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THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS



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by

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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This thesis deals with the topic, "The Kingdom of God in the Teachings of Jesus." It is a historical and biblical study of the term "Kingdom of God" which is considered the central theme of the message of Jesus.

The aim of the first major topic is to find a definition of the term "Kingdom of God." An attempt was made to trace its usage in the Old Testament, Greek, and Rabbinic literature. Its usage in Hellenistic Judaism and in the New Testament was also given consideration.

The Greek word for "Kingdom" is basileia. According to the author's study, the New Testament word basileia basically means "reign" rather than "realm" or "people." This is the sense in which Jesus usually used the term. When it is applied to God it always mean "kingly rule."

The second major topic traces the development of the idea of the Kingdom of God from the very first period of Israel's life to the advent of apocalyptic literature. This study is basic because it helps us understand its

meaning when we come to the New Testament idea.

The third major topic discusses the Kingdom of God as future. Some of the teachings of Jesus about the Kingdom have eschatological meaning, referring to a decisive event in the future. However, the writer traces first the historical discussion about this idea of the Kingdom by including the thoughts of some theologians who in one way or another are defending the claim that the Kingdom of God is purely eschatological. The ideas of Johannes Weiss, Albert Schweitzer, and Rudolf Bultmann are included here, followed by a detailed study of the Scriptural evidences of the Kingdom as future as found in the Gospels. In this portion it is particularly argued that to Jesus, the kingdom of God was primarily an eschatological event. Albert Schweitzer best described it with the term, "consistent eschatology," meaning that Jesus was primarily influenced by apocalyptic eschatological ideas when he used the term.

The fourth major topic deals with the Kingdom of God as present. Many portions of Jesus' teaching picture the Kingdom of God as a present reality. The pattern of presentation in this topic follows the same pattern as the preceding one. Given more emphasis among the three theologians who were representatives of this position was C. H. Dodd who made the most consistent attempt to present the Kingdom of God as wholly a present reality. Following this discussion

there is a presentation of the Scriptural evidences from the Gospels for the Kingdom of God as present. All the discussions support the idea that the Kingdom of God is a present reality at work among men and not something in the future.

The last major topic takes into consideration the idea that the Kingdom of God is both present and future. This is an attempt to make a contemporary synthesis of the two major views and to know how can this be possible. In this discussion, the writer tries to reconcile the two opposing views in order to arrive at something which truly represents Jesus' teaching regarding the Kingdom of God. The first sub-topic discusses the Kingdom as God's decisive intervention in present history and human experience while the second presents the Kingdom of God as the final state of the redeemed to which God's intervention in history and human experience is designed to lead.

This study would lead us to the conclusion that the Kingdom of God is a single concept, the rule of God which is manifested in history through his divine intervention in and through Jesus Christ and which will also be eschatologically manifested in the future.