

Gloria Park

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TH720

Theology of the Kingdom

Beginning with Genesis all the way to Revelations, the kingdom of God is a recurring theme throughout the Bible. This particular theme develops progressively from the Old to New Testaments, revealing Jesus Christ as the Ultimate Messiah and by extension, King of all Kings, appointed by God to rule over all the nations and kingdoms of the earth. However, unlike the Jewish understanding at the time, God's kingdom is not primarily an earthly or political one, per se, but rather a spiritual one. Furthermore, there is a kingdom of darkness which is consistently juxtaposed against the kingdom of God and serves not to compare the two as rivals, per se, but rather demonstrate the complete authority and sovereignty of the kingdom of God over against the kingdom of darkness. I shall begin by tracing the development of the theology of the kingdom of God and Jesus as King throughout the Old and New Testaments, supplemented by themes and principles contrasted with the kingdom of darkness and Satan, and conclude with practical implications for said theology on behalf of the Church today.

While the phrase "kingdom of God" does not explicitly appear until the New Testament, God and His Anointed, or "Messiah," is frequently described as King over all the nations throughout the Old Testament (Psalm 2; 2 Chron. 20:6; Isa. 37:16). In the beginning, God creates a covenant with Adam and Eve, enabling them to "fill the earth and subdue it" so long as they remain in right relationship with Him (Gen. 1:28). When they choose to disobey God, however, they lose their authority to rule over the earth and the so-called "keys of the kingdom," as Reimer states in his book, *Spiritual Authority*. Instead Adam and Eve choose to listen to Satan, the father

of lies, and in so doing give him “spiritual access to...[their] souls” (Reimer 94; John 8:44). Thus, Satan becomes the “god of this age” and usurps the reign over earth which rightfully belonged to mankind (2 Cor. 4:4). Yet, God offers this promise amidst Adam and Eve’s rebellion in what is often known as the proto-euangelion or proto-gospel, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Gen. 3:15). This offspring of the woman proves to be none other than Jesus, who ultimately is “bitten” by the enemy in the form of physical death, but conquers spiritual death once and for all, thereby “crushing” Satan and his dominion over mankind.

In 1 Samuel 8, the people of Israel ask God for a human king to rule over them, like the other nations. This deeply grieves Samuel the prophet, yet God reminded him that it was not ultimately Samuel the people were rejecting so much as God Himself (v. 7). Up until this point, the people of God had been subject to a theocracy of sorts, being ruled by God directly, beginning with God’s covenant via Abraham all the way to Moses, the judges, and eventually Samuel. God ultimately grants the people their request, much to Samuel’s dismay, and the Israelites begin to have a series of kings to rule over them. While some of these kings were recorded as doing “what was right in the eyes of the Lord,” the vast majority of them were recorded as evil and deliberately going against God’s will and oppressing the people, as Samuel had predicted (1 Kgs. 15:11). Yet again in the midst of the people’s faithlessness and disobedience, God again establishes His covenant and promises to raise up a king in the line of David who will rule over and “bring justice to the nations” and “of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end” (Isa. 9:7; 42:1). In the book of Isaiah, this Messiah is portrayed as a Suffering Servant figure, “despised and rejected by mankind” and eventually “pierced for our transgressions...crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that

brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed” (53:3-5). Thus, God’s masterful redemption plan for all mankind is revealed: through Jesus’ perfect obedience to the Father, even unto death, He wrought about our redemption and was thus “exalted...to the highest place and g[iven] the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9-11).

The authors of the respective Gospels make it very clear that they believe Jesus is the Messiah (Matt. 16:16; Lk. 4:17-21; John 1:40-49; 4:25, 26). The Gospel of Matthew begins with “the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1). Similarly, Mark begins his gospel by stating “the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1). The author proceeds to describe how John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus’ mission by proclaiming, “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15). To contemporary Jewish listening ears, it would have been understood that the arrival of the “kingdom of God” equated the arrival of the Messiah, for the two were closely intertwined. Later in Matthew, Jesus states, “I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:18-19). Through Jesus’ life of perfect obedience to the Father, acting as a “second Adam” of sorts, and ensuing death, He once again hands over the keys of the kingdom to the church (Reimer 67; Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:45-46). Just as Jesus “went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness,” so too are we as followers of Jesus, namely the church, called to work towards “the reversal of everything that

went wrong with the world when sin entered” (Reimer 64; Matt. 9:35). In other words, the kingdom of God is not merely about “sinner being saved, but [also] the works of the devil being destroyed...Healing, deliverance, justice, reconciliation, liberty to the captives, freedom, and fullness are all parts of the salvation Jesus came to offer” (Reimer 67). Christ came not only to grant forgiveness of sins. Reimer states, “there is no proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom in the New Testament without a demonstration of power” (64).

Both the Old and New Testaments make it clear that Jesus is the King of all Kings and that God will one day “reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross” (Col. 1:20). Jesus’ death on the cross and resurrection ensured that He had once and for all conquered death, and that it no longer had power over anyone who believed in him. However, as Dr. Reimer also likes to say, while we know the ultimate victory has been won on the cross, that is V-Day, there are still battles we must face in the interim, sort of like D-Day. The war has been won, but there may be battles lost if we are not careful to constantly equip ourselves with the Spirit and be on the offensive as well as defensive in the spiritual realm. As stated earlier, the spiritual battle is not between God and Satan, but mankind and Satan. Likewise, our fight is not against each other, or fellow human beings created in the image of God, but rather “against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12). Therefore, Paul encourages us, we must “put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand” (Eph. 6:13). Hence we as the Church are called to partake in the ongoing battle against evil and the dominion of darkness in this world. Colossians 1:16, states, “For in [Christ Jesus] all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible,

whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.” Therefore, even Satan and his authorities belong to God, for God is Creator and Ruler of all. The real battle, therefore, is not so much between God and Satan, per se, as Satan and mankind. Ephesians 1:19-21 states that the Church has access to the same power which “raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.” This establishes two distinct truths: (1) Jesus is Lord and King over all and there is “no competition for [Jesus’] throne” and (2) the Church can similarly access this very power and authority Jesus has in the heavenly realms by virtue of their faith in Him (Reimer 91). This underscores a key theme and principle of the kingdom of God versus the kingdom of darkness: Jesus has already won the victory over evil and darkness, and we need only to appropriate our access to His victory by fixing our eyes on Jesus, not ourselves or Satan.

In Luke 10:18, Jesus tells the seventy-two disciples upon their return from their first mission, ““I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.” This reinforces Jesus’ identity as the Son of God, who was seated in the heavenly realms and throne room even prior to the foundations of the earth. His eyewitness account of Satan’s fall from heaven ensures the imminent eternal condemnation of Satan and his angels and by extension, Jesus’ supremacy over the kingdom of darkness. Jesus goes on to say, “ I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (10:19-20). This illustrates the principle that the kingdom of God is not ultimately about us, but that authority is ultimately “the right to use someone else’s power” (Reimer 56). We are called to be ambassadors of Christ on earth, extending His rule and reign here as it is in heaven. Thus, the kingdom of God

is highly relationship-based and its ultimate goal is not healing and deliverance in and of themselves, but rather the freedom, wholeness, and restoration to the Father which ensues as a result of these acts of power.

Some implications of the theology of the King and the Kingdom for the Church today is our God-given mandate and responsibility to “close the gap” between our lived experiences and Jesus’ teachings and actions (Reimer 62). While there are several gifts that come with accessing the kingdom of God, such as faith, miracles, and prophecy, one unique service which the Church is able to provide that none other can is that of deliverance. Unfortunately, even Satan and demons know how to appropriate miracles such as healing and words of knowledge, and due to the abundance of resources in the Western world today, such as biomedicine, there appears to be less of a reliance on God when it comes to physical ailment and treatment. The same applies for mental health issues. Due to growing awareness of mental health, including factors such as chemical imbalances and genetics, healing is increasingly seen as something relegated to the natural, rather than the supernatural. Yet, as Reimer says, “You cannot medicate demons and you cannot cast out human.” In other words, the Church is able to provide a unique holistic framework of healing that other means are not able to provide, namely that of deliverance. We know that the root of demonization is spiritual and there is only one solution: to cast out demons. As this requires faith in Christ and by extension spiritual authority, the Church is uniquely positioned to heal and restore people to wholeness in a way no other source can. The exponentially rising rates of depression, anxiety, suicide, murder, and a plague of other diseases and social conditions around the globe attest to the need for the kingdom of God to come in greater measure than ever before. The world needs Jesus and the theology of the kingdom of God presents an effective framework through which we can present Jesus as King, Savior, Lord and

Healer to “proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners” (Isa. 61:1).

### **Bibliography**

Reimer, Dr. Rob. *Spiritual Authority: Partnering with God to Release the Kingdom*. Franklin, TN: Carpenter’s Son Publishing, 2020.