingdom of God will break in so soon that it will spare him the way through death. At all events, this logion hardly came into being in primitive Christianity: Jesus has no special role at the eschatological meal. It is not his person but the future kingdom of God that stands at the centre.

5. *The sayings about admission*. Sayings about admission like Matt. 7.21;

Mark 9.43ff.; 10.15, 23 etc. formulate conditions for future entry into the kingdom of God: 'Not every one who says to me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven' (Matt. 7.21). In structure they are suited to formulating ethical conditions which justify entry into the kingdom of God. The paradoxical character of these conditions for entry is characteristic of Jesus: the rich have little chance of entering the kingdom of God (Mark 10.23 par.). Instead, it is open to those who receive it like a child (Mark 10.15), to those who would prefer to enter it crippled, with one foot and one eye, rather than offending against God's will (Mark 9.43ff.). The toll collectors and prostitutes will be admitted before the pious who are unwilling to repent (Matt. 21.31ff.). A secondary analogy (by the evangelist Matthew?) might serve as a title for the antitheses in the Sermon on the Mount: 'Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven' (Matt. 5.20). But where paradoxical conditions for entry are formulated, everything suggests that they come from Jesus: whereas he sees an opportunity in the kingdom of heaven for prostitutes (πόρναι), Paul already wants to exclude whoremongers (πόρντοι) apodictically from it (I Cor. 6.9f.).⁴⁰

6. *Sayings about a date* (Mark 9.1; 13.30; Matt. 10.23). By contrast, the authenticity of the sayings relating to a date is rightly disputed. They promise the advent of the kingdom of God (or the Son of Man) still in the lifetime of the hearers. Probably they were a comfort, since the coming of the kingdom of God was delayed. Initially it was said that everything would be fulfilled in this generation (Mark 13.30). Then the coming of the Son of Man was promised before the mission to Israel had ended. Finally, there were still a few of the first generation left. To them the promise was given: 'There are some standing here who shall not taste of death until they see the kingdom of God coming with power' (Mark 9.1). But in the end the expectation of the parousia was attached to the last survivor of the first generation, a disciple who had grown very old – the 'Beloved Disciple' of the Gospel of John. A saying of Jesus is handed down about him which promises that he will not die before Jesus comes (cf. John 21.22f.). Anyone who attributes the stimulus towards composing such sayings about a date to Jesus himself is thus arguing that these sayings caused perplexity in primitive Christianity, since they had not been fulfilled. They could only have been preserved because they were associated with the authority of Jesus.

We learn only a little from the sayings about the future kingdom of God about life in it. It is striking what is missing. National needs are not addressed, nor are there any liturgical dreams of worship in the eternal presence of God. The Torah is

⁴⁰Matt. 21.31ff. and I Cor. 6.9f. can be logically harmonized. The two sayings promise salvation to the sinner who is ready to repent. But the form and basic attitude are different: in the former we hear a saying about admission, in the latter a saying which threatens exclusion.

not studied by enlightened scholars. The fulfilment of the longing is a good meal – not as a sacrificial meal in the temple but as a festal meal in the circle of the patriarchs.⁴¹ The ritual separation of Gentiles and Jews no longer plays a role here. Indeed, 'the kingdom of God is not an empire, but a village'.⁴² The most natural explanation for this may be Jesus' origin in Galilee. He drew his imagery from a world which lay on the periphery, far removed from the centres of power, education and religion.

4.2 The present rule of God

Whereas the existence of a future eschatology in Jesus can be disputed only if one quite violently denies Jesus clearly future sayings, the authenticity of sayings about the present is undisputed. However, it is open whether there is really talk of a kingly rule of God in the present, since this notion would be new in Judaism: Jesus 'is the only Jew of antiquity known to us who proclaimed not only that people were on the edge of the end-time, but at the same time that the new time of salvation has already begun' (Flusser, *Jesus*, 91). However, it should be remembered that the notion of a present kingly rule of God over the world and creation was also known in Judaism. Jesus did not need to give his contemporaries any complicated explanations as to why he spoke of the rule of God in the present. But he filled familiar images with new content: for he did not mean the presence of the rule of God over the world which had always existed, but the presence of the rule of God which was expected in the future – that state of affairs in which God would establish himself completely against all enemies and against evil. That was a bold statement. Was not Israel still dominated by foreign powers? Was not the world full of evil? How is the proclamation of this present rule of God, contrary to the facts, to be understood? The relevant statements can be divided into three groups: into sayings which express a consciousness of fulfilment; sayings which speak of a struggle between the powers of the old world and of the new; and sayings which contain an awareness of a new dawn: the certainty of the beginning of the new world in the midst of the old

4.2.1 Fulfilment sayings

In the summary characterization of the preaching of Jesus in Mark 1.15f. (sketched out from a post-Easter perspective), his eschatological message is summed up in two statements. The first is, 'The time is fulfilled.' That does not mean that it is fulfilling itself but that it has fulfilled itself (in the perfect). And secondly, 'The kingdom of God is at hand.' Here too the statement is not that the

⁴¹Paul sees this, too, quite differently: 'For the kingdom of God does not mean food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (Rom. 14.17).

⁴²Burchard, 'Jesus', 42.

kingdom of God is approaching (ἐγγίζει) but that it has approached (in the perfect, ἤγγικεν). Here too the focus is on a process which is already complete, which is making a mark on the present. The rule of God is dawning. Now whereas there is no argument about Jesus' sense of fulfilment, his consciousness of a dawning needs to be interpreted. So we shall begin with the certain statements about his consciousness of fulfilment.

1. *The beatitude on eye-witnesses* (Matt. 13.16f./Luke 10.23f.) says more than that the eye-witnesses are seeing the signs of salvation. That is shown by Jewish parallels in PsSol. 18.6: 'Blessed are those born in those days to see the good things of the Lord which he will do for the coming generation (which will be) under the rod of discipline of the Lord Messiah . . .' (cf. also PsSol. 17.44). The future generation expected here is present for Jesus. Prophets and other figures of the past have not just waited for further signs of the time of salvation but for that time itself. The logion can hardly derive from primitive Christianity, since there those are called blessed who believe without seeing (John 20.29).

2. In its original version the *saying about taking the kingdom of God by storm* (Matt. 11.12f./Luke 16.16) probably ran: 'The law and the prophets (are) until John. From then on violence is done to the rule of God, and men of violence seize it.' Regardless of the way in which this saying is interpreted, at all events the kingdom of God is a present entity, which has been there since the days of John the Baptist. That is the only reason why it can be 'seized' in the present. It leads beyond the law and prophets – probably as their fulfilment. There is a dispute as to whether those who seize the rule of God are its opponents or its supporters. If we note that they have only been at work since John the Baptist, we will think more of supporters: all possible opponents – politicians, demons, religious groups – were already in existence beforehand. Only Jesus and his followers appeared with and after John the Baptist. Matthew 11.11/Luke 7.28 also contains this view that John the Baptist represents a turning point: he is the greatest of all human beings hitherto, but the least in the kingdom of God is superior to him. Precisely because John is given such a central position in both sayings, they can hardly come from primitive Christianity. Here John as a forerunner is related directly to Jesus – but not to a group of anonymous 'men of violence' or to the least in the kingdom of God!

3. Even the *sayings about there being something 'greater than'* attest a consciousness of fulfilment in Jesus: John is more than a prophet (Matt. 11.9). Already with him, history enters a stage which surpasses anything hitherto – and even more in the time after him, in which Jesus is active. His preaching about wisdom and repentance surpasses the wisdom of Solomon and the preaching of Jonah (Matt. 12.41 par.).

4. *The question of fasting* (Mark 2.18ff.) is focussed on a statement about fulfilment in the present. Because the bridegroom is now there, the disciples – in contrast to John the Baptist's followers – cannot fast. The role of fasting which derives from first-century CE Pharisaic circles illuminates the implicit presup-

positions: in its days of joy are introduced, recollections of positive events in Israel's history, on which fasting and mourning are forbidden. In the presence of Jesus this impossibility of fasting becomes a permanent state. This pericope, too, cannot be derived from primitive Christianity, as the custom to fast existed in it – and the pericope itself alludes to the return to the practice of fasting after Jesus' death: 'The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day' (Mark 2.20).

4.2.2 Sayings about struggle

Positively, the present consists in the fulfilment of age-old promises. This fulfilment is shown most clearly in a negative certainty: in principle, evil has been conquered. Some apocalyptic statements about the kingdom of God knew the dualism of God and Satan presupposed by Jesus (cf. TestDan. 5.10ff.; 1QM VI, 6; AssMos. 10.1ff.; see above 3.2). They expected a victory over Satan. Only Jesus is certain that this victory has already been won.

1. *The vision of a fall of Satan* (Luke 10.18) may have only been handed down in the Lukan special material, but there is a legendary echo of it in the tradition in the temptation story. Perhaps a reference to a vision of Jesus at his call has been preserved in Luke 10.18. Primitive Christianity later associated the overcoming of Satan with the cross and resurrection (cf. John 12.31; 16.11; Rev. 12.5ff.). But already in his earthly activity Jesus presupposes a fall of Satan. It becomes a certainty to him as a result of his exorcisms: if the demons flee, that is a sign that the power of evil has fundamentally been broken.

2. *The saying about exorcism* (Matt. 12.28/Luke 11.20) has rightly been cited as the main evidence for a present eschatology. If the demons are being driven out, the rule of God has already arrived. The verb 'arrive' (φθάνειν), here in the aorist, means more than 'come close'. It can mean 'catch up with' or 'overtake'. Other New Testament instances confirm this: the term means more than a sign announcing the kingdom of God in advance, namely the rule of God itself (cf. φθάνειν in I Thess. 4.15; 2.16). At all events, one could assume a prophetic saying which describes the future as already having taken place – in the certainty that it is coming. But that is contradicted by the connection with the exorcisms of Jesus, since these have already taken place in the present. By contrast, there is no dispute about the connection with the exorcisms of Jesus' opponents. The logion is often isolated from its immediate context – despite parallel notions in Matt. 12.27f. and Luke 11.20, which confirm the connection with the context for Q:

'And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul,
by whom do your sons cast them out?
Therefore they shall be your judges.
But if it is by the "finger (Matt. spirit) of God" that I cast out demons,
then the kingdom of God has come upon you.'

The 'finger of God' (thus Luke) is more original than the 'spirit of God' to which Matthew refers in the context (cf. Matt. 12.18 = Isa. 42.1; 12.32). In view of the significance of the 'spirit' in Luke-Acts, one cannot imagine Luke having deleted it. Now the 'finger of God' is an allusion to Ex. 8.15 – to Moses' miracles before the exodus from Egypt. The Egyptian magicians fail to make gnats out of dust. They recognize the superiority of Moses with the words, 'That is the finger of God.' So the key word in the Old Testament derives from a controversy over the origin of miracle-working power in rival miracles. Just as there the Egyptian miracle workers stand over against Moses, so here opponents of Jesus and the exorcisms of their 'sons' stand over against Jesus. It can hardly be said that in Matt. 12.27 quite a different audience is in view from that in 12.18: certainly, in the former Jesus is taking an argument of his opponents ironically *ad absurdum*. By contrast, in the latter he is addressing people who have been reached by the kingly rule of God (in the positive sense). But the advent of the rule of God always also has a negative aspect: it is judgment for those who reject it. So this advent of the rule of God always also has a threatening accent. Further exegesis would take us too far afield here. The only important thing to note is that the separation of the exorcisms of Jesus from the exorcisms of others is not as obvious as is often assumed. Either these other exorcisms contrast with Jesus' exorcisms, in which case the double logion would mean: whereas in my exorcisms God's power is certainly at work, according to your logic something quite different must be at work in the exorcisms of your sons (on the presupposition that the two are really as fundamentally different as you think). Or the two sets of exorcisms are related in a positive analogy: if the exorcisms of your sons do not themselves stem from Satan (which is obviously your assumption), how much more do my exorcisms show the power of the rule of God! But the analogy could also be meant in a negative sense: if you accuse me of being in league with Satan, how much more must you accuse your sons of the same thing!

3. The kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan are opposed throughout the *Beelzebul debate* (Matt. 12.22ff./Luke 11.14ff.). The image of the stronger one is illuminating for Jesus' eschatological consciousness: in Mark 3.27 (and Matt. 12.29) we have the plundering of a house. In Luke 11.21f. (= Q?) this has become a military clash between armed forces. But at all events the statement is that a stronger one must be conquered and bound before one can plunder his house or palace. Satan has to be conquered before one can drive out the demons.

4.2.3 Sayings about the dawn of the rule of God

The sayings of Jesus unmistakably talk of the fulfilment of old expectations and the overcoming of evil. But the sayings about the dawn of the rule of God are much vaguer and more enigmatic. We have already discussed some sayings, which

include the one about taking the kingdom by force. If the kingdom of God can be 'seized' or 'robbed', it must already exist in the present – at least since the days of John the Baptist. The saying about exorcism also contains a positive statement about the dawn of the rule of God. The allusion to Ex. 8.15 possibly shows how it is to be understood: just as at that time there was a prelude to the exodus in the miracles of Moses, so in the exorcisms today there is a prelude to the liberation of Israel through the kingdom of God. Other sayings about a dawning of the kingdom are more enigmatic.

1. The statement about the '*kingdom of God in your midst*' (Luke 17.21) may be attested in the New Testament only in the Lukan special material, but it appears twice in the Gospel of Thomas, in such different versions that it cannot be regarded as a redactional reworking of the same Lukan original (cf. 3; 113). The statement in Logion 113 that the kingdom of God, among other things, is 'spread over the earth' is hardly a characteristically Gnostic reinterpretation of the 'kingdom of God in you'. As elsewhere, doublets indicate variants in the history of tradition rather than literary dependence. Like the saying about exorcism (Luke 11.20), the saying about the 'kingdom of God in your midst' (Luke 17.21) is also addressed to Pharisees – in other words to the opponents of Jesus. Jesus' reply to the question when the kingdom of God is coming is:

'The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed;
nor will they say,
"Lo, here it is!" or "There!"'

For behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you (ἐντὸς ὑμῶν).'

The translation and meaning of ἐντὸς are disputed. Is it to be understood in a spiritual sense, 'The kingdom of God is internally in you' – as in Gospel of Thomas 3, 'The kingdom of God is within you and outside' – so that it is at the same time the self of the redeemed and his heavenly home? Or is ἐντὸς to be understood spatially, 'in your midst'? That is the most widespread translation. In fact the Greek translation of the Old Testament by Aquila knows an ἐντὸς with this meaning as a rendering of the Hebrew 'in our midst' (בְּקִרְבָּנוּ), cf. Aquila on Ex. 17.7; 34.9. But as a rule ἐντὸς means 'within'. That is shown by the only parallel in the New Testament in the noun form: 'the interior' (τὸ ἐντὸς) in Matt. 23.26. Moreover Luke has the clear 'in the middle of' in the form of ἐν μέσῳ (cf. Luke 2.46; 8.7; 21.21 etc.). If we add that the repudiation of a spatial localization of the kingdom of God – it is neither 'here' nor 'there' – hardly suggests a spatial view which seeks the kingdom of God in the midst of those addressed (say in the form of the person of Jesus), Luke himself could have understood the logion spiritually: the previous pericope ends in 17.19 with the promise: 'Your faith has saved you'. The kingdom of God could begin within human beings as faith. Luke can imagine Pharisees as believing Christians, as is shown by Acts 15.5. But this Lukan interpretation (which is only a possible one) would not do away with the

original sense. In addition to the spiritual and local sense Luke also knows a dynamic interpretation in the sense of 'the kingdom of God is at your disposal' or 'in your sphere of experience'. That is a possible meaning of the word. In that case the logion would have to be understood as an invitation to put oneself in possession of the rule of God. At all events there is a present eschatology. For the future interpretation, the kingdom of God is suddenly in your midst, is quite improbable. The suddenness of the coming of God is introduced by the following context. The saying remains a riddle.

2. The *parables of growth* attest the hidden beginning of the rule of God. However, not all parables were originally images of the rule of God. Only in some cases is this confirmed by an old introduction. The instances of this are the 'parable of the seed growing by itself' (Mark 4.26–29) and the double parable of the 'mustard seed' and the 'leaven' (Luke 13.18f., 20f.). The point is always that something great grows from a small beginning. The decisive thing, the sowing, has already taken place. The mustard seed is already growing. The leaven is already permeating the dough. Even if we may not 'translate' parables like allegories, the 'naive' listener is doubtless directed to a reality which is already beginning imperceptibly in the present.

Thus the statements about the present rule of God have both clear and enigmatic aspects. It is clear that the expectations of history so far are now being fulfilled: it is also clear that evil has decisively been conquered. But in parables and paradoxical phrases it is enigmatically stated that the dawn of the rule of God has already taken place.

4.3 The combination of present and future in the Our Father

If we regard both the future and the present statements as authentic, we are faced with the almost insoluble task of how to interpret their relationship. Or should we console ourselves with the fact that the logical coherence of our expectations is inappropriate for Jesus? Did not the whole of primitive Christianity express this tension between 'already' and 'not yet' without ever feeling the need to balance them intellectually? But at all events we have an evocative text from Jesus which combines future and present in a remarkable way: the Our Father. Just as we find present and future statements side by side in Jewish prayers (see above, pp. 25 ff.), so too we find them in this prayer of Jesus. There is a fairly broad consensus as to which is the earliest version: the longer Matthaean version has come about by expansions at the beginning (after the address), in the middle (after the petitions in the second person singular), and at the end (after the petitions in the first person plural). The expansions emphasize the transcendence of God in heaven, give the eschatological orientation of the first petitions an ethical emphasis, 'Your will be done . . .' (Matt. 6.10b), and set the everyday ethic of the petitions in the first

person plural against an eschatological horizon: 'And deliver us from evil!' For this deliverance can only come about with the establishment of the rule of God.⁴³ However, the combination of eschatology and everyday ethics is characteristic not only of the additions in the Matthaean version but already of primitive Christian prayer. Therefore to the present day, almost necessarily, exegesis fluctuates between an eschatological interpretation and one related to everyday life.

The eschatological interpretation of the Our Father

The ethical interpretation of the Our Father related to everyday life

OUR FATHER

IN HEAVEN (= an expansion of the form of address)

1. HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME

The hallowing of the name is God's eschatological revelation of himself: God shows his power and glory.

The petition is focussed on the acknowledgment of the one and only God among human beings: they are the ones who hallow the name.

2. YOUR KINGDOM COME

The coming of the kingdom is the eschatological realization of the salvation that God alone ushers in.

The petition (at the same time) is focussed on the universal obedience of all people: God's kingdom is realized through this obedience.

3. YOUR WILL BE DONE

AS IN HEAVEN SO ON EARTH (= expansion of the petitions in the second person singular)

God's will is his plan of salvation which he wills to implement everywhere, also on earth.

The petition is focussed on the fulfilment of the will of God by human action.

4. OUR DAILY BREAD GIVE US TODAY

ἐπιούσιος (= future) means the bread of the eschatological meal, a share of which people already ask for today.

ἐπιούσιος means the bread that is needed or 'bread for tomorrow', the possession of which already brings relief today from everyday anxiety.

⁴³Jesus assumed that Satan had already fallen in the present. But here the removal of evil is expected in the future.

5. AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBT AS WE ALSO FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS

The petition is for the remission of debt in the final eschatological judgment.

Just as those who pray already forgive their debtors now, so now already they hope for the forgiveness of their sins by God.

6. AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL (= an expansion of the petitions in the first person plural)

Temptation is the eschatological temptation which must be endured before the final change to salvation.

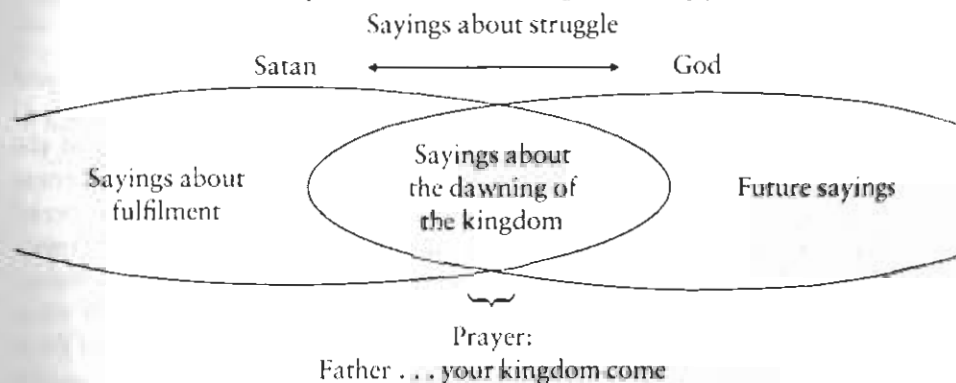
The petition is focussed on everyday temptations. Those who pray want to be protected from their own sins.

The two types of exegesis⁴⁴ must probably be combined. Both petitions in the second person singular are to be understood eschatologically. The Kaddish (see above 3.4) combines the petition for the hallowing of the name and the realization of the kingdom and relates both to the near future. The three petitions in the first person plural are to be related to everyday life and the present. The petition for daily bread means everyday bread. Forgiveness of sins is asked for the present, since the forgiveness of the sins of others is not first promised for the future. In the great eschatological temptation the petition must run, 'Preserve us in this temptation (which must necessarily come)'. But the Our Father meaningfully prays for preservation *from* temptation. Nevertheless, the eschatological interpretation also has a correct insight here: the rule of God which is dawning puts a tremendous emphasis on everyday life. Jesus can already see everyday meals as a sign pointing to the eschatological meal. The great readiness of God to forgive at the end is already at work in every mutual act of forgiveness. In every little temptation the great temptation is mastered. The additions to the Matthaean version are an appropriate interpretation of the prayer: the end-time is seen in the light of the ethical will of God, and everyday life is illuminated by the light of an eschatological liberation from disaster. But both these things happen in a prayer which is addressed to God. In the last resort future and present are combined in the understanding of God. That is shown by the two metaphors for God which are combined in the Lord's Prayer. The present God is addressed as 'Father' just as elsewhere God as 'Father' is associated with care in the present (Matt. 6.25ff.).

⁴⁴Those who support an eschatological interpretation are E. Lohmeyer, *Our Father*, London and New York 1965; J. Jeremias, 'The Lord's Prayer in the Light of Recent Research', in *The Prayers of Jesus*, London 1967, 82-107; Meier, *Marginal Jew* 2^o, 291-302. For the interpretation related to everyday life see U. Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, Minneapolis and Edinburgh 1989, 367-89.

But the future coming of God is denoted with the metaphor of God's kingship, i.e. God's will to establish salvation for human beings in this world. Accordingly the 'kingly rule of God' is the expression of a powerful ethical energy. To go into this more deeply we must discuss the second tension between salvation and judgment in Jesus' eschatology. But first, here is a diagram which sums up our results so far on the 'temporal structure' of the eschatology of Jesus.

The two overlapping ellipses depict the old and the new ages. Sayings about struggle conjure up the conflict between the powers of the old world and the new. Sayings about fulfilment illuminate the present as the realization of age-old expectations. Sayings about the future announce the dawn of the new world. Sayings about the dawning of the kingdom confirm that it is already beginning now in a hidden way. And in prayer to God, present and future are combined: the Father's concern in the present with the coming of his kingly rule in the future.



5. The relationship between judgment and salvation in the preaching of Jesus

In Judaism, God's eschatological action always has an aspect of judgment and an aspect of salvation.⁴⁵ The advent of salvation, of a new world under God's rule, presupposes that evil is overcome, both the mythical personification of evil in the figure of Satan and his demons, and historical evil in the form of those among the Gentiles and in the people of God who are dominated by them. Jesus shares this dialectical connection between salvation and disaster with all contemporary Jewish currents: with apocalyptic visionaries who triumph over the downfall of the ungodly, preachers of repentance like John the Baptist who threatened judgment

⁴⁵For the judgment in the eschatological conceptions of Judaism around the turn of the ages see M. Reiser, *Judgment*, 1-163.

and the salvation of a remnant, and with Zealots who wanted to root out the evil embodied in the Romans in order to hasten the establishment of the sole rule of God. Despite the common assumption that initially evil must triumph and the eschatological separation take place before salvation can be fulfilled, Jesus puts the announcement of salvation at the centre of his preaching. Above all in the βασιλεία preaching, the aspect of judgment remarkably fades into the background, but without being completely absent. Jesus invites people to take part in the rule of God – but those who do not accept the salvation he offers in words and deeds incur the judgment which is depicted in the sayings and parables about judgment.

5.1 Jesus' preaching of judgment

Here we shall describe Jesus' preaching of judgment by raising four questions. We shall investigate: 1. the responsibility for salvation and damnation in judgment; 2. the images and metaphors for judgment; 3. the time of judgment; and 4. those to whom the preaching of judgment is addressed.

5.1.1 The responsibility for salvation and damnation in the judgment

Jesus' preaching and conduct brought the eschatological salvation, the rule of God, into the everyday life of his hearers. As an appropriate reaction, they were to accept this gift in sheer joy like an treasure discovered unexpectedly or a pearl (Matt. 13.44-46); they were to celebrate the present as an eschatological time of salvation, instead of fasting as though God was still always distant (Mark 2.18ff.), and lead a life in keeping with Jesus' preaching. In a word (cf. Mark 1.15f.), the arrival of the kingdom of God which brought salvation was to produce repentance (μετάνοια). However, for those who did not accept salvation the preaching of salvation became the preaching of judgment. The following passages show that Jesus understood the judgment as a self-chosen or deserved exclusion from the salvation which he brought near in word and deed.

- The *sayings about admission* presuppose that only those who fulfil certain conditions will enter into the kingdom of heaven. In Matt. 7.21 those who do the will of the Father, or Matt. 19.23f.: those who are ready to part with their riches.
- Especially in the Matthaean version, the saying about the *pilgrimage of the peoples* (Matt. 8.11f./Luke 13.28f.) is a vivid threat against the Israelites, the υιοί της βασιλείας (the sons of the kingdom), to whom the saving promise of the eschatological meal was originally given. If they do not believe, they will be cast out, while the Gentiles stream in. The Lukan version, which is probably more original, does not concern all Israel, but contains the same abrupt notion of judgment.
- In the *parable of the marriage feast* (Luke 14.16-24/Matt. 22.1-14/Thomas