

The Kingdom of God

SoCM

Introduction

- The Bible portrays God as the eternal **sovereign king** over all things
- God gave dominion to Adam and Eve to rule over his creation in the garden
- Due to the fall, God re-establishes his reign over the whole earth by redeeming humanity
- The central focal point is the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus to extend God's rule on earth
- Jesus preached about the kingdom, and those who believe enter into the kingdom of God
- While the kingdom is **already present** and growing on earth, there will be a time when Jesus returns that God's reign **will extend** throughout a renewed heaven and earth

God's Rule Rejected

- As the climax to his ordering of creation, God authorizes humanity to exercise dominion on his behalf over all other creatures (Gen 1:26-28)
- To this end, God makes humans in his image and commissions them as his vice-regents to govern the earth
- Due to their rebellion against God, they actually submit to the authority of the serpent, who gains dominion over humans and everything God placed under their rule
- As a result, sin spreads in Gen 3-11 as people misuse their capacity to rule
- The serpent as the devil or Satan (Rev 12:9; 20:2) becomes the “prince of this world” (Jn 16:11), usurping God's position as king

Restoring God's Rule on Earth

- God's plan of salvation and restoring his kingdom began with the calling of **Abraham** to be the father of a great nation through which all the nations of the world would be blessed (Gen 12)
- The mission of God lies at the heart of the whole biblical story and there are many aspects to it
- One essential component is God providing a **human king** who will fulfil the role originally delegated to Adam and Eve
- In due course, with the creation of the nation of Israel, God makes David king when the prophet Samuel anoints him (1 Sam 16:1-13)

Restoring God's Rule on Earth

- When David as king of Israel captures Jerusalem and transports to it the ark of the covenant (the footstool of the heavenly throne of God) a partial convergence of David's kingdom and God's kingdom occur (2 Sam 6-7)
- Confirmation of this comes when David's son Solomon constructs a **temple** for God in Jerusalem (1 Kgs 5-8)
- With this the palace of the heavenly king stands close to the palace of the Davidic king
- Ps 2 reveals that nations stand in opposition to both God and his anointed king

Restoring God's Rule on Earth

- Nevertheless, there was an expectation for a **future Davidic king** who would restore God's rule over all the earth, bringing justice and peace (Ps 72)
- This hope surfaces in prophetic passages that anticipates a future messianic age (Isa 2:2-4; 9:2-7; 11:1-12)
- Because David's successors failed to remain faithful to God, the OT story moves from the heyday of David's reign to the sacking of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple by the Babylonians in 587/586 BC
- This was a major setback to establishing God's reign on earth
- Yet hope lived on in **Daniel's dream**:

Restoring God's Rule on Earth

- “In the time of those kingdoms, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever” (Dan 2:44)

Jesus as the Davidic King

- The OT hopes associated with the Davidic kingdom gave rise to the concept of a messiah (anointed one)
- When the gospels speak of **Jesus as the Messiah**, or Christ, they view him as the fulfilling the OT expectation involving the Davidic dynasty
- Of all the gospels, Matthew fully develops Jesus' link with the Davidic dynasty
- From his genealogy to his concluding observation about Jesus having all authority in heaven and on earth, he consistently emphasizes Jesus' royal status. But Jesus is no ordinary king
- Firstly, Jesus displays exceptional powers over nature, signifying his deity and kingship

Jesus as the Davidic King

- However, Jesus establishes God's kingdom by his self-giving, sacrificial death on the cross
- Its an **inverted kingdom**—Jesus dies on the cross in order to end Satan's rule over the earth and loose human beings from Satan's control
- Jesus' death opens the way for releasing those who are enslaved to evil (Matt 12:25-29)
- In light of his mission, Jesus proclaims the coming of the kingdom of God and urges his listeners to enter it by repenting: **"From that time on Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near'"** (Matt 4:17; cf. Matt 3:2) and believing the good news: **"The time has come, he said. 'The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!'"** (Mk 1:15)

Jesus as the Davidic King

- Through a series of parables, Jesus gives insights into the nature of the kingdom of God (Matt 13)
- The **kingdom will grow gradually**, starting as something small, but will reach great size (Mk 4:26-32)
- During this growing phase, the devil will actively seek to hinder the kingdom's expansion
- Those who become members of the kingdom will face persecution from both Satan and those who side with him
- Even Jesus is tempted and must resist Satan's offer of universal kingship (Matt 4:8-9)

Jesus as the Davidic King

- Since the coming of the kingdom does not immediately end all evil, Jesus reveals that at the end of the growing phase, he will return as universal judge to separate the righteous and the wicked
- At this time, with the destruction of everything evil, God's kingdom will become all that it was meant to be from the beginning
- Jesus warns that not everyone who initially responds positively will remain submissive to his authority as king
- Some will claim kingdom membership, but their actions will reveal otherwise (Matt 7:15-23):

Jesus as the Davidic King

- ¹⁵ "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn-bushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them."
- ²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

Jesus as the Davidic King

- Jesus reveals that national boundaries do not delineate the kingdom
- God's kingdom exists wherever people believe in him as Lord
- Jesus' followers must pray constantly for the coming of God's kingdom on earth (Matt 6:9-13) and make disciples throughout the whole world (Matt 28:19-20)

Kingdoms in Conflict

- Although Christ's sacrificial death on the cross ensures Satan's ultimate defeat, the evil continues to resist the expansion of God's kingdom
- Our struggle is not against "flesh and blood" but "the powers of this dark world" and "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm" (Eph 6:2)
- As God's chosen Messiah, Jesus comes as the king of peace. He deliberately rejects using violence to establish his kingdom
- Instead, he would permit his enemies to execute him to create the kingdom through suffering and death
- By laying down his life, he is exalted to rule over all (Phil 2:7-11)

Kingdoms in Conflict

- As history show, the kingdom of God cannot be established by force or military conquest
- Rather, God's rule must be persuaded in love
- This world is divided between those who welcome and those who oppose God's kingdom on earth
- For now, Christians must persevere in the face of opposition, realizing that the conflict between good and evil will one day end when Jesus returns in glory
- Until then, our mission is to proclaim the good news of the kingdom, and praying: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:9-10)

Conclusion

- The Kingdom of God has arrived (Mk 1:5) but we must pray and wait for the fullness of God's kingdom to be revealed (Matt 6:9-13)
- We live in the "already" but "not yet" of God's kingdom
- The kingdom of God will grow slowly like a mustard seed (Mk 4:32)
- Consistent with the OT, Jesus preached about the kingdom of God, but his actions pointed to the cross and his resurrection, which Paul describes as the gospel (1 Cor 15)
- Jesus inaugurated an "inverted" spiritual kingdom of humility, but a glorious kingdom will come one day when he returns to establish his earthly kingdom on earth