

Short Studies in
BIBLICAL THEOLOGY



THE KINGDOM OF GOD
AND THE GLORY OF THE CROSS

PATRICK SCHREINER

“The kingdom of God is central to the biblical storyline and should become central in our theology. A clear, faithful, and solid portrayal of the kingdom, this volume helps us both understand the biblical teaching on the kingdom and view the Bible through the vantage point of the kingdom of God.”

Christopher W. Morgan, Dean and Professor of Theology, California Baptist University; editor, *The Kingdom of God* and *The Glory of God*; contributor, *Systematic Theology Study Bible*

“Patrick Schreiner’s biblical theology of the kingdom of God is exactly what the church needs to help her pursue God’s justice on earth: a lucid, precise, and concise book about the kingdom of God that’s grounded in accessible biblical exegesis and provides keen theological insights, while keeping the cross of Jesus at the center of the analysis. Highly recommended!”

Jarvis J. Williams, Associate Professor of New Testament Interpretation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Patrick Schreiner has given a wonderful gift to the church through this book on the kingdom of God. It’s a creatively written and accessible entryway into this essential biblical theme. Schreiner honors the unified narrative shape of the Old and New Testaments, and he shows how every part of the Bible (including the Wisdom Literature!) contributes to the developing portrait of God’s kingdom over creation and new creation. If you’ve ever struggled to understand this complex biblical theme or tried to communicate it to others, you’ve now found the place to start.”

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“To say that the story of the Bible is the story of the King and his kingdom is one thing; to see it clearly and concisely demonstrated from every part of the Bible is another. I look forward to recommending this book to those who love and appreciate biblical theology as well as those who love Christ and the Bible but haven’t yet understood how to see King Jesus throughout its entire story.”

Nancy Guthrie, author, *Seeing Jesus in the Old Testament Bible study series*

“Patrick Schreiner beautifully traces the theme of God’s kingdom through the entire Bible. The threads of his kingdom can be seen from Adam to Abraham, through Psalms and Isaiah, to Jesus and his church, and finally to the new heaven and the new earth, where Christ will reign with his people in his place. Schreiner skillfully shows us the inseparability of God’s kingdom, the cross of Jesus, and the gospel message. I highly recommend this interesting and encouraging book!”

Randy Alcorn, author, *Heaven; If God Is Good; and Hand in Hand*

The Kingdom of God and the Glory of the Cross

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The Kingdom of God and the Glory of the Cross

Patrick Schreiner

Dane C. Ortlund and Miles V. Van Pelt, series editors

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*To my parents,
who modeled the kingdom life*

Contents

Series Preface	11
Introduction: The Importance of the Kingdom	13
PART 1: KINGDOM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT	
1 The Law: Reviving Hope in the Kingdom.....	29
2 The Prophets: Foreshadowing the Kingdom.....	47
3 The Writings: Life in the Kingdom.....	65
PART 2: KINGDOM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT	
4 The Gospels: Embodying the Kingdom	85
5 Acts and the Epistles: Kingdom Community.....	101
6 Revelation: Achieving the Kingdom Goal	121
Conclusion: Kingdom through Cross	135
For Further Reading.....	145
General Index.....	147
Scripture Index	153

Series Preface

Most of us tend to approach the Bible early on in our Christian lives as a vast, cavernous, and largely impenetrable book. We read the text piecemeal, finding golden nuggets of inspiration here and there, but remain unable to plug any given text meaningfully into the overarching storyline. Yet one of the great advances in evangelical biblical scholarship over the past few generations has been the recovery of biblical theology—that is, a renewed appreciation for the Bible as a theologically unified, historically rooted, progressively unfolding, and ultimately Christ-centered narrative of God’s covenantal work in our world to redeem sinful humanity.

This renaissance of biblical theology is a blessing, yet little of it has been made available to the general Christian population. The purpose of Short Studies in Biblical Theology is to connect the resurgence of biblical theology at the academic level with everyday believers. Each volume is written by a capable scholar or churchman who is consciously writing in a way that requires no prerequisite theological training of the reader. Instead, any thoughtful Christian disciple can track with and benefit from these books.

Each volume in this series takes a whole-Bible theme and traces it through Scripture. In this way readers not only learn about a

given theme but also are given a model for how to read the Bible as a coherent whole.

We are launching this series because we love the Bible, we love the church, and we long for the renewal of biblical theology in the academy to enliven the hearts and minds of Christ's disciples all around the world. As editors, we have found few discoveries more thrilling in life than that of seeing the whole Bible as a unified story of God's gracious acts of redemption, and indeed of seeing the whole Bible as ultimately about Jesus, as he himself testified (Luke 24:27; John 5:39).

The ultimate goal of *Short Studies in Biblical Theology* is to magnify the Savior and to build up his church—magnifying the Savior through showing how the whole Bible points to him and his gracious rescue of helpless sinners; and building up the church by strengthening believers in their grasp of these life-giving truths.

Dane C. Ortlund and Miles V. Van Pelt

Introduction

The Importance of the Kingdom

“What is the kingdom of God?”

The student leaned back and looked at me. I paused, fumbled around, then tossed out some words, but I ended my little incoherent bluster by saying that we would find out as we continued to study Matthew. This was back in college. My ministry director had asked me to lead a Bible study for students over the summer. I decided we would study Matthew. I had never studied Matthew before, and a tinge of trepidation ran down my spine, because the Epistles were my comfort zone. I knew the learning curve was going to be steep.

Although my life up to this moment had been filled with good Bible teaching, I felt misplaced in a foreign land when I came to the language of *kingdom*. I knew the basics of the gospel message, but I could not figure out how the kingdom of God related to it or why Jesus spoke so often of it. My view of the good news had been abstracted, and I had overlooked the narrative that stood beside and underneath the glorious doctrines of Christianity.

As I began to study the kingdom, I grasped that it was the thread that stitched the entire canon together. How could I have missed

it? Why wasn't the concept clear to me before? The Bible is most fundamentally a narrative, and the kingdom of God is the thematic framework for that narrative.

Similarly, when many modern-day Christians come to kingdom language in the Bible, they have a hard time knowing what it is. Jesus never directly explains it; he never gives a definition, and the Gospel writers never record the crowds or disciples asking what it is. There seems to be an implicit assumption that everyone knows what the kingdom is.

Furthermore, kingdom language is pervasive in the Gospels, and the concept is strewn through the rest of the Bible. Jesus begins his ministry by announcing that the kingdom of God is at hand (Mark 1:15), and the Gospel writers encapsulate Jesus's ministry in the phrase "the gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. 4:23). Jesus's relentless focus on the kingdom provoked Gordon Fee to say:

You cannot know anything about Jesus, anything, if you miss the kingdom of God. . . . You are zero on Jesus if you don't understand this term. I'm sorry to say it that strongly, but this is the great failure of evangelical Christianity. We have had Jesus without the kingdom of God, and therefore have literally done Jesus in.¹

So rather than being a "zero on Jesus," many have attempted to get their arms around this idea of the kingdom. Unfortunately, the term has become the buzzword for everyone's pet issue. Since the kingdom is nowhere defined, people pour in their own meaning.

Some have equated it with heaven and said that Jesus was saying, in so many words, "The kingdom is the place you go when you

1. Gordon Fee, "Jesus: Early Ministry/Kingdom of God," lecture (1993), Regent College, tape series 2235E, pt. 1, Regent College, Vancouver, BC, Canada.

die.” Others have understood kingdom as referring to the church. From their perspective, Jesus announced the beginning of the age of the church.² In this conception, the kingdom and the church are synonymous. Still others have seen the kingdom of God as simply ethics. Jesus’s announcement is a call to social action. *The kingdom* thus becomes a term that denotes good deeds. Humankind builds the kingdom of God as it “works for the ideal social order and endeavors to solve the problems of poverty, sickness, labor relations, social inequalities, and race relations.”³

Evangelicals, in particular, have been prone to reduce the kingdom to God’s rule, power, or sovereignty.⁴ George Eldon Ladd disseminated this view in his numerous works on the kingdom, arguing that the dynamic rule is the primary meaning.⁵ In more popular evangelical circles the kingdom becomes a euphemism for the rule of God in one’s heart. The kingdom thus coils into an inward, subjective mechanism, a secret power that enters the human soul and lays hold of it.

Regrettably, the defining characteristic of the kingdom in evangelicalism has been abstracted, and the time has come to restore the kingdom to its concrete nature. All the definitions above suffer from reductionism. They take a part of the whole and place it in the center. So how can we define the kingdom?

2. Mark D. Roberts, “What Was the Message of Jesus?,” accessed December 28, 2017, <http://patheos.com/blogs/markdroberts/series/what-was-the-message-of-jesus/>.

3. George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959), 16.

4. If they don’t reduce the kingdom to God’s rule, then they still argue that the kingdom is foremost about God’s reign. See, e.g., Jeremy Treat, who argues, “The kingdom is foremost about God’s reign; then human vice-regency; and then the realm of God’s reign.” Jeremy R. Treat, *The Crucified King: Atonement and Kingdom in Biblical and Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 40. Ridderbos implies that it might go back to the Reformers, saying, “Their viewpoint was theocentric, but in a rather static manner. The historical and eschatological aspects of the biblical revelation of the Kingdom of God were not prominent in their theology.” Herman N. Ridderbos, *When the Time Had Fully Come: Studies in New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957), 10.

5. He did assert that the kingdom derivatively refers to a realm. G. E. Ladd, “Kingdom of God—Reign or Realm?” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81 (September 1, 1962): 236.

The Kingdom Tree

Since we never get a textbook definition of the kingdom in the Bible, some help in understanding the kingdom can be found in examining one of the images that the Scriptures regularly associate with the kingdom: a tree. The Bible begins and ends with the figure of a tree. Genesis speaks of the tree of life that springs from the ground at the voice of the Lord and the forbidden tree of good and evil (Gen. 2:9). Watering these trees are the rivers that flow out of the garden. At the end of Scripture, the tree of life rises again, positioned within the holy city that has twelve gates, high walls, and a river running through it. Revelation describes the tree as having leaves that heal the nations (Rev. 22:2).

But the tree imagery does not merely bracket the Scriptures; it tracks its way through the entire Bible. In the Old Testament, King Nebuchadnezzar dreams about a tree that grows strong, and its top reaches the heavens so that all nations can see it (Dan. 4:10–12). Daniel interprets the dream for Nebuchadnezzar, explaining to him that the tree is a symbol of his kingdom, which will be taken away from him.

The great prophet Isaiah also speaks of a tree, yet this tree has been reduced to a stump. From this stump of Jesse comes forth a branch (Isa. 11:1). King David pronounces that those who rely on the word of God are like a tree that grows and flourishes (Ps. 1:3). In the Gospels Jesus regularly compares the kingdom to a tree (Matt. 13:31; Mark 4:31–32).

One particular tree alters the skyline of the Gospels. Just as the tree was the undoing of Adam and Eve in the garden, so the cross ends Jesus's life. He hangs upon this tree for the world to mock and sneer. This tree secures the nails that pierce his hands and feet. Rome, the Jewish leaders, and Satan assume that Jesus's kingdom has been conquered by nailing Jesus to the cross, yet in a scandalous twist, this tree becomes the King's greatest victory.

There drapes the sign that declares, "This is Jesus, the King of

the Jews” (Matt. 27:37). The defeat of Adam and Eve is the victory of God; the Serpent’s sting is Christ’s great victory. The tree shaped like a cross is the fulcrum of God summing up all things in heaven and on earth. It is positioned vertically, and Jesus’s hands stretch out horizontally, harmonizing north, south, east, and west through Jesus’s disfigured body.⁶ The tree is, as Revelation portrays it, healing for the nations.

The tree in the Scriptures thus becomes representative of the concept of which Jesus speaks so often: the kingdom. If the tree is a symbol for the kingdom throughout the Scriptures, then what does it teach us about the nature of the kingdom?

First, the image of the tree in Scripture communicates power, rule, or sovereignty. Large trees symbolize power and strength. The tree in the garden promises life. If Adam and Eve were to eat from it, they would be like God. Nebuchadnezzar’s tree, in a similar way, reaches up to the heavens and is visible to the whole world. In Revelation, there is a city with high walls, and the tree stands in the middle of this city as a symbol of power and strength.

Second, the tree usually has some relationship or connection with people. The tree of Nebuchadnezzar has creatures resting beneath its branches, with Nebuchadnezzar as the head representative of the people. In Isaiah, the branch shooting forth from the stump is quickly identified with a person (Isa. 11:2). The leaves of the tree in Revelation heal the nations. The tree in Psalm 1 is also a metaphor for a person.

Third, the image of the tree always implies the idea of *place*.⁷ The tree is placed in the garden. The tree in Daniel is placed where the whole world can see the top of it. In Revelation the tree is in

6. Historical records show that the arms of those crucified were probably not stretched out precisely horizontally, but they were still in the general horizontal direction.

7. Stephen Dempster articulated the concept of people and place with the terms *dominion* and *dynasty* as well as *geography* and *genealogy*, *land* and *lineage*. Stephen Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003).

the center of the city. Now, this tree imagery throughout Scripture may just be that—tree imagery. But this symbol can and should be instructive for us.

Defining the Kingdom

So, expanding beyond the abstract notion of the kingdom as mere sovereignty, I will use the following definition of the kingdom in this study: *The kingdom is the King's power over the King's people in the King's place.*⁸ These three realities (power, people, place) interrelate, and although they can be distinguished, they never can be separated.⁹ They are like strands of a rope tightly twisted together.

Some might object, “Shouldn’t power be primary, because without rule or authority people and place cannot come into being?” But the same can be said for all three. Kings rule over places and people. Power is empty without people and place. Place also affects people, and people affect place. Power is in places, and places themselves wield power. This interrelationship between the three is not meant to bewilder but to show that these concepts are closely related; we can’t rip one of them out and use it as a *primary* definition or description of the kingdom.¹⁰

Usually, studies on the kingdom concentrate on two interrelated subjects. They emphasize the kingdom as God’s rule and stress the temporal question, Is the kingdom now or in the future? Little atten-

8. The first time I read something similar to this was Graeme Goldsworthy, *The Goldsworthy Trilogy: Gospel and Kingdom, Gospel and Wisdom, The Gospel in Revelation* (Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 2011), 53–54. He defines the kingdom as “God’s people, in God’s place, under God’s rule.” Waltke similarly says, “A nation consists of a common people, sharing a common land, submissive to a common law, and having a common ruler.” Bruce Waltke, “The Kingdom of God in Biblical Theology,” in *Looking to the Future: Evangelical Essays in Eschatology*, ed. David W. Baker (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 18.

9. For the sake of simplicity, I am keeping my definition trifold. Yet if I were to add any two pieces, they would be the king’s *presence* and the king’s *law* (or precepts).

10. I have heard some argue that the people and the place of the kingdom are not to be equated with the kingdom although they are inseparable from it. But could we not propose the same question for the power? Should the kingdom be equated with power, or is it merely inseparable from it? I find that trying to divide these concepts in a hierarchy ultimately fails logical tests.

tion is given to the *where* or *space* or *people* of the kingdom. For too long, scholars have chided that Jesus's kingdom does not concern geography or locale. So while we need to include the ideas of power, rule, and strength, in the Scriptures these are not merely abstract concepts; they are life-giving realities.

The tree in Psalm 1 grows and is nourished by the stream of the Word of God. The tree of life's leaves give the nations healing and life in Revelation. The tree in Daniel allows the animals to lie beneath its shade. Power is not about coercion; it is about structures for flourishing. God created the tree of life out of his power so that Adam and Eve could flourish as human beings, but they turned to the forbidden tree. Power and sovereignty in the Scriptures are linked to creation, protection, and the flourishing of people.

In addition, the kingdom must include people—namely, a king and his subjects. The king is representative of the people, and the king also provides shelter and safety for the people through his kingdom. God's kingdom will *contain* and be realized *through* God's image bearers as servant kings. As Gerhard Lohfink said, "A king without a people is no king at all but a figure in a museum."¹¹ Therefore, it would be wise not to downplay the people aspect of a kingdom.

In the same way, a kingdom must be a realm. A king without a territory is an enigma. The place of the kingdom cannot be erased from the description and definition, just as a city must be situated. I. Howard Marshall said concerning the kingdom, "While it has been emphasized almost *ad nauseam* that the primary concept is that of the sovereignty of kingship or actual rule of God and not of a territory ruled by a king, it must also be emphasized that kingship cannot be exercised in the abstract."¹²

11. Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth: What He Wanted, Who He Was*, trans. Linda Maloney (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2012), 25.

12. I. Howard Marshall, "Church," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. J. B. Green and S. McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 123.

So what is the kingdom? It is concrete; it is earthy; it is people; it is place; it is about Jesus; it concerns the cross; it is about the new heavens and the new earth; it is about community, politics, order, bodies, and human flourishing. It is about power, family, thrones, walls, gates, rivers, and streams. The kingdom is cosmic in scope, and to close the door on the vast picture that the Scriptures use to paint the kingdom is to misinterpret and misunderstand the goal of redemption. In the kingdom of Christ, the ransomed will be in the presence of God living under the law of the King. The kingdom is the basic edifice for entering the story of the Scriptures. The aim of this study is to investigate the rich concept of kingdom across the storyline of Scripture.

Consequences of a Partial Definition

Why is it imperative to define the kingdom as “power, people, and place”? Is this just a precision issue that scholars can argue about? At least three consequences arise if we neglect people and place and focus only on power.

First, without people and place, the kingdom becomes intangible. Christians sometimes disparage the material world. Although alterations to this view are making progress, at times physicality is still belittled. Yet the kingdom is never presented as an immaterial entity in the Scriptures. Recognizing the importance of people and place brings a groundedness to kingdom language. The incarnation and resurrection of Jesus are the key theological doctrines that affirm this rootedness. As N. D. Wilson said, “If [God] wanted a spiritual kingdom, He could have saved Himself a huge amount of trouble by just skipping Christmas.”¹³

The second consequence that befalls us if we neglect place and

13. N. D. Wilson, *Death by Living: Life Is Meant to Be Spent* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2103), 77.

people is that we might truncate our understanding of the mission of the church. If the kingdom is merely God's sovereignty, then what role do his people play? Do they exist only to tell others about the King's power? The mission of the church is to bring people in union with a real King and into a real kingdom, not just to assent to some immaterial theocracy. Disciples are people who go out and give shape to every space. Jesus brings people into place, and he gives them a law that structures their interactions. If the mission of the church is reduced to an intellectual assent of a sovereign God but does not mold how we use our hands and feet, then the church and the kingdom become a monastery rather than a world-forming force. The kingdom of God is the mission of God, and we must not limit this mission.

Third, and related, if we define kingdom as mere power, we slash through most of the pages of the kingdom story and misrepresent it. If *kingdom* is a term used to summarize what is happening in the narrative of Scripture, then it would be unwise to reduce this narrative to the notion of sovereignty. The Scriptures are all about the people of Israel and the places in which they reside. The entire Old Testament can be summarized in this way. This story comes to a climax through the King who cleanses Israel's land and puts the law within their hearts so that they can flourish on this earth under the rule of the King.

The end of the book of Revelation points to a kingdom with a King and his subjects who live in the garden city of the new heavens and the new earth. Revelation does not end with souls soaring in the sky but with a canvas of city construction. There are dozens of helpful books on the kingdom, but many stumble through or entirely ignore the Wisdom Literature, Paul's letters, and other portions of Scripture. To remove these sections of Scripture from a biblical theology tears out the heart of the Bible. A holistic definition allows us to stitch the Bible back together.

The Aim and Method

If the kingdom is the *thematic framework* for all the Scriptures with all other themes orbiting around it, then how does one approach a biblical theology of the kingdom? A short study such as this on a biblical theology of the kingdom must pick and choose which peaks in the Scriptures are worth ascending, surveying the summits and climbing a few, while painfully passing by others. To navigate the terrain, we will do the following.

1. Limit discussion to key events, prophecies, and seams of Scripture that carry the kingdom story forward but also attempt to survey the variety of presentations in the Bible.
2. Explain various aspects of the definition of the kingdom, working to do justice to the biblical descriptions, images, and symbols of the kingdom.
3. Attempt to give equal attention to each major section of Scripture. This means that the Wisdom Literature, Acts, and the Pauline Epistles receive more attention than you might expect. This is intentional. Most biblical theologies that speak of the kingdom have embarrassingly little to say about these sections.
4. Follow the ordering of the Hebrew Scriptures, which divide the Old Testament into three sections: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. Most of our English Bibles follow what is called the “Christian” ordering of the Old Testament. Yet most early Jews read what we would call the “Hebrew” ordering of the Old Testament. When in Luke 24:44 Jesus mentions “the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms,” he is referencing the

Hebrew ordering of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. Although this is not the only way to order the Old Testament canon (the Christian ordering also has historical attestation), the Hebrew order does highlight some unique kingdom themes. The differences of order can be seen in the chart below.

English Bible Order	Hebrew Bible Order
Pentateuch	Law
Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy
Historical Books	Prophets
Joshua Judges Ruth 1-2 Samuel 1-2 Kings Ezra Nehemiah Esther	Joshua Judges Samuel Kings Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel Book of the Twelve (Minor Prophets)
Poetry	Writings
Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon	Psalms Job Proverbs Ruth Song of Solomon Ecclesiastes Lamentations Esther Daniel Ezra Nehemiah Chronicles
Prophets	
Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel Twelve Minor Prophets	

In this volume, we will consider our theme based on the following chart:

Law	Reviving hope in the kingdom
Prophets	Foreshadowing the kingdom
Writings	Life in the kingdom
Gospels	Embodying the kingdom
Acts and Epistles	Kingdom community
Revelation	Achieving the kingdom goal

More specifically, we will focus on how people and place must be included with power in a definition of *kingdom*. I am arguing in essence that this definition goes all the way from the beginning to the end. It crosses through the books of Moses, the Prophets, and the Wisdom Literature and finds its climax in Jesus's life, death, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation. Although the term *kingdom* is used sparingly in the Epistles, the concept constitutes the framework for Paul's worldview. Once you see it, it is hard to unsee.

The Threshold of the Scriptures

What better place to begin a study on the kingdom than with the King himself? Matthew begins the New Testament with eight Greek words that instruct readers on how to put their Bibles together. It teaches us how to read both backward and forward: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1).

Because of its placement at the beginning of the New Testament, Matthew 1 can be understood as the threshold through which one enters the doorway of Scripture. This opening genealogy highlights the important themes of king, kingdom, and people. Although the term *kingdom* does not occur in Matthew's genealogy, the concept of king is hard to miss. Matthew shapes

our conception of Jesus by presenting him as the son of David—the successor to the kingly throne.

Two clues in the genealogy confirm this. First, in 1:6 Matthew identifies David as “the king.” The noun here appears with a definite article—meaning David was not merely a king, but *the* king. Second, the entire structure of the genealogy is planned through David, who was promised an everlasting kingdom. Matthew’s lineage is the royal book of origin; David is the king of Israel to whom an everlasting kingdom was promised.

Jesus comes as the king in David’s line who will bring the people back from exile and unite the kingdom again. The New Testament begins with the announcement that Jesus is *the* King. Matthew instructs his readers that kingship and kingdom are the major themes through which to view both Old and New Testaments. All the other themes of Scripture find their ultimate meaning in this reality.

Second, the opening words “the book of the genealogy” occur elsewhere in a similar fashion only in the book of Genesis (Gen. 2:4; 5:1). Genesis 2:4 is about the origin of heaven and earth (place), while 5:1 is about the origin of Adam and Eve (people). Matthew thus indicates at the start of his Gospel that the new creation (with people and place as his guiding concepts) is accomplished by King Jesus. The King is the one who will restore Israel to their home. As readers encounter the genealogy, the restoration of the kingdom comes into focus as Matthew traces out their history through the Babylonian exile. The Babylonian exile shapes the assembly of the genealogy. So, in the first words of the New Testament, Matthew highlights the King and the kingdom as the guiding concepts for reading the Scriptures.

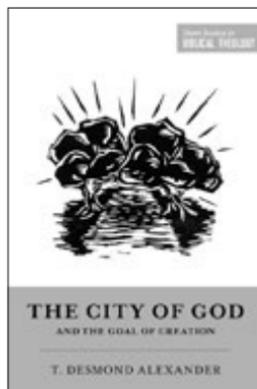
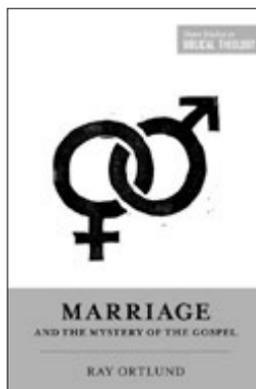
The messianic King is the epicenter of this new creation and new humanity. The rest of Matthew’s story explains the King’s mission. He is granted authority, he rescues Israel, and he creates a new home. The cursed tree becomes the means to the kingdom, and all authority

in heaven and on earth is given to him so that his followers can go out into all places (all nations) and spread the gospel of the kingdom in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

So, although the word *kingdom* is not used in the introduction of Matthew's Gospel, the idea is present right below the surface. The story of the Bible is the story of the King and his kingdom. As Dan McCartney says, the arrival of the kingdom of God is the "reinstatement of the originally intended divine order for the earth, with man properly situated as God's vice-regent."¹⁴ Jesus is the true human receiving, embodying, bringing, inaugurating, and fulfilling the kingdom promises.

14. Dan McCartney, "Ecce Homo: The Coming of the Kingdom as the Restoration of Human Vicegerency," *Westminster Theological Journal* 56.1 (1994): 2.

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“The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

MATTHEW 13:31–32

When Jesus began his ministry, he announced that the kingdom of God was at hand. But many modern-day Christians don’t really understand what the kingdom of God is or how it relates to the message of the gospel.

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KINGDOM OF GOD

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