

The Kingdom of God

“The Kingdom of God—announced, inaugurated and given by and in Christ—stands at the heart of the early Christian faith, and not only as something yet to come but as that which has come, is present now and shall come at the end.”

—Alexander Schmemmann, *Church, World, Mission*, 29.

Opening Questions:

- What is the kingdom of God? Church? Future millennial reign? Jesus in the heart?
- What is the gospel of the kingdom of God?
- How does this gospel of the kingdom of God which Jesus preached relate to the gospel of crucifixion, resurrection, and faith which Paul preached?
- What is the nature or character of the kingdom of God?
- Is the kingdom of God already in the world today, or is the kingdom a future and as yet unrealized reality? Could the kingdom in some way be both present and future? In other words, what about the timing of the kingdom?
- How does the kingdom of God relate in a practical way to the Christian life? What role does the kingdom of God play in the formation and development of a biblical worldview?
- How does the concept of the kingdom bear upon your work as a Christian educator and scholar?

I. Biblical Definition of the Word “Kingdom” (Heb. *Malkut*, Grk. *Basileia*)

A. Heb. *Malkut*: kingdom, power, might acts, dominion

Ps. 145:11 They shall speak of the glory of Thy **kingdom**, And talk of Thy **power**; Ps. 145:12 To make known to the sons of men Thy **mighty acts**, And the glory of the majesty of Thy kingdom. Ps. 145:13 Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And Thy **dominion** {endures} throughout all generations.

B. Grk. *Basileia* reign, rule, kingship, dominion, authority, power (secondarily realm)

"The key to Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God is found in the dynamic understanding of that term. God's Kingdom is first of all his **kingly rule**, his **sovereign redeeming activity**, and secondarily the realm of blessing inaugurated by the divine act." George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the NT*, p. 53.

II. Manifestations of the Kingdom (Rule/Authority) of God in the OT

Creation, fall, flood, Babel, Abraham, Moses/Exodus, Joshua/Conquest, Judges, Kings, Exiles, Return from Exile

III. The Kingdom of God in the NT

A. What is the kingdom of God?

The exercise of divine authority and power in and through Jesus Christ against all the evil in the world.

1. Teaching as kingdom
2. Miracles as kingdom

3. Exorcisms as kingdom
4. Crucifixion/resurrection/ascension/pentecost as kingdom

B. When is the kingdom of God?

1. "Already" present (Matt. 12: 28-29; Mark 1: 14-15; Luke 17: 20-21)
2. "Not yet" future (Matt. 24-25; Mark 13; Luke 21; Rom. 11; Rev. 19-22)

C. How did the kingdom of God come the first time? Like a Lamb!

1. As a "mystery" (Matt. 13; Mark 4; Luke 8 = the parables of the mystery of the kingdom — e.g., as mustard seed, leaven)
2. Through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ where He rules over sin and death victoriously, triumphantly

D. How will the kingdom of God come in the future? Like a Lion! (Rev. 19: 11-16)

IV. Explanations of the theology of the kingdom as "already" but "not yet"

A. George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, p. 91.

Our central thesis is that the Kingdom of God is the redemptive reign of God dynamically active to establish His rule among men, and that this Kingdom which will appear as an apocalyptic act at the end of the age, has already come into human history in the person and mission of Jesus to overcome evil, to deliver men from its power, and to bring them into the blessings of God's reign. The Kingdom of God involves two great moments: fulfillment within history [already], and consummation at the end of history [not yet].

B. Bernard Anderson, "Creation" in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 1: 731.

The heart of the NT gospel is the proclamation that in Christ, God has already inaugurated His kingdom, has already introduced the new history for which the OT prophets hoped. Echoing the message of Second Isaiah, the NT declares that the new creation has already come. At the same time, however, the new creation is a promise and foretaste of the end time, when there will be a new heaven and a new earth, free from the corruption of evil and death (Rev. 21: 1-4), and when all creatures in heaven and earth will join in an anthem of praise to the Creator (Rev. 4: 8-11; 5: 13). Wherever God's action in Christ is effective for man's salvation, he is creatively at work, after the manner of the original creation.

C. William J. Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning*, p. 196.

Our biblical survey has confirmed the schema, Creation—the Renewal of Creation (Redemption)—the New Creation, as the axis around which all biblical theology turns. Any theology therefore which fails to put redemption into this total biblical context will not do justice to the motif. And any Christian application of the gospel which does not assent that the gospel has to do with a total world view, not merely with personal renewal (where it must, admittedly, begin) has misunderstood the biblical concepts expressed through that term. It is not merely that New Creation is a consequence of the gospel, or is the direction to which the gospel points. [the gospel is the New Creation and the new creation is the gospel!!!]. The gospel as the gospel of God means that in God's world, his

will shall be done. Therefore the biblical writer sees as the end of all things "a new heaven and a new earth. . . ". In moving as it does from the theology of Creation to the New Creation, the Bible underscores that humanity finds its meaning and its home in God and the nature of his purposes for our world.

V. Implications of the Kingdom of God on Christian Education and Scholarship

A. Professors as kingdom agents and instruments

B. Renewal of the righteous rule of God in our disciplines and in students in fulfillment of the dominion mandate

C. Doxology purpose of the educational and scholarly enterprise as God's kingdom rule comes and His will is done on earth, as it is in heaven. +=

VI. Musical Meditation on the Kingdom of God

"The Kingdom"

by Michael Card and Scott Brasher © 1992

So near and yet still so far, far away,
So close, and yet still to come,
Concealed, the seed is mysteriously growing,
In hearts that will listen and hear,
A treasure that's hidden,
A pearl of great price,
A fortune for fools who believe.

CHORUS:

A kingdom of beauty, a kingdom of love,
A kingdom of justice and peace,
A kingdom that holds all the wilds of creation,
A kingdom where children will lead (Isa. 11: 6)

For now this kingdom's a land of the lowly (Ezek. 29: 14),
A place for the tired, plundered poor,
Now our gentle King comes in peace on a donkey (Zech. 9: 9),
But then on a charger for war (Rev. 19: 11),
A battle in heaven, a war on the earth,
To shatter the long darkened siege.

Chorus

Not by our own strength,
And not by power of might (Zech. 4: 6),
But by His Spirit it comes,
Blinded eyes will see,
And deafened ears will hear (Isa. 29: 18; 35: 15),
The praise from the lips of the dumb

Chorus