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THE KINGDOM OF GOD: BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT OF A COMPLEX DISCOURSE CONCEPT

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INTRODUCTION

Some schools of radical gospel criticism had erroneously concluded by the middle of the last century that since Jesus had no consciousness of himself in the lofty role of the Christ, all Christological titles must be dismissed as post-Easter church creations and the orthodox tenet that Jesus conceived himself to be the Son of Man establishing the kingdom of God must likewise be abandoned. And yet, in a climate of critical skepticism, that the kingdom of God constituted the central theme of Jesus' public proclamation was consensually acknowledged by virtually all gospel critics by the late fifties and early sixties of the past century, even though no concensus as to what he meant by it had been determined.[1] Rather, "everyone forces the kingdom of God violently into his own theological traditions."[2] Buchanan's well known characterization of the history of kingdom of God research would be parody if it were not so descriptively true:

> Scholars have internalized, de-temporalized, de-historicized, cosmologized, spiritualized, allegorized, mysticized, psychologized, philosophized and sociologized the concept of the kingdom of God. This has all been done for the purpose of denationalizing it[3].

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[1] Mark Saucy, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus in 20th Century Theology* (Dallas: Word, 1997), XXI. Also see, I. Howard Marshall, *Jesus The Saviour; Studies in New Testament Theology* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 1990) 214–15.

[2] R. H. Hiers, "Eschatology and Methodology," *JBL* 85 (1966): 183.

[3] G. W. Buchanan, *The Consequences of the Covenant* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970) 55.

And we might add the de-apocalypticizing of Schweitzer's 'end-of-the-world-Jesus' who, Schweitzer claimed, mistakenly proclaimed, in a frenzy of crisis and urgency, the imminent end of the world—an interpretation tweaked and perpetuated by Bultmann, Bornkamm, Conzelmann, Jeremias, Kümmel and Käsemann.[4] Disenchanted with the de-apocalypticized/ noneschatological Jesus of N. T. Wright,[5] J. D. Crossan[6] and Marcus Borg. D.C. Allison seeks to recapture Schweitzer's description of Jesus as an apocalyptic millennarian prophet whose mission and proclamation focused on the imminent catastrophic irruption of God's apocalyptic kingdom accompanied by the end of the world.[7] Not impressed with Allison's assessment of Wright by placing him in the same circle of those who argue a noneschatological Jesus, Witherington observes that "Wright does not argue, as do M. Borg or R. Funk, for a non-eschatological Jesus. Most of his most recent detailed Jesus study focuses on Jesus as an eschatological prophet."[8] And "he has gone some considerable way in delineating what Jesus as an eschatological prophet might look like, so long as he is dealing with the realized eschatological side of the equation."[9] But, stressing the apocalyptic immence of Schweitzer's position, Wright's historicizing of apocalyptic eschatology focuses on A.D. 70 as the time of fulfillment, so that Jesus' apocalyptic prophecies are fulfilled in his journey to Jerusalem, death, resurrection and finally the Temple's destruction in A.D. 70. The result of this exegesis is not just fulfillment of apocalyptic expectation, but the historicizing of apocalyptic eschatology. Wright claims that Jesus employs apocalyptic language as a mode of symbolic expression to describe the historical significance of his mission and to set forth his personal consciousness of his self-identity, so that, for example, the parable of a king returning portrays figuratively the return of Israel's God to Zion, which Jesus enacts in his final journey to Jerusalem.[10]

But in spite of Allison's, and the majority's, protest against de-apocalypticized/de-eschatologized interpretations of Jesus and his kingdom expectations, certain liberal trajectories of modern scholarship have taken an atemporal literary approach and called into question the apocalyptic eschatology of Jesus, claiming, in many cases, the *Gospel of Thomas* with its

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[4] Marcus Borg, "An Orthodoxy Reconsidered: The 'End-of-the-World Jesus'" in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology in Memory of George Bradford Caird*, ed. L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) 207–17.

[5] But see, N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1966) 147–474.

[6] J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991) 238–55.

[7] D. C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millernarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998).

[8] Ben Witherington, III, *Jesus the Seer* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999) 271.

[9] Ibid., 277. See D. L. Bock's assessment of N. T. Wright in *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N. T. Wright's Jesus and the Victory of God*, ed. Carey C. Newman (Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1999) 101–25.

[10] Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, pp. 612–53.

internalized kingdom of God, no apocalyptic sayings and no apocalyptic Son of Man, as their historical prototype.[11]

Borg, in his program to de-apocalyticize the orthodoxy of Schweitzer's end-of-the-world Jesus, likewise, rejects the authenticity of Jesus' Son of Man sayings, questions the centrality of the kingdom of God in Jesus' mission and proclamation by redefining it in terms of realistic eschatology as mystical personal experience, hence dispensing with futuristic expectations of a coming kingdom. Jesus is presented as a subversive sage, much involved in challenging social conventions and changing the political world of first century Palestine. As a first century Spirit person, Jesus was not just a charismatic visionary, but a radical social prophet with the intention of transforming Israel—not Schweitzer's apocalyptic Jesus intent on preparing a community for the imminent end of the world.[12]

Another attempt to de-eschatologize Schweitzer's end-of-the-world Jesus interprets Jesus as a first century Jewish (Crossan)/Hellenistic (Mack) Cynic sage repositioned "away from a specifically Jewish sectarian milieu and toward the Hellenistic ethos known to have prevailed in Galilee"[13] Even though substantial evidence is woefully lacking for such pervasive Cynic philosophical influence in Palestine, Jesus is presented as a social subversive with an itinerant lifestyle, deliberately acting against the conventions of society, focusing on social reform and, like the true Cynic sage, quite unconcerned about apocalyptic/eschatological issues.

> Jesus taught a kind of wisdom that mocked or subverted conventional beliefs. Jesus was a scoffer, a gadfly, a debunker who could playfully or sarcastically or with considerable charm ridicule the conventions and preoccupations that animated and imprisoned most people.[14]

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[11] Dan O. Via, "Kingdom and Parable: The Search for a New Grasp of Symbol, Metaphor, and Myth," *Interpretation* 31 (1977) 181–83; *The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967); cf. Amos Wilder's extensive literature; John Dominic Cronsan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973); Robert W. Funk, *Parables and Presence: Forms of the New Testament Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); James Breech, for whom Jesus, a first century Jewish Poet, teaches about peasant life in Palestine employing witty aphorisms (*The Silence of Jesus: The Authentic Voice of the Historical Man* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); "Kingdom of God and the Parables of Jesus," *Semeia* 12 (1978) 15–40.

[12] Marcus Borg, *Jesus: A New Vision* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989); "Jesus and Eschatology: A Reassessment" in *Images of Jesus Today*, ed. James H. Charlesworth and Walter P. Weaver (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994) 42–67. For a quick, accessible, balanced critique, see Ben Witherington, III, *The Jesus Quest: Search for the Jew of Nazareth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995) 93–107; idem. *The Christology of Jesus* (MN: Fortress Press, 1990) 192, for five reasons Borg's noneschatological Jesus in "doomed to failure."

[13] Burton Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988) 73.

[14] Marcus Borg on B. Mack: "Portraits," in *The Search for Jesus: Modern Scholarship Looks at the Gospels*. Ed. Hershel Shanks. (Washington: Biblical Archaeology Review, 1994) 92.

Crossan's noneschatological Jesus subscribed to a non-hierchial, radical egalitarianism marked by an itinerant lifestyle, meals and magic, whose message of the Kingdom of God constitutes not a message to be preached, but a program to be performed as witnessed by Jesus' own confrontation of societal structure and powerbrokers. Jesus as Cynic philosopher can be maintained only by rejection of the eschatological in his message, and yet when this is done, his teaching contains nothing about eternal life, resurrection, future judgment, a future for Israel, etc.[15]

> What Jesus called the Kingdom of God and what Epictetus might have called the kingdom of Zeus must be compared as radical messages that taught and acted, theorized and performed against social oppression, cultural materialism, and imperial domination in the first and second centuries.[16]

Like pre-Weiss/pre-Schweitzer liberal interpretations of the nineteenth century and existential readings of the twentieth, non-eschatological/ deapocalypticized renderings of Jesus often fail to take seriously the fact that Jesus carried out his mission and proclamation of the kingdom of God in a culture founded on the religion of the Hebrew Scriptures. And yet even Weiss, while portraying Jesus as an apocalyptic prophet defined his modern significance by construing the kingdom of God as the highest religious good and supreme ethical ideal, even though he personally believed that Jesus never taught that the kingdom of God was something subjective, inward, or spiritual, but the objective messianic kingdom. "We do not await a kingdom of God which is to come down from heaven to earth and abolish this world, but we do hope to be gathered with the Church of Jesus Christ into the heavenly *basileia*."[17]

Albert Schweitzer,[18] building on the work of Weiss with his, apocalyptic interpretation of Jesus, maintained the same futurist eschatology, but made it more "consistent" in his rendering of Jesus as an apocalyptist who subscribed to the same expectations as many other Jewish apocalyptic seers. Convinced that his mission would inaugurate the decisive climax of history within his own lifetime, Jesus proclaimed the imminent irruption of the apocalyptic kingdom of God, and the catastrophic end of the world. As the designated Messiah, once the kingdom arrived he would assume a position

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[15] John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper Sanfrancisco, 1991.

[16] Idem. *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: Harper Sanfrancisco, 1994) 121.

[17] Johannes Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, trans. And ed. Richard H. Hiers and David L. Holland (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971) 135–36, see Wendell Willis, "The Discovery of the Eschatological Kingdom: Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer," in *The Kingdom of God in Twentieth-Century Interpretation*, ed. Wendell Willis (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987).

[18] Albert Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus Messiahship and Passion*, trans. with introduction by Walter Lowrie (New York: Schoken, 1964).

of full authority and would be transformed into the Son of Man. When the expected end did not occur with the mission of the twelve (Matt 10), Jesus decided to precipitate its coming through confrontation with the religious authorities in Jerusalem,[19] which culminated in death and a despairing cry of disappointment from the cross when the God to whom he had devoted his life's work abandoned him. For Schweitzer, this act of misplaced confidence serves as a moral example of courage and faithfulness to one's convictions for all who, like Jesus, are willing to obey, "even if it should turn out in the course of earthly events that the fate of death awaits"[20]

Calling the Sermon on the Mount an "interim ethic" and brushing aside Jesus' statements about his self-consciousness of an intimate relationship of sonship with God as Father, Schweitzer focused on Jesus' teachings about the kingdom of God. But divorced from Jesus' own self-understanding, his kingdom language is impossible to construe correctly, and we are left with a Jesus who even in death failed to attain his purpose. "The wheel of fate would not turn, so Jesus flung himself upon it and is left there hanging still," Schweitzer said.

If the last century began with "the discovery of the eschatological kingdom" in Jesus' mission and proclamation, then this century begins with some of the academy arguing for a pre-Weiss/pre-Schweitzer reading of Jesus. Such present diversity in this brief presentation does not even begin to broach the extensive and varied history of past decades of kingdom of God interpretations. Add to this the fact that scholars don't always agree with what scholars say about the subject, throw into the mix the bewildering and wide array of New Testament statements about the kingdom of God (a present reality, Matt 12:28; a future blessing, 1 Cor 15:50; a realm to be entered now, Matt 21:31; a realm to be entered in the future, Matt 8:11; an inheritance to be bestowed, Matt 25:34; a future coming attended by great glory, Matt 13:41,43; an inner redemptive reality, Rom 14:17, and yet it has something to do with the government of the nations of the world, Rev 11:15) and the result is little wonder that kingdom of God language in modern discussion is little understood and much abused. "Indeed, the current danger in some quarters is that a few mentions of the word 'kingdom' in any theological document will be enough to guarantee that it be received with uncritical enthusiasm."[21] France, who also quotes Travis, cleverly observed:

> Thus, we find references to 'kingdom theology,' 'kingdom ethics,' 'working for the kingdom,' etc. I even came across a book with the title *Kingdom Healing*; I am not sure how this differs from other healing

[19] Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom*, pp. 62–63.
[20] Ibid., p. 62.
[21] Stephen Travis, *I Believe in the Second Coming of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 51.

> except that the term 'kingdom' presumably confers on it some sort of theological imprimatur.[22]

To add to the confusion, the mythical, theological well-educated layperson may be heard to speak of building, growing, extending, benefiting, or even empowering the kingdom of God. But, assuming kingdom language, *malkuth* in the Old Testament and *basileia* in the New Testament, primarily carries the abstract and dynamic meaning of royal authority and sovereignty exercised by a king, then how does one, for example, empower the universal, unlimited, eternal sovereignty of God to grow[23] - build, benefit or extend it? And the same may be asked of his irruptive, non-coercive kingdom. Never is it said in the New Testament that people can build or erect the kingdom, but they can enter it (Matt 5:20; 7:21; Mark 9:47; 10:23). Nowhere does the New Testament teach that people establish the kingdom, but they can possess it (Matt 5:4), inherit it (Matt 25:34), receive it (Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17). Although they cannot destroy the kingdom, they can refuse to receive it (Luke 10:11) or enter it (Matt 23:13). They cannot bring the kingdom, though they can seek it (Matt 6:33; Luke 12:31), pray for its coming (Matt 6:10) and look for it (Luke 23:51). Never is it stated that people act upon the kingdom, but things can be performed for the sake of the kingdom (Matt 19:12; Luke 18:29). The kingdom may be preached (Matt 10:7; Luke 10:9), but only God can give it to people (Matt 21:43; Luke 12:32) who, in turn, cannot give it to one another nor take it from one another. The kingdom of God can appear (Luke 19:11), be active (Matt 11:12), arrive (Matt 12:28), draw near (Mark 1:15; Matt 3:2; 4:17) and it can come (Matt 6:10; Luke 17:20).

> The kingdom does not come as men and women receive it. The ground of the demand that they receive the kingdom rests in the fact that in Jesus the kingdom has come into history. God has done a new thing. He has visited his people in Jesus' mission, bringing to them the messianic salvation.[24]

> …Since all of Gods sovereignty is mediated through Christ (1 Cor 15; Heb 1:1–3), work that is undertaken in his name and for his sake may, I suppose, usefully be called 'kingdom work.' Nevertheless, the dominant use of 'kingdom' in the New Testament suggests that we

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[22] R. T. France, "The Church and the Kingdom of God: Some Hermeneutical Issues," in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: Text and Context*, ed. D. A. Carson (Exeter: Paternoster, 1984) 30.

[23] See, e.g., Ken Hemphill, *EKG: The Heartbeat of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004), where EKG means empowering kingdom growth.

[24] George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed., ed. Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 101–102.

> would often be wise to restrict categories like 'kingdom work' to the promulgation of the gospel.[25]

This is fully in agreement with an earlier observation by Vincent Taylor who noted: "Our modern idea of labouring for the coming of the kingdom is a noble conception, fully baptized into Christ and expressive of his spirit; but it is not his teaching regarding the *basileia*."[26] Finally, the very fact that Jesus attempted clarification through extensive parabolic teaching of what he meant by the kingdom of God indicates that his use of the concept with multiple senses nuanced kingdom language in ways not always immediately apparent to his audiences.[27]

In this brief introduction, the cursory presentation of divergent excursions into kingdom of God research, coupled with a selected foretaste of New Testament kingdom language marked by multiple senses, should caution the reader that the subsequent discussion of the New Testament concept in light of its Old Testament and second temple Judaistic background will confront a bewildering assortment of biblical statements and scholarly interpretations. We will attempt to shape our discussion in light of the biblical account of God's acts in history and history's relationship to eschatology before proceeding to biblical, especially New Testament, kingdom language mapped along the rough contours of the subsequent suggested readings. Within our discussion of the kingdom of God as a complex multistage, multifaceted discourse concept[28] the following readings of kingdom language will be suggested: kingdom of God as the universal, eternal sovereignty of God and Israel as a theocracy; kingdom of God as the mediated, irruptive, non-coercive sovereignty of God; kingdom of God as the present mediated, exalted sovereignty of God; kingdom of God as the mediated, coercive–apocalyptic millennial sovereignty of God; kingdom of God as the final, eternal sovereignty of God. Often discussed eschatological–historical tensions will fall within these parameters (e.g., already–not yet; fulfillment–consumation; promise-fulfillment; realistic–futuristic; this age-the age to come) (e.g., already–not yet; fulfillment–consumation; experience–hope; realization–expectation; this age–the age to come). The foundation to understanding how the kingdom of God can be both present and future appears in the discussion of the hope of Jesus under eschatology and history.

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[25] D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 411.

[26] Vincent Taylor, *Jesus and His Sacrifice: A Study of the Passion-sayings in the Gospels* (London: MacMillan, 1937).

[27] G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth, 1980) 12.

[28] I prefer this more sound linguistic description than Norman Perrin's [*Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 16-32] use of Philip Wheelwright's terminology of "steno-symbol" and "tensive symbol" [*Metaphor and Reality* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1962), 93-96]. See Rick Brown, "Translating the Whole Concept of the Kingdom," *Notes on Translation* 14/2 (2000) 1-48.

ESCHATOLOGY AND HISTORY

Hope of the Old Testament and Judiasm

Since Jesus ministered in a culture founded on the religion of the Hebrew Scriptures, a critical question to launch our study is, how, or if the kingdom of God announced and inaugurated by Jesus as something new taking place, is in fact substantively different from God's universal, theocratic kingdom that has always been operative in the exercise of his comprehensive, cosmic reign, for "dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations" (Ps 22:28) and "the LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all" (Ps 103:19). That something new rooted in the old has come in Jesus' decisive declaration of the arrival of the kingdom of God accompanied by the dawning of eschatological salvation warrants some explanation of the sense of newness, especially because this element of apparent distinctiveness pervades the New Testament, not just Jesus' own proclamation. And, indeed, if new, given the paucity of kingdom/rule word-groups and references directly using the language of rule or reign, could Jesus' audience truly have shared enough meaning in that first-century communication situation to have understood his semantic intent? The answer to this New Testament question must be explored against the contours of the Old Testament hope described principally in terms of God's dealings with Israel under the economy of the old covenant.

The Old Testament.

The shaping of New Testament eschatology and kingdom language against the older Scripture necessitates some preliminary observations about God's acts in history and history's relationship to eschatology. From the perspective of the Hebrew Scriptures, God's redemptive activity in history includes a promise of future acts when he will bring his purposes to consummation. This element of promise and fulfillment gave rise to Israel's understanding of reality as a linear history moving irrevocably toward history's final goal—the decisive establishment of the kingdom of God within history by an act of God. Within the reality marked by the constantly creative work of God, history arises because God makes promises and fulfills these promises. This perception of history in its linear movement, rather than endlessly repeating itself, grew out of Israel's concept of the one God whose reality was not exhausted by his being the creator of the world, so that hope is ultimately rooted in God who acts in history. At any time, Israel's God could break into the course of his creation and initiate new events in unpredictable ways in contrast to other ancient eschatological belief systems founded on the observation that history was the arena of self-

repeating processes and events—a cycle of endlessly repeatable ages similar to the rhythm of the life and death that characterizes nature.[29]

Israel's belief in Yahweh as a God of promise–fulfillment prevented the nation from conceiving of their history in this cyclical fashion. The God who makes and fulfills promises had set them on a pilgrimage with promises made to father Abraham, and as long as these promises lacked total fulfillment, life as pilgrimage must continue. Their history which was moved irrevocably toward denouncement by promise and fulfillment began with God's call to Abraham to leave Ur in ancient Iraq. God's threefold promise given to Abraham at his call became hope's foundation and the initial phase of God's grand plan to bring blessings to the whole world. The promise included (1) land: "Leave your country . . . and go to the land I will show you (Gen 12:1); (2) a great nation: "I will make you into a great nation" (12:2); (3) blessing: "I will bless you" (12:2) . . . "and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (12:3), the climatic part of the promise.

At a later time, God enters into covenant relationship with Abraham (Gen 17) demanding obedience to God's will while promising to fulfill the previous promises and solidifying his relationship with the covenant promise: "I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant . . . to be your God and the God of your descendants after you" (Gen 17:7). These promises, the lifespring of Israel's destiny and hope, were not abandoned in perilous times of captivity after a famine had driven Abraham's great-grandchildren into Egypt, or during the Babylonian exile (587–539 B.C.) when faith in the God of history who fulfills promises enabled them to preserve their national identity and persist in faith that God's plan for them in their homeland would come to fruition. God had visited Israel repeatedly in their history in acts to make himself known and through which Israel was to know and serve God (e.g., Ex 6:6,7), and he would come to them as Lord of history to judge wickedness and to establish the kingdom of God, leaving no doubt by this final theophany that God is the source of the kingdom, not history. Throughout the courses of their history, God teaches his people never to think of the present historical situation as his final act, for God had promised to David a dynasty that would endure forever (2 Sam 7:13), a hope that appeared dim in the bleak days of captivity and exile, even though Israel perceived her kings as concrete manifestations of God's rule in history, just as her judges had represented God's sovereign reign on earth. Nevertheless, ". . . Kingdom hope by the time of the Babylonian captivity is driven forward by the vision of the fullness of God's rule showing up one day. It was to this hope that Jesus preached."[30]

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[29] Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and History" in *Essays on Old Testament Interpretation*, ed. Claus Westermann, trans. James Luther Mays (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1963) 315.

[30] Darrell L. Bock, "The Kingdom of God in New Testament Theology," in *Looking into the Future: Evangelical Studies in Eschatology*, ed. David W. Baker (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001) 33.

The Old Testament prophetic emphasis on the new thing that God would do in the establishment of the eschatological kingdom, at times entailed drawing the eschatological into the historical to impact the present in terms of ethical expectation and deportment. Hence, questions of time and chronologically sequencing of future events do not occupy the prophets as much as evidenced, for example, in the later reflections of second temple Judaism over the Days of the Messiah, or the Age to come, which do not appear explicitly in the Old Testament development of the kingdom of God as the object of hope. The prophets prefer to focus on the eschatological coming of the Messiah , in conjunction with the future Day of the Lord, the kingdom of God and the New Age. They are occupied with divine visitation for judgment and salvation.

> As to the question of the time of the coming of the kingdom, the Hebrews did not have an abstract idea of time or sternity. All that Israel knew was time containing events. The question of whether the consummation takes place in time or in eternity is foreign to the Old Testament. Time is simply the setting in which events occur, in this instance, in which God acts. The important thing is not time but the events that fill it.[31]

Time is history moving by promise and fulfillment toward God's intended goal/denouement. Tension between eschatology and history characterizes the very core of the prophetic view.[32]

The Old Testament hope which is always elucidated in categories pertaining to Israel's future appears most complete in the eschatological program of Ezekiel. Restored to the land (Ezek 34:11–16), converted (36:26) and ruled by God through a Davidic prince (37:24), Israel experiences the blessings of a covenant of peace (34:25). God establishes his sanctuary eternally among them (37:28). Then, there occurs an eschatological war with Gog and Magog following Israel's restoration under God's kingdom (38–39). Subsequent to this eschatological conflict, God eternally dwells with his people in a final state of redemption and blessedness as Israel's God becomes the perpetual recipient of their perfected worship (40–48). Like Ezekiel the prophets present Israel as a purified converted remnant as the center of their hope, not Israel as a whole (Amos 9:8; Isa 4:2–4; 10:20–22; 37:20–32; Mic 2:12; 5:7). Sometimes as subjected to redeemed Israel (Amos 9:12; Isa 45:14–16; 49:23; 60:12,14; Mic 5:9; 7:16), at other times through conversion (Zeph 3:9, 20; Isa 2:2–4; 60:1–14; Zech 8:20–23; 14:16–19), the Gentile nations are presented as participants in this salvation, but never do the prophets speak of a

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[31] George Eldon Ladd, *The Pattern of New Testament Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1968) 51.

[32] Ladd, *The Pattern of New Testament Truth*, p. 52.

universalistic kingdom in which everyone experiences soteriological benefits of God's reign.

Although the expression *malkuth Yahweh*, "kingdom of God," is not found in the Old Testament, approximated most nearly in Daniel by "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom" (Dan 2:44), the intent of this discourse concept appears throughout the prophetic literature. Even though God is king over all the earth, his rule is realized especially in Israel's history, and he is in a special way their king, even though his king dominion is imperfectly realized in Israel's history as disclosed by her frequent rebellion against the sovereignty of God. The literature frequently presents God as king both of the universe and of Israel. So, although the Old Testament discourse concept, "kingdom of God," never occurs, it cannot be successfully argued that the semantic intent of this idea is not retrieved by other concepts, or even other discourse concepts.

The universal rule of God as king is celebrated in a rich variety of texts, providing a source of hope and comfort and reflecting Israel's worship. As creator of heaven and earth, Yahweh possesses the right to be universal king (Ps 95:3–5), and his kingly sovereignty manifests itself in his rule over the nations of the world (Ps. 22:28; Jer. 46:18; 48:15; 51:57) as well as in his selection of the rulers of the nations (Dan 2:37; 4:17; 5:21). "Sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him" (1 Kg 22:19; Ps 103:19; Ezek 1:26–28), "from heaven the LORD looks down and sees all mankind; . . . he watches all who live on the earth" (Ps 33:13,14). Israel praises God as king of all human kingdoms (Ps 47:2,7); 2 Kg 19:15) and of the entire universe (1 Chr 29:11). His kingship is eternal (Ps 145:13; Ps 74:12; 93:2; Dan 4:3,4), and truth and righteousness (Ps 96:13; 99:4), power and glory (Ps 145:11) characterize his rule as just judge of the universe (Ps 96:10). So, "The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice" (Ps 97:1), and . . . let the nations tremble; he sits enthroned . . . let the earth shake" (Ps 99).

Since the sovereign God had created Israel by electing her as his special people (Isa 41:20; 43:15), delivered her out of Egypt to serve him (Ps 74:12) and given to her a land for their inheritance (Ps 10:16; 44:4), he reigns particularly over Israel as king (Isa 43:15; Deut 33:5; Num 23:21), for he is the true king of Israel (Deut 33:5; Isa 33:22; Ps 24:10; Zech 14:16–17; 1 Sam 12:12), and Israel is his kingdom (Ex 19:6; 1 Chr 17:14; 28:5; 2 Chr 13:8). Yahweh rules from Jerusalem (Jer 8:19; Ps 48:2; 99:1), and his throne, though regarded as located in heaven, is often described as centrally located above the cherubim in the temple (Isa 6:1; 2 Kg 19:15). His reign is everlasting, for "The LORD is king for ever and ever" (Ps 10:16), and "The moon will be abashed, the sun ashamed; for the LORD almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem . . . gloriously" (Isa 24:23).

However, incessantly engaged in wars with pagan neighbors, suffering because of evils brought on by belonging to an imperfect physical order, and eventually defeated occupied and deported by pagan nations and disillusioned by their earthly kings, Israel hoped for a future exercise of

God's universal kingly sovereignty in reestablishing his rule in a special way as Israel's king and over all other nations. The prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures gave special expression to this hoped for future reign of God, for God had promised David: "He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (2 Sam 7:13). For Israel's prophets, the promise of God's eternal rule (Dan 2:44; 7:27) would encompass a future manifestation of his irresistible, coercive sovereignty in delivering Israel from her enemies (Isa 34:12; 44:6; Zeph 3:15); in returning to their homeland exiles in foreign captivity (Isa 52:7; Ezek 20:33–38); in establishing an everlasting rule in Zion and reigning over the world's nations (Isa 24:23; Zech 14:9-17; Mic 4:6–10). Frequently the prophetic hope was anchored in the anticipated reign of an anointed king of Davidic lineage (Isa 9:6; 11:1–5; Ezek 34:23; Jer 23:5; Zech 9:9; Ezek 37:24), and Israel as "the saints of the Most High" anticipated shared rulership in the eschatological kingdom (Dan 7:18,27). Emphasizing the hope of God's perfect world rule and a new beginning for Israel grounded in his past acts of covenant faithfulness, the prophets, declaring their hopes would not be disappointed, express hope of a new Jerusalem no longer threatened by hostility (Isa 2:2–4) as the center of worship (Isa 12:4–6; Zech 14:16–19); hope of peace and safety (Isa 6:5; 17–25; Jer 33:16; Zech 14:11) as well as prosperity (Amos 9:13–15; Joel 3:18; Isa 65:21); hope of a new relationship with God (Hos 2:14–16,19) in terms of a new heart (Ezek 36:25–28) and a new covenant (Jer 31:31–34); hope of a new David in divine fulfillment of the covenant promise (2 Sam 7:12–16) of a greater son of David (Isa 9:6–7; 11:1–9; Zech 9:9; Jer 33:15–22). The one constant in this rich variety of expectation is that the prophets envisage the final establishment of the eschatological kingdom by irruption of the transcendent God of Israel, for "Look! The Lord is coming from his dwelling place; he comes down and treads the high places of the earth. The mountains melt beneath him and the valleys split apart, like wax before the fire, like water rushing down a slope" (Mic 1:3,4). His coming will bring salvation (Isa 35:4; Zech 2:10,11) deliverance (Isa 29:6), redemption (Isa 59:20) and judgment (Isa 2:21; 26:21).

The complexity of discerning Jesus' intention by kingdom language is decidedly knotted by such a rich variety of Old Testament expectation to say nothing of reflections on the kingdom motif in second temple Judaism. But before briefly assessing Judaism's contribution to the complexity, the caution is offered that not even the prophets present a monolithic portrait of the eschatological, redeemed order of the kingdom of God. In fact, not even the much expected discourse concept of the kingdom of God is employed in the Hebrew Scripture to designate the new order inaugurated by the Day of the Lord, and yet the idea permeates the expectation of the prophetic literature. Before citing the literature of S. B. Frost and T. C. Vriezen that

accessibly presents this diversity, Ladd[33] points out that although scholars argue for two disparate hopes in the Old Testament and Judaism, a truly prophetic over against a transcendental apocalyptic, the kingdom of God in the Old Testament always involves historical divine irruption in order fully to realize God's redemptive purpose. The two different kinds of apparently conflicting eschatology, the prophetic which anticipates the kingdom of God on earth ruled by a personage of Davidic kingly lineage (Isa 9,11) and the apocalyptic expectation of an entirely transcendental kingdom ruled by the heavenly Son of Man (Dan 7) beyond history, "leads to the question of whether or not the kingdom of God is to be conceived within history or beyond history."[34] Ladd observes that some scholars contend that unless the kingdom of God is caused by purely historical events within history, then it cannot be argued that history has any real meaning.[35] While not convinced of this analysis, Ladd argues for a prophetic-apocalyptic vision of reality[36] and presents the conclusion of Frost and Vriezen as indicating that "the hope of a kingdom which would issue in a renewal of the world and which could be introduced only by suprahistorical forces, i.e., by the direct act of God, is firmly rooted in the pre-exilic prophets"[37]

Arriving independently at similar conclusions about the shape of Israel's future hope, Frost and Vriezen offer a quick study in the complex nature of the problem, presenting four different perspectives which we will attempt briefly to summarize and intergrate. First, the Better Age which is pre-prophetic, pre-eschatological and purely historical is the only Old Testament hope which is strictly this worldly. It is the hope of the Israelites of Amos' day who looked for a kingdom arising within history effected by historical forces and bringing peace and prosperity. This view, denounced by Amos as false (Amos 5:18–20; 7:4; 8:9), was not endorsed by the prophets. Second, the Golden Age, which is proto-eschatological, is both historical, taking place within history, and supra-historical, effected by forces transcendent to history. It results from cataclysmic irruption into history and issues in the glorious new order of the Spirit, while life continues in this world, but life of an entirely new quality. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zephaniah and Amos entertain this promise of the future. Especially in the language of Amos does one find early building blocks of apocalyptic eschatology developed subsequently in the literature of second temple Judaism and the New Testament as the apocalyptists of second temple Judaism claimed to provide esoteric knowledge of divine mysteries, especially information hidden from mere mortals on the future activity of God the King in setting up his visible and

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[33] G. E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 55–59; also see his discussion in *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed., ed. Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 54–67, and *The Pattern of New Testament Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) 41–63.

[34] Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 55).

[35] Ibid., 55.

[36] "Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?" *JBL* 76 (1957): 192–200.

[37] Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 56,57.

powerful rule among men. They attempted to reinterpret the Old Testament prophecies with the certitude that they would be fulfilled imminently. Fourth, the Age to Come, a later development of Jewish apocalyptic not entertained in the prophetic literature, is transcendental-eschatology characterized by a developed dualism and a transcendental order of a suprahistorical world.

Judaism.

By calling attention to three important factors which shaped its development, C. C. Caragounis provides a bridge to the way early Judaism understood the kingdom of God. First, when the Davidic kingdom, which came to be conflated at some point with God's rule, and the hope of a better future which it offered were seemingly destroyed by the Babylonian captivity, some circles radically reinterpreted the promise made to David as, under the influence of the prophet Daniel's interpretation of the kingdom (Dav 2,7) and its agent, they too, interpreted "the kingdom and its agent as transcendental, heavenly realities and the consequent deliverance of God's people in primarily dynamic terms"[38] Second, they hoped for the coming of Yahweh in eschatological judgment of the wicked and reward of the just joined with the expectation of a Messiah of Davidic kingly lineage through whom God would openly manifest his coercive, irresistible, sovereign rule resulting in the realization of eschatological blessings for Israel, his chosen. Third, hope for the future was driven by intense expectation that liberation from centuries of pagan rule over Palestine would materialize. The Jewish literature shaped by these fundamental ideas is naturally important, then, because it provides a bridge between the Old Testament and New Testament concept of the kingdom of God, but compounds the problem of whether Jesus' audiences could have understood the specific intent of his kingdom language in such a bewildering swirl of ideas.

During exile in Babylonia, the hope was expressed that the security of Israel's future would be established in God's coming to establish a new age marked by God's reign exerted universally by a supernatural irruption/ invasion into mundane affairs. But by the second century B.C., even though Israel, especially since the time of Ezra, practiced obedience to God's Law as never before, yet God did not supernaturally intervene in the establishment of the long hoped for kingdom. Where was the kingdom? What had happened to Israel's covenant-keeping God who had promised to show up in their defense? The literature of this era, especially the apocalyptic, attempts to give expression to credible answers to the perceived problems of God's justice.

However, because the form and content of Israel's hope vary so greatly in the literature's presentation of kingdom teaching, "the result is a variety of

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[38] C. C. Caragounis, "Kingdom of God/Kingdom of Heavens," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992) 418.

messianologies and kingdom conceptions which are not always clearly demarcated from one another."[39] At times, God himself rules directly over his people, destroying enemies and Satan's rule while delivering Israel [40] (1 Enoch 1–36). At other times, the Messiah serves as the visible agent of God's mediated sovereignty (Ps of Sol 17–18; 2 Baruch 39; 4 Ezra 7:28; Sib. Or. 3:652–784; 1 Enoch 90). This era is often referred to as the messianic kingdom by modern scholars, regardless of whether any explicit reference to Messiah exists in the sources. God's rule is presented as earthly, involving the destruction of Israel's enemies, judgment of the ungodly, centered in Jerusalem with a rebuilt temple and the resurrected righteous dead participating in new age blessings. Under the rule and protection of God, their king, they would live in endless peace and righteousness (1 Enoch 1–36; *Jubilees; Assumption of Moses*, 7–10; Ps of Sol 17–18). Psalms of Solomon 17 employs "king" and "kingdom" to describe both God's reign and the kingdom of the Messiah: "Lord you are our king forevermore" (17:1); "And the kingdom of our God is forever over the nations in judgment" (v. 3); "Lord, you chose David to be king over Israel, and swore to him . . . that his kingdom should not fail before you" (v. 4); "See, Lord, and raise up for them their king, the son of David, to" rule over your servant Israel (v. 21). Here, too, the kingdom of God of Jewish expectation is presented not in nationalistic and military terms, but prefers a combination of nationalistic and spiritual language: "He will gather a holy people . . . he will judge the tribes of the people . . . He will distribute them upon the land according to their tribes . . . There will be no unrighteousness among them in his days, for all will be holy and their king will be the lord Messiah (Ps of Sol 17:26–32). But the nationalistic emphasis on destruction of the godless nations by the word of his mouth gives way to a greater highlighting of spiritual emphases in the kingdom proclamation of Jesus.

Some sources present the kingdom in more heavenly and transcendental language marked by communication between heaven and earth introduced by the renewal of creation (1 Enoch 104; Assumption of Moses 10). At times, it is expected that God's coming kingdom will be inaugurated by a prior period of incomprehensible tribulation (*Sib. Or* 3:796–808; 2 Bar 70:2–8; 4 Ezra 6:24; 9:1–12; 13:29–31; 1 QM 12:9; 19:1–2). Some texts present the Davidic' Messiah in fully human and earthly terms, the more traditional expectation (*Sib. Or* 3:49; Ps of Sol 17:5,23). Although *Jubilees* presents a temporary kingdom of one thousand years, 4 Ezra 7:27–31 presents the curious portrait of a Messiah who rules for four hundred years over a temporal earthly kingdom and then dies. "For my son the Messiah shall be revealed . . . and those who remain shall rejoice four hundred years. And after these years my son the Messiah shall die" (vv. 28, 29). In *Jubilees* the power of the law itself ushers in God's kingdom. Whereas in some sources the kingdom takes on a more heavenly and transcendent appearance and a

[39] Caragounis, "Kingdom of God/Kingdom of Heaven," 418.
[40] *Jubilees; Assumption of Moses*, 7–10.

transcendent, heavenly Son of Man figure assumes the prerogatives and functions of the earthly, Davidic kingly Messiah (1 Enoch 37–71; Assumption of Moses 10; 1 Enoch 104). Although their emphasis is always eschatological, when the apocalyptists lost the tension between history and eschatology (i.e., despairing of God's acts in present history), Jewish apocalypticism became pessimistic about present history, but not about God's final act to establish the eschatological kingdom. As the practice arose of referring to the coming messianic age as the "Age to Come" in contrast with this "Present Age," the concept of the messianic age developed into a reference to a temporary, earthly kingdom which preceded the transcendent, everlasting kingdom. This earthly kingdom was separated from the transcendent by the resurrection of the dead and final judgment as all salvation in apocalypticism is thrust into the future and present history is surrendered to atrocities, wickedness and evil (1 Enoch 83–90). In the Similitudes of Enoch (37–71), which contain the disputed references to the Son of Man reflecting a midrash on Daniel 7:13 ("one like a son of man), and 4 Ezra, the discourse concepts of Son of Man and kingdom of God are closely associated reflecting the similar proximity of these concepts in Jesus' teachings in which Son of Man becomes "a collection point for his Christology (and) in the same way . . . the kingdom concept (is used) as a collection point for both soteriology and eschatology."[41] But this is only by way of juxtaposition, not development. Both in 1 Enoch and 4 Ezra the strong likelihood exists that their presentation of the Messiah as a transcendent, preexistent being imitates the exalted Christology of the New Testament and was developed in the period of Jewish conflict with Rome (A.D. 66–135), emerging subsequent to the rise of Christianity.

The rabbis employed the concept of the kingdom of the heavens more extensively than their predecessors, while conceiving of Israel as the custodian of the kingdom of God. As the reign of God—the exercise of God's universal sovereignty—the kingdom of God began on earth when Abraham submitted himself to God's reign. God's sovereignty always existed as an eternal fact, but after it began on earth in Abraham, his rule was then extended to Israel through the Law at Sinai.[42] Submission to the Law involves submission to God's reign. To take upon oneself the sovereignty of God necessarily involves turning to Judaism and adopting the Law of which Israel was the custodian. Hence, Israel was the custodian of the kingdom of God, since only through the Law could God's rule be experienced.

"Obedience to the Law is thus equivalent to the experience of God's kingdom or rule. It follows that God's kingdom on earth is limited to Israel. Furthermore, it does not come to people; it is there embodied in the Law,

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[41] Dabrell L. Bock, "The Kingdom of God in New Testament Theology," in *Looking into the Future: Evangelical Studies in Eschatology*, ed. By David W. Baker (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 35.

[42] Ladd, *Presence of the Future*, 131–33; 144; 196; 273; idem., *A Theology of the New Testament*, 59, 62, 115; Gustaf Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, trans. by D. M. Kay (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1909) 91–101.

available to all who will submit to it."[43] Further, the yoke of God's sovereignty was repeatedly taken upon oneself by daily repeating the Shema in conjunction with the reading of Deut 6:4–10.[44] Israel was the mediator of God's rule to the Gentiles, for Israel alone constituted the "sons of the kingdom."[45]

The Hope of Jesus and the New Testament[46]

The truncated Old Testament *Heilsgschichte* pointing beyond itself in a posture of waiting for the eschatological hope[47] is superceded in the New Testament prophetic-apocalyptic vision of reality as a modified eschatological-historical dualism which refuses to abandon the significance of the eschatological hope within the same redemptive-historial structure implied in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, "the God who comes"—the foundational discourse concept of Israel's eschatological hope (Ps 18:6–15; Deut 33:2–5 ; Isa 29:6; 35:4; Zech 14:3–5; Mic 1:3)—to bring history to its consummation in the kingdom of God (Isa 11:2–5; 9:7; Jer 23:5f) acts redemptively in history, so that there is never any radical disjuncture between history and eschatology. In fact, God's kingdom is not a product of history, but based upon Israel's historical experiences of divine visitations, the god, who has manifested himself, continues to manifest himself in redemptive history and will come revealing the new order of redemption in a future day of eschatological visitation. Because God who will come, has come and continues to come, all salvation-history events are qualified by eschatological reality.

However, this New Testament prophetic-apocalyptic vision of reality as a modified eschatological-historical dualism encompasses the inauguration of a new stage in God's one plan disclosed in the Old Testament. It is *prophetic* because the Davidic messianic king's coming takes place irruptively and noncoercively within the history of this age without totally dislodging/eradicating it. The structure of the vision is also a*apocolyptic*[48]

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[43] Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 59.

[44] Ladd, *Presence of the Future*, 131.

[45] Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 115.

[46] The reader will recognize the author's endebtedness to Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, rev. ed. trans. Floyd V. Filson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1950); G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986); George E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974); idem., *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed., ed. Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of he Kingdom*, trans. H. deJongste, ed. Raymond O. Zorn (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962); Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948).

[47] John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1967) 138.

[48] Based on critically accepted criteria for verifying the probable authenticity of Jesus' words, James Dunn presents a strong case for the apocalyptic character of Jesus' expectation of the coming kingdom of God, rejecting as scarcely credible the conclusions of Kasemann that complete discontinuity existed between "an apocalyptic John the Baptist, a non-apocalyptic Jesus, and an apocalyptic primitive community." James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the*

because of the hoped for unleashing of God's transcendent, coercive, irresistible sovereignty within history at the parousia of the Son of Man Messiah, commencing his millennial reign and followed by the eternal state when he delievers over to the Father the kingdom in the perfection of his redemptive work. It is *dualistic* in its retention of the basic bifurcation of ´ōlām-hazzê, "this age" (aiōŋ/´ōlām habbā, "that age," a terminology appearing in rabbinic literature and emerging about the same time in New Testament and various Jewish literature (Pirke Aboth 4:1, 21f; 6:4,7; 4 Ezra 7:50, 113, 8:1; 2 Baruch 14:13; 15:7). In the pre-Maccabean Fragments of Enochic Visions (12–16), the terminology is implicit: "From the days of slaughter . . . they will corrupt until the day of the great conclusion, until the great age is consummated (1 Enoch 16:1)," World to come "in the Similitudes of Enoch 71:15 is the first extant evidence of this idiom. And 4 Ezra (2 Esd. 3–14), an apocalypse applying lessons learned from the fall of Jerusalem (587 B.C.) to suffering following the fall in 70 A.D., gives the first complete expression to this idiom in first century Jewish literature: "The Most High has made not one age but two" (7:50). The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch (early 2d cent. A.D.) captures it as well in encouraging those who had experienced the fall of 70 A.D.: ". . . the righteous ones, those whom you said the world has come on their account, yes, also that which is coming is on their account" (15:7; cf. 14:13). Since the earliest explicit, extant references seem to emerge no earlier than the latter part of the first century A.D., the plausible argument may be offered that this explicit dualistic terminology was first employed pedagogically by Jesus who gives complete expression to the idiom in Matt 12:32: "Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven either in this age or the age to come" (Mk 10:30; Matt 12:32; Lk 16:8; 18:30; 20:35. Later use and development is found in Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor 1:20; 2 Cor 4:4; Gal 1:4; Eph 1:21; 2:2; 1 Tim 6:17, all of which employ "this age;" "that age:" Eph 2:7; Heb 6:5). Even though the origin of the specific idiom cannot be positively ascertained, the Old Testament contrast between the present world order and the redeemed order of the kingdom of God gave birth to the idea. And this eschatological dualism of two ages constitutes the basic structure of the thought of Jesus Messiah and the substructure of redemptive history.

Finally, a *modification* of eschatological—holy history is effected because the Old Testament messianic hope of eschatological redemption in a single Day of the Lord is realized in the inauguration of the eschatological

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New Testament (London: 1977) 318–322. Acknowledging Jesus' modification of apocalyptic, Dunn presents the apocalyptic characteristics noted in Jesus' teachings as grounds for the above conclusion regarding the apocalyptic nature of Jesus' kingdom expectation. For example, he maintains that Jesus believed in a time of eschatological woe preceding the end; employed as a variation on the two-ages—this age and the age to come—the kingdom of God as a technical term stressing the transcendent element and the sovereignty of God who brings the apocalyptic kingdom in its consummate manifestation; intentionally employed the apocalyptic imagery of Daniel 7:13–14 in presenting himself as the transcendent Son of Man who would inaugurate at his coming the coercive, apocalyptic kingdom of God.

kingdom of God in the person and mission of Jesus Messiah as well as in the apocalyptic coming of the millennial kingdom inaugurated at the parousia, so that the eschatological transition no longer takes place only between "this age" and "the age to come" (i.e., between history and the eternal state). Hence the basic bifurcation of Judaism is modified by a new feature so that the kingdom of the messianic era of salvation beyond history occurs within history in two essential, interrelated redemptive acts of Incarnation and Parousia. The prophetic element of God's eschatological act of redemption in history disclosing his irruptive saving reign under which there is eternal life guarantees the future, coercive, apocalyptic kingdom of God. This constitutes a major difference between apocalyptic and prophetic and is a contributing factor in speaking of the vision of reality as prophetic-apocalyptic. Further, the intermediate kingdom of Jesus Messiah lasting a thousand years inaugurated at parousia is an extension of his present messianic reign. So, "The theology of the kingdom of God is a theology of the invasion of history by the God of heaven in the person of Jesus of Nazareth to bring history to its consummation in the age to come beyond history. The age to come may be spoken of as beyond history because heaven has invaded history and raised it to a higher level in the redeemed order."[49] This means salvation history, identical to world history only at the beginning (Gen 1–11) , once again becomes identical at the end (Rev 21–22) through cosmological redemption of the sin-corrupted world order.

This *modification* of Jewish redemptive expectations by the irruption of the kingdom of God within this present age means the end of this age already has begun, creating a between the times existence and an eschatological people living between the beginning of the end and the consummation of the end. "Already" the future had begun though "not yet" was it fully consummated. The irruption of the kingdom of God as God's invasive, non-coercive reign in Jesus' historical, messianic mission (Mt 12:28, etc.) constitutes the inaugural phase in the full realization of God's Old Testament covenantal, redemptive promises. Since the future already had been set in motion, the present was conceived to be on its way out. This would be actualized by Jesus Messiah's parousia in that future Day of the Lord to be inaugurated by God's coercive sovereignty in the apocalyptic manifestation of the kingdom. In the meantime, in the time between the times, life in the already inaugurated kingdom means life under his lordship and reign. The evidence indicates that Jesus thought of the kingdom of God as already present in his person, words and deeds (e.g., Mt 12:28; 11:2f; Mk 3:27; Lk 10:18; 1:20) but not yet consummated (e.g., Mk 1:15; 8:38; 9:1; 14:25), a tension of "already—not yet" that constitutes the distinctively new element in Jesus' eschatology and the beginning of a modified eschatological-holy history. In fact, "the present kingdom is the future kingdom in verbal form;

[49] George E. Ladd, *The Pattern of New Testament Truth* (Grand Rapids, Mich:Eerdmans, 1968) 57.

the future kingdom is the present kingdom in glorious manifestation"[50] The apocalypticism of Jesus views history as realized eschatology and eschatology as consummated history, since the future is seen as determining the present—a natural development of the prophetic perspective which views history in light of eschatology. Within this eschatological-historical dualism there exists a pattern of fulfillment of the Old Testament hope: "The Old Testament promise of the coming of the kingdom, fulfillment of the promise of the kingdom in history in the person, words and deeds of Jesus, consummation of the promise at the end of history—this is the basic structure of the theology of the Synoptic Gospels"[51] To be sure, Jesus' proclamation is highlighted by a distinctive element without parallel in Judaism: before the kingdom's coming in apocalyptic consummation at the end of history as a cosmic event, in fulfillment of he prophetic hope, God's kingdom has come as an event within history in Jesus of Nazareth "to bring to men in advance of the eschatological consummation the blessings of actual fulfillment."[52]

But the perception of power that Jesus brought with his proclamation of the kingdom's presence was not that show of power many people expected. "The complete regeneration of the world that many associated with the messianic age of blessing had not arrived. Rome still dominated the land, the ruthless leaders still induced fear of imprisonment and execution. People still died. Hunger and disease were still daily experiences."[53] Although the kingdom of God present in the non-coercive, mystery form of words that could be rejected and deeds ascribed to Satan's power is an historical objective event occurring in the referential world of reality outside of subjective consciousness, it demands a spiritual response to recognize in deeds seen, words heard and person encountered that God's noncoercive eschatological kingdom has arrived. Yet, "while Jesus reigns with all authority . . . , while the church already enjoys something of the delights and powers of the age to come, the kingdom advances without apocalyptic finality."[54] And meanwhile, Jesus appears wholly other than the Holy Spirit-anointed messianic inaugurator of the kingdom of God, and at best questionable to bring God's rule in uncontested fashion. But "there is a precise meaning to this gap which opens up between the coming of the kingdom veiled in the vulnerable and powerless Jesus, and the coming of the kingdom in manifest power . . . the mission of the Church to the nations"[55]

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[50] G. E. Ladd, "Why Not Prophetic Apocalyptic?" in *JBL* 76 (Sept. 1957) 200; see especially his further development of this topic, pp. 192-200.

[51] G. E. Ladd, *The Pattern of New Testament Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968) 54.

[52] Ladd, *Pattern of New Testament Truth*, 54.

[53] Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew* (*NIV Application Commentary*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004) 498.

[54] D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996) 411.

[55] Leslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989) 106.

Since the Gospel writers refuse to separate the person of the historical Jesus from the eschatological presence of the kingdom of God, the life and blessings of the messianic salvation of the Age to Come may be said to be geo-spatially localized in first century Palestine in the historical personage of Jesus of Nazareth. Thus, when Jesus' early disciples performed the deeds of the kingdom and proclaimed its presence among men as an eschatological reality, they did so as kingdom agents specifically commissioned and enabled by the historically present Jesus.

But by resurrection and exaltation Jesus' messianic mission enters a new dimension, and at Pentecost the Spirit-anointed kingdom-bringer bestows the Holy Spirit who mediates the presence of the Son and the Father (John 14:23) and transcendentally realigns the early church's experience of the coming eschatological redemption as heirs of the new covenant. Now, through the Holy Spirit of eschatological promise (Joel 2:28–32) the blessings of he messianic age/the age to come/the kingdom of God are liberated from localization in the historical Jesus to become permanent, bestowed benefits of all kingdom citizens for whom life continues in this present age in expectation of the eschaton—a radical reversal of end-time expectations as informed by their Jewish roots which maintained this day of redemption belonged altogether to the future. And Jesus Messiah, the Spirit-anointed Spirit-bestower having commenced his messianic reign on David's throne, is the king who mediates all of the kingdom's authority, reigning over the messianic era of salvation which he has inaugurated in history as suffering-servant messiah of Davidic kingly lineage (Acts 2:30–35). As Messiah and Lord he presently mediates the exalted, not political, sovereignty that is rightly his by virtue of his resurrection, an eschatological reality proleptically occurring within history bringing assurance of a future eschatological raising of the dead. This present mediatorial reign of Jesus Messiah with unmitigated kingdom sovereignty commencing with ascension and enthronement reaches backward to its inaugural stage in the irruptive coming of God's non-coercive kingdom (Mt 12:28, etc.) and forward to embrace the apocalyptic arrival of the millennial kingdom (Rev. 20) in the splendor of the irresistible, coercive sovereignty of the coming Son of Man. Then, after his parousia, millennial reign and the consummation of this present age ushering in the eternal state of the Age to Come, the mediatorial reign of Jesus Messiah having defeated sin, death and Satan—every enemy will be complete, and he will deliver over to the Father the kingdom in the perfection of his redemptive work (1 Cor 15:22–25).

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the future messianic era of salvation was one of the promised blessings of the Old Testament for the kingdom of God in the Age to Come (Ezek 36:26; 39:29; Joel 2:28–32). In the Old Testament the bestowal of God's Spirit for special endowment belonged only to selected vessels for special ministry on specific occasions. God endowed judges with his Spirit to lead Israel at a time when, having settled in Palestine after deliverance from Egypt, there was a need for settled leadership and formal organization (Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 15:14). Later,

God bestowed his Spirit on the kings of Israel, their outward ritualistic anointing acting as a confirming sign of Spirit endowment (1 Sam 16:13). The Spirit also accompanied the exceptional endowment with the gift of prophecy (1 Sam 10:6; Num 24:2; Micah 3:8). But in the kingdom of God of the Age to Come, all of God's people would be endowed with the Holy Spirit, not just judges, prophets, and kings (Ezek 36:26; 39:29). In association with the future restoration of Israel, Joel foresees the Spirit bestowed "on all flesh" (2:28–29) in the eschatological Day of the Lord (2:30-32) and enjoyed in the subsequent kingdom of God.

However, at Pentecost in he midst of the continuance of this present age, the bestowal of the eschatological gift of the Holy Spirit on the disciples occurs in a way not previously envisaged in the Old Testament. For in the Old Testament Day of the Lord, God would come exercising his sovereignty irresistibly, gloriously and coercively to destroy all bastions of evil, wickedness and resistance in order to transform the earth into a place of perfected righteousness. Peter interprets the meaning of Pentecost to be that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel (Acts 2:16). But the end of history did not materialize as expected; or in the idiom of later Judaism, the establishment of the kingdom of God in the Age to Come accompanied by the cessation of this present evil age simply did not transpire. As the Spirit-anointed kingdom-bearer had introduced eschatological reality into history both in the irruptive coming of God's kingdom in his person and by his resurrection, so the coming of the Spirit belonging to the future Day of the Lord is new eschatological reality introduced within history.

Within its context in the Hebrew Scriptures Joel 2:28–32, the passage cited by Peter in his sermon, promises the eschatological coming of the kingdom of God. Peter insists that the coming gift of the Spirit belonging to the Day of the Lord and a blessing for the Age to Come had been fulfilled in the Church without curtailment of the present age. He stresses the point of messianic fulfillment by the striking addition of words not found in Joel who originally prophesied: "And *afterward*, I will pour out my Spirit on all people" (2:28; MT 3:1). In a complimentary reuse of Joel's original prophecy of "afterward," Peter substitutes "in the last days:" "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people" (Acts 2:17). "The last (latter) days " (Isa 2:2–4; Hosea 3:5; Ezek 38:16) designate for the prophets the consummation of Gods redemptive purpose in the final goal of human history, when the universal sovereignty of God is acknowledged among humankind in his perfect reign of peace and righteousness and the Gentiles are converted (Isa 2:1–4). The "last days," then, describe the time of the establishment of the kingdom of God. Peter asserts the "last days" have arrived, the messianic era of salvation has dawned, the Spirit is bestowed, the time of eschatological fulfillment has occurred within history and yet history is not consummated for the Day of the Lord also remains an object of eschatological hope (Acts 2:20).

Kingdom of God: A Complex Multistage, Multifaceted Discourse Concept

The above discussion of eschatological–holy history has suggested that both in the Old Testament and in rabbinic Judaism God is king and must also become king, and that the thought of Jesus is structured n terms of an eschatological dualism of this age and the age to come—the essential substructure of eschatological–holy history. Since God must become king, the Old Testament envisions a single eschatological Day of the Lord in which either God himself, in his coming, or through his Messiah, brings the eschaton and inaugurates the kingdom of God, the messianic era of salvation. The prophets, grounding their hope of eschatological consummation in God's salvific work in history, awaited and announced the future age to be inaugurated by Yahweh's coming in that great day. The rabbis, as we have seen, extended this aspect of prophetic eschatology, but preferred to describe the blessings of the future new era of God's rule by the Age to Come, seldom employing the kingdom of heave as a synonym. However, Jesus, while employing an occasion age to come language and, at this point, concurring with contemporary Judaism's description of the future era of eschatological salvation inaugurated by the Day of the Lord, preferred to express both the future and present salvific content of his proclamation as the kingdom of God.

Thus, the irruption of the kingdom of God in history in the person and mission of Jesus Messiah fulfills the Old Testament promise, setting in motion an eschatological process that guarantees the apocalyptic coming of the kingdom in a future Day of the Lord. In the New Testament, this future Day becomes his parousia so that the promise of eschatological salvation in the Old Testament in a single day is realized in the two redemptive events of the eschatological coming of the kingdom in Jesus' first coming and the apocalyptic coming of the kingdom in his parousia. Since the future determines the present, as Ladd indicates above, the mission of Jesus in history is eschatological and his parousia is the consummation of history, so that "history is realized eschatology and eschatology is consummated history."[56] This is how, we would contend, the kingdom of God, eschatologically invasive as God's royal authority in Christ's first coming, can be spoken of as both present and future—the present realization in the person and mission of Jesus, described as the irruptive, non-coercive, eschatological kingdom of God and the parousia realization, described as the coercive apocalyptic kingdom of God.

As also intimated previously, the fact that the language of Daniel (Dan 7:13–18; Dan 2) portrays the coming messianic ruler as "one like a son of man" coming to "the Ancient of Days" by whom there is given to the *bar enasha* authority, glory and soverign power (w. 13, 14, NIV; "a kingdom, ESV) and further depicts the occupants of this kingdom as "the saints of the

[56] Ladd, *Presence of the Future*, 146; 313.

Most High" (ESV) does not mean that Daniel has "divested (the kingdom of God) of its Davidic, earthly, political character"[57] so that there is no remaining vision of a national restoration of Israel, but only a new, inclusive redemptive kingdom. The new, inclusive redemptive nature of Daniel's kingdom does receive emphasis and Daniel's messianic person is described as a heavenly transcendental being, but silence on Daniel's part about a Davidic kingly Messiah or *ebed Yahweh* of Isaiah's Servant Song or national restoration of the kingdom does not mean ignorance of these mattes nor some type of radical, exclusive reinterpretation.[58] So, a New Testament emphasis on the irruptive eschatological kingdom as a present, redemptive spiritual reality need not exclude the future, coercive apocalyptic kingdom as a time of national restoration for Israel. In fact, in a recent assessment of "New Testament eschatology at the turn of the millennium," Richard B. Hays surveys "three strategies for coping with the offense of the New Testament's apocalyptic theology" and advises against dispensing with apocalyptic eschatology. "The gospel is intelligible only within a narrative world shaped by biblical apocalyptic hope." Raising the question of why New Testament apocalyptic is essential to Christian faith, he proposes seven reasons for the church's need of apocalyptic eschatology: (1) to carry Israel's story forward; (2) for interpreting the cross as a saving event for the world; (3) for the gospel's political critique of pagan culture; (4) to resist ecclesial complacency and triumphalism; (5) in order to affirm the body; (6) to ground its mission; (7) to speak with integrity about suffering and death.[59] Regarding the first reason, he writes,

> Without a future–directed eschatological hope, we cannot affirm God's faithfulness to Israel, and the historical fate of the Jewish people becomes theologically unintelligible. . . . To be sure, the New Testament proclaims that these promises find their proleptic fulfillment in Jesus Christ and in the church as a prefiguration of the eschatological people of God, but the historical existence of the church is (only) a sign and anticipation of the full divine embracing (*proslēmpsis*) of the eschatological Israel, including the empirical Jewish people who have—at least temporarily—refused the gospel (Rom 11;15) . . . If God can be faithless to Israel, then we are dealing with a fickle diety whose promises are not to be trusted.[60]

Certainly, as we have seen, some expectations of God's eschatological intervention were not cast only in nationalistic terms of Israel's God

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[57] Caragounis, "Kingdom of God/Heaven," p. 418.

[58] See Daniel's prayer in 9:2, and read it in light of the expected national restoration of Jer 25:12, 29:10, since Daniel makes it explicit that he is reading from Jeremiah.

[59] Richad B. Hays, "'Why Do You Stand Looking Up Toward Heaven?' New Testament Eschatology at the Turn of the Millennium," in *Theology and Eschatology*, ed. James Buckley and L. Gregory Jones (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 2001) 121–129.

[60] Ibid., 123–124.

wielding his eternal sovereignty to displace hostile empires and kings with an organized kingdom solely in Israel's political and societal interests. Yet, Jesus avows the inevitability of the coming kingdom of God affecting directly and decisively the societal, political and economic structures of nations, even though he rebukes the purely nationalistic proclivities of James and John (Mk 10:35–45). Michaels also concludes that Daniel's kingdom, like that of the Psalms of Solomon (Pss Sol 17:3–4), "is universal in scope, yet no less Jewish for all its universality"[61] Assuming Jesus had no interest in a political kingdom and that "nonpolitical means nonnationalistic" (hence, spiritual and universal) much critical scholarship minimizes the Jewishness of Jesus' vision of the kingdom of God. "Actually the kingdom of God in Jewish expectation was both spiritual and national, both universal and ethnic."[62]

Furthermore, several possible ways of reading kingdom language have emerged.[63] How much of this has credible grounds in what already has been developed and how much can be defended in what follows remains to e seen. The following are suggested readings of kingdom language.

Kingdom of God as the Universal, Eternal Sovereignty of God and Israel as a Theocracy

First, geographical boundaries normally designated the kingdoms of earthly rulers in ancient societies making it impossible to discern any difference between the people and the land they occupied. In the Old Testament, though God's universal, eternal sovereignty is acknowledged, 1 Chronicles 28:5–" . . . he has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel"—identifies the Lord's kingdom with the people of Israel. As Caragounis points out, ". . . the monarchy was looked upon as the concrete manifestation of Yahweh's rule," (because) ". . . the king was understood to reign as Yahweh's representative and be under Yahweh's suzerainty."[64] Second, since "the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods." (Ps 95:3), then being El Elyon, "God Most High" (Ps. 46:4), "he is the Maker of all things, including Israel, the tribe of his inheritance—the Lord Almighty is his name" (Jer 10:16), and his kingdom encompasses the entire universe. "The LORD will reign for ever and ever" (Ex 15:18), the conclusion of a very old poem (Ex 15:1–18) indicates that very early Israel was considered a theocracy, a political

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[61] J. Ramsey Michaels, "The Kingdom of God and the Historical Jesus, "in *The Kingdom of God in 20th–Century Interpretation*, ed. Wendell Willis (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1987) 114.

[62] Ibid., 114: In fact, he points out, "Our brief survey has characterized Jesus of Nazareth as an apocalyptic prophet of the restoration of Israel." (p. 115).

[63] We proceed with Beasley-Murray's caution that "The relation of Jesus to the kingdom of God is such that no single formula can do justice to it. We will do well to adopt a fuller vocabulary to represent its nature" [G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) 145].

[64] Caragounis, "Kingdom of God/Heaven," 418.

kingdom ruled by Yahweh. The theocratic concept once again became dominant (most noticeably in Isa 40–55) following the era of the kings. Clearly, kingdom language acknowledges the universal totality of God's eternal sovereignty.

Kingdom of God as the Mediated, Irruptive, Non-Coercive Sovereignty of God

Jesus spoke of his mission and message as the irruptive/invasive arrival of the kingdom of God (Matt 12:28; cf. Mk 1:14–15) constituted the mediated total plenitude of God's sovereignty[65] in the non-coercive, resistable, unexpected form of words that could be rejected by men and deeds that could be ascribed to the power of Satan.

> Jesus in his own person is the embodied sovereignty of God. He lives out that sovereignty in the flesh. He manifests the kingdom of God . . . With the coming of Jesus the kingdom is not merely immanent; it gains the larger scope of incursion and invasion . . . He reveals God's royal power in its salvific activity . . . in his own person is the kingdom wherein god is reconciled to the world and the world to God.[66]

The kingdom of God present in Jesus is nothing less than an audacious declaration of diety and serves as a divine name. In Marks gospel, "the kingdom of God come with power" (Mk 9:1) is paralleled by Matthew's "the Son of Man coming in his kingdom" (Matt 16:28); where Mark has "for me and the gospel," Luke records "for the sake of he kingdom" (Lk 18:29). Here the evangelists assume an identify between the Son of Man, Christ, and the kingdom of God . "For . . . the ministry of Jesus . . . is the kingdom and the power and the glory . . . and the kingdom of God is Christ himself"[67] This reading of kingdom language is that of the irruptive/invasive/saving eschatological kingdom of God which is mediated non-coercively and without apocalyptic finality in the mission of Jesus Messiah. Indeed, "the great eschatological incision into history has been made . . . We are in the last days or in the new age now."[68] Commenting on the parable of the sower that "this parable is our first clue that a 'mystery' of the kingdom involves its seemingly insignificant start in the present with the 'planting' of Jesus' Word, Bock observes similar distinctions between the theocratic kingdom

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[65] Sovereignty as we are employing the concept to define Jesus' kingdom proclamations must not be confused with Bultmann's concept of the kingdom of God as his sovereignty, meaning the absoluteness of his will and having nothing to do with the goal of history.

[66] Carl F. H. Henry, "Reflections on the Kingdom of God." *JETS* 35/1 (March 1992) 42.

[67] Archibald M. Hunter, *Introducing New Testament Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957) 39; see the brief evidence he marshals for this, p. 40.

[68] Anthony A. Hokema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 301, referring favorably to Oscar Cullmann, *Salvation in History*, trans. S. G. Sowers (New York: Harper & Row, 1067) 74–78; and idem. *Christ and Times*, trans. Floyd V. Filson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1950) 83.

(Old Testament declarations that recognize God's "cosmic, total rule . . . comprehensive from its inception"), the apocalyptic kingdom of the eschaton ("that kingdom that is decidedly great and comprehensive from its inception") and the kingdom referent of this parable—"the eschatological kingdom, which surprisingly is 'breaking-in' in miniscule form."[69] "The kingdom of God is now incarnated in Jesus himself . . . The hope of a new age . . . is no longer hope but present reality."[70] And yet, "the current understanding of the kingdom of God as God's activity of ruling . . . is one-sided and inadequate. The kingdom of God is not just the sovereign activity; it is also the set-up created by the activity of God, and that set-up consists of people . . . ideally . . . people who accept the rule of God through Jesus. The Church as the people of God is the object of his rule."[71]

But the dominant Gospel emphasis continues to be the dynamic presence of the kingdom

> . . . in the sense that he himself, the king of that kingdom, is present among them, displaying in himself and in his activity the characteristics of the eschatological kingdom . . . the kingdom being present in his own day by virtue of the fact that he himself, the Christ, is present ministering by the power of the Holy Spirit . . . characteristics (of) the eschatological kingdom of God. He forgives sins, drives away disease, demons and death . . . pacifies the weather . . . multiplies food . . . brings his hearers to repentance and leads them t the knowledge of and worship of God.[72]

Blaising observes that although prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures anticipated

> . . . the reigns of God and Messiah . . . to come together in the closest harmonious rule, the New Testament proclaims the Messiah to be God incarnate!. . . in this Messiah, in this son of David become Son of God by covenant, is revealed an eternal, pre-existing and ever-continuing divine sonship . . .[73]

Here God is present with royal authority blessing and renewing his creation "in the same way as the Old Testament prophets spoke of God's coming

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[69] Darrell L. Bock, "The Kingdom of God in New Testament Theology," in *Looking into the Future: Evangelical Studies in Eschatology, ed., David W. Baker (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001) 41.*

[70] I. Howard Marshall, *Jesus the Saviour: Studies in New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990) 231.

[71] Ibid., 230.

[72] Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993) 248–49.

[73] Ibid., 243, 244.

reign."[74] Here, indeed, as N. T. Wright has observed in describing Paul's modification of Jewish monatheism,

> . . . is a form of Jewish monotheism not before envisaged in which the Messiah himself is the dwelling place of divine wisdom, the immanent presence of the transcendent God, the visible image of the invisible God. This means that any who claim to know God and do not recognize God in Jesus Christ do not know the true God. . . .

And yet there is no coercive unleashing of the plenitude of god's sovereignty resident within him to inaugurate the expected finality of the apocalyptic kingdom of God.

> . . . he held back his divine powers and died on the cross for our sins, (so that) the powers of the kingdom could be manifested fro the Fall onward and could achieve consummation in the establishment of a new heaven and earth. . . only because Jesus gave up power was it possible for him to exercise the power of the kingdom of God.[75]

Since God has committed himself by covenant to honor Christ's death for fallen humanity's salvation, the eschatological kingdom of God, as the exercise of God's saving sovereignty in Jesus, emphasizes God's "right to reign savingly."[76] In fact, "Wherever God is exercising his right to save, he is carrying out his oath to save."[77] Indeed, resident within Jesus was the plenitude of saving sovereignty to effect salvation, an as he exercised powers of the kingdom as God's saving reign, a realm into which kingdom citizens enter to experience kingdom blessings was created (Col 1:13; Matt 1:11; 21:31; 23:13).

> Before the final and perfect establishment of God's reign there could be a number of mediatorial stages in which the manifestation of God's sovereignty is realized in varying degrees . . . in various realms during the course of this age and before the perfect fulfillment in the age to come.[78]

Ladd's exegesis supports the recognition of three realms which are prior to and preparatory for the perfect realization of God's reign when the goal of his redemptive purpose results in the restoration/redemption of a universe corrupted by evil and sin and the destruction of all powers resistant to his rule, death being the last. First, God's kingly reign, powerfully disclosed in

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[74] Ibid., 242–43.
[75] Daniel P. Fuller, *The Unity of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) 412.
[76] Ibid., 389.
[77] Ibid., 390.
[78] George E. Ladd, *Crucial Questions About the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952) 84–85.

the mission and person of Jesus Messiah, inaugurated the eschatological kingdom by bringing to people the blessings of his reign in fulfillment of God's salvation—historical plan. Second, as a consequence of his redemptive mission, "there ensued the realm of salvation in which men may now enjoy in a new way the powers and blessings of the kingdom."[79] Third, an additional manifestation of the kingdom at Christ's parousia will continue his mediatorial ministry of subduing all that is hostile to divine rule, and then comes the eternal kingdom. This ultimate perfect reign of God will be realized only in the Age to Come after the return of Christ (Rev 19) and after the millennial reign of Christ (Rev 20:1-4). . . . The 'history' of the kingdom of God is therefore the history of redemption viewed from the aspect of God's sovereign and kingly power."[80] Obviously, Ladd proceeds developmentally in similar stages reflected not only in many scholarly and popular discussions, but also in the present attempt to nuance biblical kingdom language to reflect these differences.[81] But before proceeding to a discussion of the new dimension of Jesus' messianic mission introduced by resurrection-ascention, it would seem indisputable without sacrificing significant Christological claims for Jesus Messiah's use of kingdom language that

> . . . the kingdom of God is therefore primarily a soteriological concept. It is God acting in power and exercising his sovereignty for the defeat of Satan and the restoration of human society to its rightful place of willing subservience to the will of God. It is not the sovereignty of God as such; God is always and everywhere the sovereign God. It is the sovereignty of God in action to frustrate every enemy which would oppose God's will (1 Cor 15:25) . . . It is the action of the sovereign God of heaven by which his reign is restored in power to those areas of creation which he has permitted in rebellion to move outside the actual acknowledgment of his rule. The kingdom of God then is God's reign, the activity of God's sovereign and kingly authority.[82]

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[79] Ibid., 85.

[80] Ibid., 84.

[81] Most of what we have already observed about the kingdom once belonged to a consensus pointed out by Marshall (see above *loc. Cit.*, p. 1) and conveniently summarized with scholarly disclaimers current at the time of publication by Blomberg in his outstanding study of Jesus' parables: (1) the kingdom of God as the focal discourse concept in Jesus' proclamation; (2) the acknowledged authenticity of substantial portions of kingdom of God language in the synoptic accounts of Jesus' teaching; (3) Jesus' recognition of kingdom of God as both present and future; (4) the abstract idea of kingdom of God as God's rule/reign being in focus, rather than the concrete concept of realm; (5) the dynamic presence of the kingdom of God in the mission, words and deeds, of Jesus. "Of these five affirmations (3) and (5) are the least secure . . . Issue (4) has also been challenged . . . Clayton Sullivan has denied the present aspect . . . hotly disputed . . . is the issue of the relationship between the kingdom, the church and Israel." (Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990) 296–297.

[82] Ladd, *Crucial Questions about the Kingdom of God*, p. 83; see also Fuller, *The Unity of the Bible*, p. 389, who quotes Ladd with approval.

Kingdom of God is the Present Mediated, Exalted Sovereignty of God

In his ascension and enthronement at God's right hand, a new dimension of Jesus' messianic mission is introduced in which as Lord and Messiah (Acts 2:36), Jesus the King sits upon the throne of David and as Messiah of Davidic kingly lineage has commenced his reign (Acts 2:30–36). In him the exalted universal, eternal sovereignty/kingdom of God, recognized in heaven, is now mediated non-coercively as a spiritual (not at this time political) transcendent authority. And yet is may be said that Jesus Messiah, ascended and enthroned, presently rules the church by the Holy Spirit.[83] "In the gospel of Luke, it is clear that with Jesus' *presence* (my emphasis), and especially his Resurrection–Ascension, comes the beginning of Jesus' kingdom rule."[84] Blaising, however, leaving out "presence" observes that "The inaugurated form of the kingdom . . . came into existence through the Cross . . . the resurrection of Jesus, and his ascension."[85] If the kingdom, understood dynamically as God's invasive, saving sovereignty was not inaugurated in the person and mission of Jesus prior to his resurrection-ascension, then Jesus was mistaken when he announced "the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt 12:28; ESV. See LN 13.123). Matt 12:28 is the announcement of an authentic, historical and spatial arrival in Jesus' own person and mission of the kingdom dynamically conceived as God's invasive sovereignty. And in continuation of the inaugurated, mediated, royal authority of the non-coercive kingdom of his first coming, Jesus Messiah, son of David, the anointed king of whom the prophets spoke, resurrected and enthroned now reigns invisibly mediating the universal, totality of God's eternal sovereignty (Matt 28:18; 1 Cor 15:25). Consequently, the powers of God's kingdom, the new covenant blessing of the Age to Come, set free of first-century Palestinian geo-spatial limitations to the historical Jesus "because of Easter and Pentecost, are now experienced by the indwelling Christ through the Spirit."[86] And after Pentecost, Jesus, who had both proclaimed the kingdom and embodied the kingdom from incarnation , became the object of proclamation, so that the Church's proclamation of Jesus Messiah as Lord and Saviour constituted announcing the good news of the kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit, sent by he Father at the bequest of the presently enthroned Son (John 14:16–17), effectuated the power and presence of the kingdom of God within history, thus indicating Jesus Messiah's present, exalted reign. The Spirit of God is himself a proleptic experience of the coming apocalyptic kingdom's consummation, sent in

[83] See especially Darrell L. Bock, "The Reign of the Lord Christ" in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church; The Search for Definition*, ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) 37–67.

[84] Ibid., 65.

[85] Craig A. Blaising, "Premillennialism" in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, ed. Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999) 198.

[86] Ladd, *Presence of the Future*, p. 273; see above the pertinent discussion of the hope of Jesus which relies on Ibid. 270–273.

inaugural fulfillment of Isaiah's (Isa 59:21) and Ezekiel's (Ezek 36–37) predicted new covenant blessing of God's Spirit in human hearts (e.g., John 3:3–8). Grounded in resurrection-ascension Jesus' present kingly reign at God's right hand as Lord and King (Eph 1:20–23; Phil 2:9) expresses his exalted, royal authority and sovereignty as the legal heir to Davis's throne. Not only does he presently intercede, but his role as enthroned Davidic King is to reign endowed with full kingly authority.

Kingdom of God as the Mediated, Coercive-Apocalyptic, Millennal Sovereignty of God

"The apocalyptic kingdom of the end . . . is decidedly great and comprehensive from its appearing with the Son of Man."[87] Reference is to a time when the Son of Man comes with apocalyptic finality to inaugurate that realm of comprehensive kingdom authority "and the comprehensive establishment of peace and fellowship, after a purging judgment."[88]

> Its presence now is but a precursor to a more substantial presence in the future . . . (for) . . . Then the kingdom will fully show itself with the traits the Scripture of Israel had long promised, along with features of rule Jesus himself revealed . . . the kingdom . . . fully and coercively present in the future.[89]

This use of kingdom language expresses an extension of the present messianic reign of Jesus Messiah in an intermediate kingdom between the parousia resurrection of Messiah's saints and the consummation of this present age resulting in the inauguration of the age to come, the eternal state of the everlasting kingdom (See Rev. 20:4–6, and cf. 1 Cor 15:23–25). In the entire period between Jesus Messiah's resurrection and the consummation (*telos*, 1 Cor 15:23) God's sovereignty is mediated through Christ during which he reigns as king. As has been previously presented, this is not to discount the plenitude of God's kingly sovereignty irruptively present, even in incarnation. Jesus Messiah's intermediate rule between parousia and consummation (*telos*)—an indefinite interval in Paul (1 Cor 15:23) defined by John (Rev. 20:4) as a thousand years—involves not only the completion of the conquest of evil, but includes "hopes of old from Israel . . ."[90] Saints will share the openly manifest—hence no longer invisible and non-coercive-reign of Christ over the world (1 Cor 6:2) with the Son of Man. "Whatever additional elements there are to the kingdom realm . . . they do not preclude an element involving the old Israelite expression of hope."[91] Scripture most definitely assures a national future for Israel, for "if God can

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[87] Bock, "The Kingdom of God in New Testament Theology," p. 41.
[88] Ibid., 47.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid., 46. See also Blaising's exposition in *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 262–83.

be faithless to Israel, then we are dealing with a fickle diety whose promises are not to be trusted."[92]

In fact, Jesus parables (the great super, Lk 14:16–24; the marriage feast, Matt 25:1–13; the wedding banquet, Matt 22:1–14) and "the imagery of these parables supports a premillennialist eschatology"[93]

> That is to say, God's ultimate community on earth with his people from all ages (the millennium of Revelation 20) will not take shape until after Jesus' Second Coming. The kingdom is therefore neither just god's rule in the lives of Christians today nor simply his coming millennial reign on earth, but his dynamic activity in history, powerfully displayed in the ministry of Jesus, then present in the church which he founded, and ultimately climaxed by Christ's coming earthly kingship.[94]

Kingdom of God as the Final, Eternal Sovereignty of God

In the Old Testament, Isaiah's little apocalypse (Isa 24–29) establishes credible warrants for interpreting the indefinite period between Messiah's parousia and "the *telos* (1 Cor 15:23) as an intermediate kingdom (Isa 24:21–23). And yet within this little apocalypse, an everlasting and eternal eschatological kingdom is graphically depicted by Isaiah as also occurring, for "the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for al peoples . . . he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces (Isa 25:6–9). In this Age to Come, God's kingdom, in this final and eternal form, will include creation's redemption (Rom 8:20–22) as God's comprehensive reign is consummated and his will perfectly done in an eternal kingdom into which God's kingdom citizens gloriously enter (2 Pet 1:11; 2 Tim 4:18).

The power of the Age to Come, resident in Jesus from his incarnation and yet held back in order to die for our sins, are unleashed to achieve complete consummation of the kingdom (Rev 20:10–15), and then God will dwell among his own, and they will be his people and serve him. "No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him . . . They will see his face . . . There will be no more night . . . for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever." (Rev 22:3–5).

CONCLUSION

I realize that I have presented, especially in the theological observations of this article, what some might consider disputable conclusions without clearly stated evidential grounds. The often used excuse of space limitations

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[92] Richard Hays, ". . . New Testament Eschatology at the turn of the Millennium," 124.
[93] Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 304, 309.
[94] Ibid., 304.

disallowing some aspect of presentation must also be invoked by this writer. In the process of preparation for this journey, the exegetical evidence accumulated for observations made above already constitute another equally lengthy attempt at posting these exegetical ruminations in a subsequent article.