**Biblical Theology**

Lesson 11 – Jesus & the Kingdom of God (Gospels)

1. The time period between Malachi and the time of Jesus (approximately 400 years) is known as the “Intertestamental Period.” Hebrew religion begins to develop during the exile with synagogue worship and other changes to mark the change from worshipping Yahweh at the Temple in Jerusalem to worshipping Yahweh in one’s particular location at the synagogue. One major synagogue was in Alexandria, Egypt.
2. This Judaism gradually developed into sects and parties during the intertestamental period and groups such as the Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and Zealots develop. There is also additional writings that develop which may focus on 1 Old Testament strand of truth but develops that truth in isolation from other Old Testament truths. Today we call these writings “Apocrypha” and “Pseudepigrapha” which means “false writings.” The Pseudepigrapha are writings that are falsely attributed to a well-known author in order to gain some level of authority and use amongst believers. The Apocrypha are anonymous historical and moral writings that the Catholic church accepts as canonical in some secondary sense, but which are rejected by Protestants.
3. The culture between the testaments also changes as the Persian Empire gives way to the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great which then gives way to the Roman Empire with its Roman legion, mythologies and pagan cults, philosophers, the Roman senate, and the Roman emperor. Willem VanGemeren states, “The situation of the Jews in the first century left much to be desired. God’s people had been without a prophetic voice for centuries. They had experienced the oppression and unrest of the Seleucid-Ptolemaic period and were now under the power of Rome. The messianic era, of which the prophets had so vividly spoken and for which the Jews had so expectantly waited for centuries, had not yet come.” It is into this environment that Jesus is born.
4. The Gospel of John begins the story of Jesus at the beginning of time. Jesus is the pre-existent Word who is God and yet also distinct from God at the same time. He is also the Creator of everything that has come into being. So from John’s perspective, Jesus is God who takes on human flesh and dwells on Earth among men (John 1:1-14). From Matthew’s perspective, Jesus is the Son of David, Son of Abraham (Matt. 1:1) so Matthew sees the story of Jesus as continuing the story of the OT from Abraham running through David. Mark sees Jesus as the Son of God and Son of Man emphasizing both His divinity as well as His humanity (Mark 1:1). Luke sees Jesus as the Son of Adam, meaning Luke sees Jesus as continuing the story that began with Adam all the way back in Genesis 1. So when we combine these perspectives we get: Jesus is the eternal Word of God who is God who becomes man to continue the story of Adam, Abraham, and David as the God-Man.
5. Jesus lives with His parents in Nazareth which is in Galilee and they make trips to the Temple in Jerusalem every year to observe Passover (Luke 2:39-41). John the Baptist comes preaching the coming of the Messiah whose shoes John is not fit to untie (Luke 3:16; Matt 3:7-10) and part of that preparation for the coming Messiah is for the people to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3). Jesus comes and is baptized by John and is driven into the wilderness where He is tempted by Satan (Matthew 3:13 – 4:11; Mark 1:9-13; Luke 3:21-22; 4:1-13).
6. Once John is imprisoned, Jesus begins His preaching ministry in Nazareth of Galilee where He calls His first disciples (Matthew 4:12-22; Mark 1:14-20; John 1:35-51). Jesus comes preaching the gospel and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:14-15).
7. Jesus also comes performing miracles such as the water into wine at Cana (John 2:1-12) and healing the sick (Mark 1:29-34; Luke 4:38-41). In the Sermon on the Mount, He goes up on the mountain just as Moses went up Sinai and Jesus teaches them how to truly understand the law of God as well as pronouncing blessing on those who turn to Him by faith and repentance (Matthew 5-7). He does the same thing in the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6). He teaches the truth about the Kingdom of God/Heaven in parables (Matthew 13; Luke 8:4-18). He heals lepers (Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16), calms the storm (Matthew 8:23-27), feeds 5000 (John 6:1-15), walks on water (John 6:16-21), casts out demons (Matthew 8:28-34; 9:32-34), heals the lame (Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26). He sends His disciple out to heal and preach the good news of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 9:35-10:16; Luke 10:1-20). All of this demonstrates that the Kingdom of God has come to earth in power, to proclaim release to those who are held captive and to restore that which is unclean by making it clean again.
8. The turning point in the life and ministry of Jesus is when His disciples first confess that He is the Messiah sent from God and promised in the Old Testament (Matthew 16:13-23; Mark 8:27-33; Luke 9:18-22). Up until then, the disciples have seen nothing but power and glory in the message and ministry of Jesus. But once the confession is made, Jesus begins to teach them about His upcoming suffering. Matthew 16:21 says, “From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” This is so shocking and unexpected to the disciples that Peter tries to thwart Jesus. The Jews had this idea of the Messiah coming in power and glory, but they had failed to connect the Messiah to the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 and other Old Testament promises that the Messiah would be betrayed, crucified, and killed.
9. At this point, Jesus begins to shift His focus from Galilee to Judea, specifically Jerusalem. Along the way to Jerusalem He teaches about marriage and divorce (Matthew 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12), continues to teach in parables (Matthew 20:1-16), predicts His suffering and death (Matthew 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34), continues to heal (Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43), and continues to forgive and save sinners (Luke 19:1-10). In John’s Gospel, Jesus teaches in the Temple about His origins and His destination (John 7:25-36), true freedom (8:31-38), and heals a blind man as a spiritual lesson on the blindness of the Jewish leaders (John 9), as well as raises Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-12:11).
10. He enters into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1-9; Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:28-38; John 12:12-19), cleanses the Temple (Matthew 21:10-17; Mark 11:11; Luke 19:45-46), curses the fig tree as a symbolic parable of Israel (Matthew 21:18-19; Mark 11:12-14), teaches in parables (Matthew 21:28-22:14; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19), and laments over Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37-39).
11. While He is in Jerusalem and before His betrayal, Jesus takes the opportunity to foretell the destruction of the Temple and uses that as a springboard to talk about His return and the last judgment (Matthew 24-25; Mark 13; Luke 21:8-38).
12. The rest of the Gospels then tell the story of the Passion beginning with the conspiracy against Jesus, Judas agreeing to betray Him, the observance of Passover//institution of the Lord’s Supper, Peter’s Denial, the garden of Gethsemane, trial before the Sanhedrin as well as Pilate and Herod, His crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection (Matthew 26-28:10; Mark 14-16:8; Luke 22-24:12; John 12:20-19:42).
13. After His resurrection, Jesus appears to His Apostles (Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-29), disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-25), and to His Apostles a second time (John 21), after which time He ascends into heaven (Luke 24:50-53).
14. Jesus’ titles reveal to us His person and His mission:
    1. Messiah: The word “Christ” is the Greek word for “Messiah” which means “Anointed One.” Jesus reads from Isaiah in Luke 4:18 and says, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor” and Jesus says that He fulfills that verse from Isaiah. He is the anointed one. In the Old Testament, priests and kings were anointed, but the OT also talks about a special anointed one the Messiah. He accepts Peter’s confession at Caesarea Philippi that He is the Christ. When Jesus asks the Pharisees whose son the Christ will be, they rightly answer, “The son of David” in Matthew 22:42. Andrew tells Simon Peter in John 1:41, “‘We have found the Messiah’ (which means Christ).” Jesus is the one anointed of God to fulfill all of the Old Testament prophecies and promises.
    2. Son of God: Mark begins his Gospel calling Jesus the Son of God (1:1) and includes it near the end of His Gospel when the centurion says, “Truly this man was the Son of God” (15:39). It also appears on the lips of demons in Mark’s gospel. Even they know who He is. God calls Jesus “My Son” at Jesus’ baptism. Mark 14:61-62 says, “Again the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?’ And Jesus said, ‘I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.’” Dr. Mike Kruger says, “There seems to be a distinction between Messiah and Son of God though they do overlap. Messiah more has to do with the mission of Jesus and Son of God has to do with the identity of Jesus that lets Him fulfill the Messianic mission. Jesus can be the Messiah because He’s already the Son of God.”
    3. Son of Man: Son of Man was used both by Jesus to identify Himself as well as the authors of the Gospel. In the Old Testament it had 2 senses: 1) A human being and 2) A divine figure who receives a kingdom from the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7. In using this term, Jesus is saying that He is both human and this divine figure from Daniel 7. Ezekiel is frequently calls “son of man” to denote his humanity. Numbers 23:19 states, “God is not an, that he should lie, or a son of man [human being], that he should change his mind.” Psalm 8:4 asks, “[what is] the son of man that you care for him?” But Psalm 80:17 uses it in a divine sense in saying, “Let your hand be on the man of your right hand, the son of man whom you have made strong for yourself.” And of course Daniel 7 has the Son of Man as a divine figure given a kingdom from God. When Stephen was being stoned in Acts 7, he says, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God” (v.56). In using this title, Jesus signifies both His humanity and divinity and the divine figure especially in Daniel 7 who will receive a kingdom from God.
    4. Son of David: Jesus is a literal, physical descendent of David. His genealogy in Matthew mentions that He is the son of David and the angel addresses His father Joseph as “Joseph, Son of David” in Matthew 1:20. The blind men in Matthew 9:27 cry out to Him, “Have mercy on us, Son of David.” The crowds in Jerusalem at the triumphal entry greet Him with the shout, “Hosanna to the Son of David.” When Jesus quotes Psalm 110:1 in Matthew 22:41-45, Jesus says that David knew that the Messiah would be one of his descendants but would also be greater than David. And the angel tells Mary in Luke 1:32-33, “And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” That descendent upon his throne forever that was promised to David in 2 Samuel 7 is ultimately fulfilled in Christ, even though there were points in Israel’s history where there was no throne for a Davidic descendant to sit upon and things looked bleak and it seemed like God’s promises were threatened.
    5. Lord: Jesus also identifies Himself as “Lord” which translates the Old Testament “Yahweh,” the personal name of God. Jesus responds to Satan in Matthew 4:7 and says, “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.” Again in Matthew 7:21, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven…” He is called “Lord” by a leper in Matthew 8:2 and a centurion in Matthew 8:8. He calls Himself the Lord of the harvest in Matthew 8:38 and says in Matthew 12:8, “For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.” Thomas confesses in John 20:28, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus is Lord, meaning He is Yahweh of the Old Testament, He is the exalted One, He is the king over all.
    6. Savior: Jesus is to be given that name because “ He will save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). Jesus’ name indicates His mission and purpose as the Savior. He proclaims in John 10:9, “I am the door. If anyone enters by me, He will be saved….” In Mark 10:45 Jesus declares, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” The angels tell the shepherds in Luke 2:11, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” Samaritans say of Jesus in John 4:42, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”
15. Jesus’ message of the Kingdom of God also displays continuity with the teaching of the Old Testament in all its epochs. Mark Dever writes, “In Matthew, Jesus presents Himself as the key to understanding the Old Testament Scriptures. If you were to rip your Bible in half and take away the Old Testament and read it, Jesus would say to you, ‘You won’t understand that book without me. It all serves as a pointer to me.’ He is the authoritative interpreter of Israel’s religious writings and traditions. He explains them. From Genesis to Malachi, from teaching on marriage and divorce to the Ten Commandments and love, Jesus quotes the Old Testament and tells us what it means.” The Gospels use the phrase “to fulfill” in reference to Jesus fulfilling some verse or institution from the Old Testament over 13 times. Jesus says in Luke 24:44, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Luke 24:27 says, “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he [Jesus] interpreted to them [disciples] in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”
16. So, the Kingdom of God comes in power and glory with Jesus as the King of the Kingdom coming to fulfill the mission of the Messiah as the true Adam (Rom. 5:12-21), the true seed of Abraham (John 8:56-58; Gal. 3:16), the true Davidic descendant (Matt. 9:27; 12:23; 22:42-45; Mark 10:47; John 7:42), the Son of Man, Son of God, Lord and Savior. Jesus is the seed of the woman foretold all the way back near the beginning to Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 12:1-6) who through His perfect life, death, and resurrection, has crushed the head of the serpent. Van Gemeren writes, “Jesus’ inauguration of the kingdom is a stage in the progression of the kingly rule of God, set in motion from the time of Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the garden. Through the revelation to Israel – the covenants, promises, and mighty acts of the Lord – he extended his kingly rule. Through the prophets he encouraged his people by saying that He would extend his kingdom from heaven to earth. With the coming of our Lord, God more dramatically and effectively stirs the earth to receive His kingly rule. Heaven and earth are called into action, either to receive or reject His kingship. Jesus forces acceptance or rejection.”