

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

The Gospel of Matthew

The Kingdom of God

- ¹⁴ “After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ ‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!’” (Mk 1:14-15)
- Jesus began his ministry with the announcement that “the time is **fulfilled**” (Πεπλήρωται [peplerotai]), suggesting that the kingdom of God answers expectations based on past promises

The Kingdom of God in the Bible

- “The evidence of the NT overwhelmingly supports the view that Jesus and the apostles understood the **kingdom of God** as the fulfilment of the hopes and promises recorded in the OT. The fact that the term ‘**the kingdom of God**’ does not occur in the OT is not significant. The idea of the **rule of God** over creation, over all creatures, over all the kingdoms of the world and, in a special way, over his chosen and redeemed people, is the very heart of the message of the Hebrew Scriptures” (Goldsworthy 2000, 618)

Creation and Blessing

- The theme of “blessing” dominates the theology of Genesis
 - God our Creator, “Let there be light” (1:3)
 - Promise of “seed” to be fruitful applied to vegetation (1:11-12)
 - Promise of “seed” to be fruitful applied to humans (1:22, 28)
 - Rule over the earth and life forms (1:26-28)

Rule and Dominion

- “The creation narratives in Gen 1-2 relate to God’s kingship. Created in the image of God and given **dominion** over the rest of creation, Adam and Eve have a unique role in the purpose of God” (Goldsworthy 2000, 618)

Eden as a Pattern of the Kingdom

- “We see in the garden of Eden a pattern of the kingdom of God. God’s people, Adam and Eve, live in God’s place, the garden of Eden, under God’s **rule**; as a result, they enjoy God’s blessing” (Roberts 2002, 33; cf. Goldsworthy 1981, 47)

Rebellion

- “God exercised his **rule** in the garden through his word and that is where Satan directs his attack” (Roberts 2002 38)
- Yet man and woman rebelled against the rightful rule of God over the whole creation
- Their relationship with God was fractured and their relationship as husband and wife became competitive

Punishment and Promise

- Reversal of blessing: God punished Adam by returning him to the dust of the ground (3:14-19)
- Promise of the victory of the woman's "seed" or deliverer (3:15)
- The death penalty was imposed when God expelled the couple from the garden. Their exile barred them from access to the "the tree of life" (Gen 3:22-24)
- The struggle between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman was first manifested in Cain's murder of Abel (4:8)

Spread of Sin

- ⁵ “The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human **heart** was only evil all the time. ⁶ The LORD regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled” (Gen 6:5-6)
- The flood (Gen 6-9)
- The Tower of Babel (Gen 11)
- “The tower of Babel is a vivid symbol of our sinful desire to exalt ourselves and create our own **kingdom** independently of God” (Roberts 2002, 43)

The Kingdom in Israel

- Following the loss of the **Edenic kingdom**, God provides redemption by calling Abraham and electing a people from his descendants to be the chosen people of God
- “As the theocratic nation of Israel is constituted at Sinai, the structures of government develop towards a **kingship under the dynasty of David**. Solomon builds the temple in Jerusalem. The rule of the Davidic kings is representative of the rule of God over his kingdom” (Goldsworthy 2000, 619)

Blessings for the Nations

- God calls Abraham to form a great nation, as a channel of “blessing” to the nations (Gen 12:1-3)
- The promise of “seed” made to Abraham refers to Christ
- ¹⁶“The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say ‘and to seeds,’ meaning many people, but ‘and to your seed,’ meaning one person, who is Christ” (Gal 3:16)

The Gospel According to Isaiah

- “You who bring **good news** to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, ‘Here is your God!’” (Isa 40:9)
- “See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and his arm **rules** for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him” (Isa 40:10)
- “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring **good news**, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God **reigns!**’” (Isa 52:7)

The Gospel According to Isaiah

- In the context of these passages, a messenger bringing good news announces that God is coming to Jerusalem as a **victorious king** to deliver his people from Babylon's oppression
- The message of the "evangelizer" is that despite the apparent power of the enemy, it is God alone who rules: "Here is your God!" (Isa 40:9) and "Your God **reigns!**" (52:7)
- Deliverance was undeserved, and they were saved by God's grace

The Gospel According to Isaiah

- Due to sin, God promises that he will clothe his people in a righteousness that is not their own (61:10-11) when they come to him in faith and repentance (55:1, 7)
- God determines that the punishment for his people's sin will be executed, not on them, but on a **divine servant-king** appointed to be their substitute (Isa 52:13-53:12)

The Gospel According to Isaiah

- This **servant king** will be:
 - Pierced for their transgressions (53:5)
 - He will bear their iniquities, make a sin offering, and justify many (53:10-11)
 - He will die, be buried, but will see the light of life (53:11)
 - He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom (9:7)

The Gospel According to Isaiah

- Isaiah, in 61:1, identifies this **servant-king** as the Messiah, with divine attributes
- “The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners” (Isa 61:1; cf. Lu 4:18)

The Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew's Gospel

- “A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the Son of David, the Son of Abraham” (Matt 1:1; cf. Luke's genealogy which traces him to Adam)
- His introductory statement that Jesus is both the “**son of David**” and the “**son of Abraham**” (1:1) indicates that salvation promises made through David to God's chosen people, Israel (2 Sam 7:8-17) and through Abraham to all peoples (Gen 12:1-3) have been fulfilled through Jesus

The Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew's Gospel

- ¹⁵ “‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The **kingdom of God** has come near. Repent and believe the good news!’” (Mk 1:15)
- “From that time on Jesus began to preach, ‘repent, for the **kingdom of heaven** is near’” (Matt 4:17)
- Life in the kingdom of heaven is centered on an intimate relationship with Jesus for those who follow him (4:12-17)
- Only in Matthew's gospel does Jesus designate followers to become the “**church**” (ἐκκλησίας [ekklesia]), or an assembly called out by God that he will build and superintend (18:17)

The Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew's Gospel

- The Sermon on the Mount (chs 5-7) is unique to Matthew
- Jesus expounds on a radical everyday discipleship lived out in the world
- Jesus is the ultimate example of kingdom righteousness, who came to fulfil OT revelation of God's will for his people (5:17, 21-47), so we may reflect God in all areas of our lives (v. 48)
- Life in the **kingdom** involves an inside-out transformation into the righteousness of the kingdom (5:20)

Conclusions

- Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom, in connection with the OT, is the transition to Paul's message of the cross
- Christians have a unified and consistent message to proclaim to the nations
- Kingdom life addresses all aspects of what discipleship to Jesus means in this age, including ethical, religious, marital, and economic dimensions
- "The **whole** church taking the **whole** gospel to the **whole** world" (Lausanne Covenant 1974)