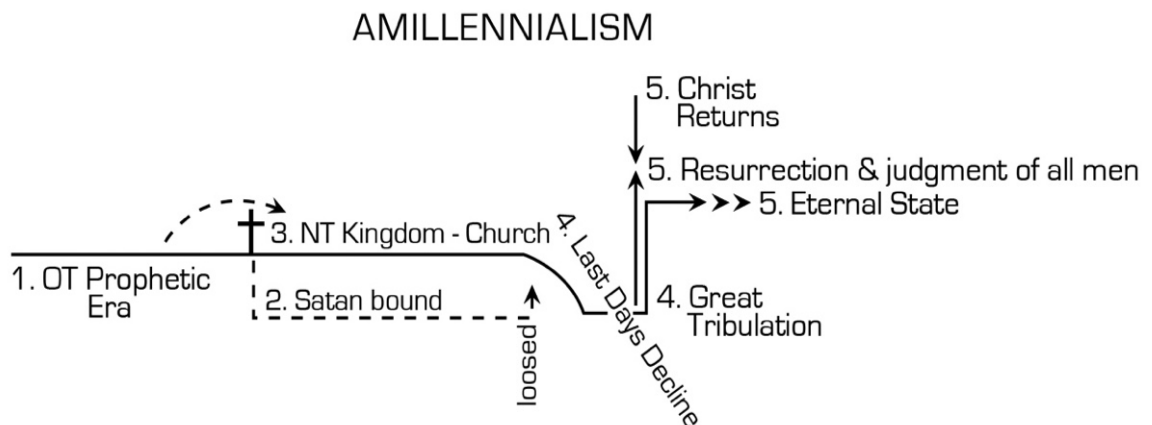


End-Times: Historic Amillennialism

- The kingdom of God was inaugurated by Jesus (1st century) and will be consummated after the times.
- There will be an end-time Roman-Empire-Like Kingdom persecuting the church.
- There will be an end-time, evil Leader persecuting the church.

We believe that Jesus is currently reigning in heaven and on earth, through the church. The 1000 years are symbolic of a long, undefined time which began when Jesus rose from the dead, bound Satan, and the church was unleashed (Plato's use). Because he is bound and demonic attacks can be thwarted, Satan cannot stop the church from expanding into the whole world. This reign will last until just before the end, when Satan is unleashed – there will be growing wickedness and tribulation in the world. Jesus' return will save his followers from annihilation at the hands of evil forces. His second coming will usher in the final judgment and then the full consummation of his kingdom.



The Kingdom of God (Abbreviated)

Excerpt from forthcoming book, *The Kingdom of God*, by Kelvin Teamer (Renew.org book).

What is the Kingdom of God?

Question: What is the Kingdom of God? Answer: The Kingdom of God is the realm where God's will is being done on earth as it is in heaven through the reign of King Jesus.

It is commonly held by many of today's biblical scholars that the Kingdom of God was the topic that Jesus spoke about more than anything else. More than love, heaven, or the church, Jesus spoke about the Kingdom of God. Jesus came to earth because of the Kingdom of God (John 18:37). Scholars seem to know this, but I don't think the church at large realizes it.

The Kingdom of God spans Old Testament and New Testament. It is Adam, Abraham, David, Jesus, Peter, Paul and you. It is seen in Israel and the church. It is here and yet it is coming. It is complex, yet surprisingly simple.

What Is the Kingdom?

The common Hebrew word used in the Old Testament for kingdom is *mam-la-ka*, meaning “dominion” or “sovereignty.” The Greek word for *kingdom* used in the New Testament is *basileia*, which is typically defined as “reign” or “rule.” The Kingdom of God, in its most basic sense, is *the reign and rule of God*. It is the space in which God has dominion. It is where God rules as king.

Knowing this basic definition, however, only takes us so far. One must see it in practice in order to practice it.

The Genesis of the Kingdom

The Kingdom of God is birthed in the creation story. It is inherently Edenic in that the picture of Adam, Eve, and the Garden are a microcosmic foreshadowing of the Kingdom. As we venture into the majestic Garden, planted by God Himself, we see everything that is good—a wonderful image of the Kingdom.

We know from Genesis that man and woman were formed and shaped by God and given the task to work, tend, and rule for God. They were to rule over the garden *for* Him, but it was God who truly ruled. Everything was as He designed it. *His will had been done on earth as it was in heaven*. I want you to breathe in that last statement and the context from which I stated it. The idea of God’s will being done on earth as it is in heaven is a Kingdom of God idea. It is what the reign of God produces.

The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament

David Young writes that the Old Testament was written so that we could understand what the Kingdom of God is.ⁱ From Eden to Abraham, from Moses to David, from Isaiah to Malachi, we come face to face with Kingdom of God. Scholar Scot McKnight professes that the biblical idea of the Kingdom is deeply rooted in the Old Testament Scriptures and is grounded in the confidence that there is one eternal, living God who has revealed Himself to us and who has a purpose for the human race which He chose to accomplish through Israel.ⁱⁱ After Eden, it is to the ancient people of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that we will look to understand the Kingdom of God.

Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:1-3, ESV).

This great, blessed nation that God would make would ultimately be His Kingdom. Through this nation/Kingdom, all families of the earth would indeed be blessed. From Abram, a great, blessed, Kingdom people would be born, a nation known as Israel. The nation of Israel was God’s chosen people. He ruled over them as King on earth, in a way that mirrored His rule in heaven.

Deuteronomy 7:6-8 For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the

LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt (Deut. 7:6-8, ESV).

God ruled Israel and they represented that rule on earth.

Exodus 19:5-6,

"Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel (ESV).

The symbiotic relationship between the people and their God was established. This was the Kingdom of God.

Of course, this is not how the story ends. Israel enjoyed Kingdom living—until they didn't. The chosen status, offered by God, would eventually meet human resistance. Instead of being ruled *by* God, Israel sought to rule *like* God. This was never clearer than when the nation of Israel asked for a human king to judge them like all the other nations. God clearly understood what was taking place. He told Samuel, "They have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being *king* over them" (1 Samuel 8:5-6, ESV, emphasis added). This choice, however, did not come without consequences, for it began what was to be a cycle of separation and sin for Israel as the people of God.

There were a few bright spots for the kingdom of Israel, noted by monarchs who did what was right in the sight of God, most notably King David. Of course, David was not without major flaws, but he was a king who had a heart which was likened unto God's. And it was to David that God promised to establish a Kingdom forever (2 Samuel 7:13-16). Ironically, this promise combined with the continued rebellion of the people, their allegiance to their own rule, and the subsequent penalty for their actions brought about the hope of a figure who would ultimately deliver them from the oppression and separation that the sin of self-rule had brought upon them.

The prophet Isaiah spoke of the grim reality facing ancient Israel when he wrote, "But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear" (Isaiah 59:2, ESV). Though the separation was prophesied, Isaiah also spoke bountifully about the coming of the One who would deal with their sin and rescue the people from captivity and separation to begin a new era of the Kingdom.

Take a look at a couple more prophecies of this coming figure:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. The Lord has sent a word against Jacob, and it will fall on Israel (Isaiah 9:6-7, ESV).

Isaiah 32:1“Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule in justice (Isaiah 32:1, ESV).

Theologian N.T. Wright sees in the Psalms and the prophet Ezekiel further in the description of this great Deliverer. He sees that the Rescuer would be the manifestation of God Himself. Wright contends that God is revealing that He would be king.ⁱⁱⁱ

I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. . . . All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord, and all your saints shall bless you! They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power, to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. The Lord is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works (Psalm 145:1, 10-13, ESV).

Ezekiel 34:22-24I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord; I have spoken (Ezekiel 34:22-24, ESV).

From our look into Eden, we learned that the Kingdom of God is indeed the realm that God rules as King on earth as He does in heaven. We then saw that there was a period of time when this Kingdom was displayed through God’s ruling over Israel, until the desire to rule like God consumed them. This decision and the sin that came with it, separated them from their true King. In the context of this separation, the prophets spoke of the hope that one day God would again rule them. What we see in the New Testament is that God would rule and His Kingdom would again be established, by this Davidic line through Jesus.

The Kingdom of God in the New Testament

If within the Old Testament Scriptures we see the concept of the Kingdom of God introduced in the story of Israel, we see it fulfilled in the life and times of Jesus of Nazareth, in what is commonly called the New Testament. As we look at Jesus, it should be noted that in order to understand and define the Kingdom of God, we can’t divorce ourselves from the previously reviewed stories of ancient Israel. Jesus is the grand connector of both Israel and the Kingdom, for He is the fulfillment of the story of ancient Israel and the true King over the Kingdom of God.

As stated earlier, Jesus spoke in great detail about the Kingdom of God. As a matter of fact, the Kingdom surrounds His entire ministry. From the preparatory ministry of the John the Baptist, who announced that the Kingdom of Heaven (synonymous with Kingdom of God) was at hand, to the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20, we see vivid examples of the divine monarchy breaking through on earth through the life of Jesus.

The Gospel of Matthew details the beginning of Jesus’ earthly ministry: “From that time Jesus began to preach, saying ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’” (Matthew 4:17, ESV). Then, in Matthew 4:23, we read that, after Jesus called His first disciples, He went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every affliction among the people. If Jesus’ synagogue experience was similar to the one Luke narrated in Luke

4:16-19, then Matthew was describing the ways Jesus demonstrated in word and deed what the Kingdom of God was all about.

It is in the words of Jesus that we can begin to gain clarity on the mystery of the Kingdom.

“Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:9-10, ESV).

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt. 6:33), ESV).

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21, ESV).

The cross is the perfect symbol of Jesus’ role in the Kingdom of God. A cross is the intersecting of two beams, one horizontal and one vertical. Jesus, as a crucified person, was stretched out between the two. The Kingdom of God brings together a linear, horizontal Old Testament story with its vertical New Testament fulfillment. It also connects the perfection and fall of the Garden of Eden, with the humiliation and hope of the Hill of Golgotha.

Jesus’ death brought forgiveness and deliverance, not just from a soteriological perspective, but from an eschatological (end times) one. It symbolized deliverance from Israel’s exile and from the separation of a nation from its God. It extended beyond the borders of Israel, however, and brought fulfillment to something uttered to Abraham centuries before, that in Abraham (through his seed) all families of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3). Promises were coming true. Righteousness was reigning. Jesus was ruling.

Jesus said in Matthew 28:18, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (ESV). In the realm where God’s will was being done, Jesus had all authority. In other words, Jesus is the King of the Kingdom!

The answer to the question, “What is the Kingdom of God?” can begin to find its resolution in putting together the pieces of the ministry and proclamations of Jesus. The Kingdom of God is the reign of God over the brokenness of man, through Jesus. It is God’s will being done on earth as it is in heaven, through Jesus. It is the righteousness of God poured out over the world that He created, taking place through Jesus. Karl Barth said that the Kingdom of God was more or less God ruling.^{iv} I would agree with Mr. Barth; however, I think it is important to add that it is God ruling *through Jesus* and that the Kingdom brings the joy, peace, righteousness, and deliverance which would come through such a Messianic reign.

God’s Kingdom exists on the earth, but at the same time it won’t be fully consummated until eternity dawns. It is a present Kingdom and an eternal one at the same time. In either case, Jesus is on the throne.

The Kingdom of God is the realm of God’s will being done on earth as it is in heaven, through the reign of King Jesus, in such a way that it brings peace, righteousness, and deliverance—now and in the age to come. As George Eldon Ladd put it,

Fundamentally, as we have seen, the Kingdom of God is God's sovereign reign; but God's reign expresses itself in different stages throughout redemptive history. Therefore, men may enter into the realm of God's reign in several stages of manifestation and experience the blessings of His reign in differing degrees. God's Kingdom is the realm of the Age to Come, popularly called heaven; then we shall realize the blessings of His Kingdom (reign) in the perfection of their fullness. But the Kingdom is here now. There is a realm of spiritual blessing into which we may enter today and enjoy in part in reality the blessings of God's Kingdom (reign).^v

This reign comes to affect one's life when the heart is surrendered to the kingship of Jesus. This surrender brings the peace, righteousness, and deliverance into the life of the believer. The old way of existence is buried, and a new life is born. We see this Kingdom reign begin when one surrenders in baptism. Those in Acts 2 who did this became known as the church.

This reign is at the heart of what it means to be disciples of Jesus. We seek God's kingdom reign (Matthew 6:33), as we trust and follow Jesus the King. When we make disciples, we are inaugurating people into the kingdom reign of the One who has all authority (Matthew 28:18), who sends us to make other disciples (Matthew 28:19) and who tells us that as disciples we are to obey all of His teachings (Matthew 28:20).

The Kingdom of God in Old Testament Promises

1. The King – there is a king coming, he will be like David; he is the Messiah.

2 Samuel 7:11-13 - The LORD declares to you [David] that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

Isaiah 11:1-5 - A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse [King Davdi's father]; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

I.

2. The Law – God will give a new Law, focused on the heart.

Deuteronomy 18:17-19 - The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him. . . . The LORD said to me: "What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him. I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name.

Jeremiah 31:33-34 - "This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they

will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

3. The People – God will make a new plentiful people.

Genesis 12:2-3 - I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

Isaiah 49:6 - It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”

4. The Reign – God will reign/rule hearts and then all creation.

Ezekiel 36:25-27- I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws (Ezekiel 36:25-27).

Isaiah 44:3 - For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants (Isaiah 44:3).

5. The Land – God will rule over all creation in the New Heaven, New Earth.

Amos 9:13-15 - The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills, and I will bring my people Israel back from exile. They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them,” says the LORD your God.

Isaiah 65:17-18 - See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.

6. Sin – Atoned and removed by the Messiah

Hebrews 9:11-12 - So Christ has now become the High Priest over all the good things that have come. He has entered that greater, more perfect Tabernacle in heaven, which was not made by human hands and is not part of this created world. With his own blood—not the blood of goats and calves—he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever (Hebrews 9:11-12, NLT).

Isaiah 53:2-6 - He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of sorrows, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Jesus the Messiah Fulfilled the Unfilled Prophecies

Jesus established a kingdom that will never end. The promise of this kingdom was an important theme in the Old Testament book of Daniel. When the angel announced the conception of Jesus to his mother, the angel told Mary, “His kingdom will never end” (Luke 1:33). In the book of Revelation, Christ’s kingdom is one he will reign over “for ever and ever” (Revelation 11:15).

- 1. King - Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Davidic king.** God promised he would raise up a descendant of David (Isaiah 11:1; Matthew 1:1; Luke 1:32). This was fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, who was Israel’s king. As King, he does not rule in the same way that kings in this world rule, for his kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). The kingdom of Christ was (and is) displayed by the rule of God within the hearts of people (Luke 17:20-21; Matthew 6:33), and its ultimate manifestation will come at the end of human history (Matthew 25:34).
- 2. Law - Jesus is the long-awaited lawgiver, prophet.** (Hebrews 3:1-6). At the time Jesus appeared, many were hoping and looking for the special prophet who would be like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15ff; John 1:45; 5:46). After Jesus was resurrected, his disciples soon realized that he was this prophet. Anyone who did not listen to him was to be cut off, but it was God’s hope that he would cause people to turn from their wicked ways (Acts 3:21-26).
- 3. People - Jesus establishes a kingdom people, including both Israelites and Gentiles.** Just before he left his disciples to go to heaven, Jesus declared that they were to go out and make disciples of all nations—by baptizing them and teaching them to obey everything that he had commanded (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; Luke 24:47).
- 4. Reign - Jesus establishes a new reign in his kingdom, by the power of the Holy Spirit.** God’s work in his kingdom is through the transformation of the heart, the inner person. In Jesus’ kingdom, people personally “know the Lord” (Jeremiah 31:31-34).
- 5. Land - Jesus establishes the promise of a renewed land in his kingdom by the use of miracles.** When Jesus is present, demons are cast out, sickness is healed, people can walk on water, etc. These are signs of the kingdom (Matthew 4:23). These acts are a foretaste of what it will be like when the kingdom is fully established – in the New Heaven and New Earth (Revelation 21:1ff)

6. Sin - Jesus Christ is the faultless Israelite, who provides for the removal of the people's sins. Jesus Christ, as the Lamb of God, was sacrificed to take away the sins of the whole world (John 1:29). God presented Christ as a sacrifice that took away the punishment due for the sins of all people (Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2). Jesus was the suffering Israelite to whom Isaiah pointed (53:7) and about whom Zechariah spoke (12:10–13:1). Jesus was the sacrificial Lamb of God (Acts 8:31-40).

The Already Kingdom

Jesus told some of those who were living in the first century that “some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power” (Mark 9:1). No one yet understood or foresaw how the kingdom of God could be established without the toppling of empires and the restoration of Israel's glory. But Jesus explained how the kingdom came into the lives of his disciples:

Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst" (Luke 17:20-21).

On another occasion in Jesus' life, he described the kingdom's presence with these words:

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time *has come*,” he said. “The kingdom of God *has come near*. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:14-15, emphasis mine).

Again, the kingdom is both “the reign of God” and “the realm in which God reigns.” Through Jesus, God rules over us as we trust and follow Jesus. The church, which we will describe in a later chapter, is the community where Jesus' rule is most clearly manifest in the world.

The Not-Yet Kingdom

There are two “comings” of the Messiah Jesus. The first coming was his birth, life, teaching, and his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. The second coming will be when Jesus returns to the earth as conquering Messiah, to judge the living and the dead at the end of time.

Although the kingdom has been present since the days of Jesus, it will not be fully consummated until he returns. Equal to the emphasis in the Bible on the “present kingdom” is the emphasis on the “future kingdom.” In this sense, we still await the kingdom, even praying for it to come (Matthew 6:10). Paul encouraged the Thessalonian Christians to hold on to the faith in the midst of difficulty, for it showed their future destiny in the kingdom of God:

All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. . . . This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels (2 Thessalonians 1:5-7).

God established his kingdom through Jesus, but the ultimate kingdom rule of God will not be made visible until Jesus returns. At that time, God will bring about the judgment of all human beings and take those who were loyal, faithful subjects of Jesus to be with him in a transformed eternity, where

the complete rule and reign of God over all nature will be complete. Jesus described this reality in Matthew 25:

Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world” (Matthew 25:34).

In this “eternal kingdom,” Jesus will have a banquet with his subjects (Matthew 8:11). There will be no more crying, death, or tears, for the old order of this world will be gone (Revelation 21:3-6). Jesus gave his followers a foretaste of this new world order by casting out demons and healing the sick (Matthew 4:23). In the future kingdom, Satan and all evil will be banished (Revelation 19–22), and all the things that are out of keeping with God’s best plan for humanity will be gone: sickness, disease, anything that harms, and death will be banished by the complete reign of God’s kingdom (2 Peter 3:10-13).

ⁱ David Young, *King Jesus and the Beauty of Obedience-Based Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Reflective, 2020), 18.

ⁱⁱ Scot McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy: Returning to the Radical Mission of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Baker, 2016), 66-73.

ⁱⁱⁱ N.T. Wright, *Simply Jesus: a New Version of Who He Was, What He Did, Why It Matters* (New York: HarperOne, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2018), 43-56.

^{iv} Karl Barth, *The Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 233-260.

^v George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 22.