

Theology of the Kingdom Paper

The Kingdom of God

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OLD TESTAMENT:

In the study of the Kingdom of God, one major theme that accompanies it is restoration. Dr. Reimer in his book, *Soul Care*, states, “The kingdom of God is the reversal of everything that went wrong when sin entered the world. It is the restoration of everything back to the way God intended it to be.”¹ In reference to understanding the kingdom of God restoring all that went wrong with sin, we set our focus on the book of Genesis. Here we see a clear indication of God’s original plan for humanity. Genesis 1:2 states that before God had commanded for there to be any creative action to the earth, it was “formless,” “empty,” and “dark.” As God began to speak things into existence, we see the creation of man. In Genesis 1:26-27 God creates mankind, yet it isn’t until Genesis 2:8 that we see God creating mankind in the Garden of Eden. Here is where we understand God’s original intention for humanity.

As God creates mankind, he gives them responsibility over the garden and the animals, but God also gives them a unique command that we will later reappear. In Genesis 1:28, God creates mankind and then blesses them in saying “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

What we see here is an establishment of a kingdom on earth as Adam is given partnership in God’s kingship over the earth. As God rules all of creation, both on heaven and earth, Genesis 1:28-30 indicates God giving Adam dominion and rulership over what He has created. Through this, we understand God’s intention for humanity. As God created Adam in the Garden of Eden, it should be understood that God’s established kingdom was within the boundaries of the Garden of Eden as well. This is why the command, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and

¹ Reimer, Robert. *Soul Care: 7 Transformational Principles for a Healthy Soul*. Franklin, TN: Carpenters Son Publishing, 2016.

subdue it,” in verse 28 is so important. As Adam’s descendants would grow, they would, as Genesis 2:24 puts it, leave their mother and father to be united elsewhere. In their leaving to be united elsewhere, they would extend the boundaries of God’s kingdom beyond the Garden of Eden. As they continued to “be fruitful, increasing in number,” they would be expanding the boundaries of God’s kingdom to the ends of the earth.

However, with this task given to Adam also came a cost. Adam would be given kingship over God’s creation only if he stayed in alignment with God. Genesis 2:16-17 states, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”

After Adam and Eve received dominion over God’s kingdom, we see the kingdom of darkness come into the scene. Genesis 3 portrays Satan, the kingdom of darkness, in opposition to God’s kingdom. Disguising himself as a serpent, he tricks Adam and Eve into giving him dominion by getting them to disobey God’s command to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Through this act of disobedience, Adam and Eve are forced out of the Garden of Eden. Their disobedience was worthy of death, yet they were not handed over to death. Rather, God activated the plan of redemption that was already set in place to restore everything back to how God intended it.

NEW TESTAMENT:

As we have looked at the theme of restoration in the Kingdom of God, the book of Romans also tells us the effects of sin. Romans 5:12 states, “just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.” Because of this, there stands a need for restoration to take place. As humanity could, in no way, answer for their crimes (Romans 3:10-19), in comes one who was able, Jesus. “For as by the one

man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous." (Romans 5:19).

As noted earlier, when Jesus came, he went about restoring all that went wrong with the world. In addition to the theme of restoration, there is also the theme of supernatural acts that Jesus did, and the implications for us as His followers. Matthew 4:23-25 reveals how Jesus came and began healing people, casting out demons, and doing other great miracles as he proclaimed the "gospel of the kingdom" (v.23). As sin caused all that went wrong in the world, Jesus came proclaiming the kingdom and bringing restoration with Him.

In the New Testament, we see numerous mentions of the kingdom of God and what often accompanies it. Where there is mention of the kingdom in the gospel, it is often accompanied by the healing of the sick/diseased/paralyzed, the casting out of demons, raising of the dead, and other miraculous acts. Matthew 10 is an area of consistency we see mentioned here. As Jesus sends out the apostles, he tells them to say, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 10:7). Again, we see this statement being accompanied by healing, raising of the dead, the casting out of demons and more. Therefore, as we read Matthew 28, we get a better understanding of what's going and what Jesus is commanding.

In verse 18, Jesus makes the statement, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." As Jesus has won back the keys to the Kingdom, he's been given all authority on earth and in the kingdom of heaven to do as he pleases. He then reveals to the disciples the Great Commission, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20). What we understand from Jesus' commission is that Matthew 10 has implications for Matthew 20. As Jesus had taught his disciples to "heal the sick, raise the dead,

cleanse lepers, cast out demons” and sends them out in Matthew 10, the disciples were to do the same in accordance to Matthew 28:20. With that being said, this has implications for us as well. As we see Jesus “heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons,” we are also to obey the things that Jesus had taught and commanded of us in scripture, to do the same things He did in His ministry.

While there are more passages like this, what we understand from this is that the miraculous acts such as healing, raising of the dead, the casting out of demons and more, all have connection to the Kingdom. What we can conclude is that these miraculous acts come as a result of the effects of the Kingdom.

Bill Johnson in his book, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, furthers this understanding by referring to The Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, specifically verse 10. “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” With this verse in mind, Johnson states, “This is the primary focus for all prayer—if it exists in heaven, it is to be loosed on earth.”² The idea is that as access to Heaven has been given to us through Jesus, we are to pray with the Kingdom authority we have. For example, if sickness isn’t present in Heaven, we ought to pray that the Kingdom be manifested in the people we pray for.

As we have talked about the Kingdom of God and themes of restoration and the supernatural acts of Jesus and its implications for us as His followers, it’s also important that we discuss another important theme, the now and not yet tension.

Through scripture, we understand that the Kingdom of God has come (as noted earlier, this is why we see miracles happen through Jesus, his disciples, and even today), however, we also understand that it hasn’t come completely. In 1 Corinthians 12-14, Paul spends some time

² Bill Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth: A Practical Guide to a Life of Miracle* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2003), 57.

taking about spiritual gifts, speaking in tongues and prophecy just to name a few. 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 tells us, “As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.” From this passage, verse 8 tells us there will be a time when the gifts of the spirit will cease. However, verse 9 and 10 tells us that “we know in part and we prophesy in part.” This reveals to us as we access the Kingdom, we can only do it in part, not fully. However, as the “perfect comes, the partial will pass away.”

This partiality is a result of the incomplete manifestation of the Kingdom of God, as it will not pass away until the “perfect comes.” In Acts 3:19-21, we receive a better idea of what this “perfect” refers to. Here, Peter tells the crowd of Jews to repent so that their sins may be erased. He then states, “Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.” (v.20-21).

From this, we understand that with Jesus comes the full restoration of all things. As Jesus comes the complete manifestation of heaven will come and all things will be made clear. We will no longer see in part but will see things complete and clear. “They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.” (Revelation 22:4-5). Some scholars attribute the “perfect” to Jesus, others attribute it to heaven, however, both essentially say the same thing. As Jesus comes, the full manifestation of heaven will come, and all things will be clear, restored, and complete.

Lastly, as we’ve studied the Kingdom of God, we must also discuss the kingdom of darkness. In John 14:30, Jesus refers to Satan as, “the prince of the world.” As this indicates that

Satan has a kingdom, this also reveals to us that the world is Satan's kingdom. As we study scripture, we come to a clearer understanding of the tensions between two kingdoms.

Matthew 12:22-33 is a great example of this tension. In the passage, Jesus heals a man who was afflicted by demons which made him blind and mute. The Pharisees then accused Jesus of casting out demons through, "Beelzebul, the prince of demons." Here, Jesus clearly distinguishes opposition that the kingdom of darkness against the Kingdom of God. In verse 25 Jesus states, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined." Through this passage, it's clear that not even Satan himself would divide his own kingdom. Therefore, verse 28 indicates the miraculous works come as the Kingdom of God restores the works of Satan, as it stated that demons caused the afflictions on the man.

John 10:10 is the popular verse that informs us of Satan's intentions. While the passage refers to false teachers and Jesus referring to them as thieves, we can appropriate the role of the thief to Satan himself. As Satan is the chief thief, he opposes what the Kingdom of God comes to do. While he comes to "steal, kill, and destroy," Jesus comes so that we may have abundant life. There are clear and obvious tensions here as both kingdoms reveal their intentions. One to bring about the distortion of God's Kingdom, and the other to bring the fulfillment of it.

As the Kingdom of God is the restoration of all that happened at the fall, Jesus comes bringing the Kingdom with Him to undo Satan's work. The implications for us is that we are the ones who continue the work of Jesus. As Jesus commands us to make disciples and teach them to obey the things he taught us in scripture, He has given us authority continue his work of combatting the kingdom of darkness. As Christ followers, we must live into our responsibility.

Works Cited

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