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The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament

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THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE
OLD TESTAMENT

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. THE ORIGIN OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD	6
Background of the Kingdom Concept	6
The Kingdom Concept	9
The Kingdom Not Realized	12
God's Promise of Grace in His Kingdom	13
III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD	16
The Patriarchal Period	17
The Mosaic Era	20
The Time of the Kings	25
The Age of the Prophets	37
IV. THE KINGDOM OF GOD DURING THE LATE OLD TESTA- MENT AND INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD	44
V. CONCLUSION	54
BIBLIOGRAPHY	57

The unity in Scripture is Christ and His kingdom of
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¹John Wright, *The Kingdom of God* (New York: Abingdon Press, n. 1937), p. 7.
²Rev. 11:16. Cf. Rev. 12:10.
³Rev. 21:2.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The proclamation of the Kingdom of God and the extension of the Regnum Dei is the mission of the Church. In order to understand better the occupation of the Church in her task, the purpose of this thesis is to sketch the beginning and the formation of the Kingdom of God as related to the Old Testament.

The concept of the Kingdom of God involves the whole message of the Bible, with the roots of the Kingdom idea deeply imbedded in the teachings of the Old Testament, and not only in the teachings of Jesus.¹ But it must be noted explicitly, the Kingdom of God must be viewed through the eyes of the New Testament faith from Abraham "who looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God,"² to "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven."³

The unity in Scripture is Christ and His redemption of mankind, and these truths revolve about the idea of a people of God, chosen by Him, to live under Him in His Kingdom,

¹John Bright, The Kingdom of God (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1953), p. 7.

²Heb. 11:10. Cf. Gen. 12:1ff.

³Rev. 21:2.

under His rule, and about the idea of the coming of God's Kingdom. Thus, this theme is immanent throughout the whole of the Old Testament and forms an unbreakable link with the whole of the New Testament.

Christ, God's Son, came. The Kingdom is on His lips. What is it like? It is like a sower who went out to sow his seed; it is like a pearl of great price; it is likened to a mustard seed. And how does one get into it? One sells all that he has and gives to the poor; one becomes as a little child. It is a matter of grave importance. In fact, it would be better to enter mutilated, maimed, or crippled than not at all. Of such paramount seriousness and importance is the notion of the Kingdom of God in the mind of Jesus that one can scarcely grasp the meaning of His teaching at all without some understanding of it.⁴ For all the repeated mention of the Kingdom, Christ never paused to define it, nor do we read in Scripture that one of His hearers asks the question, "Lord, what do these words, the Kingdom of God, mean?" "On the contrary, Jesus used the term as if assured it would be understood, and indeed it was."⁵ No doubt this term lay within the vocabulary of almost every Jew. It was something they understood and

⁴Bright, op. cit., p. 17.

⁵Ibid.

looked for.⁶

What is the Kingdom of God? It is "the reign of divine love exercised by God in His grace over human hearts believing in His love, and constrained thereby to yield Him grateful affection and devoted service."⁷ "The Kingdom of God as the supreme goal of Christian endeavor is the absolute reign of God,--the selfless pursuit of the will of God as revealed for man's well-being and salvation."⁸ "Just as much as the Fatherhood of God, the Kingdom of God is a personal relation between God and the individual human being."⁹ Thus, the Kingdom of God is basically the relationship between Him and the believer, wherein and whereby he becomes the Father of the believer, and the believer becomes the child of God.

Where is the origin of the Kingdom idea found?

The rule of heaven and the kingship of Jehovah were the substance of the Old Testament; the object of the calling and mission of Israel; the meaning of all its ordinances, whether civil or religious, the underlying idea of all its institutions. It explained alike the history of the people, the dealings of God with them, and the prospects opened up by the prophets. Without

⁶Ibid.

⁷A. B. Bruce, The Kingdom of God (New York: Scribner and Welford, c.1889), p. 46.

⁸Archibald Robertson, Regnum Dei (London: Methuen and Company, c.1901), p. 69.

⁹James Orr, "The Kingdom of God, of Heaven," A Dictionary of the Bible, edited by James Hastings, et al. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1900), II, 132.

it the Old Testament could not be understood; it gave perpetuity to its teachings and dignity to its representatives. This constituted alike the real contrast between Israel and the nations of antiquity and Israel's real distinction. Thus the whole Old Testament was the preparatory presentation of the rule of heaven and of the Kingdom of its lord.¹⁰

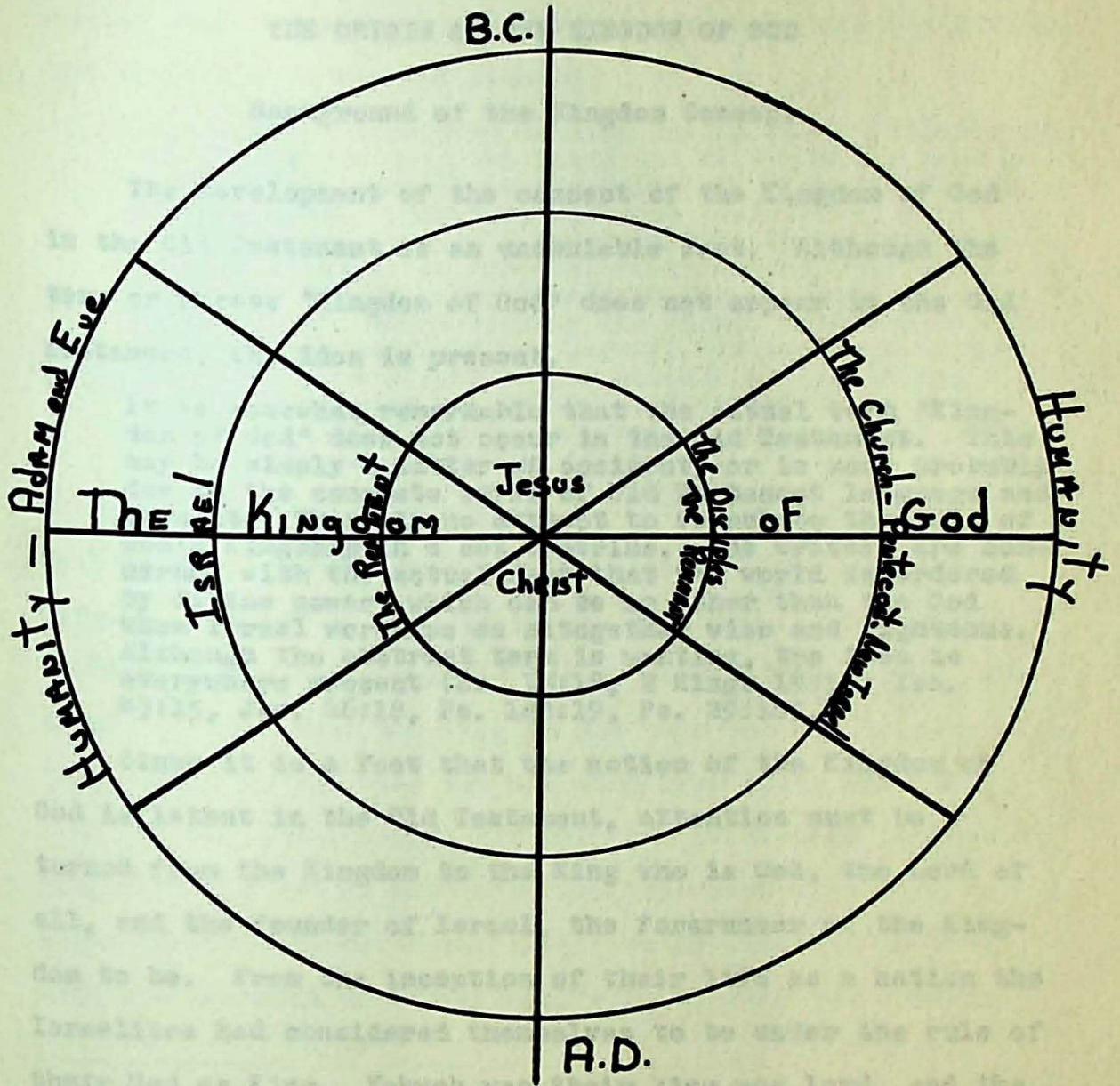
The sole purpose of this thesis is to trace the origin of the Kingdom of God from the beginning of time, creation, to the time of Christ. The development of the Kingdom of God will be traced through four specific areas: the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, the Royal, and the Prophetic. Within each of these areas it should be kept in mind that God is using people to spread His Kingdom. The fourth chapter will give a brief summary of the Jewish concept concerning the Kingdom. As for references to the Covenant Idea, the Son of Man in Daniel, the Suffering Servant, and the New Testament concept of the Kingdom of God, these lie outside the scope of this paper.

The major source of this thesis is the Holy Bible. In addition to this, helpful material was obtained from theologies of the Old Testament and major works concerning the Kingdom of God concept.

This graphic illustration will introduce the development

¹⁰Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus, the Messiah, I, 235. Quoted by William F. Arndt in "The New Testament Teaching on the Kingdom of God," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXI (January, 1950), 9.

of the Kingdom of God as it is presented in this thesis.



Robert A. Scott, *The Kingdom of God in the New Testament* (New York: The Macmillan Company, c.1931), p. 27.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGIN OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Background of the Kingdom Concept

The development of the concept of the Kingdom of God in the Old Testament is an undeniable fact. Although the term or phrase "Kingdom of God" does not appear in the Old Testament, the idea is present.

It is somewhat remarkable that the actual term "Kingdom of God" does not occur in the Old Testament. This may be simply a matter of accident, or is more probably due to the concrete style of Old Testament language and thought. There is no attempt to formulate the idea of God's Kingship in a set doctrine. The writers are concerned with the actual fact that the world is ordered by divine power, which can be no other than the God whom Israel worships as altogether wise and righteous. Although the abstract term is wanting, the idea is everywhere present (Ex. 15:18, 2 Kings 19:15, Isa. 43:15, Jer. 46:18, Ps. 103:19, Ps. 29:10).¹

Since it is a fact that the notion of the Kingdom of God is latent in the Old Testament, attention must be turned from the Kingdom to the King who is God, the Lord of all, and the founder of Israel, the forerunner of the Kingdom to be. From the inception of their life as a nation the Israelites had considered themselves to be under the rule of their God as King. Yahweh was their king and lord, and the worship of Yahweh was completely different from the worship

¹Ernest F. Scott, The Kingdom of God in the New Testament (New York: The Macmillan Company, c.1931), p. 17.

of Israel's neighboring Semitic tribes. Yahweh was more than a tutelary deity who ruled as a vicious lord and task-master constantly waiting to be appeased. He was the living and true God; He was the Jehovah,

a name which specially denotes Him as the selfidentical and changeless one, the Being who is eternally what He is (Ex. 3:14), who is and remains one with Himself in all He thinks, purposes, and does (Mal. 3:6), who possesses together with immutability, the attributes of self determining freedom and unlimited rule (Deut. 4:39, Ps. 130:6), who, therefore, in the relation of the covenant, would display His might, demonstrate His supremacy as moral ruler, magnify His covenant--keeping faithfulness, and reveal Himself as the living, personal God, working freely in history in the pursuance of gracious purposes, and in spite of all human opposition bring them to pass.²

He is the King, and there would be a time when He would declare His lordship over all the nations. The earliest reference to God as King is in the Pentateuch. The Book of Deuteronomy shows that if Israel should pick a king, she should be sure that the King is one whom God has chosen. "Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose."³ The Book of Numbers indicates, "The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them."⁴ Samuel shows specifically that God is King when the Children of Israel desire to be like the nations

²James Orr, "The Kingdom of God, of Heaven," A Dictionary of the Bible, edited by James Hastings, et al. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), II, '845.

³Deut. 17:15.

⁴Num. 23:21.

about her and have an earthly king. The Lord tells Samuel, "They have not rejected you, but they have rejected me, that I should not be king over them."⁵ The prophets also regard Yahweh as King. In Isaiah's inaugural vision it should be noted: "Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts."⁶ Zephaniah the Prophet indicates: "The King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee."⁷ Therefore, one of the dominant ideas in the Old Testament era was that God was King and directed all events of history in the world for the benefit of His people.⁸ Millar Burrows observes:

The idea of God as King is the basis and essence of the conception of the Kingdom of God. The Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew nouns ordinarily translated "kingdom" all mean primarily "kingship" or "sovereignty," though they are used also in the derived senses of "reign" and "realm." The Old Testament speaks of God's kingdom in the sense of his sovereign rule of the universe (1 Chron. 29:11ff.; Pss. 22:28; 47:2,7ff.; 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1; 103:19; 145:10-13; Isa. 52:7; Dan. 4:3; 17:34; 5:21; (6:26)). In Judaism this idea of the kingdom of God (or heaven) is very prominent. The prayer book, referring to the crossing of the Red Sea, says, "Then they saw thy kingdom" (i.e., royal power). The rabbinic literature speaks of making God King (literally, causing him to reign) in the sense of accepting him as King. The same idea is expressed also as taking upon one the kingdom of God or receiving his kingdom. A similar expression is "taking the yoke of the kingdom of heaven." The rabbis speak also of

⁵1 Sam. 5:7.

⁶Isa. 6:5.

⁷Zeph. 3:15.

⁸C. Piepenbring, Theology of the Old Testament, translated from the French by H. G. Mitchell (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company, c.1895), p. 130.

"taking the yoke of the commandments" (Matt. 11:29), the distinction being that taking the yoke of the commandments means obeying for the sake of rewards, whereas taking the yoke of the kingdom of heaven means devotion to God in love, apart from self-interest, i.e., full acceptance of God's sovereign rule.⁹

Before the Kingdom of God in the Old Testament is discussed, it is proper and necessary to mention a few words concerning the connotation of "kingdom." Kingdom suggests a king, ruler, lord. It necessitates people, folk over whom the king holds sway. It implies laws under which the people live, with rewards for obedience and punishment for violation. It exists for a purpose, a purpose which in the case of the Kingdom of God is for the benefit of humankind, although at first it was confined to the Chosen. A land is essential. This land for Israel was Canaan.¹⁰

The Kingdom Concept

Where does the Kingdom of God concept begin? Many scholars maintain that its origin began with the Exodus and the giving of the covenant at Mt. Sinai. John Bright alludes to this:

Before there could have been the hope for a prince of David's line, there had to be--David. Before the hope of a messianic Kingdom there had to be--the Kingdom of

⁹Millar Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1946), p. 65.

¹⁰Gerhard Kittel, Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, Erster Band (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1933), pp. 563-576.

Israel. In short, before Israel's hope of the Kingdom of God could assume such a form, she had first to build a kingdom on this earth. . . . We must then begin our story in the latter half of the thirteenth century B. C., for it was then that Israel began her life as a people in the Promised Land.¹¹

This is undeniable fact, but the concept of the Kingdom of God begins with Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

The real basis for the idea of the kingdom of God is already laid in the creation history. The doctrine of Scripture in its oldest as in its later parts, is here entirely uniform. The one God--the God who afterwards entered into covenant with the patriarchs, and as Jehovah brought Israel out of Egypt, and formed it into a people for himself--is the Almighty maker of heaven and earth, the creator, Lord, and Ruler of all things, animate and inanimate.¹²

Having created the world, established the laws of nature, and provided for the support of all animate creatures, God needed an agent, a representative to function as He willed. Man was formed: "And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."¹³ "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."¹⁴ Then God delegated to man authority, dominion, and rule.

¹¹John Bright, The Kingdom of God (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1953), p. 19.

¹²Orr, op. cit., p. 844.

¹³Gen. 1:27.

¹⁴Gen. 2:7.

And God blessed them; and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish 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 moveth upon the earth.¹⁵

This delegation of authority and rule to man is also reflected in the Psalter:

What is man that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man that thou visited him? For thou hast made him a little lower than God and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yea, and all the beasts of the field. The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.¹⁶

The creation narrative in Genesis 1 with its delegation to man of "dominion over" the creatures lays the foundation of the doctrine of the Kingdom of God.¹⁷ The control of God extends to everything--to man, to the nations of the world, and to all creation.¹⁸ God is the possessor of heaven and earth. When to His word "be" came the willing "and it was," in other words, when matter obeyed the Divine Word like a willing servant, the Kingdom of God began.¹⁹ Disobedience and disloyalty do not destroy the

¹⁵Gen. 1:28.

¹⁶Ps. 8:4-8.

¹⁷Orr, op. cit., p. 844.

¹⁸Cf. Gen. 17:25; 45:5-9; Deut. 32:9; Ex. 9:13-16; Prov. 21:1; 2 Chron. 16:9; 2 Kings 19:28; Isa. 10:15.

¹⁹Orr, op. cit., p. 844.

rule of God in His Kingdom. He is sovereign, and His Lordship is in action throughout the Scriptures.²⁰

The Kingdom Not Realized

As stated before, the universal Dominion or Kingdom of God is recognized in the Old Testament. Everything is under His control, responding to His command. Man, the zenith of God's creation, created in the image and likeness of God, was able to think, feel, rule, and will, and given a task which would challenge him. Man alone was free. Man alone could enter into a free relation with God. God, the Lord of creation, the Ruler whose sway is observed in the laws of nature, the Giver of gifts, the One Lord and Ruler of all things gave man a power of choice, an ability to accept or reject the command of God. Man could defy God. Man did defy God.

After the creation of man, he was told by God what he was to do and what he was not to do:

And the Lord God commanded the man saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.²¹

God provided a helpmeet for man, but Satan in the form of a serpent tempted her to eat of the forbidden tree of

²⁰Cf. Ps. 29.

²¹Gen. 2:16-17.

knowledge of good and evil.

And when the woman saw the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired, to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the Lord God in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord amongst the trees of the garden.²²

Their consciences were functioning; sin had made cowards of them. The sin of disobedience was heinous, and from their disobedience there followed sin and death.

The Kingdom of God was not realized; man had violated the law of God, and this meant expulsion from His presence. Even so the rule of God in His Kingdom was shown in His wrath.²³ After man had rebelled, disobeyed the Lord's command, lost the close friendship which he had with God, a new program had to be initiated for the realization of the Kingdom.

God's Promise of Grace in His Kingdom

It might be well to note that the Old Testament background for the Kingdom of God is man in revolt, out of

²²Gen. 3:6-8.

²³cf. Gen. 6:5-6; 8:21; 13:13; 19:20-21; Lev. 18:24-30; Deut. 9:4-6; 1 Kings 8:46; Pss. 14; 51:5; Prov. 20:19; Isa. 1; Hos. 4.

harmony with God and condemned.²⁴ The record of sin is deplorable. The Bible is realistic; nothing is hid; nothing is covered. Since man was in revolt, what was God to do to re-establish His reign in His Kingdom? He did not choose to use force; had He done so, He would have lowered Himself to the level of a despot, such as Sennacherib or Pharaoh. The alternative that He chose was that of grace, the favor which He could bestow upon man in rebellion.

This note is first struck in the Gospel promise of Genesis 3:15: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Grace is implied. God must take the initiative; this He did even from the beginning.

The promise to Eve in Genesis 3:15 has happily been called the "protevangel," the first Gospel, although not spoken directly to Eve, but in her hearing: "He (the seed of the woman) shall bruise him on the heel." The cunning of the serpent had prevailed. Sin, sorrow, and death had entered into human life. But the tempter was not left to gloat with impunity over the ruin he had caused, nor did God leave his children to eternal defeat and despair. In the dark hour of apparent defeat, God's word of comfort in the promise of ultimate victory came to cheer. This was the first Messianic prophecy for the future. The manner of its giving, in an hour of hopelessness, and its way of fitting into the special need of that occasion, are the same as in the clearest and most detailed promises of the later centuries. The human family had fallen into sin and sorrow. . . . But out of the family so

²⁴Ibid.

stricken would come deliverance; for its son, in some future day, would defeat the foe.²⁵

The Kingdom of God is latent in the Old Testament, discernible in the creative acts of God. God created man, but man fell into sin. The Kingdom was not lost; it was again promised in the Protevangel.

²⁵Edward Mack, The Christ of the Old Testament (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1926), pp. 41-42.

He had said,

... that he would be able to hear his voice, that he might instruct them, and upon earth he showed them his great fire, and that he would give them the land of the fire, and because he loved the fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought them out in his might with his mighty power out of Egypt; to drive out nations from before them greater and mightier than they are, to bring them in, to give them their land for an inheritance, as he is this day.

Their destiny was universal, for the intention of God from the first was to crush the devil through them.

Having found that the Kingdom begins in the creative acts of God and that man denied the right of God to reign by his sin, attention is now turned to the development of the Kingdom in the Old Testament. According to Dr. James Orr

Gen. vi. 19:13-16; Isa. 45:1.

Gen. vi. 4:12-14.

Gen. vi. 4:15-25.

Gen. Gen. 12:1; 18:18; 22:12; 23:12; 26:4.

CHAPTER III

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Israel was God's chosen people.¹ Its constitution was theocratic. God was its Ruler and King, and the people were His, subject to His orders, and obligated to what He wanted done. As Lord and Leader, it was His task to drive out the enemy and establish the people in the land which He had promised.²

Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he shewed thee his great fire; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire. And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt; To drive out nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day.³

Their destiny was universal, for the intention of God from the first was to enrich the races through them.⁴

Having found that the Kingdom began in the creative acts of God and that man denied the right of God to reign by his sin, attention is now turned to the development of the Kingdom in the Old Testament. According to Dr. James Orr

¹Cf. Ex. 19:3-16; Isa. 43:21.

²Cf. Deut. 4:32-48.

³Deut. 4:36-38.

⁴Cf. Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 28:14; 22:18; 26:4.

there are four steps in this development: the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, the Royal, and the Prophetic.⁵

The Patriarchal Period

After the Fall sin made further inroads on the life of man. Because of the penetration of sin the world was destroyed by water. Noah and his family were spared in the destruction wrought by the deluge.⁶ God chose Shem and attached the promise to him.⁷

Noah, with his family, is placed by God in a covenant relation, 9:8ff. But the Biblical idea of covenant by no means implies equal rights, and in consequence of this similar reciprocal conditions, and in the two contracting parties. Berith denoted property settlement, adjustment, solemn conditioning, arranging, but especially a conditioning by which God puts Himself in a special relation to men, more closely specializes the relation existing already between Him and all men. On this understanding of the word and idea it is obvious that the initiative proceeds entirely from God, and we see why the obligations of men are not always expressly set forth as covenant conditions. God makes such an arrangement in sovereign grace, and only in the second place is the new relation to God to take shape in human life. Thus in 6:18, 9:11ff., nothing is said of conditions to be observed by Noah. Rather it is said of conditions of grace, in which God binds Himself by promise. . . . The substance of the divine covenant with Noah . . . consists in the promise that God will

⁵James Orr, "The Kingdom of God, of Heaven," A Dictionary of the Bible, edited by James Hastings, et al. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), II, 844-849.

⁶Cf. Gen. 6:9; 7:1; 8:1ff.; 9:1ff.

⁷Gen. 9:26-27.

not again bring a judgment of universal destruction on mankind after the manner of the great Flood.⁸

The next step in the development of the Kingdom of God had to do with the Patriarch Abram. At his time the families of mankind were being formed into tribes, states, and kingdoms, and being spread over the face of the earth. God separated one family from the rest. He chose Abram.

The Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee; and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.⁹

The points to be observed in this promise are the land and the people. The whole patriarchal history looks forward to the holy people in the land promised to them by God. The intimate relation of Abram to God became the heritage of a particular people. What was the significance of that relationship? First, the recipient of the revelation and call was a man of faith,¹⁰ highly honored by being made the avenue of blessing to the people. Genesis 20:7 refers to him as a prophet. The importance of this brief statement lies in the fact that he was God's chosen instrument. The

⁸C. Von Orrelli, The Old Testament Prophecy of the Consummation of the Kingdom of God (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1885), pp. 91-92.

⁹Gen. 12:1-3.

¹⁰Cf. Heb. 11:8ff.

favours of God were determined by the attitude of the people to Abraham. Whoever scorned Abraham would arouse the displeasure of God, but whoever blessed him, would be blessed by God.

Not merely will Abraham's good fortune be proverbial throughout the world, but all nations of the earth will see that in Abraham the highest good is to be found; and thus he will be the priestly mediator of salvation between God and the world, since Abraham's will bring to those farthest off the knowledge of the true God, and in praying for such blessings they will use the name of Abraham who prevailed with God.¹¹

Abraham died; the promise was made to Isaac¹² and to Jacob.¹³ Ishmael and Esau were excluded. Jacob became the object of God's affection, and although he had proved unworthy on many occasions, he became a new man:

And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince has thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.¹⁴

At this point the blessing of Jacob is important.¹⁵ One of the pronouncements bears directly on the Kingdom, in

¹¹Orelli, op. cit., p. 108.

¹²Cf. Gen. 26:3-6.

¹³Cf. Gen. 28:13ff.

¹⁴Gen. 23:27-30.

¹⁵Cf. Gen. 41.

that a prophecy is made pertaining to the tribe of Judah. Judah held the preference over Joseph, even though Joseph is most notable among his brothers. Reuben, Simeon, and Levi had lost their birthright by transgressions: Reuben dishonored his father's couch,¹⁶ Simeon and Levi brought their revenge on the Schechemites.¹⁷ The blessing centers on Judah:

Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies: thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come: and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.¹⁸

God used these Patriarchs in His Kingdom to keep His Lordship alive. Thus God used people in the extension of His Kingdom.

The Mosaic Era

The Kingdom first appeared in actuality after the Exodus, when the family of Jacob had grown into a people and gained its freedom through the intervention of God. The Israelites saw in this deliverance the greatness of their God, the true God, the living God, superior to the false

¹⁶Gen. 35:22.

¹⁷Gen. 34:13ff.

¹⁸Gen. 49:8-10.

gods of the people about them. His trustworthiness verified what they had heard concerning the promises made to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. God was their King; this note was celebrated in the Song of Moses.¹⁹ "But the formal beginning of the Kingdom of God in Israel was made by the transactions at Sinai."²⁰ The giving of the Law marked the beginning of the Theocratic Kingdom.

Moses was the man unto whom God communicated His words and upon whom He placed the responsibilities of a leader and mediator. Moses was the prophet without rival in his intercourse with God. It is said more of him than of all other prophets as a whole: "God talked with him," or "God spake to him." He is called the greatest among the prophets with whom God communed.²¹

Orelli points out the part that Moses played in the establishment and growth of the Kingdom.

The condition and means of this instituting of the theocracy was the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. This deliverance was accomplished through Moses the prophet. "By a prophet Jehovah brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was it preserved" (Hos. 12:13). Moses possesses no title to which he could appeal before the heads of the sojourning and enslaved in Egypt, but his divine call, the special revelation of the Holy God imparted to him on the Sinaitic peninsula. By this divine word, attended with signs, he then set

¹⁹Ex. 15:18.

²⁰J. S. Candish, The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1884), p. 51.

²¹Cf. Num. 12:6ff.; Deut. 34:10ff.

his people free. And when it was free, he led it by that word and arranged its constitution.²²

Yahweh was the King of Israel. He was so recognized at Sinai where the theocratic constitution was formally established. Israel was conscious of this relationship,²³ without the Kingship of God she could not explain her good fortune. At Sinai God proposed to take Israel as His own.²⁴ That the import of that transaction may be fully apprehended, one passage is cited:

And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians and how I bare you up on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.²⁵

Four points stand out in this account. First, God reminded the people what He had done for them. He raised up their leader; He guided them through the wilderness. When the time came for them to cross the rivers, He effected the unusual; the water parted and the people walked over on dry ground.

²²Orelli, op. cit., p. 126.

²³Cf. Ex. 19:6; Judges 5.

²⁴Cf. Ex. 19:2-6; 24:4-8.

²⁵Ex. 19:3-6.

Secondly, the condition of the continuation of His relation with the people was the obedience to His Laws, the covenant at Sinai.²⁶

Thirdly, the people would become the Lord's, chosen by Him for His own glory, the carrying on of the promise, and the manifestation of His Kingdom.

Fourthly, they were to be a kingdom of priests, consecrated and holy.

The people accepted the proposals: "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do."²⁷ In this connection Candish makes the following significant comments:

By the solemn conclusion of the covenant at Sinai (Ex. 24), Israel became the people of God, and he became their King. It is from this relation, for which Josephus (C. Apion. 2:17) introduced the name theocracy, that the whole conception of the kingdom of God has arisen, and accordingly it is of great importance to understand wherein the theocracy in Israel consisted.

It did not consist simply in the nation having no human king; for though Gideon (Judg. 8:22,23; and 1 Sam. 8:6,7) regarded the proposal to appoint a King; yet afterwards, when kingly government was established in Israel, it was not held that the theocracy had ceased. In psalms and prophetic books written long after the nation had become a monarchy, God is still spoken of as the King of Israel, and the Book of Deuteronomy, . . . makes provision for a human kingship in Israel. The constitution was indeed modified when that was set up, and it may be called . . . a basileo-theocracy, instead of a pure theocracy; but the Kingdom of God, in the sense in which it was real and valuable in Israel, continued in spite of that change.

²⁶Cf. Ex. 20:1ff.

²⁷Ex. 19:8.

According to the Old Testament representations, the theocracy in Israel really consisted in this, that Israel was in covenant with God; they were his peculiar people, and he was their God and King. More particularly the privileges that they thus enjoyed are indicated in Deut. 4:7,8, to be these, that they had God near them, and had a righteous law given them by him. The same idea appears in Deut. 33:3,4; Pss. 147:19,20, and 148:14. This certainly implied a providential government exercised over the people, such as is signaled in the Book of Judges, where it is especially brought out, that God chastised Israel for unfaithfulness to him by giving them up to their enemies, and again had mercy on them, when they were humble and penitent. This is what is brought out in Amos 3:1-8, when the prophet protests against the idea that God's relation to Israel was merely a natural one, such that he must be on their side no matter how they acted. It is a moral relation, requiring agreement, and implying chastisement for iniquity. . . . What distinguished Israel was, not the idea that God was their king and they his people, for that was common to almost all ancient nations; not the fact that the power of their leaders and king was limited by the authority of laws revered as of divine authority, for that was also usual in early societies; but the fact that in Israel these laws did come in a special sense from God, and were interpreted and developed by men who were in spiritual communication with God.²⁸

Because Yahweh their God was holy, the people, directed by divine command, were determined to be holy and to realize righteousness by diligent observance of all the Laws of God.²⁹ And as such they were set apart from their heathen neighbors.³⁰

By Divine Revelation ideas were planted in the minds of the people of Israel, so lofty, and rich, and deep, that in the existing religious condition they could

²⁸Candish, op. cit., pp. 53-55.

²⁹Cf. Deut. 4:1ff.

³⁰Cf. Num. 23:9.

never see their perfect realization; ideas which with every step in the development of the religious life and knowledge, only more fully disclosed their own depth and fullness, and which must therefore have led them to the future for their fulfillment.³¹

Yahweh, the God of Israel, was the God of the whole earth,³² and as the Lord of all creation, animate and inanimate things, He was entitled to the reverence, respect, obedience, love, loyalty of every Israelite. "On the ground of the knowledge of Jehovah must the Israelite claim the whole earth for the Kingdom of God."³³

The Time of the Kings

Before taking up the monarchy, the period of the Judges and its relation to the development of the Kingdom of God must be briefly considered. The period of the Judges may be summarized quite simply: the Children of Israel would walk after other gods and incur the anger of Yahweh, whereupon He would deliver them into the hands of their enemies. Israel would then repent and cry out to God, and He would raise up a strong man to deliver them from the hands of their enemies. The pattern would then repeat itself.

The one outstanding characteristic of each judge was the fact that he was endowed mightily with the Spirit of

³¹Orr, op. cit., p. 846.

³²Cf. Ex. 19:5.

³³Orr, op. cit., p. 846.

God. By virtue of this endowment, he was enabled to rally enough of the tribes about him to defeat the enemies of Israel. The case of Gideon is an example:

But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.³⁴

In effect each judge was a "charismatic hero," specially endowed by God and calling upon Israel to renew their loyalty to God. "Their remarkable history and their religious zeal were undoubtedly the principal cohesive forces in their organization."³⁵

In other words, Israel was at this time a theocracy. The nation had no human king. The case of Gideon, who refused to be made king by reminding the people that their only King was Yahweh, may be cited.³⁶ In other words, the men who were raised up by God never considered themselves as kings, but only instruments in the hands of God. The real significance of the judges lies in the fact that they were men specially set apart by God. They and they alone were the recognized leaders of the tribes of Israel. As it will be noticed later, even the early kings, such as

³⁴Judges 6:34-35.

³⁵W. F. Albright, Archaeology and the Religion of Israel (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1942), p. 99.

³⁶Cf. Judges 8:22-23.

Saul and David, were similarly set apart and endowed by God.

The disparity between the divine ideal and the existing reality of the kingdom, which evinced itself in the rebellion of the people, can be clearly seen.³⁷ The tribal jealousies, the lawlessness abroad, and the alternating rise of faith and doubt, led to the demand for a king.

And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. . . . And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment. Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. Now, therefore, hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them. And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king. . . . Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.³⁸

As Gandish so rightly says:

The demand for a king was thus a sign of the failure of Israel to rise above the position of a kingdom of priests, having Jehovah alone as its King, and being directly governed by him. It was simply, as the narrative indicates (1 Sam. 8:8), the continuance of the

³⁷Cf. Ex. 32; Num. 11.

³⁸1 Sam. 8:1, 3-10, 19-20.

same spiritual incapacity that they had shown all along. . . . It was just the danger of failure that made them seek a king. They were now conscious of their weakness; and though the kingly government came short of the ideal, it was a real and great blessing to Israel.³⁹

The clamor of the people and their intention to have a king at all costs led the prophet Samuel to acquiesce in their demands. The above passage points out that Samuel consulted the Lord, and the Lord instructed him to submit to the demand of the people. He did so with hesitation. How did they proceed? Who was it that determined the choice of the King?

Now the Lord had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, Tomorrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines; for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me.⁴⁰

It is significant that according to this passage God has not cast off His people, even though they have rejected Him as King. Instead He proposes to use Saul in order to save His people. Now chosen for the task, Saul was inducted into the high office of king under God.

According to the Law of Moses, Yahweh was to choose the King of Israel, who was to be His representative. The choice of Saul by God is implied in the anointing by Samuel,

³⁹Candish, op. cit., p. 59.

⁴⁰1 Sam. 9:15-17.

the representative of God, and the confirmation of this choice by holy lot.⁴¹

The first thing which Samuel makes clear is that God through him has given them a king, and not they themselves. Then Samuel recounts their history. It was God who brought them out of the land of Egypt and delivered the Promised Land into their hands. It was God who raised up the judges to deliver them from the hands of their enemies. Up to this time, Samuel reminds them pointedly, they had been satisfied to trust in God as their King when enemies arose against them. But when Ammon came against them, they cried for an earthly king to reign over them. Now God has given them a king.

The king's authority was not akin to that of a modern monarch. He was responsible to God. On the spiritual side his power was limited by that of the Prophet, the spokesman of God; and on the side of the people, the subjects of the kingdom, he had to deal with the Elders, the representatives of the people. Even so, the king was the leader, and as leader he was above the Prophets and the Elders, but ever the servant and the agent of Yahweh, laboring for the welfare of his brethren.

And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests

⁴¹Cf. 1 Sam. 10:1-20.

the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: That his heart be not lifted above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.⁴²

The duties of the king were many. He was ever under God, and to God he had to give an account for his programs and activities. Among his responsibilities the following are set forth in Scripture: (1) He defends against enemies.⁴³ (2) He functions as the supreme court, ever willing and glad to hear the complaints of his people.⁴⁴ (3) He appoints and dismisses priests.⁴⁵ (4) He is to supervise the priesthood.⁴⁶ (5) He is to keep a watchful eye on the religious life and conduct of the people, striving constantly to eradicate evil. When sin is prevalent, it is his obligation to provide a bullock for the sin of the people.⁴⁷

⁴²Deut. 17:18-20.

⁴³Cf. 1 Sam. 8:30.

⁴⁴Cf. 2 Sam. 15:2; 1 Kings 3:1ff.

⁴⁵Cf. 1 Chron. 16:37,39; 2 Sam. 8:7; 1 Kings 2:27,35.

⁴⁶Cf. 1 Chron. 15:16,23-24; 16:4-6.

⁴⁷Cf. Ezk. 14:22.

His income was secured from his subjects,⁴⁸ foreigners,⁴⁹ booty in war,⁵⁰ taxes,⁵¹ forced labor,⁵² Israelites,⁵³ first growth of pasture lands,⁵⁴ subdued nations,⁵⁵ and extensive royal domain holdings.⁵⁶

The information above may seem to be a bit extraneous to the development of the Kingdom of God, but it is cited to show that the king, chosen by God, was responsible to God in all areas of life, both spiritual and domestic.

After the death of Saul, David came to the throne.⁵⁷ His reign was considered ideal, and although he failed personally, he never forgot the honor attached to his position and the necessity of thinking and working for the people of Israel.⁵⁸ King David had not lived up to his sincere

⁴⁸Cf. 1 Sam. 10:27; 16:20.

⁴⁹Cf. 2 Sam. 8:12; 1 Kings 5:1ff.; 10:25; 2 Chron. 32:23.

⁵⁰Cf. 2 Sam. 8:11; 12:30; 1 Chron. 26:27.

⁵¹Cf. 1 Kings 9:11; 1 Sam. 17:25.

⁵²Cf. 1 Kings 9:20; 2 Chron. 2:18.

⁵³Cf. 1 Kings 5:13; 11:28; 12:4.

⁵⁴Cf. Amos 7:1.

⁵⁵Cf. 2 Kings 3:4.

⁵⁶Cf. 1 Chron. 28:25-31.

⁵⁷Cf. 1 Sam. 16:1-10; 2 Sam. 5:1-9.

⁵⁸Cf. Ps. 18.

purposes, and because of his own recognition that he had failed, he looked forward to the hour when a member of his house would accomplish what he longed to accomplish.

Psalms sixty-two and one hundred one are similar in tone. David foresaw the king of the future, whose ideal leadership would usher in the ideal kingdom.⁵⁹ Many passages refer to the King-to-be, and the Ruler of that kingdom, the Kingdom of God.

The Royal Psalms give a clear description of Israel's concept of Kingship. Many of these Psalms have been interpreted by the Church as Messianic. Others have held to the fact that these Psalms only declare the function of the earthly kings of Israel. These two viewpoints do not contradict each other but show us the contemporary situation of the author of the Psalms and the ultimate interpretation of the Messiah by the Church.

Psalm 2:7 states that the king was the son of Yahweh. The problem arises whether the king is really the son of Yahweh or merely adopted by Him. Many scholars hold to the adoption theory. The king, adopted by Yahweh as His son, receives an abundance of gifts. The main gift was that Yahweh sent His spirit upon the king as a source of power

⁵⁹Cf. 2 Sam. 23:1-5; Ps. 2; 20; 65; 77; 89; 110; 132.

and strength.⁶⁰

Psalm twenty-one tells that the king receives long life, victory over the enemies, and glory and honor among the nations--all gifts of Yahweh.

Helmer Ringgren points out that in Psalm one hundred ten the king was a priest after the order of Melchizedek, and this implies that the king was the legitimate heir of the Jerusalemite priest-kings up to the time of the exile.⁶¹

Ringgren presents a summary of the picture of the king in the Royal Psalms. He points out that the king was anointed by Yahweh and proclaimed as His son. The command given to the king by Yahweh was that he rule in righteousness and in justice for his people. He was to defeat the enemies of the people and establish His kingdom over the domain of the world.⁶² It must be granted that some of the qualities of the coming Messiah find their root in the Israelite concept of their earthly king.

Gandish has concluded that "David was the king of Israel who most nearly realized the theocratic ideal of a king ruling in the name of Jehovah, and securing the

⁶⁰S. Mowinckel, He That Cometh, translated by G. W. Anderson (New York: Abingdon Press, 1951), p. 79.

⁶¹Helmer Ringgren, The Messiah in the Old Testament (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1956), p. 12.

⁶²Ibid., p. 20.

observance of his righteous law among the people."⁶³ To this Robertson adds:

The reign, the achievements, and the personality of David formed the nucleus of an ideal which struck deep and lasting root in popular feeling. Amid their later vicissitudes, the Hebrews forgot the many failures of David's reign in comparison with its unquestionable splendors.⁶⁴

In other words, David was a symbol of the past which grew into the embodiment of hope for the future. The prophets, therefore, came to look back upon the reign of David as the symbol of all the hopes conceived for the nation in the future.

Moreover, the monarchy tended to centralize the national conscience.⁶⁵ Instead of a loose confederation of tribes, Israel was now a nation responsible before God.

"This allowed the contrast between the ideal and the actual to come to a head, and thus the way was prepared for the growth of a more definite hope of an age to come."⁶⁶

The significance of the rise of the monarchy in respect to the Kingdom of God may be summarized under three major ideas.

⁶³Candish, op. cit., p. 61.

⁶⁴Archibald Robertson, Regnum Dei (New York: Macmillan Company, 1901), p. 16.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 17.

⁶⁶Ibid.

In the first place, the rise of the monarchy shows that Israel recognized herself as a kingdom of God and so demanded an earthly king. But the demand for the earthly king was at once a sign of spiritual weakness, and yet a step forward in the growth of the Kingdom of God. The ancient pattern of a Leader and a Preserver was continued and reached its culmination in David the king. Thus, when the prophets prophesied concerning the coming of the Kingdom of God, they looked back to one, David, who had fulfilled the idea of an ideal king. Hence, the pattern for the Messiah as a king was set.

In the second place, after Israel had demanded a king, Yahweh as the King is represented as delegating the authority to Israel's earthly king. Yahweh through Samuel chose Saul and David: "And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people?"⁶⁷ Saul is made king "before the Lord."⁶⁸ Saul and David themselves recognize that their authority comes from God and that they are responsible to Him. After Saul's sin concerning Amalek, he confesses to Samuel: "I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because I feared the

⁶⁷ Sam. 10:24.

⁶⁸ Sam. 11:15.

people, and obeyed their voice."⁶⁹ There are several instances where David refused to harm Saul because he was "the Lord's anointed."

This feeling that Yahweh was the real King over Israel was never allowed to depart from the Israelite's minds. Although Israel had an earthly king, the prophets knew that this king must derive his authority from the Lord, and that the king in turn must be governed by the Lord, the King of Righteousness.

In the third place, with the rise of the monarchy there also rose the feeling that the true blessing for the nation centered in the idea of kingship. This conclusion has already been anticipated in the preceding two points. Israel desired a king and a strong man as other nations.⁷⁰ It remained for later generations to look back upon the monarchy as a time of true blessing, upon the David monarchy particularly. Since Israel could not measure up to a theocracy, it was apparent that while there was no king in Israel, every man would do that which was right in his own eyes. The monarchy was much preferred.

Thus God chose people to develop and extend His Kingdom. The monarchy was set up by God's will to establish the true blessing of Israel which ultimately came in Christ

⁶⁹1 Sam. 15:24.

⁷⁰Cf. 1 Sam. 10:27ff.

the King.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.⁷¹

The Age of the Prophets

After the death of David, the Kingdom of Israel was divided into the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom. Many of the kings did not walk with God. The patience of God reached the breaking point, and He permitted the kingdoms to be invaded and the people to be taken into captivity. The people of the Northern Kingdom were conquered by the Assyrians, and taken into captivity in 722 B. C., while the people of the Southern Kingdom were crushed by the Babylonians in 586 B. C. In this predicament, the people were broken-hearted; in such a state they were receptive to the message of the prophets, those men of God who sought to revive their zeal and to give them hope for the Kingdom which was to be established.

This marks the last step in the development of the Kingdom of God in the Old Testament. Keeping in mind the great ideas of the spokesmen of God and the glorious

⁷¹Isa. 9:6-7.

anticipations of the Psalms, the people were disappointed that they did not make any greater progress toward the realization of these hopes. They saw the conditions under which the Kingdom was to be set up. But looking forward to the hour when the predictions of Isaiah would become realities, they continued to fail. But as always the case, their externity became God's opportunity. Defeated, without any recourse from any direction, and ready to surrender, they were prepared to listen and to heed the advice and messages of the prophets.

The people of Israel were apprised of the following: the Lord God is the God of the whole earth;⁷² His providence is not confined to that of the Chosen, but rests over His enemies, including even the bitterest of enemies for His own ends;⁷³ His Kingdom is not for the Israelite only, but it has within it a place for the Gentile;⁷⁴ and Israel is His servant, whose mission it is to enlighten the people, to bless them, and to serve humanity.⁷⁵ To appreciate the task which the Chosen of God are to perform, it will not be amiss to quote two of the passages that are involved:

⁷²Cf. Ps. 29:10.

⁷³Cf. Isa. 37:33-38.

⁷⁴Cf. Isa. 63:3.

⁷⁵Cf. Amos 4:13; 5:8; Mic. 4:1-5; Isa. 40:1-14; 52:3-10; 60:1-22.

But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it. For all people will walk everyone in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.⁷⁶

For lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, the Lord, the God of hosts is his name.⁷⁷

A greater kingdom was coming, a kingdom which would have in it all the races of men. Reverting to the prophecy of Nathan,⁷⁸ among other ideas concerning the Kingdom of God, the idea of universality and durability is shown. It is when Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 17:22-24; 36:25-27; and Joel 2:28-32 are thought through that a glimpse of the far-reaching scope of the Kingdom-to-be is noticed.

During the time of Amos the people looked for a Day of the Lord in which the Lord would intervene in behalf of His

⁷⁶Mic. 4:1-5.

⁷⁷Amos 4:13.

⁷⁸Cf. 2 Sam. 7:11-16.

people and relieve them of their difficulties. But Amos declares that this Day of the Lord will be one of judgment and not peace.

Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! To what end it is for you? The day of the Lord is darkness and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light. Even very dark and no brightness in it?⁷⁹

Isaiah could not conceive of Israel being completely destroyed because Israel must form the nucleus of the Kingdom. In the doctrine of the saved remnant, which is found in the writings of Isaiah and Jeremiah and the other prophets, there is the principle of the hope of a restored and purified Israel. The idea of redemption through purging forms one of the basic ideas of the prophet's conception of the future Kingdom of God. In Isaiah 10:5-12, 15-23, this idea is set forth quite clearly. Assyria is identified as the instrument of purging in God's hand an instrument that will itself be destroyed. But there is a definite promise of a remnant which will survive judgment, no longer leaning foolishly upon man but on God. The central idea is in Isaiah 10:22, in the idea of a destruction that God has determined but which is itself "overflowing with righteousness."

⁷⁹Amos 5:18-20.

Within this framework of the prophetic step in the development of the Kingdom of God, the remnant is closely allied. The remnant denotes the faithful, the loyal, the devoted, the people who remained true, no matter where they were or what the cost. Without the temple in which to worship, the remnant in captivity knew the value of spirituality.

It is also important to note that among the early prophets the redemption is not concerned with the individual as such, but with the group, the people. It is the people who will be redeemed by purging the sinners, "and bringing back the remnant of the nation to obedience and right worship."⁸⁰ Thus, from Isaiah the conclusion would become apparent that this purged nation is the nucleus of the future Kingdom of God.

In the prophet Jeremiah, the conception of the New Covenant within the Kingdom of God is given prominence.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they break, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his people. And

⁸⁰W. Robertson Smith, The Prophets of Israel (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1882), p. 247.

they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Bless the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.⁸¹

The main significance of this passage lies in the fact of God's rule in the hearts of His people. Indeed, in the passage in Jeremiah just preceding the formulation of this New Covenant, Jeremiah states quite clearly the principle of individual responsibility: "But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge."⁸² Thus, with the emphasis on individual responsibility, the Kingdom of God becomes less concerned with the nation and more concerned with the individual. Individuality in approach to God is a new emphasis of the New Covenant. Not the nation, but the individual now enters into covenant relationship with God. As a result, there was a definite trend toward concentration upon individual religion and upon the individual's responsibility toward God. Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and Ezekiel directed attention to the individual's responsibility before God.

The dissolution of the Jewish nation tended to encourage a much wider outlook among the more thoughtful Israelites. The Kingdom to which they looked forward is

⁸¹Jer. 31:31-34.

⁸²Jer. 31:30.

essentially Jewish in its origin, but one which would benefit all mankind.⁸³ The remarkable fact is that the Jewish nation, dissolved as a nation, could look beyond the darkness of exile into the light of the Kingdom of God.

In summary, the Kingdom of God has been traced through the development of the patriarchal, the Mosaic, the royal, and the prophetic periods. From a national concept of the Kingdom of God under the rule of the monarchs of Israel, the Kingdom of God concept became individualized by the later prophets. God used people to extend His Kingdom.

⁸³Robertson, op. cit., p. 26.

CHAPTER IV

THE KINGDOM OF GOD DURING THE LATE OLD TESTAMENT AND INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD

The faith of Israel had taught her to expect great things for the future. Yahweh was to fulfill His purpose through history and establish His rule over His people in glory. The Day of the Lord was coming, and on that day the Lord would make His Kingdom a reality. Israel knew that she was the Chosen People, and so she faced the future with confidence and looked for that Day of the Lord.¹

The prophets conceived of the Day of the Lord as being close at hand. They thought that the day was to usher in the Messianic Age as the prelude to the ultimate rule of the Kingdom of God.² For many of the people, the Day of the Lord was to be a day of deliverance for Israel, but a day of destruction for the other nations. It was to be a day on which the Lord would come with fire and sword to destroy the chaos and darkness and usher in this new era. This is why the nation hoped for the Day of the Lord. Amos, however, shattered this false hope. He told the people not

¹John Bright, The Kingdom of God (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), pp. 59-61.

²H. W. Robinson, The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., Ltd., 1913), p. 192.

to hope for that day, because Israel was an enemy of the Lord because of her sin and apostasy. The Lord would come on that day in order to punish His disobedient people.³

Thus, in the Israelite's mind, two thoughts concerning the Day of the Lord arose. One, that it would be a day of judgment for the foes of Israel with blessings centering on the Nation, and the other, the thought of judgment upon Israel, a theme which continued to the time of Christ.⁴

The Day of the Lord came. The fall of Jerusalem and the captivity of its people proved a boon and real blessing; they were turned from the externalities to the internalities, to the spiritual. Religion as previously stated became personal.

The destruction of the nation in 586 (588) B. C. did not crush nationalism. After the exile the national hope remained strong, with periodic resurgence in great strength. The individualism of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, however, with its distinction between the righteous and the wicked within the chosen people, became a fixed element in Old Testament religion after the exile. The wisdom literature was always and characteristically individualistic.⁵

Apocalyptic literature, on the whole, maintained that the world was the scene for the enactment of a cosmic drama

³Bright, op. cit., pp. 46ff.

⁴Willis Beecher, The Prophets and the Promise (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company Publishers, 1905), pp. 306-309.

⁵Miller Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), p. 147.

that involved all the nations but pinpointed one nation, Israel. The Apocalypses tried to offer the final answer to the question of history's outcome. The deadly cycle of sin, judgment, calamity, redemption, and more sin was to be broken by Yahweh who was bringing His Kingdom and supplanting the kingdoms of this world.⁶ The Apocalypses declared that the present struggle between the Lord and evil was reaching its highest pitch. The Kingdom was soon to come. There was a longing for Yahweh to step into this world to chastise His enemies and to set up His Kingdom. Thus, the very core of the Apocalyptic hope of the Kingdom of God goes right back to the Day of the Lord. The old popular theology crept back. The warnings of Amos were brushed aside, and the people yearned for the Lord's judgment on His foes and the establishment of His Kingdom over His people. The Apocalyptic literature fostered this hope.⁷

The message of the Book of Daniel was that Israel should hold fast to the Law and to the Lord. The Kingdom of God towered over puny man. The Lord was now planning to intervene and to destroy the evil powers of this earth and to set up His Kingdom among the faithful.⁸ The book dealt

⁶Otto J. Baab, The Theology of the Old Testament (New York: Abingdon Press, 1931), pp. 179-180.

⁷Bright, op. cit., pp. 164ff.

⁸Ibid., p. 183.

with the last things, the effective terminus toward which history moved.⁹ Daniel emphasized the power of the Lord's Kingdom in the passage of the stone that broke the world kingdoms.¹⁰ God was a powerful King, and the Kingdom was to be established by divine intervention. The world struggle was one of spiritual purport, but the Lord would conquer the evil and establish His Kingdom.¹¹

With the writing of the Book of Daniel, a new factor is to be noted in Israel's Messianic hope. This book introduces us to the Son of Man and the Ancient of Days,¹² whose Kingdom is everlasting and impossible of destruction.

With this concept anchored in their hearts and minds, the people returned from the exile under Zerubbabel. They were under the influence of the prophets, among whom were Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Through these prophets little was added to the Kingdom ideas except the coming of the Messenger of the Covenant.¹³

Some new factors in the Kingdom concept are to be noted in the apocryphal literature of the intertestamental period. First Enoch, written during the Maccabaeon Age,

⁹Ibid., p. 163.

¹⁰Cf. Dan. 2:45.

¹¹Bright, op. cit., p. 169.

¹²Cf. Dan. 7:9-12.

¹³Cf. Mal. 3:1ff.

according to Rowley, speaks of the coming of the Kingdom in terms of a severe judgment upon the wicked and the resurrection of the righteous dead after the judgment. The writer looks for the establishment of a Golden Age with its center at Jerusalem. There the tree of life will be brought in order that the righteous might feed upon it. There is no Messiah and no coming of the Kingdom here on earth, but only in the hereafter.¹⁴

The coming of God to execute judgment is described thus:

And behold! He cometh with ten thousands of his
Holy Ones
To execute judgment upon all
And to destroy the ungodly.¹⁵

The righteous are described in the hereafter:

And there I saw another vision, the dwelling places
of the holy,
And the resting places of the righteous.¹⁶

An "Elect-One" is spoken of, but in a rather impersonal way:

And in that place mine eyes saw the Elect-One of
righteousness and faith,
And I saw his dwelling place under the wings of the
Lord of Spirits.
And righteousness shall prevail in his days,
And the righteous and elect shall be without number
before him forever and ever.¹⁷

¹⁴H. H. Rowley, The Relevance of Apocalyptic (London: Lutterworth Press, 1944), pp. 52-54.

¹⁵1 Enoch 1:9.

¹⁶1 Enoch 39:4.

¹⁷1 Enoch 39:6ff.

First Enoch describes the lot of the apostates, and the new heaven and the new earth. Both the heaven and the earth will be transformed and made a blessing.

In the Book of Jubilees no catastrophic events are looked for. Instead the Kingdom is expected to come gradually. There is no expectation of a resurrection in the Messianic Kingdom on earth.¹⁸

The testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs contain a series of passages which look for the Messiah from the tribe of Levi. The influence of Persian dualism is seen in Beliar, a figure of evil standing over against the will of God and the rule of the Messiah. In this work the doctrine of the resurrection is developed. Beliar is destroyed and the saints rest in the Garden of Eden.¹⁹

In the Sibylline Oracles, a devastating war heralds the coming of the Kingdom. A purely human picture of the Messiah is given; and the earthly Kingdom is conceived in Jewish national terms.²⁰

The Psalms of Solomon also depict a Jewish national kingdom, purely earthly, and with its center at Jerusalem. The Gentiles are to be reduced to servitude. "All that is looked for is a coming of the Messiah to judgment, to

¹⁸Rowley, op. cit., p. 59.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 63-64.

²⁰Ibid., p. 67.

destroy the wicked, and to establish his Kingdom with the righteous."²¹ It is universal only as it conceives of the subduing of all peoples by force and not by grace. In chapter eleven, verse nine, of this book, it should be noted that "the mercy of the Lord is upon Israel forever and ever."

In the Zadokite Fragments, a period of great wickedness is predicted. The Messiah arises and a remnant is found during that period of evil.²²

The most interesting of the ideas presented in the surviving fragments are the idea of the Forerunner of the Messiah, who shall precede his advent by forty years and the idea of the faithless members of the Messianic community that awaits the advent of the Messiah.²³

It might be well to include other post-canonical literature. For example, The Wisdom of Ben Sirach "looked for a time of blessedness, in which the priesthood, and the kingship should both exist in Israel, and be together the means of wellbeing and happiness."²⁴ The Book of Baruch believed that the restoration of Israel was conditioned by "the faithful observance of the Law."²⁵ The author of

²¹J. S. Candish, The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1884), p. 103.

²²Rowley, op. cit., p. 74.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Candish, op. cit., p. 91.

²⁵Ibid.

First Maccabees regarded the Messianic Kingdom as a "restoration of the Kingdom of Israel, and made little or no account of the hopes connected with the Messiah, whom he only speaks of as a prophet."²⁶

The works just cited are sufficient to show the general trend of thought that developed out of the Old Testament concept of the Kingdom of God. There are several features common to most of the apocryphal literature: the great wickedness of the last world kingdom, the unexpected coming of the Messiah to execute judgment upon the world, the Messiah as protector of the righteous who are identified with the people of Israel, the Messiah acting solely as the representative of God, and Israel exalted to preeminence over the nations.

H. H. Rowley's general conclusion concerning these works of the first and second centuries before Christ is well worth noting:

All are concerned with the end of the age and the dawn of a new age, and with the destiny of the righteous and the evil, but all manifest a certain fluidity in their thought. They build freely in the basis of ideas culled from the Old Testament or from one another, but in the building each has a character of its own.²⁷

Man is in rebellion, filled with sin, despair, and hopelessness, but the Kingdom of God will bring peace and joy when

²⁶Ibid., p. 93.

²⁷Rowley, op. cit., p. 74.

the Messiah, God's representative, appears. Thus the apocryphal concept builds freely on the basis of the Old Testament Kingdom concept in one form or another.

The Syrian persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes in 165 B. C. and the war with Antiochus Sidetes in 130 B. C. brought trials which fostered this hope of the Kingdom of God. The Messiah would come to establish a theocratic state in which the Jews would be rulers.²⁸ This meant the emergence of the parties, the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Scribes, the Essenes, and the Zealots.

At the time when John the Baptist appeared, there was a general expectation of the coming of the reign of God; but very different ideas of the way in which it was to come. At the head of the nation was the priestly aristocracy, which had lost much of its power since the rise of the Herodian family, and the subjection of Judea to the direct government of Rome, but was still a strong and wealthy body, with the greatest influence in the sanhedrin. Their aim was to maintain as carefully as possible what remains of independence Israel still had. Their Sadducean views left them no faith in any supernatural divine interposition or miraculous appearance of the Kingdom of God; that must be looked for, they thought, through ordinary political means; and as political wisdom gave no encouragement to a popular uprising, they were shut up to a cautious temporizing policy, and depreciated any violent excitement. Then there were the Scribes, who aimed at the rigid observance of the letter of the law, with the traditions that they had raised up as a fence around it, and who looked for a sudden miraculous interposition of God for Israel, if it would perfectly keep the law. This party had the favor and support of the great body of the people. Some, however, were not satisfied with waiting in peace and inaction for a miraculous deliverance; but zealous for the law, and

²⁸L. Berkhof, The Kingdom of God (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), pp. 96ff.

provoked to action by public violations and insults offered to it, took up arms, and attempted to imitate the deeds of Mattathias and his sons, who had delivered Israel from the yoke of Antiochus Epiphanes.²⁹

This concept of the Kingdom of God is what Christ found among the people. The Jews, on the whole, had rejected the spiritual and vital import of the Kingdom. Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, the Messiah, had to tell and teach again what the Kingdom of God consisted of according to God, the King Almighty. God used people to declare His Kingdom. God, through His Son Jesus Christ, declares the Kingdom.

²⁹Candish, op. cit., pp. 116-117.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

God is the creator and the disposer of nations. He was from the beginning the King, and being a King implies a Kingdom.

This concept is latent in the Old Testament. Jesus Christ and John the Baptist accepted this as fact. They started their public ministry with the declaration that "The Kingdom of God is at hand."¹ Could such a statement have been made without the hearers having knowledge of such a Kingdom or at least having been taught such a Kingdom was existent?

The Kingdom began at Creation. God created man, but man failed God, God who had created him with a free will, granting to him the power of choice. Man sinned. God withdrew from him.

Although the creation implied the Kingdom of God, it was no guarantee of the Kingdom. Man was in revolt, and being in revolt God took cognizance of that rebellion and projected a plan looking to the restoration of man to His grace by His grace, and the real establishment of the Kingdom.

¹Cf. Matt. 4:17; 3:1-3.

God's purpose centered in Israel, and Israel was identified with the Kingdom. It was within the history of Israel that the development of the Kingdom took place.

There are four steps in the development of the Kingdom of God. The first step is the period of the Patriarchs. Abraham was the person whom God singled out, pointing to the Kingdom and its fulness. Isaac followed. The covenant was renewed. Jacob appeared and pronounced his blessing on Judah.

The second step is the era of Moses, who established the Kingdom by the giving of the Laws, religious and civil. The reality and the implications of the Kingdom in the transactions of Moses and connected with Moses can be seen in Exodus 19:3-6 and 24:4-8.

The third step is the time of the kings. The people were ill at ease, disgruntled, and seeking security. Influenced by the people about them they wanted a king, thinking that a king would lead them and make for loyalty and strength. After Saul died, David ascended the throne. He was the almost ideal king. He knew that the Kingdom he dreamed of would eventually be established. The establishment of the Kingdom was to follow the labor of the King to come.²

²Cf. Isa. 9:6-7.

The fourth step is the age of the Prophets. They were the spokesmen of God, commissioned by Him to minister to the people of Israel. During the time of the prophets the Kingdom of Israel was divided due to the sins of the people. Yet, they prophesied concerning the universal Kingdom of God to come.

The Remnant is allied to the concept of the Kingdom of God. This concept of the Kingdom constituted a step toward individualizing religion and stressed the point of the individuality within the Kingdom of God rather than a national political Kingdom on earth.

Thus, the Kingdom of God is latent in the Old Testament. Its roots are founded in the Creation, and developed by God through people.

This thesis has not surveyed the entire aspect of the Kingdom of God. Other areas that remain to be studied include the concept of the Kingdom of God in Daniel, what the post-exilic prophets taught concerning the Kingdom of God, the inter-testamental period and its influence on the Kingdom of God concept, and the bearing that the new covenant had on the Kingdom of God.

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