

Kingdom of God, Old Testament Sources

Commentary for July 1, 2017 — How Did the Israelites Know about God's Kingdom?

The phrase "Kingdom of God" occurs only in the New Testament in all four gospels, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Colossians, and Second Thessalonians. The synonymous phrase "Kingdom of Heaven" occurs 37 times, only in the Gospel of Mathew. John the Baptist preached about the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 3:2).

Those who heard John the Baptist, Jesus and His disciples, what did they understand when they heard preaching that used the phrases "Kingdom of God" or "Kingdom of Heaven"? Well, several Old Testament passages refer to a reign by God and His Kingdom in the future.

"Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: YHWH has said unto me,

'You are my Son; this day have I begotten you. Ask of me, and I shall give you the heathen [the nations] for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.'"

• *Psalm 2:6–9*

This king is identified as Jesus in Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5.

Psalm 110 (quoted in the New Testament more than any Old Testament passage, read all seven verses), also speaks of the Son as King seated on a throne at YHWH's right hand. Yet another Psalm tells that YHWH's Kingdom is ruled by His Son:

"All your works shall praise you, O YHWH; and your saints shall bless you. They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and talk of your power; To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting [*olam*, age-lasting] kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations."

• *Psalm 145:10–13*

The prophet Isaiah wrote more specifically about the Kingdom of God and His Son:

"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, Counselor, 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 judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever [for the age and beyond]."

• *Isaiah 9:6–7*

After Israel and later Judah were exiled, Israel learned what Daniel said when he interpreted King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the time when ten toes (representing ten kings) would be destroyed by a stone cut without hands:

"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but

it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever [alam, Aramaic, 'for the age']."

• **Daniel 2:44**

Later, Daniel himself had visions

"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting [alam, Aramaic, 'age-lasting'] dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

• **Daniel 7:13–14**

Matthew 24:30, 26:64; Mark 13:26, 14:62; and Luke 21:27, 22:29–30, 69–70 all refer to Daniel 7:13–14. Remember John the Baptist's preaching? He preached the Kingdom of Heaven:

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, 'Repent you: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'"

• **Matthew 3:1–3**

When Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, before His crucifixion, the people called for the restoration of David's kingdom, proclaiming Jesus to be the King of that kingdom:

"And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, 'Hosanna; Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that comes in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.'"

• **Mark 11:9–10**

Other passages such as Jeremiah 23:5–6 were known by the apostles when they asked Jesus about His coming Kingdom: Matthew 23:39, 24:3; Mark 13:3–4, 34–35; Luke 21:7, 27–28.

They asked the same question after His resurrection, just before He ascended to heaven. Why? They asked because His resurrection changed everything. It was proof that He was the prophesied King, son of David, prophesied to rule Israel and the world.

"To whom [His apostles] also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs [from the Scriptures], being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, 'Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?'

And he said unto them, 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.'"

• **Acts 1:3, 6–7**

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David Sielaff
david@askelm.com