

What is the Kingdom of God?

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The fundamental structure of the scriptures and Jesus teaching is found in the theme of the Kingdom of God (Gen 1:1;1:28; 4:9; Mark 1:18; Luke 4:18,19;11:20; John 3:1-16; Acts 28:31; Daniel 7:18; Rev 19: 11-16; 20:4; 21:1-4).

Jesus' Central Theme

From that day on, Jesus began to preach, saying, Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand (Matt 4:17). "I must preach the good news of the Kingdom of God, for I was sent for this purpose" (Luke 4:43). But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things shall be yours as well (Matt 6:33). "The kingdom of God was the subject of Christ's first sermon (Mk 1:14), was the only thing he called the gospel (Mt 4:23), and was the topic on which he focused his teaching to the disciples during his last forty days on earth (Acts 1:3)." (Bryant Myers)

Central theme of the early church

Central theme of the early church Paul is found at the end of Acts, "preaching the Kingdom of God" (Acts 28:30). In his writings Paul focusses more on the Holy Spirit than the Kingdom. John in the Apocalypse, "The kingdoms of this world, they have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ..."

Roots of the Kingdom in the Old Testament

In the beginning, God... He reigns... He rules! In the Psalms, increasingly the concept of God's Kingdom begin to surface. Daniel speaks several times of the Kingdom of God, prophesying its eventual overwhelming of the Kingdoms of the earth. (Daniel 7:18)

Discipleship is the response to his Kingship (graphic)

The Epochs of the Kingdom of God (graphic)

The Return of the King (graphic)

The Final Conflict: City of God vs Culture of Global City.

Babylon as a symbol of Global City Culture, Centre of Empire (17:1, 15) It Rules over nations (Purple and Scarlet, cup) Centre of opulence – full of precious stones, merchants, goods (18:11-17) Blood of Saints flows (17:6) Exploitative. Oppressive. Draws in wealth of nations Full of sensuality (17:2, 4; 18:3) Ruled by one Man of Spiritual Authority. United Religious Belief. Home for Demons (18:1) Destroyed by plague and fire (18:8) As prophesied in Daniel. As portrayed in Revelations 17-21 (Dual interpretation of prophesies – Rome and into the future) In the 21st century we have moved from cities as locations to the global interconnected city based nowhere, but everywhere.

The Return of the King

The Coming of the King to Reign (19:11-16). On a horse as a General. Bringing Justice with a Sword. Reigns on the Earth for a Millennium (20:4). Transformation into a New Heavens, New Earth, New City. In 1 Thes. 4:17 we rise up to meet him to bring him back into the city as triumphant King (no concept of rapture, where we are taken away).

He is coming soon. The Gospel is nearly to the ends of earth (Matt 24:14). Jews are back in Israel as prophesied in Daniel. As portrayed in Revelations 17-21. In Daniel 7:9 the Ancient of Days took his seat (Daniel 7:13) the son of Man coming with the clouds... he was given authority (7:27). An Everlasting Kingdom.

The Fundamentalist Gospel of Salvation

The Holistic Gospel of the Kingdom

Kingdom Mission: Its Socio-Economic Implications

Comparison of Two Gospels:

Gospel of Salvation: Simple, easy to communicate. Reproducible. Gives meaning in closed cultural systems. Reductionist thinking. Excludes, basis of division.

Gospel of Kingdom: Comprehensive, can communicate in many contexts. Opens up freedom to reproduce in many contexts. Gives basis of meaning in multiple arenas. Integrative manner of thinking. Includes, basis of unity.

Signs of the Kingdom

Holistic Kingdom: Three Aspects of Kingdom – the Lausanne consensus: Word (preaching) Deed (healing) Sign (casting out).

Characteristics of the Kingdom Leslie Newbigin: Universal. Extends to physical restoration; restorations relationships with others & God; growth of personal character. Structural Doesn't just modify, but goes to the roots of faulty structures. Definitive God's final will: this suffering world will pass away, to be replaced by a 'new heavens & new earth.'

Is the Kingdom the Church?

Catholic theology tends to equate the Church with God's Kingdom here on earth. Christendom views continued in the State churches till today. But He reigns over all, not just the church. His principles are universal. While the church is global, it is specific, and outworks those principles. The word *basileia*, translated "kingdom", occurs 162 times, and in the plural only in Matthew 4:8. Luke 4:5. Hebrews 11:33. Revelation 11:15. On the other hand, the word *ekklesia* occurs 115 times, and of these 36 are in the plural and 79 in the singular, all rendered "church" except in Acts 19:32, 39, 41, "assembly". The people of the church are the heirs of the Kingdom.

Different Vies of the Relationship of Church and Society

Calvin viewed the Kingdom ruling, thus the church rules. This is the Catholic, and Presbyterian default position.

Luther viewed Church and State, Kingdom of God and Kingdom of earth in parallel and in constant conflict. This affects Anglican and Episcopalian churches.

Anabaptists/ Free churches / Pentecostals view church in opposition to the rulers of the earth. This is at the roots of fundamentalism and hence much of Evangelicalism.

Is the Kingdom of God the Right Social Order?

Is the Kingdom of God the Right Social Order? The Kingdom of God is the highest good. The idea of God is the highest and most comprehensive conception in philosophy; the idea of the Kingdom of God is the highest and broadest idea in sociology and ethics (Rauschenbusch 59). A conception which is not universally human... "the Reign of God". This conception embodied the social ideal and best minds of one of the few creative nations of history. How did Jesus interpret this inherited social ideal? (49). Rauschenbusch, Walter. (1916). *The Social Principles of Jesus*. NY: Association Press.

It is more than Plato's *Republic* or More's *Utopia*, or Marx's *Socialist Manifesto*?

Mysterious Parables of the Kingdom (Matt 13)

Mysterious Parables of the Kingdom (Matt 13). The Kingdom of Heaven is Like a seed sower (Unlike a weeder. Like a mustard seed. Like yeast. Like treasure hidden in the field (44-46). Like a net let down in a lake. Provision for birds, grass and you (Matt 6:25-34) Creates responses. Explosively expansive. Socially transformative. Stake all on the Kingdom. Seek it above all else.

Images of the Kingdom

Commercial: Treasure / pearl / sharing wealth / reward for faithfulness / managers.

Agricultural: Sowing seed / wheat & weeds / abundant harvest / tenants of vineyard Family Faith like a child / cup of water to helpless / marriage feast.

Kingdom Conflict

Conflict with Evil: Deliver us from evil, for thine is the Kingdom... Conflict with Evil People? Culture? Conflict with Evil Structures?

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