

THE KINGDOM OF GOD:  
PRESENT REALITY OR FUTURE HOPE?

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Speculations among Christians about the “end times” are perhaps more prevalent today than ever. Popular novels and movies depict events believed to take place immediately prior to Christ’s return. Many in the contemporary church seem to think that the biblical teaching of the “last things”—*eschatology*—consists solely of concepts like the rapture, the tribulation, and the antichrist. But Scripture says far less about these things than it does about the eschatological concept of the kingdom of God and Jesus’ role in bringing it about. In fact in the Gospels, “the heart of Jesus’ teachings centers around the theme of the kingdom of God.”<sup>1</sup>

However, while the Bible gives us much information about the kingdom and concepts related to it, there seems to be much conflicting information regarding the time of its coming. Some argue, based on biblical evidence, that the kingdom is a present reality that one enters into and enjoys now. One need not wait for any future arrival of the kingdom. Others draw just the opposite conclusions upon examining the texts of Scripture. They insist that the coming of the kingdom of God is something that lies solely in the future. No elements of it exist today.

Both sides on this issue make valid observations. They state their case, though, to the neglect of the contrary evidence. In light of the testimony of Scripture, a more faithful and evangelical view is to affirm that the kingdom of God is in some sense *both* present *and* future.

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<sup>1</sup>Robert H. Stein, “Kingdom of God,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 451.

It is neither fully realized nor totally imminent. Instead, we should speak of an “inaugurated” eschatology—the kingdom has been inaugurated by Christ, but awaits its final consummation. Thus, evangelicals often speak of the kingdom as both “already” and “not yet.” The following discussion will begin with a brief evaluation of alternative views of the kingdom. Then, a consideration of the biblical evidence will demonstrate that inaugurated eschatology is the most faithful view. Finally, I will conclude by responding to potential objections.

### **Alternative Views of the Kingdom**

Those who have taught that the kingdom is either present or future have been quite influential in advocating their views. Among early liberal theologians, Adolf von Harnack saw both aspects in Jesus’ message. But, he insisted that, while Jesus shared the future view of the kingdom with his contemporaries, the view of its being already present was his own. Given this peculiar emphasis in Jesus’ teaching—and focusing especially on Jesus’ parables—Harnack concluded that the kingdom is the rule of God in the hearts of individuals. Seen from this point of view, everything external and future has vanished. It is the inward coming of the kingdom that is dominant in Jesus’ message.<sup>2</sup> The ideas Jesus unwittingly accepted from Jewish tradition are the “husk” that must be cut away from the “kernel” of his own original thoughts, which is the really essential part of his message.<sup>3</sup> Harnack’s position, however, fails to take the biblical data seriously, making him arbiter of the parts he will accept. As with other liberal scholars, Harnack’s Jesus is merely a profound teacher of ethical principles.

Also emphasizing the present aspect of the kingdom, C. H. Dodd describes the

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<sup>2</sup>Adolf von Harnack, *What is Christianity?* trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders (New York: Harper, 1957; repr., Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 52-57.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 57.

teaching and ministry of Jesus as bringing about a “realized eschatology.” Jesus’ statements affirming that the kingdom has come are explicit and unequivocal. No unequivocal sayings exist in the form, “The kingdom will come,” to counterbalance Jesus’ proclamation, “The kingdom has come” (see Matt 12:28). One must, therefore, evaluate those sayings that seem to speak of a future element to the kingdom. According to Dodd, some predictions in the Gospels regarding a future kingdom have certainly been colored and formed as a result of the early church experience. Other sayings, such as those that speak of individuals coming to eat with the OT patriarchs in the kingdom (Matt 8:11) or Jesus proclaiming he would drink with his disciples in the kingdom (Matt 14:25), refer to that transcendent eternal order which lies in a world beyond space and time.<sup>4</sup> Since there is no “before and after” in this eternal order, future tense sayings must be understood as an accommodation of language: “That which cannot be experienced in history is symbolized by the picture of a coming event.” Thus, the kingdom of God does not come “after” other things, but is that to which men awake when no longer limited by space and time.<sup>5</sup>

Though space does not permit a detailed evaluation and response of Dodd’s position, his methodology is problematic. For one, when examining the “future sayings,” he insists one must depend on the earliest and best sources—Mark (minus the “Little Apocalypse” in Mark 13) and the material common to Matthew and Luke (“Q”).<sup>6</sup> This eliminates much relevant material in the Gospels and is unacceptable to an evangelical view of Scripture. In addition, his view of the kingdom’s ultimate fulfillment lying after death in a transcendent eternal world is foreign to

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<sup>4</sup>C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, 3<sup>rd</sup> rev. ed. (London: Nisbet & Co, 1936), 49-56.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 108.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 52-53.

the biblical worldview, which speaks of God acting within history. Critiquing this perspective in another of Dodd's writings, George Ladd comments, "This sounds more like Greek immortality than the biblical hope of the Kingdom of God which is concerned with history."<sup>7</sup>

At the other end of the eschatological spectrum, Albert Schweitzer saw in Jesus' message an essentially future coming of the kingdom of God. This eschatological notion of the kingdom was at the base of his preaching from the beginning, and, according to Schweitzer, Jesus' ministry counted *only* on this realization of the kingdom.<sup>8</sup> Through his preaching, Jesus believed people would be brought to repentance and a moral renewal. This combined with his redeeming death would act as a pressure exerted to actually compel the kingdom to appear.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, Jesus was wrong. After his death, the kingdom never came. Therefore the primitive church had to reinterpret the event of his death. Rather than being a transitional event, his death became the central fact of the new Christian teaching.<sup>10</sup>

While Schweitzer has rightly seen the future aspect of the kingdom's coming, his Jesus turns out to be a hopeless martyr. He somehow sees redeeming value in Jesus' death, but the life of the historical Jesus ends with the grave. As with the other views, this one assaults the reliability and truthfulness of the Scriptures, as well as the person and mission of Christ.

### **Inaugurated Eschatology: The Kingdom as "Already, But Not Yet"**

In spite of their presuppositional and methodological problems, the previous views

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<sup>7</sup>George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 20.

<sup>8</sup>Albert Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1985), 47-51.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 62-73.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 152-56.

help highlight the dilemma with which Scripture confronts readers concerning the kingdom of God. Some passages speak of the kingdom as having already come, while others insist that it is a future reality. Is this simply a blatant contradiction or is there a means of legitimately reconciling these texts?

Before looking to the NT, it will be helpful to place Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom against its proper theological background by considering the OT. Far from this being a novel idea, Jesus and his disciples considered the kingdom of God to be the fulfillment of the OT hopes and promises. The fact that the actual term "kingdom of God" does not appear in the OT is irrelevant, since the concept of the rule of God over all creation, in general, and his people, in particular, is at the heart of the OT message.<sup>11</sup> God is the sole creator of the world and its inhabitants (Gen 1). By virtue of this, the OT recognizes him as the sovereign ruler of all (2 Kgs 19:15; Ps 95:3-5). "His dominion is an everlasting dominion" (Dan 4:34), and he is "the King of all the earth" (Ps 47:7). God made man in his own image, establishing him to subdue and rule over creation in his stead and under his authority (Gen 1:27-30). But through man's rebellion, his position is forfeited and the creation is plunged into sin (Gen 3). While the OT consistently declares God's sovereignty over creation and history, this is distinct from his work of bringing about his rule in the context of a rebellious creation.<sup>12</sup> It is this work that gives direction to the OT message.

As a part of his redemptive plan for the universe, the Lord calls out a people in covenant with himself, establishes them as a nation, and sets up a king to rule in his place. God

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<sup>11</sup>See Graeme Goldsworthy, "Kingdom of God," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. by T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 618.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

promises King David that his descendent would inherit an everlasting kingdom (2 Sam 7:12-16). This concept converges with others in the OT to paint the picture of a coming human redeemer-ruler who would accomplish God's purposes and crush God's enemies (Gen 3:15; Num 24:17; Isa 11:1-5; Ps 2). At the same time, this king is described in ways that make no sense if he is merely human (Isa 7:4, 9:6-7; Dan 7:13-14).

Within God's saving purposes, the OT speaks of redemption to cleanse the sins of his people (Isa 53; Zech 13:1), a new covenant that brings forgiveness and a transformation of sinful hearts (Jer 31:31-34), an outpouring of his Spirit to cause people to walk in obedience (Isa 44:3; Ezek 36:26-27), and the creation of a new heavens and a new earth (Isa 65:17; 66:22). All of this renewal is somehow connected with the rule of God's Messiah (Isa 11:5-10) and the coming of God himself to bring salvation (Isa 59:15-19).

But when are these things to come about? The prophets speak of a divine visitation called the "Day of the Lord" (see, e.g., Isa 13:6; Joel 2:31; Amos 5:18; Zeph 1:7), a catastrophic day of judgment upon mankind. This is usually an historical event in which God brings wrath upon specific enemies (e.g., Babylon). But, the historical day is often combined with an eschatological day that will bring universal judgment upon all the earth. The present and future days are seen as one visitation of the Lord—they are acts of the same God on behalf of his people.<sup>13</sup> The coming of this day and its association with the above mentioned themes of salvation, the Messianic King, and universal renewal is presented in similar terminology: "in the last days" (Isa 2:2; Hos 3:5), the "days are coming" (Jer 31:31; Amos 9:13), and "at that time" (Zeph 3:20). "In that day," we are told, "the Lord will be king over all the earth" (Zech 14:9).

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<sup>13</sup>See Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 66-69.

This background provides the context in which Jesus proclaims the kingdom. It also helps one understand the use of the Greek word *basileia* (“kingdom”) in the Gospels. Depending on context, the word can have a functional meaning (“royal sovereignty”) or a geographical meaning (“realm”).<sup>14</sup> Our English word “kingdom” usually carries with it connotations of the latter—a physical realm over which a king exercises dominion. But, though he sometimes uses the word with this meaning, Jesus primarily referred to the kingdom of God as the “reign” or “rule” of God.<sup>15</sup> This is consistent with the OT, which is concerned with God reestablishing his rightful rule over sinful humanity. So, Jesus was not proclaiming something new when he spoke to the Jews about the coming of the kingdom. What set Jesus’ message apart was his emphasis on the present fulfillment of the kingdom. Before God’s kingdom finally and fully appears, it has become dynamically active in the person and mission of Jesus.<sup>16</sup> The purpose of this work of Jesus is the redemption of God’s people from sin and demonic powers and the establishment of the new heavens and the new earth.<sup>17</sup> The “inauguration” of the kingdom of God has come.

Jesus’ message consisted of a declaration that the time had been fulfilled and the kingdom of God had come near (Matt 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Mark 1:15).<sup>18</sup> In response, he called his

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<sup>14</sup>U. Luz, “*basileia*,” in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. by Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 201.

<sup>15</sup>See Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 122-48.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>17</sup>Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 45.

<sup>18</sup>Matthew’s “kingdom of heaven” is synonymous with the “kingdom of God”—“heaven” being a Jewish circumlocution for “God” (see Stein, “Kingdom of God,” 451; and C.C. Caragounis, “Kingdom of God/Kingdom of Heaven,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. by Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992], 417).

listeners to repent and believe in the good news. The Gospel writers present Jesus as the promised Davidic King—the Messiah. Thus, he embodies the kingdom of God in his person. This is demonstrated when he is anointed by the Spirit (as Messianic King) at his baptism and declared by God as his beloved Son (Matt 3:16-17; cf. 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7). He is also the Son of Man who tells his enemies that they will see him sitting at the right hand of God and coming with the clouds of heaven (Mark 14:62; cf. Dan 7:13). Therefore, one is not surprised to see Jesus' name equated with the kingdom.<sup>19</sup> One sees this when he tells his followers they will inherit eternal life for sacrificing “for the sake of the kingdom of God” (Luke 18:29). But in Matthew's parallel account, these things are done “for *my name's* sake” (Matt 19:29). When asked about the time of the kingdom's coming, Jesus responded that it was not something coming with observation. Rather, the kingdom was standing before them: “For behold the kingdom of God is in your midst” (Luke 17:21). The Christ has come, and he brings the reign of God with him.

Not only is the kingdom reflected in Jesus' person, but also in his mission. The proclamation of the kingdom is frequently associated with his performance of miracles, healings, and exorcisms (Matt 4:23; 9:35; Luke 10:9). His power over sickness, demons, and the cosmos demonstrates that the promised eschatological salvation has arrived. “If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God,” Jesus says, “then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt 12:28).

Yet in spite of all of this, Jesus does not indicate that the kingdom of God has arrived in its final form. It has begun, but it awaits a future consummation. Christ's disciples are to pray for the kingdom to come (Matt 6:10). Jesus often speaks in the future tense of those who will enter the kingdom (e.g., Matt 8:11; Luke 13:28-29; 22:29-30). A final day in history awaits in

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<sup>19</sup>See Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 43.

which the righteous will be welcomed and the wicked will be shut out of the kingdom (Matt 7:21-23; 25:31ff.). The demons, responding to Jesus' activity during his ministry and knowing that a time of judgment for them looms in the future, shout to him, "Have you come here to torment us before the time?" (Matt 8:29). This consummation of the kingdom lies "on that day" (Matt 7:21), at "the end of the age" (Matt 13:49), and in "the age to come" (Mark 10:30).

None of this data should be regarded as contradictory. There is no reason the reign of God cannot have both an "already" and a "not yet" aspect. God has already manifested his reign among men through the person and work of Christ, calling humans to turn from their rebellion and submit to his rule in the person of his Son. But the reign of God in Christ will not be finally accomplished until he returns. Jesus' parables of the kingdom testify to this. The parables of the sower, the weeds and wheat, the mustard seed, and the leaven picture the kingdom supernaturally coming and bringing people under its rule. Beginning in a small and insignificant way through the preaching and hearing of "the word of the kingdom," the kingdom's presence grows, gathering more and more of humanity, but without disrupting the natural order. The sons of the kingdom are in the world alongside the sons of the evil one. Not until the end of the age will the two groups be separated in eschatological judgment (Matt 13:1-43).

This inauguration of the kingdom is intimately tied to God's once and for all dealing with man's sin and providing salvation through Christ. In order for people to enter the kingdom, they must be born again by the Spirit of God (John 3:5). While the term "kingdom of God" is not found often in John's Gospel, the concept is present there in Jesus' repeated references to "eternal life." To "enter life" and "inherit eternal life" are used as synonyms for entering the

kingdom in the Synoptics (see Mark 9:43, 47; Mark 10:17, 23).<sup>20</sup> This salvation comes as a result of the suffering of the Son of Man and through his giving of his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). Only after his work on the cross and his rising from the dead does the Christ enter into his glory (Luke 24:26, 46). Following this, repentance and forgiveness of sins are preached in his name by his followers to all the nations (Luke 24:47). It is through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus that sinners are enabled to enter the kingdom. John can speak of individuals “already” possessing eternal life through believing in Jesus (John 5:24). Yet, it is also a “future” possession one will have when Jesus raises him up at the last day (John 6:40).

As the foregoing discussion has shown, the Gospels testify that the kingdom’s coming is directly tied to Christology. In his person, ministry, death, and resurrection, Jesus has brought the long promised eschatological rule of God (and all the promises that go with it) into the present. But, the ultimate fulfillment awaits his return. In that day, the reign of God will coincide with the realm of the kingdom. The entire created order will be redeemed and subdued to Christ. The remainder of the NT continues and furthers this “already/not yet” perspective.

One often hears contemporary believers asking whether or not we are living in the “last days.” To this the NT authors answer a resounding, “Yes!” The last days spoken of in the OT have come with the coming of Christ. The NT writers “are conscious that they are already living in the last days.”<sup>21</sup> Peter interprets the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost as a fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, which was to come about “in the last days” (Acts 2:17). The author of Hebrews testifies that God has spoken in his Son “in these last days” (Heb 1:2); Peter writes that Christ has appeared “in these last times” (1 Pet 1:20); and John tells his readers, “it is

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<sup>20</sup>Bertold Klappert, “King/Kingdom,” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. and trans. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 387-88.

the last hour” (1 John 2:18). The perspective of the OT pictured history divided between “this age” and “the age to come.” The NT, though retaining this view, modifies it to reckon with the fact that one age does not merely follow the other. Rather, the “age to come” has broken into the present age, causing a coexistence or overlap of the ages. The appearance of Christ has set this eschatological process in motion.<sup>22</sup> Oscar Cullman offers the following illustration. While the decisive battle in a war may have already occurred, the war still continues. The decisive battle is a clear victory, even though it is perhaps not recognized by all and the war continues to rage for a time. According to the NT, the cross and resurrection constitute the decisive battle. The present period of the church lies between the decisive battle and “Victory Day.”<sup>23</sup>

The Apostle Paul clearly views the crucifixion of Christ and its application to believers in an “already/not yet” fashion. Through faith in Christ and union with him, Paul is “crucified with Christ” (Gal 2:20). What is true of Christ is true of Paul (and all believers) now. By presenting himself as an offering for sin, Christ condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirements of the Law might be fulfilled (presently) in those who are recipients of his Spirit (Rom 8:3-4). The old self was crucified with Christ, and we died with him, so that we might be set free from sin (Rom 6:6-8). Yet, believers still fall into sin. This is clear given Paul’s exhortations to the churches to abstain from sin and practice righteousness. Believers are commanded to transform their minds and not be conformed to this world (Rom 12:2). They must walk in a manner worthy of their calling (Eph 4:1, 17ff.). We are declared and credited as

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<sup>21</sup>Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 16.

<sup>22</sup>For a discussion along these lines and helpful diagrams, see Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952) 36-38.

<sup>23</sup>Cullmann, Oscar, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*, trans. by Floyd V. Filson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1950), 84, 145.

righteous through Christ (Rom 3:24; 4:5), but exhorted to be imitators of God, since no immoral person will enter the kingdom (Gal 5:1-5). This combination of ideas in Paul, often referred to as “the indicative and the imperative,” makes sense in the context of an inaugurated eschatology. Paul follows his discussion of what God has done for believers (the indicative) with the call on believers to live in a way that honors God (the imperative). Christ’s work on the cross is complete, bringing forgiveness, transformation, and salvation to believers. But the presence of the imperative—the command to holiness—signals that our salvation is not yet completed. The indicative of what God has accomplished in Christ makes the imperative possible and ensures that it will become a reality. The indicative does not negate the need for exhortation, nor vice-versa. Our salvation is “already” but “not yet” in this period between the times.<sup>24</sup>

Paul also demonstrates this view when discussing the resurrection. Though believers were dead in their transgressions, God made them alive and raised them up together with Christ (Eph 2:1-6; Col 2:12-13). This is a present fact. Yet, we groan within ourselves, awaiting the realization of the redemption of our bodies (Rom 8:23). A day is yet to come when Christians will finally receive glorious resurrection bodies (1 Cor 15:40-44). The kingdom of God will be inherited by those who are changed and clothed with immortality “at the last trumpet” (1 Cor 15:50-52). While believers have been raised with Christ, they still die physically. But they will be raised at the resurrection and triumph over death. The future resurrection of believers is grounded in the prior and foundational resurrection of Christ (1 Cor 15:12-22).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>See Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 254, and his discussion on 253-69. See also David E. Aune, Timothy J. Geddert, and Craig A. Evans, “Apocalypticism,” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. by Craig A. Evans and Stanley Porter (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 54.

<sup>25</sup>See Schreiner, *Paul*, 152-3.

Perhaps one of the most pervasive biblical concepts that displays the “already/not yet” character of the kingdom is based on the NT use of Psalm 110. Here, David writes, “The LORD says to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet’” (Ps 110:1). David speaks of the Davidic king *par excellence*, his descendent and Lord, who would reign forever from his throne (cf. Matt 22:41-45). According to the apostolic church, God raised Jesus from the dead and has exalted him to his right hand (Acts 2:32-35). God has seated his Christ in the heavenly places, above all authority and dominion, and put all things under his feet (Eph 1:20-22). Though the Lord had placed all things in creation under man’s feet (Gen 1:26-28; Ps 8:4-6), Adam sinned, abdicating his position through rebellion (Gen 3). But, the new man, the new Adam, has succeeded where the first failed. Thus, the author of Hebrews can say that, though we do not presently see everything under man’s feet, we do see this fulfilled in Jesus (Heb 1:13; 2:8-9). However, even though the Lord Jesus has actually been enthroned (Acts 2:36), defeated his enemies (Col 2:14-15), and rules over the church (Eph 1:22), none of this has reached its consummation. He is seated at God’s right hand, *until* all his enemies are made his footstool. Pointing to a yet future reality, Jesus tells the religious authorities that they will see him “sitting at the right hand of Power” (Matt 26:64). Soon, Paul promises the churches, God will “crush Satan under your feet” (Rom 16:20), with every knee bowing and tongue confessing that Jesus is Lord (Phil 2:9-11). When the end comes, he will abolish all rule and authority and defeat his enemies, including death (1 Cor 15:24-27). In that day, the kingdom of this world will finally and completely “become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever” (Rev 11:15).

But is this “already/not yet” view of the kingdom free from criticism? Though he commends the work of George Ladd regarding the kingdom, Eldon Epp contends that Ladd has

perhaps too easily accepted the Synoptic material at face value, without much interaction over the historicity of the passages. He criticizes Ladd for occasionally rejecting views that do not square with the biblical data, which Epp identifies as “a form of begging the question.”<sup>26</sup> Epp’s objections, however, seem to arise from a non-evangelical view of Scripture. The historicity and reliability of the biblical texts is an important issue—but one that lies outside the parameters of the present discussion. The very least that one can say is that Epp’s concerns are not so much directed at Ladd’s reconciliation of the data, as they are directed at the data itself. Given the witness of Scripture, inaugurated eschatology is a consistent and coherent interpretation.

Another potential objection is that the “already/not yet” approach is “convenient.” In other words, it is unfalsifiable and, therefore, indefensible.<sup>27</sup> But, inaugurated eschatology does not affirm a simplistic “both/and” approach that accepts two streams of clearly contradictory data in order to prove itself. The kingdom is present through the work of Christ, but not in the exact same way in which it will be present at the consummation when he returns. The kingdom is both present and future, but a coherent distinction exists between these two aspects. Therefore, the charge of being unfalsifiable does not seem valid. Furthermore, one finds that individual biblical authors affirm both aspects of the kingdom, sometimes in the same immediate context. In John, Jesus tells his listeners that “an hour is coming and now is” (present) when the dead will hear the Son’s voice and live (5:25). He then says, “an hour is coming” (future) when all those in the tombs will rise, either to life or judgment (5:28-29). Paul exhorts the Corinthians to remove the immoral man from their midst: “Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump” (1 Cor

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<sup>26</sup>Eldon Jay Epp, “Mediating Approaches to the Kingdom: Wernel Georg Kummel and George Eldon Ladd,” *The Kingdom of God in 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Interpretation*, ed. Wendall Willis (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1987), 52.

<sup>27</sup>See Aune, Geddert, and Evans, “Apocalypticism,” 52.

5:7). This command assumes the “not yet” of their ethical condition. But, he then concludes with the “already” in the same sentence—“just as you are in fact unleavened.”

Thus, inaugurated eschatology best explains the biblical view of the kingdom of God as both “already” and “not yet.” Jesus has inaugurated the reign of God so that the age to come has invaded the present age. One day, however, at the appointed time, the present age will finally give way to the fullness and completeness of the rule of God in Christ.

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