

THE KING: THE KINGDOM OF GOD: THE KINGSHIP

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1. INTRODUCTION: THE MEANING OF THE KINGDOM

‘Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand!’ was an electrifying announcement to those who heard it in Israel. Both John the Baptist and Jesus proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom, and certainly their statement made sense. It was an innovation. The idea of the Kingdom of heaven (or, the Kingdom of God) was not a new one. There was nothing novel about it, to them. What then was its origin, and its related ideas of God as King, and the action of His Kingship?

There are two ways of approaching the subject:- (i) The elements of the King-Kingdom idea can be traced from early in the Scriptures to the end, so following the fact and principle of the Kingdom, and (ii) the Scripture can be seen as a whole and the principles by which Scripture itself is understood. We mean that by nature of the case, God is King and His rule is the Kingdom, its ultimate climax being what God has predetermined. In this way we do not so much seek to abstract subject material from its background, but rather simply trace its innate constituent elements. In fact, both principles can be used together. We can trace developing elements of the Kingdom from Genesis to Revelation, and we can understand Scripture by the great fact of God being King, and His rule being the Kingdom in the affairs of creation, redemption, and the final restitution of all things.

2. DESCRIPTIONS OF THE KINGDOM

Without doubt the Hebrews understood God as ‘King of all the earth’ (e.g. Ps. 47:2). This being so, the Kingdom of God would simply be the rule of God over His creation. Since however, celestial and human powers have rebelled against God, it must be seen that His Kingdom, as yet, contains elements of rebellion. It is, nevertheless, the Kingdom of God. There is an area of operation where the Kingdom has no rebellion (a) Where celestial powers perfectly obey God, and (b) Where human powers voluntarily obey God. It can be seen that where God’s Kingdom is triumphant, ultimately, that all elements will obey God the King.

Further defined from the Biblical point of view, God's Kingdom is His entire creation, ruled continuously by Him, and contingent upon Him. Where it is rebellious, God moves to destroy rebellion. He first moves out in creation, then in Israel, and then in redemption. Finally, His Kingdom is evidenced in the eschatological judgements and the renewing of creation. Because celestial and human powers rebel against God does not mean His continuing reign is less dynamic than is His ultimate success, but rather that grace, forbearance and forgiveness, are elements of that reign, and will effect their own fruits. We see then, that the actual reign of God in the three elements of creation, redemption and the reconstitution of all things, is as much the part of His Kingdom, as if His omnipotent reign had never been opposed.

When we say that the Kingdom of God is His rule and reign, we naturally think of:

- (a) A monarchical system
- (b) A realm of ruling
- (c) A community of the ruled.

This is reasonable, but the Kingdom must not be confined geographically to a limited area in which the ruled community exists. In the ultimate, the Kingdom is eternal. Also our monarchical concepts are very limited, and are, at best, only a partial indication of the true authority of God. Also, the nature of the King causes Him to move in with power to redeem His elect community from the rebellious powers of evil, and to aid them to be fit members of His Kingdom.

The ultimate nature and form of the Kingdom must relate to its initial and present elements. We mean that God has planned the final successful triumph of His Kingdom, so that along the way, in time and action, we ought not interpret the rebellion of evil as a triumph over God. As we will see, this is the occasion for God to display His true power, particularly in grace and judgement. Hence when we view the ultimate success of the Kingdom we can interpret the intermediary elements of God's operation in their true light. In any description of the Kingdom, we must see that which is ultimate—the King is victorious, and His aim has been achieved. This is seen when Christ says to his people, 'Come, O Blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'. (Matt. 25:34)

3. THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS SEEN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

(I) HIS KINGSHIP IN GENERAL

If we accept the principle that the Scriptures are not, per se, theology, and that they do not explicate themes as such, schematically, then we will not expect the Kingdom theme to appear after a schematised order. For example, when we read the story of creation, we adduce the fact that God is King, although He is not explicitly said to be so. Likewise His dealings with man at creation and in his sinfulness are those of the sovereign Creator, yet it is not said that man rebels against any specified Kingdom order. In fact this is what man does, and in fact God acts as the Creator King. Even so, we can read the rebellion of man, and Satan, against the reasonable rule and order of God. If we can speak of the 'Kingdom of Creation' then we see that celestial powers greeted it with joy (Job 38:4–7), although Satan must have rebelled at some early point in time (cf. Gen. 3:1–6, Isa. 14:12–14, Rev. 12:1–10 and Ezek. 28:11ff.).

THE KING: THE KINGDOM OF GOD: THE KINGSHIP

The term 'Kingdom of heaven' is never, as such, mentioned in the Old Testament, nor for that matter the term 'Kingdom of God'. Nevertheless, Psalm 103:19 says 'The Lord has established his throne in the heavens and his kingdom rules over all', and in Daniel 4:37 Nebuchadnezzar says, 'I will praise and extol and honour the King of heaven', whilst in Psalm 145:11–13 the theme of the Kingdom is clearly put:

They shall speak of the glory of thy Kingdom,
and tell of thy power,
to make known to the sons of man thy mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendour of thy kingdom.
Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and thy dominion endures throughout all generations.

The thought that the Kingdom is of God, and that He rules in and from heaven, is, of course, obvious. It is just that the terms, as such, are not explicitly used.

Psalm 22 :28 says, 'For dominion belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations'. (Cf. Obad. 21, and I Chron. 29:11). In addition, there are many passages which speak, overwhelmingly, of the Lord as King, e.g. Psalm 10:16, 24:7–10, 44:4, 47:2, Isaiah 6:5, 33:22, 43:15, and Jeremiah 10:7. If it is claimed that such ideas arose only later in Israel, it should be seen that passages such as I Samuel 8:7, Psalm 93:1, 96:10, 97:1, Isaiah 24:23, with Exodus 15:18, Deuteronomy 33:5, Numbers 23:21, and I Kings 22:19 (which relate to the early history of Israel), have very high ideas of God' Kingship, and so, His Kingdom. When we analyse them, we see the following elements:-

- (i) God is King over all the earth: He is King of creation.
- (ii) His Kingdom is from everlasting, and is everlasting.
- (iii) He is the King of glory: He rules not only in the earth but in heaven, and from heaven. All celestial creatures are subject to Him. There is none like Him amongst the (so-called) gods and lords, heavenly or earthly.
- (iv) His reign is terrible. All are before Him, and are afraid of Him. He is high and lifted up. He judges all the nations.
- (v) He is the living God, that is He does great deeds. His Kingship is known by His deeds and actions.
- (vi) He is the King of Israel. He has always been the King of Israel, but this was made clear at Sinai when He gave the law. When ultimately Israel desired a king, He allowed this. In principle, they rejected Him from being King, but although they selected an earthly king, He was still, nevertheless, King. ('By Me kings reign'.)

Our reading of the accounts of Creation, the Fall and the Flood, the Covenant with Abraham, and the general dealings of God with the nations other than Israel show us that God is King over all the earth, and that the operations of nations are under His reign and control. It is when we come to Israel that we see His Kingship has particular reference to that nation.

(II) HIS KINGSHIP OF ISRAEL

Israel's view of God as King appears in various phases. The Patriarchs related to God through His covenant, and certainly see Him as 'The Most High God' (cf. Gen.14), meaning He is above all gods, i.e. He is King over all the earth. It is at the Exodus, however, that God reveals His Kingship over the earth by His acts against Pharaoh, and for Israel. They see Him as King over all nations, but particularly as their own King. For this reason they operate as a theocracy.

Provision is made for them, as a people, to have a King (Deut. 17:14–20), but this King will have to represent the King who is God. He must not oppress his people (God does not oppress His people), and he must have a copy of the law, and live in its precepts. He must never become proud. Israel lived without such a king until the days of Samuel. The judges who were generally charismatic leaders, did not aspire to be kings. The pressures from outside Israel, and the need for a national integration led Israel to press for a king. A reading of I Samuel chapter 8 (cf. I Sam. 12:1ff.) shows that God accepted their choice of a king, but also knew it meant rejection of Him as the King. Nevertheless it was part of His plan.

The matter of the choice of a king was quite delicate. It is clear that God regards (and shapes) Israel as His special Kingdom amidst the wider Kingdom of His creation. In Exodus 19:5–6 God spells out His intention, 'Now, therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among my peoples: for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation'. See also, Deuteronomy 7:6, 14:2, 21, 26:19. We have seen in the references above that Israel knew Him to be King over all the earth, but especially King of Israel. All of this understanding would relate to His covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, these being realised, at least in part, through Moses and Joshua.

The triumph of Israel under David, with its consolidation by Solomon did much to assure Israel that it was indeed a nation. However the division of Israel into two kingdoms, with the Northern Kingdom of the 10 tribes becoming apostate from the Temple's central worship, posed deep problems. The destruction of the Northern Kingdom, and the exile of the Southern Kingdom caused a deeper prophetic thrust to be expressed in the prediction of a Kingship to come which would be at once both Divine and human. It was the theme of Messiah.

(III) THE KINGDOM TO COME

This subject is complex. It involves on the one hand the prophecies of a great King whose Kingdom would be of universal power, and on the other hand of one who would suffer greatly as the Servant of the Lord. The triumph of David's kingdom will be superseded by the seed of David who will set up an even greater kingdom. That the Kingdom will be Davidic is clear from II Samuel 7:12–14, Psalm 132:11–18 and I Kings 8:25. Doubtless this links the prophecy of Genesis 49:10 with the rulership of Judah's Davidic Messiah to come.

To understand the fact and nature of this coming Kingdom, see passages such as the following:-

THE KING: THE KINGDOM OF GOD: THE KINGSHIP

- (i) Isaiah chapters 24–27, 40–55, Obadiah 21, Micah 4:3, Zephaniah 3:15, and Zechariah 14:16–17. In Isaiah 40:9–11 God is telling Israel she will be restored, and God will be her Shepherd. In Isaiah 52:7 the comforting announcement is made ‘Thy God reigns!’ Isaiah chapters 24–27 are beautiful pictures of the new Israel, with God as her Guide and Comforter. Obadiah 21 announces that ‘the Kingdom shall be the Lord’s’. In Micah 4, the kingdom appears almost as universal, Israel being the centre and cause of blessing. In Zephaniah 3:15ff. God is in the midst of His people, delighting over them. He is called, ‘The King of Israel!’ In Zechariah 14:1ff. the Kingdom is so fulfilled that the statement is made (v9) ‘And the Lord will become king over all the earth: on that day the Lord will be one, and his name one.
- (ii) Hosea 14:3f, Isaiah 2:10ff., 9:1–6, 11:1–10, 60:1f., 65:17, 66:22, 24 (cf. 25:7f., 26:19, 45:22, 51:4–6, 61:1ff.), are prophecies which speak of the nature of the Kingdom and the Kingly reign. They involve the person of Messiah, and tell us that Israel’s enemies will be destroyed, that salvation will come to Israel, and that it will be imperishable, that death will be destroyed, that there will be a new heaven and a new earth, that the wicked being judged and punished the redeemed will experience eternal bliss. There will be universal blessing, since the Gentile nations will also participate in blessing. God will reign over all, but generally, through His Messiah. The pictures alternate between God’s own reigning and that of His Davidic King. Likewise the kingdom sometimes seems exclusively that of Israel, and sometimes that of a wider, indeed universal kingdom. Hence these references need to be studied quite deeply and in detail.

(IV) OTHER ELEMENTS RELATING TO THE KINGDOM.

(a) The Book of Daniel

In the Book of Daniel we find two elements which relate to the Kingdom. The first is the attestation of Nebuchadnezzar to God’s Kingdom. His experiences, as also the teaching of Daniel brought him to the point where he said, ‘His Kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation’ (4:3). Daniel 4:34–37 repeats and amplifies this statement. The King is told that, ‘You shall suffer until you have learned that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will’.

In Daniel 7, the kingdom to come is powerfully shown to be given by God—‘the Ancient of days’—to ‘one like a Son of man’. This ruler of the Kingdom which is to be of all nations, and to be for ever, has impressive power. Also ‘the saints of the Most High’ will actually take the Kingdom. There is a relationship between the Ruler and the saints. In addition, the prophecy is concerned with the rise and fall of the nations, which although being contemporary, nevertheless relate to the ultimate setting up of the universal kingdom.

(b) The Holy Spirit

The following passages relate to the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel, and are passages where it is said the Spirit will come, will work, or will be poured out. The first set of references is explicit, the second more implicit.

- (i) Ezekiel 36:24–28, Ezekiel 37:1–14, Joel 2:21–32, cf. Zechariah 12:6–14, Isaiah 32:14–20, 44:1–5.
- (ii) Isaiah 42:1–4. Ezekiel 47, Isaiah 61:1ff.

The sum of this teaching is that Messiah will be anointed with the Spirit, and that the coming of the Spirit or the outpouring of the Spirit upon God's people will accomplish a restoration of the Kingdom.

(c) The Kingly Psalm

We have already mentioned various elements of God's Kingship and Kingdom which have come through in the Psalms. There are, however, specific Psalms which are devoted to an exposition of God as King and His reign over all the earth. These are Psalms 47, 93, 96, 97 and 99. They are essentially Kingdom Psalms. As such they are not Messianic Psalms. The Messianic Psalms relate to an earthly king who is to come. As such he will be God's king over His Kingdom as it is here, on earth. Such Psalms are 2, 89, 110 and 132.

(V) CONCLUSION ON THE KINGDOM IN THE O.T.

We can now draw our threads together. Man, in Adam, rebelled against the King-Creator who is God. God chose to covenant with a special people in order to have them be His special Kingdom within the wider order of things. However they have failed to be truly obedient. Their history is that of a people who gradually rises to the Lordship of God, but fails to become fully obedient. Gradually the kingdom sinks into desuetude, firstly in the land of Palestine, and then in exile. Even after return from exile it does not exist as a true theocracy. The prophets tell of the renewed Kingdom to come and relate it to the leadership of the Prince-Messiah. He, for his part, seems to be on the one hand very much a man raised up by God, and on the other hand, so Divine as to be scarcely a man. Such terms as 'Mighty God', 'Everlasting Father' are applied to him, and the 'Son of Man' of Daniel 7 is no less a figure. The second half of Isaiah is given over to a 'Suffering Servant' who, whilst he accomplishes much, is almost a nonentity as a man.

Nevertheless on thing is clear. God will restore the Kingdom of Israel, and will so extend it that its ultimate blessings cover creation, universally, to the point even of a new heaven and a new earth, and a paradisiacal creation in which all is righteous, harmonious, and peaceful. No wonder Israel looked for a great Kingdom to come.

4. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

That the people were in expectation of the Kingdom of God, and that they had some understanding of its nature goes without saying. John does not, as the baptizer, call people to repentance without them knowing what it is he is proclaiming. Likewise, with Jesus they understand the call of the Kingdom, as also the announcement of it. For our part then, we can continue to trace the events which surround the subject of the Kingdom. In the natural order they run thus:

- (i) John the Baptist and the Kingdom.
- (ii) Jesus and the Kingdom.
- (iii) The early church and the Kingdom.

This will include the action and teaching of the church in regard to the Kingdom, as also the prophetic finale of the Book of the Revelation. We will examine them in this order.

(I) JOHN THE BAPTIST AND THE KINGDOM

We cannot possibly understand what John is about, unless we realise all that we have spoken of, above. Israel's destiny of kingdom, its failure, the holy remnant and the Kingdom and Messianic prophecies all combine to set the foundation for John's proclamation. He himself was the son of a priest, and had unusual events surrounding his birth. Had not he himself evidently appeared in the role of the prophet, then none would have listened to him. Indeed the prophetic voice had not been heard over many centuries, and long ago the 'establishment' had forgotten how to handle a prophet, if, indeed it had ever learned to do so! That is why we must understand (a) John's affirmation of Jesus, and (b) Jesus' (later) affirmation of John.

Jesus pointed out that the prophets were until John, John climaxing that series of men who pointed to the Kingdom. He shows that John is the Elijah of Malachi, who was to come as the precursor to the Lord himself. The passage of Malachi 3:1ff., and 4:1-5 speaks of events prior to and leading up to the day of the Lord. Since John is the 'Elijah' who precedes Messiah, then, with him, the Kingdom is at hand. John himself has attributed to him by the writers of the first three Gospels, the prophetic forerunner passage of Isaiah 40:3-5. He is the one who comes 'to prepare the way of the Lord'. Zechariah, John's father, in his prophecy over John had conflated Malachi 3:1, 4:5 and Isaiah 40:3 (cf. Luke 1:76ff.).

However it is the actual appearance of John, with his innate authority, that impressed Israel. At the proclamation of the Kingdom 'then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea and all the region round about Jordan' (Matt.3:5) and 'they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins'. Such wide acceptance of John troubled the authorities, especially as John was calling Israel to repentance. Any such call should have come from the highest authority (the High Priest or the Sanhedrin), and in any case the call to repentance of Isaiah 40:1ff. was so Messianic as to demand official investigation. Hence in John 1:19-23 the priests demand an explanation. When John denies he is Messiah, they seize on him, demanding why he baptises. His answer is that water baptism is to be followed by something (i.e. Someone) of a much Higher order. In fact that is Spirit-Baptism, Messiah, and the Kingdom.

John couples with the Kingdom two other universal elements (a) Remission of sins. (b) The baptism of (in) the Holy Spirit, that is the outpouring of the Spirit which is doubtless that event we saw when the Kingdom will be renewed. In Rabbinic teaching, there was the idea that with the coming of the Kingdom there would be a new law (cf. Jer. 31:31-34), and forgiveness without the sacrificial cultus. However, most immediately John demanded repentance which was signified by the baptism in water. It was a preparation for the Kingdom, One had to be truly repentant (cf. Matt. 3:7-12), because merely being a blood descendant of Abraham was not sufficient. Also the coming of the Spirit was to judge the evil and burn up the dross. One needed to be cleansed by the baptism for repentance or one would be subject too the 'Spirit of burning and of judgement' (cf. Matt. 3:11, Isa. 4:2-4).

Also John was aware the Kingdom was 'at hand', because 'one stands among you whom you do not know', i.e. the King, the Messiah of the Kingdom.

(II) JESUS AND THE KINGDOM

If John has been attested to, as the prophet, Jesus more so by the events of his birth. Of course the Jews generally did not know, nor were they concerned to enquire. Nevertheless, the Gospel writers show that he truly was the fulfilment of the Messianic prophecies. It was enough, at the commencement of his ministry, for John to speak of him, and point to him. The link with John and Jordan, via his baptism, and more so by the rending of the heavens (Isa. 64:1f.) and the attestation to Jesus (and the people) of the Sonship, shows him to be Messiah. Thus in Luke 4:17 Jesus speaks of being the Messiah of Isaiah 61:1ff., and in fact of all the prophecies. Peter affirms this in Acts 10:38.

Yet it is the innate authority of Jesus which impresses people. He comes announcing the Kingdom, saying it is 'at hand', and that the time appointed for it has now been fulfilled. He is the epitome of fulfilment of all the prophecies. People must now repent. If we keep in mind that he has already, as the new, or true, or 'last' Adam, been tested of Satan and has won, then we can better understand that he has rejected every wrong mode of winning the Kingdom. He is virtually the Messiah of Psalm 2:1 with all its Messianic connotations. (Cf. Matt. 3:17, 17:5, Acts 4:25f., 10:38, 13:33–34).

(a) The Gospel of the Kingdom

Jesus said, 'Repent and believe the gospel'. It was the gospel of the Kingdom, the Gospel which John had already preached, covering repentance, the remission of sins, the enactment of the Kingdom, the pouring out of the Spirit. The Kingdom not only is, but is dynamic, and is salvific. It is the power which comes to release and liberate man who is in bondage. This we will see. Hence to believe the Gospel was not only to have repented, but also to have faith that God was about establishing the Kingdom in the midst.

The Gospel involved teaching. Jesus and his disciples taught wherever they went. There was nothing moralistic about their teaching. The 'Sermon on the Mount' was not intended to be moralistic. It was the setting out of the dynamic principles of the Kingdom. Generally, then, when Jesus taught, acts of great power took place. His words were 'spirit and life' hence they effected what he was saying. He did not give courses in theology, or lectures on healing and exorcism. He healed and exorcised by the word of authority. It was this which impressed the hearers. At the sermon on the mount they were 'astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes'. (Matt. 7:28). In the events he wrought (the word enacted) they were told that this was the Kingdom 'come upon them', or 'come near them'. The key to this principle is Matthew 12:28 'If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons then the kingdom of God has come upon you'. This is the meaning of Luke 4:17f. and Acts 10:38.

Another way of saying it is that Jesus is announced as the 'anointed one', 'king', and 'my son' of Psalm 2:2, 6, 7. Where the king is (or, 'Messiah'), then there is the Kingdom. This is borne out by Luke 10:1–12, and 9:1–6. In both cases authority is delegated. It is authority to preach (the Gospel of) the Kingdom of God and (so) to heal.

In 9:1f. preaching the Gospel and healing are the one thing. Likewise in 10:9 being healed is having the Kingdom come on, or near, one. In other words, the gospel or good news, is proclamation which delivers. Hence when Jesus heals a woman of her spirit of infirmity he says, 'Woman, you are freed from your infirmity'. He asks whether she ought not to 'be loosed from this bond', even though it is the Sabbath. He says Satan had bound her all those years. He also observes that this was so, even though she was a daughter of Abraham. His forgiving of sins in the case of the paralysed man involved healing him, and this was the good news, the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Equally, the good news of the Kingdom is the bad news for the kingdom of darkness. Luke 11:14–26 tells this. Not only are all evil forces subject to Jesus, in the Gospels, but he can castigate Israel as having been cleansed of a demon (idolatry) only to be infested with worse demonic forms. The good news of the Kingdom is that their hour is at an end. 'The Stronger-than-the-Strong-man' man has now to come, and to unarm him. In fact in John 12:31 (cf. 16:11) Jesus makes it clear that the defeat of these powers is a foregone conclusion. The Cross will effect this.

(b) The Teaching of the Kingdom

The Kingdom was not only enacted, it was taught. Not only did wrong ideas have to be corrected, but full teaching had to be given concerning it. The Sermon on the Mount taught of those who possessed or would inherit the Kingdom. Fatherhood was expounded, so that God is shown as Father-King. One has to seek the Kingdom of God first, and then the things of life will be added to the seeker. The Kingdom is that of heaven rather than that of the earth. It is of God rather than of man. In fact the material is so profuse, in his teaching, that it cannot easily be categorised. It is not always apparent as to what Jesus is referring his teaching to, that whether it is the present or the coming elements, or even the continuing general nature of the Kingdom. Hence the many differences which interpreters have. Very roughly speaking, his teaching does refer to the (then) present elements and the elements of the Kingdom to come.

1. The Kingdom is Present.

Jesus, by saying the kingdom was at hand, or come upon his hearers, was pointing to the present nature of the Kingdom. When John the Baptist had some doubts as to his Messianic being, he pointed him to the messianic passages in Isaiah, (cf. Matt. 11:2–6, Isa. 29:18–19, 35:5–6, 61:1f.) showing that by his healing, cleansings, miracles, raisings from the dead and preaching, the Kingdom was indeed present.

It is also obvious from the use of the term 'theirs is the kingdom of heaven' that Jesus meant such were already entered the Kingdom. Whilst he indicates a future (total) inheriting of the Kingdom, yet he also points a present experience of it. The question of the Pharisees, 'When is the Kingdom of God coming?' is answered by, 'The Kingdom of God is in the midst of you' (Luke 17:21). Not 'in you' or 'within you', as such. For this reason, Jesus can say certain people are in the kingdom, and can invite others by becoming as little children to enter the Kingdom, or to be born of the Spirit, or to give up house and home for the Kingdom's sake (cf. Matt. 18:1, John 3:3–6, cf. Mark 10:17–31). Those who are bound by their riches find it almost impossible to enter the Kingdom, whereas the poor have a good hope.

THE KING: THE KINGDOM OF GOD: THE KINGSHIP

The Beatitudes, then, are not for some future (idyllic) Kingdom, but for the present. In fact Jesus lives as a true member of the Kingdom. More than this, the Kingdom is present in the person of Jesus. Where he preaches and teaches, the Kingdom is present. Whilst it is true that 'the Kingdom of God has come upon' those who are healed, and have demons exorcised and sins forgiven, yet it is also true that the Kingdom has not come in its fulness. It also has a future aspect, even if that future is, as it were, 'at the door'. This imminence means that the ultimate has not yet happened. Nevertheless it is about to happen, and will happen. The disciples are told, 'Fear not, little flock, it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom (Luke 12:32)', and at the Last Supper, Jesus actually appoints to them the Kingdom (Luke 22:28f). There are some standing amongst them who will not see death until they see the Kingdom coming in power. (Luke 9:27).

2. The Kingdom is in the Future.

No one knows the hour of the ultimate coming of the Kingdom. The parables of Matthew 13, and of Matthew chapters 24 and 25 all speak of a suddenness of the coming of the Kingdom, and the radical changes which will be effected, yet at the same time say that the growth of the Kingdom is at times imperceptible, secret, and only, later, suddenly realised. The seed grows secretly, the wheat and tares together, so that full judgement of evil is kept until the end. Yet God vindicates His elect at the end. All nations must hear the Gospel of the Kingdom before the end comes. Hence the coming of the King appears to be that of a slave (Mark 10:44–45), or a son rejected and even killed. Many attempts will be made by evil men and powers to subvert or prevent the Kingdom. However it will come. The tares will be burned, the goats will be separated, the Son will be exalted. Some of the blood-descended children of Abraham will find themselves ousted for the Gentiles.

There is something about the Kingdom being present in its veiled form, as also its coming in its unveiled form, which is most relevant for the present. The children of the covenant and the Kingdom work as though it were here, and as though it were coming quickly. This is why it is not easy to interpret the parables completely. Where they speak of the future they refer, nevertheless, ethically to the present. That is, in the light of what will be—judgement and ethical renewal—one must live in godly manner in the present.

3. The Kingdom is a Mystery.

To speak of the Kingdom as being present, and yet still in the future, seems to be a contradiction. If it is partially present, then there is no contradiction. Yet, with Jesus, it was more than partially present. It was present, but as in a mystery. That is to say, it was evident to men of faith, but not to those who did not have ears to hear or eyes to see. After telling the story of the sower, Jesus told his disciples, 'To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God: but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand'. It was at that time he had cried, 'He who has an ear to hear, let him hear'. It is clear, for example, that for the most part people did not really see and understand what he was about. His own people did not receive him. The religious leaders harassed him, and his statements and actions were continually misunderstood. He once remarked that a prophet could not perish outside Jerusalem, and included his own death in the conclusion.

To his disciples he said, 'Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for verily I say unto you that many prophets and righteous men (or, 'kings') have desired to see the things which you see, and saw them not, and to hear the things which you hear, and have heard them not' (Matt.13:1f., cf. Luke 10:23f.). The people of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum have witnessed mighty miracles—events which would have changed Sodom and Ninevah—but without really seeing! Likewise in John 2:23–3:6 many believe in Jesus when they see his miracles, but he does not believe in them, for in fact these events are intended to be signs.. Hence Jesus prescribes new birth to Nicodemus, in order that he see the mystery of the Kingdom.

(c) The Securing of the Kingdom

In his actions Jesus had shown the power and authority of the Kingdom. In his teaching he had disclosed the nature of the kingdom, especially as he had healed, exorcised demons and forgiven sins. All this he had done as Messiah, albeit that too, had been veiled to a great degree. Now his Messiah-ship was to be proven in the last events. He had successfully overcome Satan in the wilderness, but to release mankind from being in bondage of Satan, was a much more demanding exercise. From Hebrews 2:14–15 (cf. Jude 9 and John 14:30–31, 10:10) we recognise that Satan has 'the might of death' namely the power to keep men and women in bondage through fear of death, which is in fact, fear of judgement (cf. I John 4:16–18).

Luke 22:53 (cf. John 14:30–31) shows that the powers of darkness have a curious and dynamic authority at the time of the Cross. This is the accusatory powers which are associated with Satan (cf. Rev. 12:10), and which have enormous psychological depth, relating as they do to the dynamics of guilt. Messiah is to bear the sins of his people and make intercession for men (Matt. 26:28, Jer. 31:31–34, Isa. 53:12), but in bearing their sins (Isa. 53:4–5, I Pet. 2:24) he must bear the actual guilt. This is the terrifying experience which will either destroy him or destroy the power of evil. Hence in the death of the Cross, and the rising of the resurrection—a practical act and fact of history—Christ defeats the kingdom of darkness, as he prophesied (Luke 11:20–22, John 12:31, 16:11), having triumphed over death. Colossians 2:14–15 (cf. Heb. 2:14–15) show his defeat of the evil powers, and Galatians 1:4 speaks of the deliverance of man from the powers of the corrupt and evil aeon.

There is of course, much more to it than that. The power of sin, the law, the flesh, the conscience and death are so defeated that the new humanity stands upright in the presence of God (Rom. 5:1, 8:1–3). These elements cannot now influence the new humanity which is in Christ. One is now transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of the Son of God's love (Col. 1:13–14), this too being through the forgiveness of sins. The word of justification now becomes the bulwark against Satanic power. This is clear from Romans 5:12–21.

(III) THE EARLY CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM

Following the events of the Cross and Resurrection, Jesus commissions his disciples to preach repentance and remission of sins to the ends of the earth (John 20:19–23, Luke 24:44–47, cf. Matt. 28:18–20, Mark 16:15f., and Acts 1:8). In Acts 1:3–8 an interesting point develops. In the forty days following his resurrection, Jesus talks to them concerning the Kingdom.

As he ends this instruction, he points to the outpouring (baptism in) the Spirit. Putting the two things together as we have done (see p.5 above) they assumed the Kingdom was about to be restored to Israel. That is, they remembered that every promise of the outpouring of the Spirit was accompanied by the promise of the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel. In reply to their very natural question, Jesus said that the times and the seasons were under the Father's authority. That is, they could not know when the Kingdom, as such, would be restored to Israel. Their task, then, was to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom in Jerusalem, and all Judea, in Samaria, and to 'the ends of the earth'. This last statement was from Psalm 2:8 with its strong Messianic connotation. In any case, the whole concept of the Kingdom embracing Jew, Samaritan and Gentile was radical for the disciples, although it was innate in many of the O.T. prophecies, and demanded by the wider nature of the Kingdom. Jesus is virtually saying, 'The Kingdom is not only for Israel. It is the universal Kingdom.'

(a) The Kingdom in the Acts

The first question that must be settled is whether in fact the apostles and the early church preached 'the gospel of the Kingdom'. Acts 20:18-27 makes it clear that they did. Paul speaks of his message as 'repentance to God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ' (v. 21). He calls this 'the gospel of the grace of God' (v.24) and immediately makes it synonymous with 'preaching the Kingdom' (v.25) and so 'the whole counsel of God' (v. 27). This parallels with the commission he says he was given by Christ, in Acts 26:18 'to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith' In 26:20 the Gentiles are 'to repent, and perform deeds worthy of repentance', a statement which closely parallels John's word to the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. 3:7-8). In Acts 13:38-39 Paul's message is forgiveness and justification by faith, which is essentially the message of the covenant.

In Acts 8:5 and 12, the message of Jesus being the Christ, is, in fact the message of the Kingdom, hence people are baptised 'in the name of Jesus Christ'. What is the message but that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah of the Kingdom, and that forgiveness is now obtained by faith in him who has borne their sins upon the Cross. In Acts 14:22 the apostles exhort the converts in Asia Minor to press on since 'through much tribulation we shall enter the Kingdom of God'. This means the Kingdom had been preached, even though it appears, as it often does in the epistles, that the ultimate inheritance of the Kingdom, totally, is at a future date. Even more clearly in Acts 19:8 the apostles are described as 'speaking boldly and arguing and pleading about the Kingdom of God', doubtless the matter to which Paul refers in Acts 20:25.

The final picture in Acts is of Paul in Rome, in Acts 28:23-31 where 'this salvation of God' is in fact 'testifying to the kingdom of God' and 'teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ'. Such statements lead us to conclude that Jesus is shown as the Lord, the Messiah, of the Kingdom, and that whilst much of the Kingdom is future and eschatological, yet it is also present and salvific. Hence its immediate relatedness to all men and women who are in need of salvation.

(b) The Kingdom in the Epistles

It would be a fruitless task to reduce the teaching of the Kingdom to those comparatively few verses which actually mention the Kingdom. The great theme of the Lordship of Christ occupies much of the Epistles. In the initial kerugmatic teaching of the apostles, it is mentioned only in passing. It is not the burden of the epistles which are directed to those who have already entered the Kingdom. Nevertheless, significant teaching clusters around the references which speak of the Kingdom. They can be roughly classified as follows:

1. Entrance into the Kingdom.

Colossians 1:13–14 speaks of those who are already in the Kingdom. Hebrews 12:28 speaks of believers having ‘received a Kingdom which cannot be shaken’ This is the equivalent of Christ appointing a Kingdom to his disciples (Luke 22:28f) which in turn refers to Daniel 7:22 and 27 in which the saints ‘receive’ the Kingdom because it is ‘given’ to them. In Ephesians 5:5 Paul speaks of persons who relate to impurity and darkness as not having any inheritance in the Kingdom. Similarly, James (2:5) speaks of those who God has chosen to be heirs of the Kingdom. We can say that all who have been translated into the Kingdom have it proleptically, and so wait for it.

2. Heirs-to-be of the Kingdom.

I Corinthians 6:9, 15:50, Galatians 5:21, I Thessalonians 2:12, II Thessalonians 1:5, II Timothy 4:18, James 2:5 and II Peter 1:11 all indicate that the Kingdom is coming and will be inherited by those who are called into the Kingdom. These references also state clearly that there are marks of those who are in the Kingdom. Such live pure lives, having parted with their former life, and so now walk in light. Those who do not live this way are not worthy of the Kingdom and will not enter it. There is no suggestion that anyone merits the Kingdom by the way he lives, but simply that righteous living is the way or manner of the Kingdom. II Peter 1:11 speaks of ‘an abundant entrance into the Kingdom’, meaning that one’s manner of life here conditions one’s manner of being there. I Corinthians 15:50 (and context) indicates that unresurrected flesh cannot inherit the Kingdom. Inheritance of the Kingdom is being in the Kingdom in its ultimate fulness. However, as we have seen, one is already in the Kingdom by repentance towards God and faith in Christ. Notice that the prospect of the ultimate inheritance is a great motivation to godly living and present holiness. In II Timothy 4:18, Paul speaks of God delivering him from all evil and preserving him for the ‘heavenly Kingdom’.

3. Other Elements of the Kingdom.

In Romans chapter 14 Paul is discussing the whole matter of Christian freedom, and speaks of the wrangles over food and ethical matters which disturb certain believers. He says (v. 17) ‘The kingdom of God is not meat, food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit; he who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and is approved by men’. He gives us a window onto a true understanding of the Kingdom:

- (a) The Kingdom is in and by the Holy Spirit
- (b) It is a Kingdom of love (cf. Col. 1:13).
- (c) Its members actually experience righteousness, peace and joy.
- (d) In this context they do not press their own 'freedoms' against the problems of others, i.e. against those of weak conscience and weak faith (cf. I Cor. ch. 8).

The second element Paul refers to in I Corinthians 4:20. At Corinth there has been trouble with proud and arrogant people, who, when Paul will confront them, will collapse. Their talk is loud, but they lack power. The Kingdom of God is not in words or mere talk, but in power. This refers back to what is accomplished in the Kingdom, and by the Kingdom. In the Gospels, the word of the Kingdom effects what it utters, and this principle is seen in Acts 8 where Philip's word effects what it accomplishes. Similarly in I Peter 1:10 he who speaks is to speak as the utterance of God.

The third element is the suffering connected with the Kingdom. In II Thessalonians 1:4–5, Paul speaks of the sufferings his converts are enduring for the sake of the Kingdom. In fact such suffering is making them worthy of the Kingdom. Whilst they do not merit it through suffering, it enriches (glorifies) them for that great day.

Another element is mentioned in I Corinthians 15:24–28, where Christ's outworking of victory is seen in his winning the kingdoms of the world, and offering them up to the Father as the Kingdom. This is the equivalent of Philippians 2:9–11 where, at the end 'every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father'. It indicated that the matter of God's reigning and the battle concerning the Kingdom is still going on, even at this present time.

(c) The Kingdom in the Revelation of John

Below we will attempt to sketch a panoramic view of the Kingdom 'from creation to [the new] creation', so that we will not cover all the Book of the Revelation in this section. What is clear, however, is that the book shows the events and operations which lead up to the final denouement of the Kingdom. Doubtless (as in chapter 12) the prophecy goes back beyond the N.T. events, and then proceeds into the future ahead of them. Yet all is the scene of the conflict of two kingdoms, that of God and that of Satan.

The book, as it opens, is addressed to those who, with John 'share in Jesus the tribulation, and the kingdom, and the patient endurance'. They are in the Kingdom; they await the Kingdom. In 11:15 the same moment described in I Corinthians 15:24–28 is announced by the angel who says, 'The kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever'. In 12:7–11 a great conflict appears in heaven, perhaps that which Jesus saw in Luke 10:18, for Satan and his hosts are cast down, out of heaven. A loud voice announces, 'Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them, day and night, before our God'.

The whole book, as we have said, leads up to the ultimate climax of victory. The motif is repeated again and again, especially in chapters 18–21, where Babylon—the kingdom of the world—is cast down, and the evil powers of the devil, the beast, the second beast, its image and the false prophet are climactically defeated. As we will see, the victory of the Cross is worked out in the final defeat of all evil. The Kingdom of God remains. It is everlasting, and God is King!

5. THE WHOLE MATTER OF THE KINGDOM

We have said, in our introduction, that there are two ways of understanding the Kingdom. We can do it by seeing the motif of the Kingdom as the great theme of Scripture, or we can simply trace through the many references to it. Whatever we do we must keep in mind that the Kingdom is the reign and rule of God, as it has ever been, and as it will ever be. Particularly we are to be submitted to it, and work in the power and principle of it.

(I) A PANORAMIC VIEW OF THE KINGDOM

Often the Kingdom is called ‘the everlasting Kingdom’. Its transcendence, and its immanence is emphasised throughout Scripture. By creating the universe, God has always been King over it. The rebellion of evil powers, and the abdication of man from his stewardship of the universe have caused two kingdoms to be. The kingdom of evil is ever in conflict with the Kingdom of God.

The creation of a special kingdom of Israel must have caused the hatred of the kingdom of evil. Doubtless there is no explicit teaching concerning Satan’s hatred of this Jewish kingdom, yet the opposition of nations, as also the infestation of demonic evil on Canaan is significant. Acts 7 shows that Israel was always under the pressure of idolatry. The Northern Kingdom soon split away in apostasy from the true God, and Israel’s history is that of a kingdom which—apart from its holy remnant—never achieved the goal of Exodus 19:5–6.

The prophetic promises were that such a Kingdom would ultimately arrive. In Christ this was to be the Kingdom. Whilst it did not formulate, as such, in his lifetime, following his death, resurrection and ascension a new people of God formed. It is to these that Peter transfers the promise of Exodus 19:5–6 and says, ‘You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were no people, but now you are God’s people: once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy’. This accords very closely, with Ephesians 2:11–22.

Even so, the Kingdom is not complete. It must actually come, at the end of time, when all evil shall be banished, and the righteousness of God vindicated. This is a theme pursued in the Gospels, the Epistles, and the Revelation. Particularly powerful is the Revelation in showing that (a) all evil is only allowed to do its works under the sovereign hand of God. Ultimately He uses it for the purpose of His Kingdom, e.g. to ripen itself for judgement, and where necessary to be used as the scourge of God. (b) All evil is ultimately vanquished, especially by the Lamb who alone may guide and control history (cf. Rev. 5:1ff.). (c) Finally when all evil is destroyed, the new heavens and the new earth appear, and God is in the midst of His people and they adore and serve Him forever. His will is ‘done in earth as in heaven’.

This, then, is the Kingdom of the King.

(II) THE KINGDOM OF GOD, HIS SON AND HIS SPIRIT

(a) The Kingdom of the Father

In Matthew chapters 5–7, Jesus clearly points to the Kingdom as that of the Father. The Lord's prayer also makes this clear. To seek the Kingdom is to acknowledge the Father. It is also to be sons of God, and to love as He does. In the widest view we see God as Creator-Father (cf. Luke 3:38, Gen.1:26f., Acts 17:28–30). In the special sense we see in Matthew 25:34 that God, as Father, has prepared the Kingdom for His children from the foundation of the world. This must parallel John 14:1–5. The children of the Father are also the children of the Kingdom (cf. Eph. 1:4–7, Isa. 43:6–7, Eph. 1:12–14) as also the children of the covenant and the prophets (Acts 3:25), because they are the children of Abraham, and it is his true children who belong to the Kingdom (cf. Matt. 3:1–10). Covenant and Kingdom are closely linked as we see from Ezekiel 34 and Ezekiel 37.

The Kingdom, then, is of the Father, who is primarily the Father of the Son, and then of the children.

(b) The Kingdom of the Son

In Colossians 1:13, the Kingdom is called 'the Kingdom of the Son of His Love'. In John 3:35 it is said that the Father loves the Son and had given all things into his hands (cf. John 16:15, Matt. 11:27). In Psalm 2, the Messiah is the Son who is made king, and to whom are given the nations of the world. Jesus said 'As my Father appointed a Kingdom for me' meaning that what is really the Father's is also his. Hence, 'All that the Father has is mine'. At the same time he speaks of being the Son of Man, and says, 'The Son of Man will send his angels, and will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers'. (Matt. 13:41). Hence it is his kingdom. This accords, of course, with Daniel 7:14f. where the 'Son of man' receives the Kingdom. Again in Matthew 16:28 he says, 'Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not see death before they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom'.

On the night of his betrayal, he spoke of 'my kingdom' (Luke 22:30) and told Pilate 'My kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). In the Epistles it is his Kingdom, or the kingdom of Christ (II Tim. 4:1, 4:18, II Peter 1:11, etc.). This is undoubtedly because in Acts, Christ is seen as the Messiah of the Kingdom, the Lord who is raised above all powers and authorities. Hence in I Corinthians 15:24–28 he is subduing all things with a view to giving the Kingdom to the Father (cf. Phil. 2:9–11) and this is explicitly stated in Revelation 12:10.

(c) The Kingdom of the Spirit

That the Kingdom is very much in the hands of the Spirit is evident from Matthew 12:28. The Kingdom of God comes upon people when Jesus casts out demons by the Spirit. This in fact is the meaning of the anointing of Jesus at his baptism (Luke 4:17f., Acts 10:38). The Spirit works in the interest of the Kingdom. Paul so closely identifies the Lord (Christ) and the Spirit in II Corinthians 3:17–18 that it is difficult to tell who is who. The same Spirit who is the aide to Jesus' sonship is the Spirit by whom men are born into the Kingdom of God.

As we have seen from Acts 1:3–8, it is the ‘Spirit of His Son’ sent into their hearts, which makes men to be true sons of the Kingdom and the covenant (Gal. 4:4–6, Rom. 8:14ff.). This accords with the prophecies of the Spirit in regard to the restoration of the Kingdom, which as we have seen, Ezekiel 37 and Joel 2 being two of the outstanding examples.

In the Epistles, the Holy Spirit of power, and the Kingdom is in power (cf. I Cor. 2:5, 4:20). Also it is ‘righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.’ We also see that to walk in the Spirit is to be victorious over the flesh and to live according to grace and not law. Hence the life of the Kingdom is according to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

We conclude that the creation, redemption and restoration of man and the universe comes under the trinitarian action of God. The ultimate Kingdom is of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

(III) THE KINGDOM AND THE CHURCH

The practical nature of the Kingdom meets us at this point. Since the Kingdom is primarily the rule and reign of God, is then the Kingdom the Church, the Church the Kingdom? The answer is, ‘No!’, but the ‘No’ has to be conditioned. Those in the Kingdom are those who have been liberated by Messiah and his kingly rule. They are children of the Father. They are sons of the Kingdom. They are really ‘the community of the Kingdom’, nevertheless they are not the Kingdom.

It is not correct to identify the church and the Kingdom. Nor is it possible to make them wholly different, one from the other. In the Gospels Christ is the Messiah, bringing in the Kingdom. In the Acts, the church preaches the King and his Kingdom. Indeed they are with him in the outworking of His Kingdom, as we saw from Acts 1:8, the Gospel commission passages, and I Corinthians 15:24–28 (cf. II Cor. 10:1f., and Eph. 6:10f.). Also the Kingdom, being the dynamic rule and reign of God, is that entity which will be consummated at the end of the age, as it, also, consummates the present age. At best the Church is Christ’s people, his community, through whom he works his will, which is primarily the will of the Father (John 14:10f., cf. 16:15).

If the church were wholly the Kingdom, then we could pray ‘Thy church come’, and the church would be that force by which all evil is subdued. Instead, Christ and the kingly rule he has been given, are that power. In Ephesians 1:19–23, Jesus is made head over all things ‘for the church’, and in Ephesians 3:1–11 Christ outworks the plan of God, but enlists his church in some of the action.

The main point that has to be kept in mind is that Jesus is Lord, and that he is working out the plan of God. If the church merely sees him as its moral and devotional head, and occupies itself with its own internal being, and does not heed the commission and identify with Christ in his plan, then the whole thrust of the Kingdom becomes foreign to the life of the church, and it stultifies, being occupied with itself as an entity in contradiction to its true reason for being. It will become an ethical entity at best, or, at worse a pointless socio-religious organisation.

(IV) THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM

The Kingdom has always been. The Kingdom was there in Israel. The Kingdom was yet to come. It came in Christ and was secured. The Kingdom is yet to come. This sums up the matter of the Kingdom. The life of the Kingdom is lived by members of the Church, because the Kingdom is about to come. We must not be surprised by its coming. Ethically, we must not be caught napping.

Matthew 13, 24 and 25 with Luke 21, and Mark 13, provide the materials which we call eschatological and apocalyptic, for in them are events which concern the Kingdom, and the coming of the King at the end of the age. Likewise in the Revelation, we read in apocalyptic language the events which lead up to the last days. In Acts 2:14–21, the coming of the Spirit is for the last days, and the last events which lead up to the day of the Lord are also told. Whilst this paper cannot enter into the intricacies of the various prophetic schemes, the material is enough to warn the evil that that day will come, when the judgements will be made and to encourage the believer to continue in the Kingdom until it is fulfilled. Whilst watchfulness is enjoined, obedience encouraged, and holiness of life motivated (cf. II Pet. 3:10ff.) yet even more, proclamation of the Gospel is both enjoined and motivated. In I Timothy 4:1–2 the writer says,

‘ I charge you in the presence of God and of Jesus Christ who is to judge the living and dead by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching’.

The passages speaking of the eventual coming and consummation of the Kingdom act as a warning to those unsaved, and as encouragement to those who are redeemed. Best of all, those who wait, wait for the unveiling of the sons of God, for the changing of their bodies of humiliation into bodies of glory, such as is his. They wait to see the last enemy destroyed (death) and know that there will be no more sorrow, or crying, nor pain, nor death. They know too, that all things will happen suddenly, such as the coming of a flash flood (Matt. 24:37ff., Luke 17:26), the entrance of a burglar (Matt.24:43), the surprise of the servants at the sudden homecoming of their master (Matt. 24:45), or the sudden arrival of the bridegroom (Matt. 25:1–13). Yet come it will—that Kingdom!

As Zechariah 14:9 states it clearly,

‘In that day the Lord will become King of all the earth; On that day the Lord will be one, and His name one’.

Hence we pray: ‘Thy Kingdom come’. Hence the Lord of the Kingdom says, ‘Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you’.

APPENDIX ONE

TWO KINGDOMS IN ONE UNIVERSE

The scope of our paper did not allow opportunity to trace the whole system of Satan, his anti-God system called the world. This 'world-system' is under the dominion of Satan who has an hierarchy of principalities and powers. Hence the history of the world, from one vantage point, is the power struggle between the kingdom of darkness (Luke 11:14–26, esp. v. 18) and the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God has never been vanquished since God is unperturbed by Satan and his operations. This is because, anyway, they are under His sovereignty. Satan seems to fluctuate between believing he is under this sovereign control (cf. Rev. 12:12, Mat. 8:29), and that he will be as God (Isa. 14:13–14, II Thess. 2:3–4). Without doubt, Satan seeks to oppose every move that God makes, even to destroying Messiah (cf. Rev. ch. 12). If men, in their thinking were not deceived by Satan (II Cor. 4:4f.), then they would not be under the deceit of sin (Heb. 3:13–14), and they would understand that the misery in the world springs from the kingdom of darkness, and not from God. However, not even God's judgements, which are intended to lead to sane estimates, necessarily bring repentance. Revelation 16:10–11 shows that punitive judgement, when experienced by the kingdom of darkness, only increases hardness.

Ultimately, of course, all evil is judged and destroyed. It is not that the Kingdom grows in power, so much as its eternal innate power is revealed. In the sense the Kingdom never 'extends' (as men often express it). It never has been dispossessed by evil. It has always been God's intention to incorporate the rebellion of men and angels, and glorify His sovereignty, that is to rule by His Kingdom.

Practically, the life of the Kingdom is that of forgiveness. That is, God forgives through the Cross, and the members of His Kingdom forgive one another. The daily practice of overcoming evil lies in this element. The Beatitudes are the true expression of the Kingdom of love (cf. Col. 1:13–14). This is why the pure in heart, the poor in spirit, the humble, the meek, the reconcilers and others are the members of the Kingdom. Hence in Revelation 5:1ff. the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (cf. Gen. 49:10) is in fact the Lamb that has been slain. In Revelation 11:15–19, the Kingdom is consummated, the twenty-four elders worship God, saying 'We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, who art and who wast, that thou hast taken thy great power and begun to reign. The nations raged [Ps. 2:1], but thy wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, for rewarding thy servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear thy name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth'. They mean, 'You always had this power. It was never diminished. Yet you have waited patiently (cf. Rom. 2:4ff.). Now you have exercised that power, and completed the settlement, for ever, of your Kingdom'

It has to be seen that this defeat is not to be the exercise of some metaphysical power inherent in God, but by His love, which is always holy, and accords with His righteousness. At the same time, the forces of evil must never be underrated. They are vicious, evil, subtle, cunning deceptive. However, this kind of evil, or any kind of evil cannot accomplish a lasting result. The seeds of its own destruction are contained within it. Only the Kingdom of love and light is eternal. Hence, when every device is used by evil, it fails, and is ultimately destroyed.

APPENDIX TWO

THE SON OF GOD: THE KING OF ISRAEL

Tracing the elements of Messiah, Son of God, King of Israel, Son of Man in the Old Testament, and in the New, is not a tedious task, but it is most demanding. A simple Christology is found in 'The Lord from Heaven' by Leon Morris (I.V.F.). In this appendix we are concerned to trace briefly the O.T. predictions which relate to his authority in the Kingdom. They are:

(i) Messiah

The latter half of Isaiah speaks of the Suffering Servant who has a ministry even beyond restoring Israel to the Gentiles themselves. Isaiah 61:1 speaks of this Messiah-figure being anointed, and sets out his work. Jesus refers John the Baptist to such Messianic-Kingdom ministry, when John perhaps begins to doubt Jesus is the Messiah. See Luke 7:17–23 (Isa. 29:18–19, 35:5–6, 61:1). In Luke 4:17f. Jesus had indicated the significance of his baptism in these terms. (Cf. Acts 10:38). Hence he is Messiah, and Messiah related to the Kingdom. Another source of Messiahship is Psalm 2 where the anointed one is both 'Son' and 'King'. He is given the nations of the earth as his kingdom. In fact this figure leads us on to another Kingdom concept—the Son.

(ii) The Son of God

Psalm 2 is the locus classicus of the Son concept. The Hebrew concept of the King being the Son was by adoption, rather than procreation, and of course he was head over the Kingdom. Hence in Matthew 16:16 and 26:63 Messiah and Son of God are virtually synonymous. This then accords with the statement of Nathaniel, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' Again the concept of Zechariah 9:9 relates to Jesus' triumphal entrance into Jerusalem when he is acclaimed as 'the Son of David', 'Blessed is the Kingdom of our father David', 'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!' and, 'the King of Israel!' The Son-Messiah, then, is King of the Kingdom. As we have seen, the Anointed-King-Son of Psalm two relates to the Servant of Isaiah 42:1–2, and is addressed in the terms of Psalm two at his baptism, transfiguration, death, resurrection and ascension (Matt. 3:17, 17:5, Acts 4:25–26, 13:32–34, cf. Rom. 1:4, Heb. 1:3–5, cf. Rev. 2:26, 19:15).

The Son motif also relates to Israel as the Son (Exod. 4:22) who is called out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1). Hosea 11:1 is applied to Jesus as the Son (Matt. 2:15). He is corporately the Son, embracing the 'sons', as in fact Israel embraced the 'sons of God' (cf. Duet. 14:1–2).

(iii) The Son of Man

Jesus often uses this term, both to denote his true humanity, and to relate to the concept of Daniel 7:14ff. He has special authority which is given to his humanity, as it was in Daniel 7. In Matthew 26:63–65 when the high priest asks whether he is the Son of God, he, Jesus, does not deny, yet rather emphasises that he is the Son of man, and here both seem to be the one. Hence the high priest makes the accusation of blasphemy. Jesus says, 'Hereafter you will see the Son of man, seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven'. (Cf. Matt. 16:27, Acts 1:11, etc.).

THE KING: THE KINGDOM OF GOD: THE KINGSHIP

This Son of Man relates to ‘the saints of the Most High’, who are to receive the Kingdom. Israel is a Kingdom, in accordance with Exodus 19:5–6. Obviously she does not fulfil this charge although she promises obedience (Exod. 24:7). In Daniel 7:22 and 27, the saints are said to be given the Kingdom and to receive it. However they receive it in the Son of Man. Jesus encouraged the disciples, ‘Fear not little flock, it is the Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom’ (Luke 12:32) and later appointed the Kingdom to them, as it has been appointed to him (Luke 22:28) thus assuring them of the fulfilment of Daniel 7. The saints of course participate in the battle and struggle of the Kingdom. See Luke 22:28, Revelation 19:14 (cf. 19:8b), including the dynamic humility of the saints (Matt. 5:5–16) which is the true life of the Kingdom, securing the Kingdom for the saints.

These three titles, ‘Messiah’, ‘Son of God’, and ‘Son of Man’ have their origins in the O.T., but are filled out in the N.T., and become deeply significant, especially in regard to the Kingdom. They show the progressive nature of revelation and of the plan of God, and verify the fact that the Scripture, as also the work of God, are a beautiful unity.

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