

“SEE The Kingdom of God”

John 3:3c

November 20, 2022

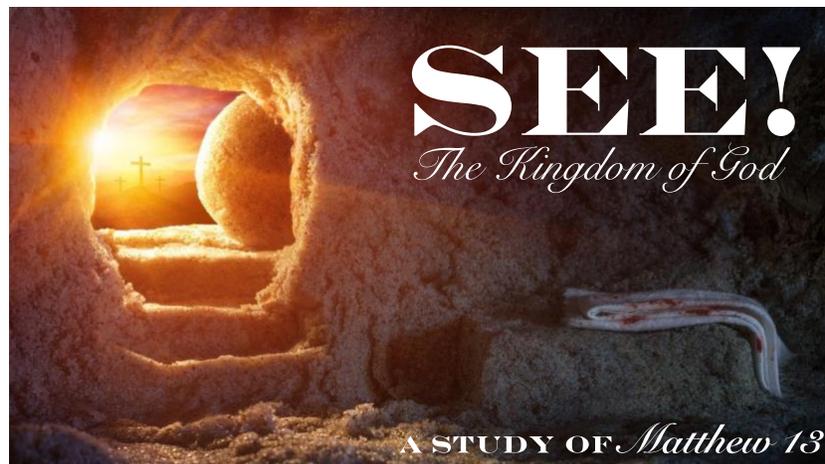
VIDEO: *Final Ps. 119 devotional*

INTRO: Let's SEE how God is guiding us in/per His Word!

How well do you see reality?



Now... close your eyes... **What do you see?**



How well **did/do** you see the kingdom of God?

PRAYER

CONTEXT:

- A. The Word of God *(with a Psalm 119 Perspective)*
- B. The Kingdom of God
- c. The Gospel of Matthew 13 *Introduction, Interaction, Infusion*

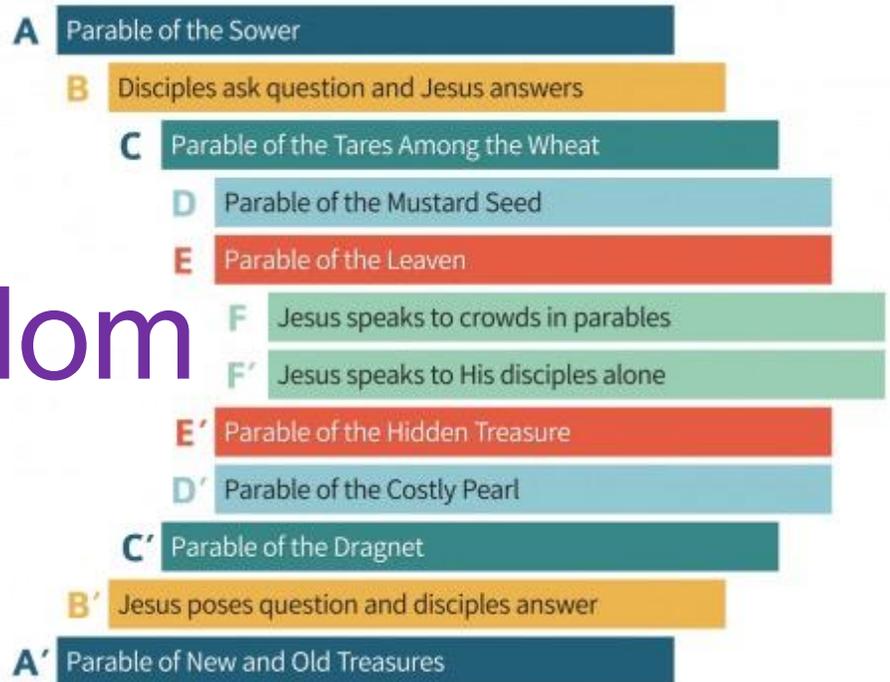
Matthew

Ch. 13

The Kingdom of God

Chiastic

Arch



D. The 6 week series

- a. **SEE** The Kingdom Of God
- b. **BE** The Kingdom Of God
- c. **QUERY** The Kingdom Of God
- d. **WE** The Kingdom Of God
- e. **WEE** (little) Kingdom Of God
- f. **ETERNALLY** The Kingdom Of God

E. Today = **SEE...** the **DEFINITIONS**

Due to the kingdom's complexity, there tends to be corruption & confusion circling the kingdom's construction, comparisons, & completion.

PREVIEW:

- A. The Kingdom's **DEFINITION**
- B. The Kingdom's **DIMENSIONS**
- C. The Kingdom's **DURATION**
- D. The Kingdom's **DESCRIPTIONS**
- E. The Kingdom's **DISTINCTIONS**

BIG IDEA: *We'll seldom BE what we cannot SEE*

TEXT: John 3:3c *"...see the kingdom of God."*

T/S: First, let me contextualize **John 3:3c...**

- ~ Jesus was declared to be Creator God in John 1...
- ~ Jesus had begun to call His Apostles to Himself
- ~ Jesus went to a wedding & did His 1st miracle...
- ~ Jesus just cleansed the Temple (*enemies growing*)
- ~ NOW, Jesus receives a visit from Nic at night...

John 3:2

(Nic) *...came to Jesus by night & said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him."*

John 3:3a & c

Truly, truly I say to you... ...see the kingdom of God."

I. SEE The Kingdom's DEFINITION

“See...”

We all desperately need to SEE Visually,
Experientially, & Eternally!

i. Corruption

1. The Fall
2. The Faithless
3. The Fakes
4. The Fickle
5. The Forgetful

The bad news is... you cannot stumble into God's kingdom. The good news is... in the same way, you can never stumble out of God's kingdom!
You can stumble while in... but never so far as to fall out... of God's kingdom... & that's good news!

-JDP

Amen & AMEN

ii. Confusion

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. <u>Cultural</u> | make & master your own... |
| 2. <u>Churchy</u> | moralism & traditionalism... |
| 3. <u>Christian</u> | milk & mashed vs. the meat |

iii. **Clarification** on The Kingdom's Definition:
kingdom.

The dynamic reign of God as sovereign over creation.

Although the roots of the term lie in the OT, the Christian understanding arises more specifically from Jesus' proclamation of the inbreaking of God's rule.

Hence the kingdom is God's divine, kingly reign as proclaimed and inaugurated by Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection, and the subsequent outpouring of the Spirit into the world. In this sense Christ is reigning now, and the kingdom of God has arrived. At the same time the church awaits the future consummation of the divine reign. This "already" and "not yet" dimension of the kingdom of God implies that it is both a given reality (or the divine power at work in the present) and a process that is moving toward its future fulfillment or completion.

- Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms

In other words, by definition...

The kingdom of God is, simply put,

God's redemptive rule & reign!

**II. SEE The Kingdom's DIMENSIONS,
DURATION, & DESCRIPTIONS**

“See *the kingdom...*”

i. **Definite Article** = “*THE*” vs. “a”
(Singular; Particular; Exclusive)

ii. **Divine Authority**

1. King = THE King vs. a king
2. Domain = THE vs. a domain
3. *Kingdom* = THE reigning King’s domain

John 18:36:

“My kingdom is not of this world”

iii. **Defining Attributes**

1. Dimensions (like facets = parts of whole)

- a. *Ruler* & *Subjects*
- b. *Reigning* & *Repenting*
- c. *Rules* & *Responses*
- d. *Realms* & *Realities*
- e. *Places* & *People* (macro & micro)

2. Duration (*was, was new, is, will be, & forever*)

- a. *Eternal* (before time began...)
- b. *Helpful* (a.k.a. Mediatorial/Covenantal)
- c. *Sinful* (Satan’s short reign of the world)
- d. *Christological* (1000 year Messianic reign)
- e. *Eternal* (forever & ever without end)

Forever & ever...

Completes *the eternal circle:*

Pre-Creation... Pro-Creation... Post-Creation

3. Descriptions

- a. *Prophets & Psalms: Messiah will reign*
- b. *Proclamation: Jesus declared!*
- c. *Parables: Defined & Discovered*

Parables are practical stories
illustrating spiritual truths.

ALL the parables are Gospel centric
...with different thematic doors & windows.

- JDP

Jesus taught with parables to confuse the corrupt.

- JDP

*At their core, parables are curriculum for Christians
but judgments upon the Christ-less corrupt.*

- JDP

III. SEE The Kingdom's DISTINCTIONS

“See the kingdom of God”

- i. Contrasting the kingdom of SELF

1. *EVERY knee WILL bow & EVERY tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is LORD!*

- **Philippians 2:10-11**

2. No amount of fame, fortune, or pleasure...

There will never be enough earthly gratification to take the place of God's eternal Gospel! - JDP

3. No 12-Step god's or kingdoms of your own understanding will stand (Matt 7:21-27)

ii. Contrasting the kingdom of **SATAN**

1. The Bible is clear about Satan's kingdom...

a. **Matthew 12:26** (*"his kingdom"*)

b. **John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11;**

c. **2 Corinthians 4:4** (*the god of this world*)

d. **Colossians 1:13**

e. **1 John 5:19** (*...world lies in the power of the evil one*)

2. Satan & his demonic helpers even come to us disguised as angels of light (2 Cor 11:14-15)

John 12:31

*Now is the judgment of this world;
now will the ruler of this world be cast out.*

VIDEO: *MacArthur on this world*

iii. Distinguishing The **SAVIOR's** Kingdom

John 3:2

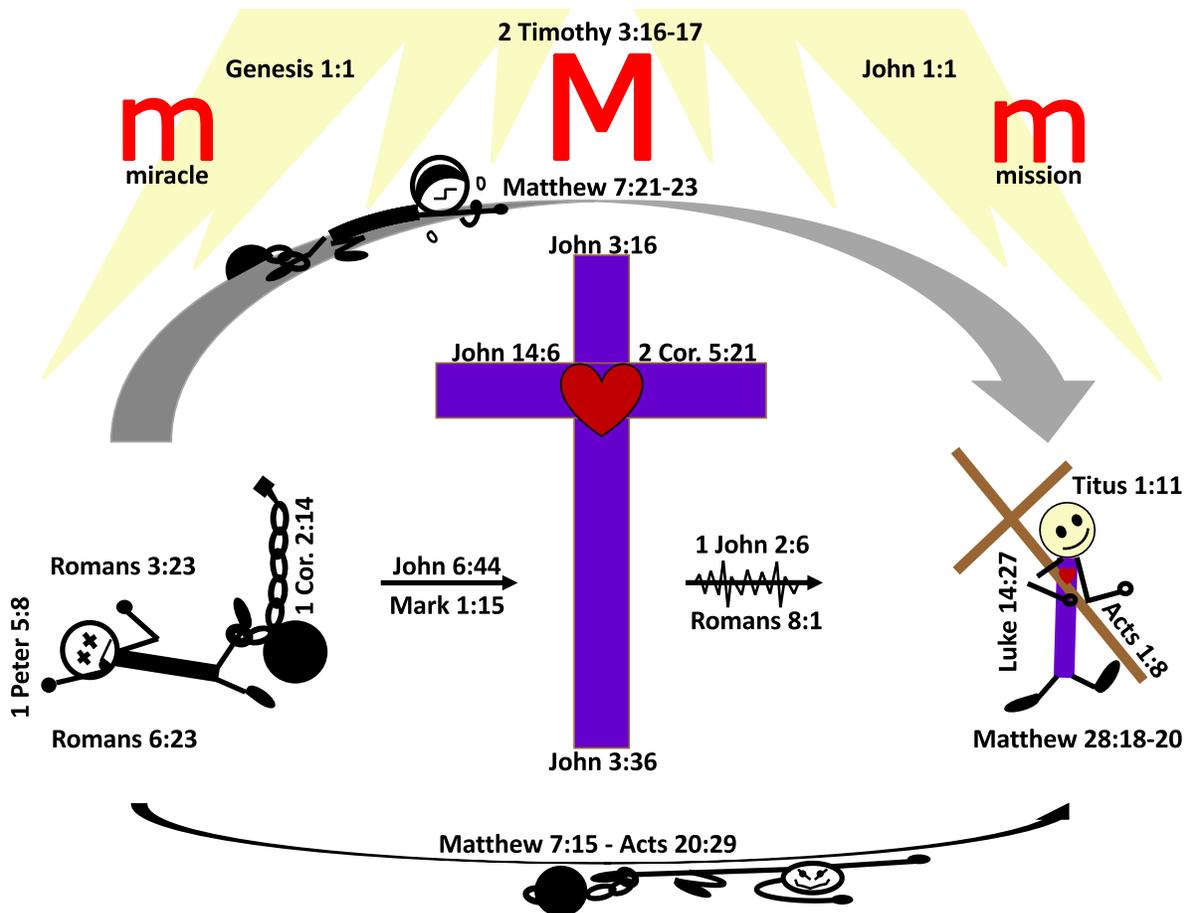
(Nic) ...came to Jesus by night & said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him."

John 3:3

Truly, truly I say to you...

UNLESS YOU ARE BORN AGAIN YOU CANNOT

...see the kingdom of God."



The kingdom of God's core distinctive is its reigning King... & His redeemed mission & missionaries!

Jesus is the only One who gives life... & He's the only Door into The King's kingdom! (cf. John 10)

Jesus is the way, the truth, & the life... and NO ONE comes to (or sees with eternal eyes) the Father, except thru Christ! (cf. John 14:6)

To “*see the kingdom of God*” begins with God's love & grace which empowers us to see the difference & distinction between:

Born-again
Holy Prayers
THRU the Cross
The Supernatural
God's Love/Lovers
The Miracle
The Church
Real JOY
Self-LESS Ministry
Heaven
God's Family/Followers

Dead in sin
Human Players
Over/Under the Cross
The Superficial
Satan's Lies/Liars
The Mechanical
The Crowd
Rotten Junk
Self-absorbed Misery
Hell
Satan's Fakes/Phonies

T/S: ...that marks a perfect place to end for today and set us up for next time...

REVIEW:

The kingdom of God is, simply put,

God's redemptive rule & reign!

John 3:3

Truly, truly I say to you...

UNLESS YOU ARE BORN AGAIN YOU CANNOT

...see the kingdom of God."

CLOSE:

I pray that today, by God's grace, the blind will see!

and

**I pray that those who see will see more clearly...
the glory, grace, & gospel of our God!**

PRAYER

Dear LORD,

What we have not, give us.

What we know not, teach us.

What we are not, make us.

In Jesus' name, Amen & AMEN!

NASB Topical INDEX:

KINGDOM

The biblical words for kingdom primarily signify the abstract idea of kingly authority or reign (kingship, e.g., 1 Sa 14:47; 1 Ki 2:12.

However, since a reign necessarily creates a realm over which it is exercised, the terms are also used for that

realm (kingdom, e.g., Mt 4:8; 8:11). They are used both for secular earthly kingdoms and the kingdom related to God and Christ.

kingdom, God's

Although the expression "kingdom of God" is not used in the OT, the idea of the reign of God and His kingdom is frequent (e.g., Ps 22:28; 145:13; Da 2:44). It becomes the dominant theme of the proclamation of Christ (cf. Mt 4:17) and His disciples (Mt 10:7) in the Gospels. References to the kingdom or reign of God are less frequent in the epistles, but again come into prominence in the book of Revelation (e.g., 11:15, 17; 12:10; 20:4).

Scripture teaches two closely related concepts of the kingdom of God. Since God has always ruled over His created universe, His kingdom has existed from eternity in its reign over all things (e.g., 1 Ch 29:11–12). But since the reign of God has not been fully established, especially on the earth, there is another sense in which the kingdom is seen as coming to

defeat the forces of evil and establish the righteous reign of God on earth (e.g., Da 2:44; Mt 6:10).

This earthly historical kingdom was a primary theme of OT prophecy (e.g., Is 9:6–7; Je 23:5). It was announced as near or “at hand” at the first coming of Christ (e.g., Mt 3:2; 4:17), and on the basis of His death and resurrection He was exalted to kingly authority (cf. Ac 2:34–36).

The kingdom includes both the spiritual salvation of the new covenant (e.g., forgiveness of sins and new life through the Spirit) and the outward salvation of society through the defeat of the evil forces of history and the establishment of the righteous rule of Christ on earth. There is general agreement concerning the presence of the kingdom in its spiritual salvation during the present church age. The outward consummation of the kingdom of Christ, however, has evoked various views often described in terms of different explanations of the millennium.

Derived from Re 20:1–10, the millennium (from Latin mille, “thousand”) denotes the temporary messianic kingdom reign of Christ before the final judgment and inauguration of the eternal state with the new heavens and earth. The prophetic Scriptures relative to this reign of Christ have been variously interpreted throughout church history. Premillennialists view it as a literal 1000 year reign of Christ on the earth characterized by peace, righteousness, and material prosperity following His return and prior to the commencement of the eternal state. Postmillennialists understand it as an era of similar conditions that will be brought about by the proclamation of the gospel during the present church age before the return of Christ. His return will then signal the final judgment and the inauguration of the eternal state. Finally, amillennialists interpret the prophecies of a millennial kingdom as signifying the blessedness of believers in a present spiritual kingdom over which Christ rules from heaven through the Word and Spirit. His return will bring the consummation in the destruction of evil forces, the final judgment, and the eternal state (*See also DAY OF THE LORD, END TIMES*).

eternal universal kingdom: 1 Ch 29:11–12; Ps 29:10; 74:12; 103:19; 145:13; Da 4:34–35; Mt 6:10; 1 Ti 1:17

mediatorial (messianic) kingdom

terminology ♦ kingdom of God: Mt 21:31; Mk 1:15; 4:11; 9:1, 47; 10:14, 23–25; 12:34; 14:25; 15:43; Lu 4:43; 6:20; 7:28; 8:1, 10; 9:2, 11, 27; 10:9; 11:2, 17; 12:31; 13:28–29; 16:16; 17:20–21; 18:24; 19:11; 21:31; 22:16; Jn 3:3, 5; Ac 1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 20:25; 28:23, 31; Ro 14:17; 1 Co 4:20; Ga 5:21; Col 4:11; 1 Th 2:12 ♦ kingdom of heaven: Mt 3:2; 4:17; 5:3; 6:10; 10:7; 11:11; 12:28; 13:11; 16:19; 19:23; 21:43; 25:1 ♦ Christ’s kingdom:

Mt 20:21; Lu 1:33; 22:30; 23:42; Jn 18:36; Col 1:13; 2 Ti 4:1; 2 Pe 1:11 ♦ kingdom of Christ and God: Eph 5:5; Re 11:15 ♦ kingdom of the Father: Mt 13:43; 26:29 ♦ kingdom of David: Mk 11:10

entrance requirements ♦ spiritual new birth: Jn 3:3, 5 ♦ repentance: Mt 3:2; 4:17; Mk 1:15 ♦ faith: Mk 1:15 ♦ conversion: Mt 18:3 ♦ spiritually humble: Mt 5:3; Lu 6:20 ♦ righteousness: Mt 5:20; 1 Co 6:9–11; Ga 5:19–24; Eph 5:3–6 ♦ righteous service: Mt 7:21; 25:34–35 ♦ childlikeness: Mt 18:1–4; 19:14; Mk 10:14–15; Lu 18:15–17 ♦ wholehearted devotion: Lu 9:62

time of ♦ present: Mt 12:28; 13:11–52; 23:13; Lu 17:21; Ro 14:17; 1 Co 4:20; Col 1:13; Heb 12:28 ♦ future: Lu 19:11–12; 21:31; Ac 1:6–7; 14:22; 1 Co 6:10; Ga 5:21; Eph 5:5; 2 Th 1:5; 2 Ti 4:18; 2 Pe 1:11; Re 5:10; 11:15, 17; 20:4, 6: restored to the Father: 1 Co 15:24

characteristics of

spiritual ♦ salvation: Is 2:1–6; 52:7–10; 60:18; 61:10; Jn 3:3–8; Col 1:13–14; 2 Ti 4:18 ♦ righteousness: Ps 85:10; Is 1:26–27; 32:1; 11:4–5; 46:13; 51:5; 60:21; 61:11; Mt 5:20; 7:21; 25:34–35; 1 Co 6:9–11; Ro 14:17; Eph 5:3–6 ♦ holiness: Is 4:3–4; 35:8; Joe 3:17; Zep 3:11–12; Zec 14:20–21 ♦ outpouring of Spirit: Is 32:15; 44:3; Eze 36:27; 37:14; 39:29; Joe 2:28–29 ♦ joy: Is 9:3–4; 12:3–6; 14:7–8; 51:11; 61:2–3, 7; 65:18–19; Je 31:13–14; Zec 8:19; Ro 14:17 ♦ power: Mt 12:28; 1 Co 4:20; Heb 6:5 ♦ Satan bound: Re 20:3, 7 ♦ presence of sin: Is 11:4; 65:20; Zec 14:17–19

physical ♦ curse on nature lifted: Is 11:6–9; 35:6–9; 41:18–19; 55:13; 65:25; Ro 8:19–22 ♦ great productivity: Ps 71:16; Is 32:13–15; 35:1–2; Eze 36:4–11; Am 9:13–14 ♦ physical healing: Is 29:18; 33:24; 35:3–6; Je 30:17; Eze 34:16 ♦ long life: Is 65:20–23

social ♦ justice: Ps 72:4, 12–13; Is 9:7; 11:4; 42:1–4; 65:21–23; Je 23:5 ♦ peace: Ps 46:9; 72:7; Is 2:4; 9:4–7; 11:6–9; 32:17–18; Hos 2:18; Mi 4:3; Zec 9:10: universal: Ps 2:8; 72:8–11, 17; 86:9; Is 2:2–4; 11:9; 55:5; 62:1–2; Da 2:44–45; 7:13–14; Zec 14:9; Php 2:10; Re 11:15

gospel of (*see also* GOSPEL): mysteries of: Mt 13:11; Mk 4:11; Lu 8:10: parables of: Mt 13:3–52; 18:23–35; 20:1–16; 22:2–14; 25:1–30; Mk 4:1–34; Lu 8:4–15; 13:18–21

kingdoms, human

Gentile ♦ earliest: Ge 10:8–10; 14 ♦ presently under God's sovereignty: Pr 8:15–16; 2 Ch 20:6; 36:23; Je 27:5–7; Da 4:25, 32, 35; 5:18; Jn 19:11; Ro 13:1 ♦ taken over by God's kingdom: Da 7:13, 14; Re 11:15

Israel (united kingdom) ♦ beginning of: Ex 19:6 ♦ God as King of: Ex 15:18; Ps 89:18; Is 33:22 ♦ Messiah as King of: Ps 110:1; Is 9:6–7; Je 23:5–6; Zec 9:9; Mt 21:5 ♦ established forever: 2 Sa 7:8–16 ♦ division of: 1 Ki 11:9–13; 12:6–24. (*see also* ISRAEL)

kingdom, Satan's: Mt 12:26; Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Co 4:4; Col 1:13; 1 Jo 5:19¹

¹ [The NASB Topical Index](#), electronic ed. (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1992).

VINES: Word Study

KINGDOM

malkut (מְלָכוּת, 4438), “kingdom; reign; rule.” The word *malkut* occurs 91 times in the Hebrew Old Testament and apparently belongs to late biblical Hebrew. The first occurrence is in Num. 24:7: “He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.”

The word *malkut* denotes: **(1) the territory of the kingdom**: “When he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honor of his excellent majesty many days, even a hundred and fourscore days” (Esth. 1:4); **(2) the accession to the throne**: “For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esth. 4:14); **(3) the year of rule**: “So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign” (Esth. 2:16); and **(4) anything “royal” or “kingly”**: throne (Esth. 1:2), wine (Esth. 1:7), crown (Esth. 1:11), word (Esth. 1:19), garment (Esth. 6:8), palace (Esth. 1:9), scepter (Ps. 45:6), and glory (Ps. 145:11–12).

The Septuagint translations of *malkut* are: *basileia* (“kingship; kingdom; royal power”) and *basileus* (“king”).

mamlakah (מַמְלָכָה, 4467), “kingdom; sovereignty; dominion; reign.” The word appears about 115 times throughout the Old Testament. *Mamlakah* occurs first in Gen. 10:10: “And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar” in the sense of the “realm” of the kingdom.

The basic meaning of *mamlakah* is the area and people that constitute a “kingdom.” The word refers to non-Israelite nations who are ruled by a *melek*, “king”: “And it shall come to pass after the end of seventy years, that the Lord will visit Tyre, and she shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth” (Isa. 23:17). *Mamlakah* is a synonym for *am*, “people,” and *goy*, “nation”: “... they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people” (Ps. 105:13). *Mamlakah* also denotes Israel as God’s “kingdom”: “And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation” (Exod. 19:6). The Davidic king was the theocratic agent by whom God ruled over and blessed His people: “And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever” (2 Sam. 7:16). Nevertheless, the one *mamlakah* after

Solomon was divided into two kingdoms which Ezekiel predicted would be reunited:” And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms ...” (Ezek. 37:22).

Close to the basic meaning is the usage of *mamlakah* to denote “king,” as the king was considered to be the embodiment of the “kingdom.” He was viewed as a symbol of the kingdom proper: “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you” (1 Sam. 10:18; in Hebrew the noun “kingdoms” is feminine and the verb “oppress” has a masculine form, signifying that we must understand “kingdoms” as “kings”).

The function and place of the king is important in the development of the concept “kingdom.” “Kingdom” may signify the head of the kingdom. The word further has the meaning of the royal “rule,” the royal “sovereignty,” and the “dominion.” The royal “sovereignty” was taken from Saul because of his disobedience (1 Sam. 28:17). “Royal sovereignty” is also the sense in Jer. 27:1: “In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim....” The Old Testament further defines as expressions of the royal “rule” all things associated with the king: (1) the throne: “And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites” (Deut. 17:18); (2) the pagan sanctuary supported by the throne: “But prophesy not again any more at Beth-el: for it is the king’s chapel, and it is the king’s court” (Amos 7:13); and (3) a royal city: “And David said unto Achish, If I have now found grace in thine eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there: for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with thee?” (1 Sam. 27:5).

All human rule is under God’s control. Consequently the Old Testament fully recognizes the kingship of God. The Lord ruled as king over His people Israel (1 Chron. 29:11). He graciously ruled over His people through David and his followers until the Exile (2 Chron. 13:5). In the New Testament usage all the above meanings are to be associated with the Greek word *basileia* (“kingdom”). This is the major translation of *mamlakah* in the Septuagint, and as such it is small wonder that the New Testament authors used this word to refer to God’s “kingdom”: the realm, the king, the sovereignty, and the relationship to God Himself *melek* (מֶלֶךְ, 4428), “king.” This word occurs about 2,513 times in the Old Testament. It is found several times in Gen. 14:1: “And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations.”²

Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms:

² W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White Jr., [*Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*](#) (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, 1996), 129–130.

kingdom.

The dynamic reign of God as sovereign over creation. Although the roots of the term lie in the OT, the Christian understanding arises more specifically from Jesus' proclamation of the inbreaking of God's rule. Hence the kingdom is God's divine, kingly reign as proclaimed and inaugurated by Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection, and the subsequent outpouring of the Spirit into the world. In this sense Christ is reigning now, and the kingdom of God has arrived. At the same time the church awaits the future consummation of the divine reign. This "already" and "not yet" dimension of the kingdom of God implies that it is both a given reality (or the divine power at work in the present) and a process that is moving toward its future fulfillment or completion.³

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

William D. Barrick, Th.D.

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God's kingdom program is a major theme of both the Old Testament and New Testament. Since the

³ Stanley Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, [*Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 71.

New Testament builds upon the literal meaning of the Old Testament message, a thorough study of both testaments is necessary to understand the kingdom. An inductive study of the kingdom, based on sound hermeneutical principles, will show that the Lord's plan for His kingdom dominates history from the first creation to the new creation. The Old Testament predicts a coming earthly kingdom, a kingdom that will be fulfilled someday through Jesus Christ, the second Adam, and the One who fulfills the covenants of Scripture.

Introduction The kingdom of God does not appear as a peripheral topic in Scripture. Both testaments speak of God's kingdom. Students of Scripture must understand the kingdom in order to properly apply its truths and their implications. Too often the readers of Scripture, and we as dispensationalists in particular, tend to limit the topic of the kingdom of God to a discussion merely of the eschatological and earthly messianic kingdom of one thousand years duration. In the same fashion, the discussion too often addresses the matter of the future land of Israel alone. On the other hand, too many scholars automatically assume that the kingdom of God refers only to greater spiritual realities with reference to salvation and either ignore or deny outright the reality of a literal eschatological and earthly kingdom. In truth, the earthly and eschatological messianic kingdom yet to come is only one part of the program of God. Referring to the overall kingdom program as the universal kingdom and to the outworking of that kingdom through history as the mediatorial kingdom helps in the discussion and development of theological thought. In any treatment of this topic, we dare not treat the OT any differently than the NT treats it. NT writers took the OT seriously—and literally. So must we. As 174 | The Master's Seminary Journal Jelinek reminds us, "Wherever the testaments appear to take a differing view or where an OT subject is not explicitly treated, we are not justified in emasculating the OT by the virtues of the NT. Instead we must consider the perspectives in some way complementary."¹ Unless a reader consistently spiritualizes every reference to the kingdom, it is next to impossible to deny that it is eschatological, earthly, and messianic. But does that messianic kingdom exhaust the biblical teachings concerning God's kingdom? According to Alva J. McClain, "The Kingdom of God is, in a certain important sense,

the grand central theme of all Holy Scripture.”² The OT concept of the kingdom of God relates directly to God’s sovereignty throughout all the ages.³ We serve a sovereign God who controls His program throughout history. God’s kingdom program does not commence late in the OT as some form of prophetic movement or as a new theological construct later converted into a spiritualized concept. God began His kingdom program at creation, long before the establishment of an earthly messianic kingdom. As Erich Sauer puts the case, “God is Ruler. He rules over matter. He forms and shapes and moulds it into a well-ordered whole. He is therefore the Lord of all development, the God of history.”⁴ The eschatological kingdom brings to completion God’s kingdom program. We habitually give at least lip service to the literal eschatological kingdom whenever we recite the Lord’s Prayer—“Your kingdom come.⁵ Your will be done,⁶ On earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10).⁷ First, the prayer itself recognizes that the kingdom has not yet arrived, since it prays for it to come. It is yet future. It is not the church. Thus, the church prays the apostolic prayer appointed by Christ: “Your kingdom come.” Part of the reason God’s kingdom has not yet come stems from fallen mankind’s consistent antagonism to God’s sovereign purpose for His own earthly kingdom.⁸ From ancient times Babylon has served as the chief representative of this rebellion. According to Eugene Merrill, Nimrod (Gen 10:8–10) provided leadership 1 John A. Jelinek, “The Dispersion and Restoration of Israel to the Land,” in *Israel, The Land and the People: An Evangelical Affirmation of God’s Promises*, ed. by H. Wayne House, 231–58 (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1998), 236. 2 Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), 4–5. This same focus is apparent in Eugene H. Merrill’s appropriately entitled OT theology, *Everlasting Dominion: A Theology of the Old Testament* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2006). 3 See Renald E. Showers, *There Really Is a Difference!: A Comparison of Covenant and Dispensational Theology* (Bellmawr, N.J.: Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1990), 156. 4 Erich Sauer, *The King of the Earth: The Nobility of Man according to the Bible and Science* (1962; repr., Exeter, UK: Paternoster Press, 1979), 48. 5 The aorist imperative calls for action viewed as a single whole, for action to be done in its entirety on that occasion. It involves a sense of urgency in petitions. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 719–20. 6 The passive imperative occasionally is equivalent to a statement that is fulfilled at the moment of speaking. *Ibid.*, 492. 7 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Updated (NAU). 8 Cf. Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion*, 223. The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament | 175 in a movement to sidetrack the kingdom program of the Lord in favor of one of human creation. The Babel (Babylon) kingdom of God antithesis marks the pages of the sacred text, not only throughout the OT but the NT as well (Isa 47:1–15; 48:14–15; Jer 50–51; Dan 2, 4; Rev 17–18). Babylon epitomizes all the cities and nations of the world that challenge the City of God and His dominion.⁹ Babylon still opposes God’s kingdom whereby man intends to establish his own kingdom contrary to the one of God’s design. In the Fall, man abdicated his regency in God’s kingdom. After the global flood, Noah failed to exercise his mediatorial role as vice-regent. David, though the recipient of the kingdom promise (2 Sam 7:8–16), falls short of the eschatological kingdom hope. Thus, historically, the glimmers of hope fade and mankind still awaits the regency of the second Adam (cf. 1 Cor 15:22, 45, 47), Jesus Christ. Second, Christ’s prayer echoes and is patterned after the OT prayer of David himself which also focuses on

God's sovereignty in 1 Chron 29:11: Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O LORD, and You exalt Yourself as head over all. The Lord's Prayer is kingdom-saturated and kingdom-oriented, and it acts as a reminder to the disciples that because of their fallen state they cannot be the anticipated mediators. Their leadership and their program, their teaching and preaching, and their miracle-working will not establish the mediatorial kingdom. The disciples are not the second Adam. How can the kingdom of God exist in two different forms? It might help to understand the distinctions by comparing the universal kingdom to God's omnipresence while taking the eschatological kingdom as comparable to His emphasized, localized residence by which the omnipresent God resides in the pillar of fire and pillar of cloud at the Tabernacle or at the Temple—or, His residency within the believer while not residing in the unbeliever. An alternative comparison might consist of the universal church as distinguished from the local church as its immediate manifestation. Yet another analogy exists with the believer being presently a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, but not yet residing in heaven. Therefore, both the universal kingdom and the historical, mediatorial kingdom are distinct entities, wherein the latter is the localized and temporal expression of the former. Considering the Vocabulary of Kingdom A brief survey of the Hebrew root mlk (מלך) (reveals the distribution of the concept of kingship and kingdom throughout the OT. Forms of this root occur 3,154 times in the Hebrew Bible. The vast majority of uses involve human kings and kingdoms. Soggin's table in Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament (TLOT) provides the statistics for the verb (347x) as well as the cognate nouns "king" 9 Ibid., 224. 176 | The Master's Seminary Journal (2,526x), "queen" (40x), "kingship" (24x), "kingdom" (91x), and "dominion/royalty" (126x).¹⁰ The interpreter must avoid thinking that this word group comprises the totality of revelation on the concepts of kingship, kingdom, and royalty in the OT. We must consider other Hebrew words like רָדָה (רָדָה) rādâ, "rule"; e.g., Num 24:19; Ps 110:2), מָשַׁל (מָשַׁל) māšal, "rule"; e.g., Ps 8:7 [Eng. 6]; Zech 6:13), כָּבַשׁ (כָּבַשׁ) kbš, "subjugate/subdue"; e.g., Gen 1:28), שָׁפַט (שָׁפַט) šāpaṭ, "judge/govern"; e.g., Obad 21), דִּין (דִּין) dîn, "judge"; e.g., Ps 9:5 [Eng. 4]), שָׂר (שָׂר) šar, "prince/commander/chief"; e.g., Isa 9:5 [Eng. 6]), כִּסֵּי (כִּסֵּי) kissē, "throne"; e.g., Isa 6:1; Jer 3:17), שֵׁבֶט (שֵׁבֶט) šēbet, "scepter"; e.g., Gen 49:10), and מַטֵּה (מַטֵּה) maṭṭeh, "rod/scepter"; e.g., Ps 110:2; Jer 48:17), and הֵקַל (הֵקַל) hêkāl, "palace"; e.g., Mic 1:2). Even if we exhaust the vocabulary, some biblical texts that speak obviously of a divine kingdom or divine king do not manifest any of the regular vocabulary. Note how the Song of Moses at the Reed Sea (Exod 15:2–18) makes no specific mention of the expected vocabulary until the final line: "Yahweh reigns (מלך, mlk) forever and ever" (v. 18). Psalm 118 uses no kingdom vocabulary, yet in the NT both Jesus and several of the apostles understand its reference to the "corner stone" to refer to the Messiah's elevation to kingship over the kingdom of God (Matt 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet 2:4–8). The reader will do well to commence this study with the understanding that a kingdom possesses four essential elements: first, a right to rule; 11 second, a rule; third, a realm to be ruled; and, fourth, the exercise of the function of rulership. These defining elements help to maintain an understanding of biblical teaching beyond a mere reference to the right of kingship or limiting it to the person of the King himself. Promised Potential Fulfilled One of the major features of an earthly kingdom involves the fulfillment of God's original creative purposes for mankind. Sometimes we tend to focus so much on Israel that we neglect the physical aspects of the messianic kingdom that apply to all mankind. However, one who

commences the study with the first kingdom revelation will soon understand that God's eschatological kingdom is an outgrowth of His kingdom from creation onward. McClain astutely declares that if men would understand clearly the future consummation of the Kingdom, they must first understand the Kingdom in history; if they expect to understand the Kingdom of which our Lord spoke, they must first consider 10 J. A. Soggin, "מֶלֶךְ melek king," in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 3 vols., ed. by Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. by Mark E. Biddle, 2:672–80 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 673–74. 11 McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, 17 gives only three, but includes this right in his "rule with adequate authority." The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament | 177 what the Old Testament prophets have said about it; if they desire to expound the Book of Revelation, they must begin with the Book of Daniel.¹² With mild apologies to McClain, this writer begs to disagree very slightly and to make an adjustment. Biblically, in order to expound either the book of Revelation or the book of Daniel, we must begin with the book of Genesis. Arie Leder, while expounding upon the story line of the Pentateuch, remarks that "Royal language is a pervasive metaphor in the Pentateuch."¹³ John Sailhamer, in a similar fashion, concludes that the major poetic seams within the Pentateuch (Gen 49; Num 24; Deut 32) link the narrative by means of a single theme focused on Messiah with royal imagery.¹⁴ Indeed, the entire Hebrew Bible, from Genesis to Chronicles, reveals a focus on dynasty and dominion that finds ultimate fulfillment through the line of David.¹⁵ As Stephen Dempster notes, "Significantly, a key concept in the last narrative section of the Tanakh that begins with Daniel and ends with Chronicles is the term 'kingdom' (of God). The Tanakh ends on a note of hope, pointing to the future."¹⁶ The flow of Scripture proceeds from a global perspective and narrows to a focus on the Davidic Messiah, then opens up again to close with the book of Revelation and its renewed global/universal extension of the kingdom of God.¹⁷

Figure 1. Chiastic Structure of the Kingdom Program in Scripture
 Genesis 1:1 Creation
 Genesis 1:3 God's Light
 Genesis 1:26 Man's Rule
 Genesis 2:8–17 Old Eden
 Genesis 3:17 Curse . . . etc. . . . etc.
 Revelation 21:4; 22:3 No Curse
 Revelation 22:1–2 New Eden
 Revelation 20:4 Man's Rule
 Revelation 21:23; 22:5 God's Light
 Revelation 21:1 New Creation
 12 Ibid., 6. 13 Arie C. Leder, *Waiting for the Land: The Story Line of the Pentateuch* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2010), 43. 14 John H. Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition and Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 242. See, also, Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Really Messianic?*, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 70–72. 15 Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology*, ed. by D. A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 48–49. 16 Ibid., 49. 17 See Dempster's chart in *Dominion and Dynasty*, 232. In other words, the eschatology recapitulates protology in inverse order. Warren Austin Gage, *The Gospel of Genesis: Studies in Protology and Eschatology* (Winona Lake, IN: Carpenter Books, 1984), 16 outlined this approach nearly thirty years ago.

Figure 2. Chiastic Structure of the Anti-Kingdom Program in Scripture
 Genesis 1:1 Creation
 Genesis 3:1 Satan's Freedom
 Genesis 6–8 Worldwide Judgment
 Genesis 10–11 Babel/Babylon . . . etc. . . . etc.
 Revelation 17–18 Babylon
 Revelation 19:11–19 Worldwide Judgment
 Revelation 20:2–3 Satan's Confinement
 Revelation 21:1 New Creation

Both of the chiasms presented in the previous two figures (Figures 1 and 2) can be extended much further than the nested parallels depicted above. The first chiasm focuses on the kingdom program of God while the second chiasm focuses on the anti-kingdom program

resulting from Satan's rebellion and mankind's fall. Protology (doctrine of first things) and eschatology (doctrine of last things) point to Christ as the focal point of divine history (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Christ, the Focal Point of Biblical History Revelation 19:10 The kingdom of God has existed through all time from creation (Ps 10:16). Geerhardus Vos noted quite succinctly that "A God who cannot create cannot consummate things because he is conditioned by something outside himself . . ."18 It comprehends the entire universe, not just mankind, not just planet earth (Ps 103:19; Isa 24:23). Although God is His kingdom's High King and ultimate Sovereign, He has chosen to rule the kingdom mediately (Ps 59:13; cf. Ps 8). His first mediatorial ruler was the first man Adam. 18 Geerhardus Vos, *The Eschatology of the Old Testament*, ed. by James T. Dennison, Jr. (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2001), 1. Vos wraps up this thought as follows: "that will not lend itself to him for the execution of a set purpose and for the plastic handling of what is antecedently given to him toward that end. For eschatology, God needs not only to be the Potter sovereign with reference to the clay, but he needs to be a Potter who can produce his own clay with reference to its tractableness." *The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament* | 179

Mankind's Created Potential Dominion: Genesis 1:28; Psalm 8:4–8; Hebrews 2:5–9; 2 Timothy 2:12. Fruitfulness and Multiplication: Psalm 72:16–17; Isaiah 60:22. In the pre-Fall world, God, in His own royal role as the High King of creation, established His chosen vice-regents, Adam and Eve, to rule immediately over all the earth: "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." . . . God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen 1:26, 28). The Fall interrupted God's creation blessing and mandate for mankind. Tragically, fulfillment of mankind's promised potential cannot come to its fullest expression because of mankind's fallen nature. Any exercise of that original dominion proves to be incomplete and imperfect. The psalmist refers to that high and lofty role in Ps 8:3–9: When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained; What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty! You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, All sheep and oxen, And also the beasts of the field, The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, Whatever passes through the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth! Thus the psalmist presents the ideal for mankind, not the current reality—the designed future of kingdom rule, not the diminished past and present. Of course, Messiah, as the "Son of Man," will fulfill mankind's role as the human race's only perfect representative. Listen to the writer of Hebrews: For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking. But one has testified somewhere, saying, "WHAT IS MAN, THAT YOU REMEMBER HIM? OR THE SON OF MAN, THAT YOU ARE 180 | The Master's Seminary Journal CONCERNED ABOUT HIM? YOU HAVE MADE HIM FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS; YOU HAVE CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOR, AND HAVE APPOINTED HIM OVER THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS; YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET." For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him. But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of

death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, "I WILL PROCLAIM YOUR NAME TO MY BRETHREN, IN THE MIDST OF THE CONGREGATION I WILL SING YOUR PRAISE." . . . Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, . . . (Heb 2:5–12, 14) The writer states that "we do not yet see all things subjected to" Christ—His mediatorial kingdom has not commenced. In the end, even the currently reigning prince of this world, Satan (John 12:31; Eph 2:2), will come under the Messiah's reign and kingdom power. As long as Satan reigns as prince of this world, the kingdom of Christ has yet to be established. For that reason Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Your kingdom come."

Israel's Covenanted Potential In the pages of the OT we find that Yahweh has entered into six covenants with the people of Israel:¹⁹ the Abrahamic, the Mosaic,²⁰ the Priestly,²¹ the Deuteronomic,²² the Davidic, and the New. God unilaterally and unconditionally promulgated the terms or stipulations of all six biblical covenants. Man had no significant choice in their wording. The covenants were not the product of human manipulation—they were imposed and enforced by a sovereign God. Ultimately, all covenantal promises will be fulfilled. ¹⁹ These covenants are distinct from the Noahic Covenant which was established with non-Israelites long before the existence of Abraham and his descendants. ²⁰ The Mosaic Covenant is also known as the Sinaitic Covenant. ²¹ The Priestly Covenant is also called the Levitical or Zadokite Covenant. ²² "Deut also adds to the Horeb covenant another, made in the land of Moab, prior to the entry into the land, a covenant that seems to be a renewal of the former and similar in character" — Gordon J. McConville, "tyrIB.," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 5 vols., ed. by Willem A. VanGemeren, 1:747–55 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 750. The Deuteronomic Covenant is sometimes given the title of "Palestinian Covenant." Some theologians include this covenant in the Mosaic Covenant, rather than distinguish between the two.

The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament | 181 Figure 4. The Biblical Covenants with Israel²³ According to the Abrahamic Covenant, the following themes will highlight covenant fulfillment for the descendants of Abraham: Nation: "I will make you a great nation" (Gen 12:2). Seed: "count the stars . . . So shall your descendants be" (Gen 15:5). Land: "To your descendants I have given this land" (Gen 15:18). Blessing: "in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (12:3). Kingdom:²⁴ "your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies" (22:17). If it is possible to demonstrate that the Abrahamic Covenant is a permanent, unilateral, unconditional, and immutable covenant, then there is no way that the disobedience of either Abraham, Jacob, or the Israelites could have abrogated or annulled its promises. First, Scripture labels the covenant as an "everlasting covenant" (Gen 17:7, 13, 19; 1 Chron 16:17; Ps 105:10). Regardless of circumstances, God's promise is permanent²⁵—He will eventually fulfill it. Second, God established His covenant with Abraham while the latter slept (Gen 15:12)—it was a unilateral commitment that did not depend upon Abraham's continued obedience for its ultimate fulfillment. Yes, one might argue that this covenant could ²³ Cp. William D. Barrick, "The Mosaic Covenant," *Master's Seminary Journal* 10, no. 2 (Fall 1999): 218, Figure 2. Over the past thirteen years, I have developed the themes more completely and, I believe, more

accurately. Recommended reading: this entire MSJ issue presents articles by TMS faculty on the biblical covenants. 24 See Gen 49:10. 25 John H. Walton, *Covenant: God's Purpose, God's Plan* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 132, points out that possible translations of ~'l'A["include 'indefinitely, permanently, in perpetuity or perpetual, enduring, always.' It expresses open-endedness or an agreement without specified end." He states that "The implication of the terminology is that these agreements are not temporary, not stopgap, nor on a trial basis. They are permanent in the sense that no other alternative arrangement to serve that purpose is envisioned" (ibid.). 182 | *The Master's Seminary Journal* not commence until Abraham had left his home country (Gen 12:1), but once God enacts the covenant, its fulfillment no longer depends on Abraham's obedience. His obedience "was a foregone conclusion (Gen 18:19). The renewal to Isaac and Jacob was based upon the past obedience of Abraham, not on the continued obedience of the seed of Abraham (Gen 26:3, 5)." 26 Third, this covenant was unconditional. No conditions are stated in any of the repetitions of that covenant's stipulations. Fourth, God's promises in this covenant are immutable according to NT revelation (Heb 6:13–18; cf. Gal 3:15; cp. Ps 89:33–37). Biblical history emphasizes this fact by repeated confirmation of the covenant's promises to individuals like Jacob, who had been disobedient (Gen 28:13–15). For the Mosaic Covenant, some of the same themes recur as a progressive development of divine revelation founded upon the Abrahamic Covenant: Nation: "you shall be to Me . . . a holy nation" (Exod 19:6). Land: "that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you" (Exod 20:12). Blessing: "He will love you and bless you and multiply you . . . You shall be blessed above all peoples" (Deut 7:13–14). Kingdom: "and you will be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod 19:6). Although expositors often overlook the Priestly Covenant, it likewise echoes at least two of these themes in its association with the Davidic Covenant: Blessing: "My covenant of peace" (Num 25:12). 27 Kingdom: "David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man before me" (Jer 33:17–18). Zechariah 6:13 reveals that the Messiah "will be a priest on His throne." These dual offices, king and priest, bring together the two key roles of the mediatorial kingdom's ruler. What Israel did not accomplish in their appointment as a "kingdom of priests" in the Mosaic Covenant, the Messiah will fulfill as their representative. Later in progressive revelation, the Deuteronomic Covenant likewise spoke of a number of these themes: Nation: "that He may establish you today as His people" (Deut 29:13). Land: "in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you" (Deut 28:11). Blessing: "The LORD will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand" (Deut 28:12). 26 William G. Bellshaw, *Clarifying God's Covenants: Adult Teacher Bible Study Guide* (Denver, CO: Baptist Publications, 1971), 42. 27 Cp. Ezek 34:24–25. *The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament* | 183 Kingdom: "The LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you only will be above . . ." (Deut 28:13). When the prophet Nathan announced the Davidic Covenant, it also featured equivalent themes: Nation: "That you should be ruler over My people Israel" (2 Sam 7:8). Seed: "I will raise up your descendant after you" (2 Sam 7:12); "your house . . . shall endure before Me forever" (7:16). Land: "I will also appoint a place for My people Israel" (2 Sam 7:10). Blessing: "let men bless themselves by him; Let all nations call him blessed" (Ps 72:17). Kingdom: "your kingdom shall endure before Me forever" (2 Sam 7:16). One of the major issues concerning the Davidic covenant in present-day discussion/debate involves whether Christ is currently seated on the

throne of David. According to John Walvoord, “The New Testament has fifty-nine references to David. It also has many references to the present session of Christ. A search of the New Testament reveals that there is not one reference connecting the present session of Christ with the Davidic throne.”²⁸ Some interpreters confuse the Father’s throne with the throne of David—the two are not identical—Christ is currently seated on the Father’s throne according to Scripture, not the Davidic throne.²⁹ Finally, the New Covenant contains the same basic themes: Nation: “Shall [not] cease from being a nation before Me forever” (Jer 31:36). Seed: “I will sow . . . with the seed of man” (Jer 31:27); “the offspring of Israel shall [not] cease” (31:36). Land: “The city shall be rebuilt for the LORD” (Jer 31:38); “it shall not be plucked up or overthrown anymore forever” (31:40).³⁰ Blessing: “I will put My law within them . . . I will forgive” (Jer 31:33–34). Kingdom: “the city will be rebuilt for the LORD . . . And the whole valley of the dead bodies . . . and all the fields . . . shall be holy to the LORD” (Jer 31:38–40).³¹ In summary, the dominant theme of all six biblical covenants is blessing. Since those covenants are based upon the Abrahamic, that is an expected emphasis. The second most frequent themes are land and nation. Biblical covenants indicate a continuing nation of Israel in the land promised to Abraham and his descendants. Ultimately, the true seed of Abraham is the Messiah Himself. The Messiah fulfills

28 John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Dunham Publishing Co., 1959), 203. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Recovering the Unity of the Bible: One Continuous Story, Plan, and Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 137–40 offers a response to Walvoord in adopting a “now-already” and “not yet” duality to the eschatology of the kingdom program of God. 29 Showers, *There Really Is a Difference!*, 89–90. 30 See Dennis M. Swanson, “The Expansion of Jerusalem in Jeremiah 31:38–40: Already, Never, or Not Yet?” *MSJ* 17, No. 1 (Spring 2006): 17–34. 31 *Ibid.* The reference is to the building of Jerusalem as the capital city of the Messianic kingdom. 184 | *The Master’s Seminary Journal* all of the covenant themes in their totality in His various roles as the Seed of Abraham, the Mosaic Prophet and Priest, the Davidic King, and the Savior of Israel and of the world. He calls and governs the nation. He blesses the land and the people. He establishes and rules over His kingdom. The Messianic Kingdom’s Physical Blessings Before describing the physical aspects of the Messianic kingdom, we must not neglect its other characteristics: • The messianic kingdom is primarily soteriological (Isa 52:7–10). It is a kingdom of grace, of unmerited divine favor (Zech 12:10). In addition, God establishes the messianic kingdom in holiness and His holiness pervades the kingdom (Ezek 28:25; Zech 14:20). He initiates the kingdom by pouring out His Holy Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28–29). • Due to the spiritual nature of the messianic kingdom, sinful and immoral values give way to readjusted moral values in accord with divine perfection (Isa 51:4–5). Yahweh’s own objective standard will measure all ethical thought and behavior (Isa 2:3; 30:20–21), so that Messiah will judge on the basis of an accurate appraisal (Isa 32:5; Mal 3:18). Personal responsibility will dominate interpersonal relationships (Jer 31:29–30) and truth will characterize all matters (Ps 89:14; Zech 8:3). • In the realm of society, Messiah will abolish warfare and establish peace (Isa 9:7; Mic 4:3–4). Social justice will prevail in every class and race of mankind (Isa 65:21–22; Ps 72:4) and God will reclaim social wastes (Ps 72:16; Isa 61:4). Messiah will teach mankind to emphasize worthwhile relationships (Isa 42:3; Mal 4:6). • In the political venue, the Messiah will establish Himself as the international authority (Isa 2:2–4; Ps 2:8–10) and will establish a world capital at Jerusalem (Jer 3:17). In His kingdom, the Messiah will put an end to the perennial “Jewish problem” (Zech 8:13, 23).³² As a reversal of the curse

at Babel, language will cease to be a barrier to all human interaction and relationships (Isa 19:18; Zeph 3:9). • Ecclesiastically, Messiah will rule as priest-king over Israel and the world community (Zech 6:12–13; Ps 110:4). In the messianic kingdom, Israel will become the religious leader of the world (Exod 19:6; Isa 61:6, 9) and the world’s religious capital will be Jerusalem (Zech 14:16–17). As a result, the Temple in Israel will be the focal point of worship (Hag 2:6–9; Ezek 40–48). Scripture often characterizes divine promises as perpetual in these covenants for Israel (Gen 13:15; 17:7, 8, 13, 19; 48:4; 2 Sam 7:13, 16, 24–26, 29; Pss 89:29, 32 Eugene H. Merrill, *An Exegetical Commentary: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 224, “YHWH has promised that Jerusalem will be restored, repopulated, and reconfirmed as the center of His covenant interests (vv. 1–8).” *The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament* | 185 36–37; 105:8–11; 1 Chron 16:15–18). Walter Kaiser points to the fact that “all three parts of the covenant (i.e., the seed, the land, and the gospel) were bound together as one promise with a promise that this one promise was eternal. . . . to use a theological scalpel to cut out one part is to expose the rest of this same covenant to diminution and a time limitation.”³³ Indeed, as Kaiser expresses elsewhere, any “conditionality was not attached to the promise but only to the participants who would benefit from these abiding promises. If the condition of faith was not evident, then the patriarch would become a mere transmitter of the blessing without personally inheriting any of its gifts directly.”³⁴ Our focus here is on the physical aspects of the messianic kingdom.³⁵ Covenantal promises clearly indicate that the future nation of Israel will inherit the land of Canaan again. To this, both pre-exilic and post-exilic prophets agree (Ezek 36:8, 12). Land, the pre-eminent factor in the physical aspects of the messianic kingdom, comprises an indelible element in the Abrahamic Covenant’s blessings recited in Lev 26:4–12. Those blessings fall into six categories: (1) productivity (vv. 4–5; cf. Gen 24:35; 27:28; 30:43) (2) peace (v. 6; cf. Gen 22:17) (3) power (vv. 7–8; cf. Gen 22:17) (4) population (v. 9; cf. Gen 12:2; 15:5; 17:6) (5) provision (v. 10; cf. productivity, above) and (6) presence (vv. 11–12; cf. Gen 17:7, 8). Scripture associates all these blessings with the land that Israel will receive from Yahweh. They are consistent with all the various statements and restatements of the Abrahamic Covenant.³⁶ In order to fulfill these promises, God will: (1) alter the topography (terrain) to make it more fruitful and more inhabitable (Ps 72:16; Isa 4:2; 27:6; 29:17; 32:13–15; 33:10–11; 35:1–7; 41:18; Ezek 36:4–11; 47:1–12; Amos 9:13; Zech 14:4, 8),³⁷ (2) change the climate to increase the rainfall (Isa 30:23–30; Ezek 34:26; Joel 2:21–24), (3) alter the nature of animals (Isa 11:6–9; 65:25; Ezek 34:25; Hos 2:18),³⁸ and (4) Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “The Land of Israel and the Future Return (Zechariah 10:6–12),” in *Israel, The Land and the People: An Evangelical Affirmation of God’s Promises*, ed. by H. Wayne House (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1998), 211 (italics his emphasis). ³⁴ *Idem*, *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1978), 94. ³⁵ One of the classic treatments of this topic is that of McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, 234–41. ³⁶ William D. Barrick, “The Eschatological Significance of Leviticus 26,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 16, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 113–14. ³⁷ A possible exception to such fruitfulness and habitability might be the region of Edom whose judgment will leave a scarred landscape even during the messianic kingdom (see Isa 34:8–15). ³⁸ “To reject a literal understanding of these passages about nature seems unwarranted, however, in light of the biblical teaching of the effects of sin on the natural realm (cf. Gen 1:29–30; 3:14, 17–18; 9:2–3).” —Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational & Non-Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan,

1993), 237. “There seems no reason to doubt that this is to be understood literally. . . . Any adaptation of the eco-system involved will presumably be a restoration of the world to its unfallen condition.”—G. W. Grogan, “Isaiah,” in *The 186 | The Master’s Seminary Journal* (4) enable Israel to extend her national boundaries³⁹ (Isa 26:15; 33:17) leading to the adjustment of tribal allotments (Isa 49:8; Ezek 47:13–48:29).⁴⁰ Messiah will also intervene in the physical welfare of mankind by putting an end to disease and physical deformities (Isa 33:24; 35:5–6; 61:1–2; 65:20; Ezek 34:16; 47:12; Mal 1:8). Note that several of these characteristics were undeveloped or unfulfilled during the return of Israel to the land following the Babylonian Exile (viz., altered topography, climate changes, and extension of boundaries).⁴¹ This would seem to contradict those theologians who insist that the promises to Israel for restoration were all fulfilled when Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah led their various groups of Israelite exiles back into the land from Babylon. If these promises were fulfilled by the return of the Jews from the Babylonian exile, “How then shall we explain the prophecy in Zechariah 10:8–12⁴² that announces in 518 B.C. a still future return, which would not only emanate from Babylon, but from around the world?”⁴³ *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., ed. by Frank E. Gaebelin, 6:1–354 (Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1986), 88–89. There are those commentators, however, who reject the literal because “the fact that the lion’s carnivorousness is fundamental to what a lion is and that literal fulfillment of the prophecy would require a basic alteration of the lion’s nature suggest that another interpretation is intended” (viz., a figurative interpretation)—John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1–39*, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 283. Interestingly, Watts avoids giving any specific interpretation of Isa 11:6–9 (John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, rev. ed., *Word Biblical Commentary* 24 [n.p.: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2005], 210–13). Given the recapitulation of protology in eschatology, however, Gen 1:30 makes it plain that God gave plants as food for all created land animals. Thus, in the eschatological history, the animals return to the same fare. ³⁹ Even if the reader identifies a minimal extension of the land (from Wadi el’Arish to Nahr elKebir in northern Lebanon), it would include “the whole of the Phoenician coastal section from north of Beirut” —Kaiser, “The Land of Israel and the Future Return (Zechariah 10:6–12),” 218–19. No Israelite king in the Davidic dynasty ever controlled such boundaries. ⁴⁰ Cp. Gordon H. Johnston, “Millennium, Old Testament Descriptions of,” in *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*, ed. by Mal Couch, 267–72 (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1996), 270. ⁴¹ Amillennialists deny any literal fulfillment to a new temple, to changes in the geography and climate of Israel, insisting that such interpretations “are out of line with the New Testament’s own interpretation, which relates the prophetic hope to its messianic fulfillment in Jesus.”—Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Message of Ezekiel: A New Heart and a New Spirit*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 341. ⁴² Note the specific geographical entities identified in this passage (e.g., Egypt, Assyria, Gilead, Lebanon, and the Nile)—obviously intended to be literal. Any figurative interpretation would render the text virtually unknowable due to the multiplication of potential interpretations. Note, also, the spiritual relationship that Israel will have to God at that time: “in His name they will walk” (v. 12). ⁴³ Kaiser, “The Land of Israel and the Future Return (Zechariah 10:6–12),” 213. An allegorical approach to this text in Zechariah can be found in Thomas Edward McComiskey, “Zechariah,” in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, 3 vols., ed. by Thomas Edward McComiskey, 3:1003–

1244 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 1183–86. E.g., “When we read promises of great repopulation we must not fail to see the church, for the promise to Abraham of great posterity includes redeemed Gentiles” (1183); in regard to the references to Lebanon and Gilead in v. 10, “The terms must be understood metaphorically. . . . both are metaphors for the Restoration, the time when the blessings of the new covenant became a reality. . . . Gilead is a metaphor for the ShepherdKing’s provision for his flock (Jer. 50:19–20; Mic. 7:14),” 1184–85. The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament | 187 Kingdom Hope The dominant characteristic of the messianic kingdom is that a holy God dwells “in the midst of a holy people in a holy land” (Ezek 37:25–28).⁴⁴ This one factor alone makes it impossible for the revival of the nation of Israel in Palestine in 1948 to fulfill the OT prophecies about Israel’s inheritance of the land.⁴⁵ Because of that singular biblical truth, not a single OT prophecy would be violated nor one divine promise contradicted, if the Arab nations should succeed in pushing the modern nation of Israel into the sea and ending their tenure on the land promised to Abraham’s descendants. Indeed, when God restores Israel to the land according to Scripture, they will be believers who have called upon the name of Yahweh (Joel 2:32).⁴⁶ Those whom He will gather into the land of promise will be converts experiencing His cleansing and His Spirit—He will give them a new heart and a new spirit with which to obey His Word (Ezek 36:24–29; cp. Dan 12:1). This is not the condition of the modern nation of Israel. Let’s take a brief side trip to the teachings of Jesus in Luke 19:11–27. His disciples had “supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately” (v. 11). This occasioned Jesus’ response with a parable about a nobleman who “went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return” (v. 12). Before he leaves to receive that kingdom, he calls his servants to him, distributes some funds, and exhorts them to carry on until he returns (v. 13). In that same location the citizens demonstrate hatred for him and reject his rule over them (v. 14). By context, those are clearly the people of Israel to whom Christ came in His first advent. Later, when “he returned, after receiving the kingdom” (v. 15), he calls upon his slaves to account for what they did during his absence. Note that Jesus identifies himself with this nobleman. He is rejected by His people. He then departs from them to a distant place (in His case, heaven) to receive His kingdom and then to return (His second advent). Jesus has not yet brought His kingdom to earth, to Israel! At His ascension He left to receive the kingdom—He did not establish it during His first advent.⁴⁷ Acts 1:6 confirms this truth when the disciples again ask if He is going to establish it prior to His ascension. Now, back to Ezek 37:21–28. With regard to this text, Hal Lindsey correctly asks that we consider the following points: (1) The Church has never been scattered in discipline among the nations. (2) The Church has never been in a civil war that resulted in two kingdoms called 44 Gordon J. Thomas, “A Holy God Among a Holy People in a Holy Place: The Enduring Eschatological Hope,” in *Eschatology in Bible & Theology: Evangelical Essays at the Dawn of a New Millennium*, ed. by Kent E. Brower and Mark W. Elliott, 53–69 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 63. 45 Cp. Showers, *There Really Is a Difference!*, 74–75. 46 See Irvin Busenitz, *Joel & Obadiah*, Mentor Commentary (Geanies House, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2003), 192. 47 Kaiser, *Recovering the Unity of the Bible*, 138, arguing that Christ currently possesses the Davidic throne, makes a point of the fact that Christ receives the kingdom before His return. However, he fails to adequately deal with the equal fact that Christ has not yet established that kingdom on earth.

188 | The Master’s Seminary Journal Israel and Judah. (3) The Church has never been promised restoration to the land and mountains of Israel. (4) The Church cannot be in view when it says,

“They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your fathers lived.” (5) If this were in any conceivable sense referring to the Church, why does it say that the Gentiles will recognize who God really is when He makes Israel holy and His sanctuary is among them forever?⁴⁸ Thus, the church is not Israel and Israel is not the church.⁴⁹ Bible readers must be equally distinguishing in their comparing the future eternal kingdom of God to the future messianic kingdom on earth. With regard to this latter comparison, Renald Showers makes the following careful observations: During His reign Messiah will have dominion from sea to sea (Ps. 72:8; Zech. 9:10), but eternity future will have no sea (Rev. 21:1). Unsaved wicked people will be present during Messiah’s reign (Isa. 11:4; Rev. 20:8–9), but no such people will be present in the new eternal earth and heaven (Rev. 21:8—in eternity future all the unsaved will be in the lake of fire). Some people will die during Messiah’s reign (Isa. 11:4; Jer. 31:29–30—rebels will be executed), but there will be no death in eternity future (Rev. 20:14; 21:4). Children will be born during Messiah’s reign (Jer. 30:19–20; Ezek. 47:22), but no children will be born in the new eternal earth and heaven. . . . These contrasts require the conclusion that Christ will reign over a kingdom on this present earth before it is destroyed and before eternity future begins.⁵⁰ Such an approach differs from that of a New Covenant theologian like Steve Lehrer, who believes that the land promises of the Abrahamic Covenant were already fulfilled historically “by the time of the conquest of the Land of Canaan under Joshua.”⁵¹ Those who confuse the church with Israel, the eternal kingdom with the messianic kingdom, and the conquest under Joshua with the Abrahamic Covenant’s fulfillment all violate the same logical dictum: Similarity does not mean identity (or, in symbols: $\approx \neq =$). In an appendix to this study, a brief analysis of Obadiah 15–21 serves to demonstrate the results of a literal-grammatical-historical interpretation of an OT prophetic text. There are so many equivalent texts in the OT on the future earthly Messianic kingdom that it is not possible to expound every one of them here. One unifying factor, however, stands out in most of them: specific geographical details ⁴⁸ Hal Lindsey, *The Road to Holocaust* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 108 (all emphasis is Lindsey’s). ⁴⁹ For a detailed refutation of so-called replacement theology (wherein the church replaces Israel in God’s kingdom program), see Michael J. Vlach, *The Church as a Replacement of Israel: An Analysis of Supersessionism*, EDIS Edition Israelogie 2 (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Peter Lang, 2009) and *Has the Church Replaced Israel?: A Theological Evaluation* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010). ⁵⁰ Showers, *There Really Is a Difference!*, 95. Cp. Ralph H. Alexander, “Ezekiel,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., ed. by Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1986), 6:945–46, who makes the same observations. ⁵¹ Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology*, 32. The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament | 189 tie the prophecies to actual locations in Israel and the ancient Near East. In order to counter such clear testimony, one must either (1) allegorize on an astounding scale without any certainty at all regarding interpretive accuracy; or (2) one must make the theologically questionable claim that such prophecies are merely ancient near eastern hyperbole (amounting to bluster without any real fulfillment); or (3) one must gut the OT text by jettisoning such passages from Scripture entirely. All three of these options run counter to the NT writers’ usage of the OT. Kingdom Government Form. According to the OT, the messianic kingdom will be a monarchy (Isa 32:1). Christ, as the head of that government, will act as the ultimate representative fulfilling all prophetic relationships. The social strata of the kingdom’s citizens will look like a pyramid commencing with a broad base and each subsequent level being progressively narrower (Figure

5). The governmental hierarchy will possess similar stratification (Figure 6). Figure 5. Social Strata in the Messianic Kingdom In order to fill out the biblical picture of the eschatological, earthly, messianic kingdom, concise summaries will round out this essay. The summaries address the kingdom's form, nature, extent, and duration. Figure 6. Governmental Roles in the Messianic Kingdom Jesus promised that His disciples will reign with Him in some heightened role in His kingdom (see Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30). Both Paul and John indicate that believers will reign with Christ in His kingdom (1 Cor 6:2; 2 Tim 2:12; Rev 20:6). While the church saints enter the kingdom with glorified bodies (1 Cor 15:50; cp. 1 Thess 4:14; Rev 19:14), there are other individuals who at Christ's second advent either enter the kingdom with physical bodies yet subject to death (cp Isa 65:20) or 190 | The Master's Seminary Journal are subsequently born during the kingdom (obviously from parents also alive physically). Thus, the kingdom government possesses a hierarchical structure which might be described in a general fashion by the following diagrams of the social and governmental strata under Messiah's rule. Nature. The messianic kingdom's governing principles include righteousness and justice (Ps 97:1–2), supernatural power (Ps 2:7–9), and mercy and tenderness (Isa 16:5; 40:11). Extent. In its extent, the messianic kingdom will be universal (Dan 2:34–35). Duration. As to length of time, the messianic kingdom will endure for one thousand years (Rev 20:1–7). Its effects, however, are everlasting (1 Cor 15:24–28). Conclusion God's kingdom program stands as a major theme within both the OT and the NT. Our sovereign Lord's plan for His kingdom dominates history from the first creation to the new creation. His kingdom program will be fulfilled. He has not altered his plan—there is no "Plan B." He speaks plainly and specifically. If the reader cannot take the biblical text literally with regard to both a universal kingdom and a future, earthly, eschatological, messianic kingdom, then even the Lord's Prayer will suffer loss. We still pray, "Your kingdom come." We cannot inaugurate the mediatorial kingdom, because we, as direct descendants of the first Adam, are not the second Adam. Just as God created historically, so He will consummate His kingdom program in history. "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20). The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament | 191 Appendix: Obadiah 15–21 • These details are physical—ethnic, political, and geographical. • The text speaks of real people, real locations, and real events. • Obadiah associates all of it with the kingdom. • The details do not match any past historical situation. • The church never took possession of these territories in the manner described. 192 | The Master's Seminary Journal • The church cannot be satisfactorily equated with these exiles. • The fulfillment has not yet taken place, but awaits a future time—unless the interpreter should decide that the prophecy is erroneous and that it has not been fulfilled and will never be fulfilled.

Key QUOTES from above:

According to Alva J. McClain, “The Kingdom of God is, in a certain important sense, the grand central theme of all Holy Scripture.”

1 Chron 29:11: *Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O LORD, and You exalt Yourself as head over all.*

The reader will do well to commence this study with the understanding that a kingdom possesses four essential elements: first, a right to rule; 11 second, a rule; third, a realm to be ruled; and, fourth, the exercise of the function of rulership. These defining elements help to maintain an understanding of biblical teaching beyond a mere reference to the right of kingship or limiting it to the person of the King himself.

The writer states that “we do not yet see all things subjected to” Christ—His mediatorial kingdom has not commenced. In the end, even the currently reigning prince of this world, Satan (John 12:31; Eph 2:2), will come under the Messiah’s reign and kingdom power. As long as Satan reigns as prince of this world,

the kingdom of Christ has yet to be established. For that reason Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “Your kingdom come.”

Israel’s Covenanted Potential In the pages of the OT we find that Yahweh has entered into six covenants with the people of Israel:19 the Abrahamic, the Mosaic,20 the Priestly,21 the Deuteronomic,22 the Davidic, and the New. God unilaterally and unconditionally promulgated the terms or stipulations of all six biblical covenants. Man had no significant choice in their wording. The covenants were not the product of human manipulation—they were imposed and enforced by a sovereign God. Ultimately, all covenantal promises will be fulfilled.

PROOF of a Messianic Millennial Reign/Kingdom:

During His reign Messiah will have dominion from sea to sea (Ps. 72:8; Zech. 9:10), but eternity future will have no sea (Rev. 21:1). Unsaved wicked people will be present during Messiah’s reign (Isa. 11:4; Rev. 20:8–9), but no such people will be present in the new eternal earth and heaven (Rev. 21:8—in eternity future all the unsaved will be in the lake of fire). Some people will die during Messiah’s reign (Isa. 11:4; Jer. 31:29–30—rebels will be executed), but there will be no death in eternity future (Rev. 20:14; 21:4). Children will be born during Messiah’s reign (Jer. 30:19–20; Ezek. 47:22), but

no children will be born in the new eternal earth and heaven. . . . These contrasts require the conclusion that Christ will reign over a kingdom on this present earth before it is destroyed and before eternity future begins.

Jesus promised that His disciples will reign with Him in some heightened role in His kingdom (see Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30). Both Paul and John indicate that believers will reign with Christ in His kingdom (1 Cor 6:2; 2 Tim 2:12; Rev 20:6).

Conclusion:

God's kingdom program stands as a major theme within both the OT and the NT.

Our sovereign Lord's plan for His kingdom dominates history from the first creation to the new creation. His kingdom program will be fulfilled. He has not altered his plan — there is no "Plan B."

He speaks plainly and specifically. If the reader cannot take the biblical text literally with regard to both a universal kingdom and a future, earthly, eschatological, messianic kingdom, then even the Lord's Prayer will

suffer loss. We still pray, “Your kingdom come.” We cannot inaugurate the mediatorial kingdom, because we, as direct descendants of the first Adam, are not the second Adam. Just as God created historically, so He will consummate His kingdom program in history. “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev 22:20).

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The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament: Kingship and Creation

Ben C. Dunson

In a [previous post](#) I mentioned that the exact phrase "kingdom of God" does not show up in the Old Testament (although "kingdom of the Lord" does appear in [2 Chronicles 13:8](#); see also the talk of God's kingdom in Daniel [for example, [Dan 6:26](#)]).

Despite this fact, **the concept of God's kingship is present throughout the Old Testament and is vital if we are going to make sense of Jesus' preaching about the kingdom of God.**

Remember: Jesus simply announces that the kingdom is "at hand" (Matt 3:2), assuming that His hearers had some grasp of what He meant, even if He knew that they did not fully understand Him.

What, then, does the Old Testament have to say about the kingdom of God? In this post we will examine the kingdom of God at creation, namely in the commission God gives to Adam to rule over the earth.

The most important teaching on the kingdom in the Old Testament, however, is that God is king, so we must turn to this idea first. The Old Testament spells this out in two main ways.

First,

God is king over all of creation.

As **Psalm 10:16** says: *"The LORD is king forever and ever; the nations perish from his land."* Or as King Jehoshaphat confesses in **2 Chronicles 20:6**: "O Lord, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you." Or consider King Hezekiah's exultation in **Isaiah 37:16**: "O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth." See also **Psalms 93:1-2; 95:3-6; 96:10; 104; 136:1-9**. Simply put, God is the sovereign ruler of the universe.

Second,

the Old Testament portrays God as king over Israel in a special way.

In [1 Samuel 12](#) the prophet Samuel rebukes Israel for desiring a king that would be just like the greedy, self-serving kings of the nations surrounding Israel. While it was not wrong for Israel to desire a king (more on this below), the reason driving Israel's request was indeed sinful. As Samuel says in [1 Sam 12:12-13](#): "The Lord sent Jerubbaal and Barak and Jephthah and Samuel and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and you lived in safety. And when you saw that Nahash the king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us,' when the Lord your God was your king." Israel's desire for a powerful earthly king was driven by fear and earthly-mindedness (see [1 Sam 8:4-9](#)).

God's people failed to rest in the fact that God was their king, and that He would protect His covenant people.

While it is true that God alone is the ultimate king of Israel and over all of creation, human kings have a key role to play in God's kingdom.

In fact, God built human kingship into creation itself. In [Genesis 1-2](#) Adam is clearly portrayed as a king. This is seen most clearly in the commission that God gives to Adam in [Genesis 1:26-30](#) (and repeated in [Gen 2:15-17](#)):

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens

and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so.

Kingship is at the heart of the commission that God

gives to Adam: he is granted dominion over all animal life on the earth (1:26); he is told to have many children in order to subdue the earth and take dominion over it (1:28). He is given control over all plant life (1:29) and again over every animal on the earth (1:30).

In short, Adam is to rule over the whole world as a subordinate king underneath God, the true king over all.

He is to spread God's own dominion outside the boundaries of the ordered garden of Eden so that it branches out to the farthest reaches of creation.

In this sense, God reigns over His creation in and through Adam.

Adam, of course, fails to take dominion over the earth. Instead, he rebels against his own sovereign, the Lord God almighty. Nonetheless, God does not abandon His intention to rule over the earth through a human king.

In the next post we will look at how God's kingdom develops in the Old Testament, beginning with Abraham, moving on to kingship in Israel, and ending with the exile of the northern and southern kingdoms.

See also:

- [The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament: From Abraham to Israel](#)
- [The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament: The Prophetic Hope](#)

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Biblical Studies Old Testament Studies The Old Testament

The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament: The Prophetic Hope

Ben C. Dunson

When the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel went into exile the hope for God's rule over the earth to be manifested in an Israelite king seemed to have come to nothing. The prophets (before, during, and after the exile), however, make it clear that even with the exile God would not, and did not, abandon His intention to rule over His people and His world through a Davidic king.

Many important prophetic passages reveal that the only hope for the establishment of an enduring and faithful kingdom in Israel lies in a future work of God's redemption. The human heart is too corrupt for God's purposes for the world to be accomplished through Israel's fallen and sinful kings. Periodic revivals and times of faithfulness (such as Josiah's reforms [2 Kings 23]) are not enough to usher in God's worldwide dominion.

Despite Israel's earthly failure God still does not abandon His plan to reign over the whole world through His appointed human king.

How will this reign manifest itself? What is necessary for God to reverse the failure of Israel to be a light to the nations and extend the kingdom across the earth? First, **God will bring about a new exodus.** This exodus, however, will not be a mere deliverance from Israel's earthly enemies. Instead, God will come in power to deliver His people as He ushers in the new creation itself and renews His reign over His people.

As **Isa 35:1-4, 8-10** puts it:

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory

of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you." ... And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it. It shall belong to those who walk on the way; even if they are fools, they shall not go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

The prophets speak of God's deliverance of His people in this way as the reestablishment of God's kingdom:

Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young. (Isa 40:9-11)

It is not as if God somehow ceased to be king simply because of the failure of Israel's earthly kings. Instead, speaking of a return of God in the power of His kingdom is meant to highlight the necessity of God performing a dramatic act of salvation and rescue for His wayward people in the future. If the kingdom of God is to be manifest over the earth, and if Israel is to be a light to the nations (which will be brought about through a messianic king: [Isa 9:1-7; 42:1-9](#)), then it will only come about when YHWH returns to Zion to deliver His sinful people and equip them to extend His saving reign to the furthest points of the earth:

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of the Lord to Zion. Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has bared his holy

arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. ([Isa 52:7-10](#))

Jeremiah expresses this with the imagery of God placing shepherds (a symbol of kingship) over His people in the context of bringing them (in a new exodus) out from the nations to which they have been driven ([Jer 23:3-4](#)): “Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the Lord.”

Daniel speaks of this reality in this way ([Dan 2:44](#)): “And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever.”

Through the end-time kingdom that God will set up “the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day the Lord will be one and his name one” ([Zech 14:9](#)). God, through a future, godly Davidic king will reign over the whole world forever (see [Psalm 89](#)). Adam’s dominion mandate will be fulfilled through the dramatic saving work of God. In that day “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” ([Hab 2:14](#)).

While the prophets consistently speak of God as the one who will sovereignly usher in His end time kingdom, they also speak of this as being accomplished through a kingly messiah figure.

This messiah is described in many ways in the prophets, but two passages stand out as particularly significant for understanding

the ministry of Jesus Christ, namely [Isaiah 52:13-53:12](#) and [Daniel 7](#).

In [Isaiah 52:13-53:12](#) the prophet speaks of a coming servant of the Lord who “shall be high and lifted up and shall be exalted” ([Isa 52:13](#)). This is the language of kingly exaltation, as is reinforced two verses later where we read that “kings shall shut their mouths because of him” (52:15). The exaltation of God’s servant, however, will paradoxically come about through his own suffering (53:3-5):

He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

Israel’s sinful failure requires atonement: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all” ([Isa 53:6](#)). The suffering and death of God’s kingly servant is necessary for the end-time kingdom to be established. In fact, it is the very means by which the kingdom will be established.

In [Daniel 7](#) the coming kingly deliverer of God’s people seems strikingly unlike the suffering servant of [Isaiah 52-53](#). Consider [Dan 7:13-14](#):

I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

These two verses nicely encapsulate Daniel’s vision of an end-time “son of man” who will defeat all the enemies of God and of His people. Through this son of man, God will establish his dominion over all nations, a dominion that will never pass away or be destroyed. The dominion mandate of Adam will be fulfilled. Israel (see [Dan 7:22](#)), through the kingly son of man, will establish God’s kingdom over all peoples.

How is it, then, that the final, saving reign of God can be said to ushered in through a suffering servant ([Isa 52-53](#)) and a triumphant heavenly deliverer ([Dan 7](#))? Which is it? The answer is that it is both: victory will come about through the suffering of God's king. This was difficult for many Jews to accept, because they simply expected a triumphant king, without understanding how he would triumph (see [John 6:15](#), for example). This is, however, precisely how Jesus understands His own kingly calling: He is the heavenly son of man who will come on the clouds to judge the world, but only after He has died on the cross for the sins of His people. This seemingly

paradoxical reality is a vital theme that we must return to in future posts.

While Israel does eventually return from its earthly exile in Babylon (which has since come to be ruled by the Persians), the reports in Ezra and Nehemiah of their return fall short of the prophetic hope of a renewed Israel ruled over by a righteous Davidic king. The Persian king Cyrus sends the Israelites back to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple ([2 Chron 36:22-23](#)), which they indeed do ([Ezra 1-6](#)), but Israel never attains anything near the glories of the monarchy under King David. This is perhaps seen most clearly in the weeping of the elders of the people at the dedication of the new temple, since it falls significantly short of the glory of the previous temple ([Ezra 3:12-13](#)). This new temple probably did not even contain the ark of the covenant (the centerpiece of God's saving presence with his people) which was most likely lost or destroyed when Judah was defeated by Babylon. The prophetic hope looks to a future day when God will come in power to once-and-for-all set up his end-time kingdom. It is with this sense of anticipation that the Gospels open, which is captured so memorably in Simeon's words in [Luke 2:29-32](#): "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

Simeon, like Anna, and "all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem" ([Luke 2:38](#)), knew that a king would one day come who would save and deliver God's people.

The Old Testament teaching on God's kingdom is the necessary context for making sense of Jesus' teaching and preaching, especially His announcement that the kingdom of God was "at hand" ([Matt 3:2](#)).

The Jews Jesus preached to knew that God was king. They knew that He had always been king. What they did not know (apart from those who were given special

revelation) was that the final, end-time, saving reign of God announced by Israel's prophets was already breaking into the world in Jesus' own person and ministry.

We must therefore turn to the Gospels to see what Jesus has to say about the nature of the kingdom of God.

Suggestions for Further Reading:

- Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (Philipsburg: P & R, 1962), pp. 3-17.
- Jeremy Treat, *The Crucified King: Atonement and Kingdom in Biblical and Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), pp. 53-86.
- Christopher M. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson eds., *The Kingdom of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), pp. 49-94.

John Piper on The Kingdom of God in the O.T.

Audio Transcript

"The kingdom" is a big theme for Jesus. In the ESV translation, "kingdom" is mentioned 126 times in the Gospels. But then "kingdom" is mentioned only 34 times in the rest of the New Testament, prompting Christopher from the UK to write in. "Hi, Pastor John! Thank you very much for your excellent APJ podcast. I'm amazed you can put so much effort into such complex and difficult questions for complete strangers, like me! My question for you is this: The gospel of Matthew alone is full of references to the coming 'kingdom' (55 of them). But

from Acts and into the epistles, there seems to be very little mention of 'the kingdom.' So what is this 'kingdom of God'? Is it the church or something bigger?"

I hear two crucial questions: (1) What is the kingdom of God? (2) Why does it get so much prominent, explicit focus in the teachings of Jesus but far less prominent, explicit focus in the letters of the New Testament? Let me say a word about each of those questions.

Rule and Reign

I think the most important thing I could say about the kingdom of God that would help people make sense out of all the uses is that **the basic meaning of the word *kingdom* in the Bible is God's reign — R-E-I-G-N — not realm or people.**

The kingdom creates a realm, the kingdom creates a people, but the kingdom of God is not synonymous with its realm or its people.

“God decided the kingdom of God would be most gloriously revealed in a crucified and risen king.”

For example, consider **[Psalms 103:19](#)**:

“The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.”

You can

hear the basic meaning of the
word *kingdom* as rule.

It doesn't mean that his kingdom rules over his realm; it means that God's reign or rule governs all things.

He sits as king on his throne of the universe, and his kingly rule — his kingdom and his reign — governs all things.

The basic meaning of the word kingdom in the Bible is God's kingly rule — his reign, his action, his lordship, his sovereign governance.

Saving Sinners

Since God's purpose for the world is to save a people for himself and renew the world for that people, his kingly rule implies a saving and a redeeming activity on their behalf.

This is why the coming of the kingdom in the New Testament is called good news.

In and through Jesus, God, the king, is coming in a way — a new way — into the world to establish his saving rule.

First, in the hearts of his people and in their relationships by triumphing over sin, Satan, and death. Then by the exercise of his reign, gathering a people for himself in congregations that live as citizens of a new allegiance of the kingdom — not of this world. Then Christ comes a second time and completes the reign by establishing a new heavens and a new earth.

Already, but Not Yet

The picture you get in the Gospels as Jesus unfolds the teachings of the kingdom is that it is both present and it is still future. In fact, this is what he means when he says that the mystery of the kingdom is here — presence without consummation.

For example, you can hear the future dimension of the kingdom in the Lord's Prayer: "Your kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10).

*We should pray that every day.
Bring the kingdom, Lord.*

It's not here the way we want it to be.

*Bring your kingdom. Bring your reign fully in
people's lives, in my life, in the world.*

“The lordship of the crucified and risen Christ should
receive the emphasis today.”

In [Luke 19:11](#), Jesus proceeded to tell a parable because he was near Jerusalem, but the people supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. But Jesus knew it was not coming immediately. The kingdom of God is not going to appear immediately, and yet repeatedly, Jesus says, “The kingdom is at hand. Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.”

In fact, he is more explicit than that in [Luke 11:20](#): “If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” Even more explicitly, [Luke 17:21](#) says, “Behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.”

How can the kingdom of God be both *not yet present* and *already present*? He says, “Pray for it. It's coming. It's not yet here. It's not going to be immediate, and yet already, it's present in your midst, upon you, at hand.” How can he say all that?

The answer is, ***the kingdom of God is God's
reign — his sovereign action in the
world to redeem and deliver a people
and then at a future time finish it and***

renew his people and the universe completely.

Trading the Throne for a Cross

If we ask why the term “kingdom of God” or “kingdom of heaven” is prominent and explicit in the teachings of Jesus but much less so in the epistles (which is true), what should we say?

My suggestion is this: during the lifetime of Jesus, he was walking a very fine line between making himself known as the Son of God and the actual presence of the king himself, on the one hand, and concealing himself from being taken and made to be an earthly king on the other hand (like they wanted to do in John 6).

They were ready to come and make him king. You recall how Jesus repeatedly told people not to tell others about what they had seen (Mathew 17:9; [Mark 7:36](#)). That’s because there would be such a widespread misunderstanding about the nature of his kingship that a political revolt might happen as people try to sweep him on to the throne like in John 6.

No, he came to be crucified. That’s why he came. He came to die, not to be put on a throne yet. **He would only be king through crucifixion and resurrection. The disciples could scarcely comprehend that.**

The Risen One Is Lord

After the resurrection, it could be seen now with crystal clarity what the disciples couldn’t fathom during his lifetime. Namely, ***the***

kingdom of God would be most gloriously revealed in a crucified and risen king. Therefore, the shift that happens in no way diminishes the importance of what was taught about the kingdom during the lifetime of Jesus. But it does shift. It does put the overwhelming emphasis now on the king himself as the crucified, risen Lord of the universe.

“Jesus is Lord’ is almost synonymous in the epistles with ‘the king has come.’”

The new emphasis, which is more explicit in the epistles, declares, “Jesus is Lord.” In fact, if you would have pressed me, I’d say “the kingdom has come” is almost synonymous with “Jesus is Lord.” Or to say it the other way round, “Jesus is Lord” is almost synonymous in the epistles with the kingdom — the reign — “the king has come.”

It’s not just that he has come, he will come. I think we probably do well today to keep this in mind whenever we start to foreground the kingdom of God.

Let’s make sure that our teaching has the flavor of the apostolic application of the reign of Jesus in the churches and in the world. It is the lordship of the crucified and risen Christ that should receive the emphasis today.

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The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament

Article contributed by www.walvoord.com

[John F. Walvoord, President and Professor of Systematic Theology, Dallas Theological Seminary]

The masterful chapter on “The Kingdom Concept in the Old Testament” by J. Dwight Pentecost in his work, *Things to Come*,¹ sets forth in a comprehensive way the doctrine of the kingdom of God in the Old Testament. Unfortunately, in spite of the comprehensive presentation in this chapter, as well as numerous other books that set forth the doctrine of the kingdom in the Old Testament, amillenarians have repeatedly stated that the Bible nowhere teaches a future kingdom on earth.² Rather than leave such statements unchallenged, it seems best to review briefly the specific contribution of the Old Testament to the premillennial interpretation of a future kingdom on earth.

The problem is by no means simplistic. Many varying definitions of the kingdom of God are given. As Pentecost states, “Through this maze of interpretations it is almost impossible to make one’s way.”³

Pentecost divides these confusing aspects of the kingdom of God into two categories, the eternal kingdom and the theocratic kingdom.⁴ As Pentecost and others have noted, **the theme of the theocratic kingdom can be traced from the Garden of Eden through the period of human government initiated by Noah, the period of the patriarchs initiated by Abraham, the kingdom under the judges, the kingdom under the kings, and finally the kingdom under the prophets.**⁵ Although interpretations of these aspects of the kingdom of God vary in differing systems of eschatology, the primary problem of interpretation is found in the theocratic kingdom under the prophets. Usually it is conceded that the kingdom was in theocratic form in Israel under Saul, David, Solomon, and their successors. **The question remains whether there is a future form of the kingdom that**

will also be theocratic, political, and on earth. This is the point of tension between premillennial and amillennial interpretation.

Obviously for an amillenarian to say summarily that no verse in the Bible teaches a future earthly kingdom is a dogmatic statement that needs to be examined. The purpose of this discussion is to refer primarily to what the Scriptures actually state and then raise the question as to the proper interpretation of these passages.

The Prophecies of Isaiah

As a casual reading of the Book of Isaiah demonstrates, the prophet Isaiah speaks repeatedly on the subject of a future earthly kingdom. In his book he predicts a future kingdom with Jerusalem as its capital and involving the tribe of Judah.

In the last days, the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways, and that we may walk in His paths. For the law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples, and they will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war (**Isa 2:2-4**, NASB).

This prophecy has had no literal fulfillment in the past, but a future kingdom on earth could fulfill precisely these predictions of Isaiah.

One of the better known of Isaiah's pronouncements concerning the future kingdom is his prediction of Christ's birth.

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His

government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Again this passage refers to an earthly government. The child will be born on earth; the throne will be that of David; rule will be characterized by justice and righteousness; and it will be accomplished by the power of God rather than the power of men. His birth has been fulfilled, but the establishment of His earthly government has not.

One of the most extensive passages by Isaiah refers to Christ's coming and the characteristics of His reign on the earth:

Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, and He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear; but with righteousness He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; and He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, and faithfulness the belt about His waist. And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze; their young will lie down together; and the lion will eat straw like the ox. And the nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea (11:1-9).

These characteristics of Christ's reign obviously refer to earth.

The righteousness of His rule, the destruction of the wicked, the accompanying tranquility in nature does not correspond to anything in history nor anything in the future in heaven, but refers to the earth.

Verse 9 refers to “My holy mountain” and “the earth” being “full of the knowledge of the LORD.” **To these prophecies Isaiah adds the graphic picture of judgment on earth in chapter 24 in connection with His earthly reign...**

He concludes, “Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed, for the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and His glory will be before His elders” (24:23).

To this Isaiah adds another point in [Isaiah 32:1](#), “Behold a king will reign righteously, and princes will rule justly.” And in [33:20](#), he describes Zion: “Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts, your eyes shall see Jerusalem an undisturbed habitation, a tent which shall not be folded, its stakes shall never be pulled up nor any of its cords be torn apart.” Again, this prophecy has never been fulfilled in any way in the past; thus it requires a future fulfillment. Emphasis here is again on Israel’s regathering to her “own land. Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king, and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days” ([3:4-5](#)),

Hosea, though he lived years after the death of David the king of Israel, predicted that David would return. This resurrection of David is promised by several other prophets and is related to the second coming of Christ. That is when David will live and reign with Christ. The kingdom of God over which David will reign after the second coming of Christ was predicted by Ezekiel. “And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken” ([Ezek 34:24](#)).

Ezekiel confirms it again with these words: “And My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances, and keep My statutes, and observe them” ([Ezek 37:24](#)).

Jeremiah adds his confirming word. "But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them" ([Jer 30:9](#)).

In these passages it is clear that David is not Christ. The resurrected David who once reigned on the throne of Israel will serve as a prince under Christ, the King of kings.

The revival of the Davidic kingdom and the restoration of the cities and vineyards of Israel is graphically prophesied by Amos. "In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David, and wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old" ([Amos 9:11](#)). The prophecy concludes:

Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel, and they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them, they will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, and make gardens and eat their fruit. I will also plant them on their land, and they will not again be rooted out from their land which I have given them, says the LORD your God (9:14-15).

This does not describe a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of the followers of Christ, nor does it refer to the eternal new earth. Instead Amos is writing about a literal kingdom on earth with cities and vineyards. This will be a literal Davidic kingdom.

A major prophecy is given in [Micah 4:1-5:5](#) , the early portion of which parallels [Isaiah 2:1-5](#). Zion is declared to be the source of the law ([Mic 4:2](#)). Peace will characterize world government ([Mic 4:3](#)). This will be when "the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on and forever" ([Mic 4:7](#)). As in many other promises of the coming kingdom, nothing in history or in the contemporary spiritual situation parallels these prophecies, or in any sense provides a reasonable fulfillment.

[Zechariah 2:10-12](#) adds its testimony to the future joy and blessing of the kingdom. Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst, declares the LORD. And many nations will join themselves to the LORD in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. And the LORD will possess Judah as His portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem.

As in other prophecies, the center of the government will be Jerusalem and the central fact of the kingdom will be the abiding presence of the Lord on the earth.

Another confirming word is found in [Zechariah 8:1-8](#).

Then the word of the LORD of hosts came saying, Thus says the LORD of hosts, I am exceedingly jealous for Zion, yes, with great wrath I am jealous for her. Thus says the LORD, I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called

the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain. Thus says the LORD of hosts, Old men and old women will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of age. And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets, Thus says the LORD Of hosts, If it is too difficult in the sight of the remnant of this people in those days, will it also be too difficult in My sight? declares the LORD of hosts. Thus says the LORD of hosts, Behold, I am going to save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west; and I will bring them back, and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem, and they will be My people and I will be their God in truth and righteousness.

Familiar predictions of Jerusalem as the center of God's kingdom and the presence of the Lord and His blessing on His people are again emphasized in this prophecy. [Zechariah 9:9-10](#) adds:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; and the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations; and His dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

This passage, like [Isaiah 9:6-7](#), views both advents of Christ together. At His first coming, the nation welcomed Him as her King. But His crucifixion followed. Christ will nevertheless reign over Jerusalem when He returns again, "and His dominion will be from sea to sea" (9:10). [Zechariah 14](#) describes in detail the return of the Lord, the battle of Jerusalem, the establishment of the kingdom, the change in the typography of the land, and the ultimate victory of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords. As in other millennial passages, nothing in history, in the present age, nor in the eternal new earth corresponds to these events. Many other Old Testament passages bring confirming evidence to these passages that have been quoted. The kingdom of God, brought to the world by Christ in His second coming, is not taught merely by an isolated passage here and there; it is a major theme of Old Testament prophetic revelation.

Prophecies in the Psalms

Frequently in the Psalms as in the Prophets, references are made to God's future theocratic kingdom.

Psalm 2:6 predicts that Christ will be "installed [as] My King upon Zion, My holy mountain."

While Psalm 22 prophesies the crucifixion of Christ, Psalm 24 predicts His reign on earth.

Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in! Who is the King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O gates, and lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in! Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory (24:7-10).

Many understand Psalms 45 and 46 to refer to the reign of Christ. Psalm 48 speaks of the future glory of Zion.

One of the clearest passages is Psalm 72. Although given in the form of a prayer, it will surely be fulfilled, as is evident for instance, in verses 7-8. "In his days may the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace till the moon is no more. May he also rule from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth." The universal submission of the kings of the world in the future theocratic kingdom is described in verses 10-11, "Let the kings of Tarshish and of the islands bring presents, the kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts. And let all kings bow down before him, all nations serve him." The psalm closes with the prayer, "And blessed be His glorious name forever; and may the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen, and Amen" (v. 19). It should be noted that this prophecy relates to "earth," not heaven. recent form of amillennialism, which says the prophecies are fulfilled in a nonliteral way for the believer in heaven (in the intermediate state) prior to the creation of the new heavens and the new earth; (3) a combination of the other two forms, that interprets some kingdom passages as being fulfilled in the present age, some fulfilled in their intermediate state during the present period, and others yet to be fulfilled in the eternal state in the new heavens and the new earth.

The variety of approaches of the amillennial view, which is essentially a denial of a literal millennium on earth, is its own commentary. None of these views provides any reasonable literal fulfillment of the passages. Amillennial writings, which sometimes boldly state that not a single verse in the Bible teaches a kingdom of God on earth following the second coming of Christ, usually avoid the many Scriptures which have been cited in this article. Amillennialism nevertheless has appealed to many scholars in the ancient as well as in the modern church. But that theory does not provide an adequate explanation of these passages. Amillennarians often simply avoid passages that would contradict their conclusions or dismiss them by asserting dogmatically that the premillennial interpretation is wrong.

An illustration of this is the discussion by Jay Adams in his work, *The Time Is at Hand*. This book does mention some passages which seem to teach premillennialism but often his references are only a sentence or two, a footnote here and there, or a strong assertion that the premillennial view is wrong. Of 14 references to Isaiah, 9 are simply references in footnotes. In 2 sentences in a footnote he dismisses 11 passages in Isaiah as being already fulfilled, and he claims that his interpretation “can hardly be questioned.”⁸

Amillennarians in their interpretation of millennial passages have several alternative explanations: (1) they declare them conditional and therefore never to be fulfilled; (2) they declare them historical and already fulfilled; or (3) when historical fulfillment is doubtful, they say they will be fulfilled in the new earth. But with one voice they declare that it is impossible to find their fulfillment in an earthly millennial kingdom. There is a growing tendency among amillennarians to refer millennial passages to the new earth as this eliminates the difficulty of finding historic fulfillment for many such prophecies.

Adams provides another illustration. In regard to numerous passages on the millennial Jerusalem he writes, “Was Christ to rule in Jerusalem? Of course! And that is precisely what he does. Today he reigns and rules from that ‘Jerusalem which is above’ ([Gal 4:26](#)); from that heavenly ‘Mount Zion’ to which the writer of Hebrews says that believers ‘have come’ ([Heb 12:22](#)).”⁹

Certainly all recognize that [Hebrews 12:22](#) refers to the new Jerusalem in the eternal state (and it could conceivably be in existence now). But does this satisfy the many references to a millennial Jerusalem? Again Adams writes, “Come to a millennial city? Come up to a literal mountain? A physical throne? An earthly temple? Of course not.”¹⁰ Why does he say, “Of course not”? The answer is that it would teach a millennial kingdom.

All of Adams's references to the millennium in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Nahum, and Malachi are discussed in footnotes. He avoids giving a detailed exegesis of pertinent passages. A reading of the many Old Testament passages previously quoted reveals that they do not disappear simply because a footnote says a literal interpretation is impossible and a nonliteral interpretation is "of course" the only proper one. Even his claim that the amillennial interpretation is transparently the only possible one is supported by too scanty a New Testament confirmation.

In defense of Adams, it may be pointed out that he is attempting only a relatively small paperback discussion of a large problem. But the sweeping dismissal of alternative views and the failure to recognize that there is a variety of contradictory amillennial interpretations are all too characteristic of amillenarians' discussions. The fact is that the many allusions to an earthly kingdom yet to be fulfilled in the future are too detailed to dismiss them that easily.

It is not the purpose of this article to provide a detailed refutation of amillennialism. The writer has sought to do that in his work, *The Millennial Kingdom*, which is confirmed by the extensive work of J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come*, both of which have been mentioned earlier. **The goal of this discussion is to call attention to the many detailed prophecies related to the millennium which premillenarians feel have never been satisfactorily explained by the amillennial approach. Premillenarians believe that it is honoring to Scripture to allow it to mean what it appears to mean when taken literally and that it is just as wrong to explain away prophetic passages about the millennium as it is to explain away historic passages referring to the virgin birth, the resurrection of Christ, and other central doctrines of biblical faith.**

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The familiar cry of amillenarians is that the New Testament confirms their interpretation of the Old Testament. The next article in this series will deal with the New Testament doctrine of the kingdom of God.

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¹ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), pp. 427-45.

² Rutgers states, for instance, "Again the New Testament gives plain indication that Christ will remain in heaven until the end of the world. That kingdom will not be one of earthly, material felicity and blessing, but spiritual. In Christ and His true disciples that kingdom is already established, and in harmony with the confession of the church of all ages, not to establish an earthly, Jewish kingdom, Himself visible and bodily reigning in this semi-earthly, semi-heavenly realm of material existence, but for judgment. An unprejudiced reading of the Scripture renders one universal judgment, one universal resurrection.

Nowhere is there intimation of a millennial reign intervening" (William H.

Rutgers, *Premillennialism in America* [Goes, Holland: Oosterbaan and Le Cointre, 1930], pp.

286-87). Hoekema states, "That the millennial reign depicted in [Revelation 20:4-6](#) occurs

before the Second Coming of Christ is evident from the fact that the final judgment,

described in verses 11-15 of this chapter, is pictured as coming after the thousand-year

reign....it is obvious that the thousand-year reign of [Revelation 20:4-6](#) must occur before

and not after the Second Coming of Christ" (Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the*

Future [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.. 1979], p. 227).

³ Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p. 427.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 428, 433.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 435-37, 441.

⁸ Jay Adams, *The Time Is at Hand* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1970), p. 63.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*