

“The already but not yet of the Kingdom of God”

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Kingdom of God; Salvation History;

In the OT God is presented as the supreme King of the universe, ruling over all. But from the moment of Adam’s sin, it became apparent that something broke – mankind now largely rebelled against the King’s rule. And the result was that not only was humanity broken from that day forward but all creation was affected. Human beings (Romans 5:12) and the world in which we live (Romans 8:20) have been altered by sin so that we barely reflect the glory of God or the glory with which we were first created.

The Bible starts, in Genesis, with the tree of life (Genesis 2:9) in a setting of intimacy between God and mankind (Genesis 2:15-25).

The Bible ends, in Revelation, with the tree of life (Revelation 22:2) in a setting of *restored* intimacy between God and mankind (Revelation 21:3).

Between Genesis and Revelation, the message of the Bible is the story of humanity’s on-going rebellion and God’s more powerful grace to restore humanity, the earth and his universe.

- Starting in Genesis 3:15, God promised a reversal of the effects of sin.
- In Genesis 12 Abraham was promised that through his offspring the whole world would be blessed by God.
- The Prophets saw how broken the world was and looked forward to the day when sin’s domination would be ended and God’s righteous and benevolent rule would again reign supreme.

The Prophets likewise wrote that this life-changing and world-changing rule of God would be ushered in by his appointed Messiah.

Then with the NT we see Jesus presenting himself as that “Messiah.” He came proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God – the rule of God overcoming the forces of evil which have held sway over humanity and the

rest of creation for millennia. He came teaching us to pray “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Satan’s reign (and our cooperation with it) in the world is characterized by sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like, and it ends in death!

God’s reign in the world is characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control and it is life!

Jesus came ushering in God’s (His) kingdom rule **but not all at once**. He announced both what would be true in the future AND how some of that future would be experienced now. We can rightly describe it as the future invading the present. Paul wrote that our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). We, who are saved by God’s grace through faith in Jesus, are future “kingdom of God” people living in the present kingdom of this world. We are colonists not from some other place in the past but from the future. We are tethered to the future but living in the present.

This work of Jesus produces two great truths:

1. We have an almost unimaginable future (1 Corinthians 2:9) that has been and is secured by God’s grace:

Revelation 21:1-4

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away...”

What we often refer to as “heaven” is actually the new earth that God will recreate (2 Peter 3:7,13). And on that new earth we know, from God’s promises, it will be a radically different experience for us than now. There will be peace

with God – no fear of alienation. There will be the peace of God – our relationships will be whole and healthy. The fruit of the Spirit will not be sporadic in us but consistent. The heartaches we know now will be impossible then. Even the physical earth will be restored to greater glory (Romans 8). And our bodies will be resurrected, immortal and incorruptible.

2. The second thing that is true is that some of that future blessing of the kingdom of God, God's complete and uncontested rule, is experienced even now.

If someone gave you a \$1000 down payment on a parcel of land, the earnest money and what it could provide you are yours now even though you don't yet have the full amount that will be paid in the future. The Holy Spirit of God is called God's down payment (Ephesians 1:13-14) on what will be ours in the future but that Holy Spirit and what he will provide are also ours now!

When the Kingdom of God is completely fulfilled on the new earth, there will be a peace with God untroubled by circumstances and doubt, **but even now** we can know a great measure of that peace. Or to say it differently, that future complete peace even now invades the present in part.

When the Kingdom of God is completely fulfilled on the new earth peace with each other will be perfect **but even now** we can know a measure of that peace through forgiveness, reconciliation, kindness, and genuine fellowship. The future complete peace with each other even now invades the present in part.

When the Kingdom of God is completely fulfilled on the new earth we will live in resurrected, immortal, and incorruptible bodies. When Jesus was on earth healing people he was giving them (and us) a glimpse into the future. He was demonstrating the power of the Kingdom of God that will eventually overcome all the devastating effects of sin – including disease, debilitation and death. **But even now**, when God heals people today he is giving us a taste of what is to come. That healing may be by the immediate intervention of God, what we call a miracle, or by the mediated intervention of God through medicine. But in either form it is the future wholeness of the Kingdom of God, now in part, invading the present.

What we are experiencing now, by God's grace, is what some call the "already but not yet" of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God has been established in Jesus' death and resurrection; it is a certainty and we are already experiencing some of the effects of it. But we are not yet experiencing its fullness which is yet to come. The Kingdom of God is "already, but not yet." We have the privilege of living in expectation of what God can and often does even now but accepting that the fullness is yet to come. "Maranatha" ("Our Lord Comes" or "Come, Lord Jesus!")