

LECTURE II

What I am going to do, before we look at the unifying theme [story-line] I am going to develop in this course, let me do an overview of some other themes that can assist us in reading the OT as God progressively revealed his plan to redeem and restore all things through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Covenant.

Interpreting the Bible According to the Covenants

One of the unifying themes is the concept of COVENANT.

You see this in the way our Bibles are divided into Old Testament/Covenant and a New Testament/Covenant?

So we need to understand what a covenant is (the word 'testament' is from the Latin word for covenant).

A covenant is a relationship that God establishes with man.

In this covenant relationship God promises blessings and requires obedience.

It is a relationship that is sealed with an oath (often in blood).

Sometimes you may hear of covenants being likened to contracts or other binding agreements between two parties.

However, the best example of a covenant today is not a business contract, but a marriage.

Marriage is a relationship that is sealed with an oath in which promises are made and obedience or responsibilities are required.

Marriage is also sealed in blood in the sense that it lasts until "death do us part."

God works in and speaks to His creation on the basis of a covenant. His covenant is focussed on redemption in Jesus Christ and is called the Eternal Covenant or the Covenant of Redemption.

To understand the Bible we must trace the development of God's covenant purpose through the Scripture.

There are 5 elements to God's covenant.

1. **Relationship** - *"I will be your God and you will be My people."*
2. **Sovereignty** - God establishes the covenant on His terms by His initiative of sovereign grace.
3. **Sealed with an Oath** (often in blood) - the covenant invokes a life or death commitment; the shedding of blood (death) is the cost of the relationship.
4. **Blessing** - God promises the ultimate blessing of eternal life with various lesser blessings included.
5. **Obedience** - God gives responsibilities and requires obedience to show love and loyalty to Him.

After mankind lost a favourable relationship with God by their fall into sin, God did not send Jesus Christ with His covenant immediately.

He revealed it progressively over time with further instalments throughout history.

The Bible is the record of God's development of His covenant.

The 39 books of the OT are the Old Covenant documents and the 27 books of the NT are the New Covenant documents.

Study Exercise

Read the following passages to see what the Bible itself says about the OT and NT.

- Jeremiah 31:31-34
- Hebrews 8:6-13
- Hebrews 9:15
- 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

You can see that the designations Old Covenant and New Covenant come from the Bible itself.

Through Jeremiah [written when Israel was in Exile in Babylon] God promised a New Covenant that would be better than the Old Covenant that He had made with Israel.

The Old Covenant, going back to Abraham and Moses, failed, because man was unable, due to sin, to obey it.

They continued to be unfaithful to the covenant, which was the reason they were under God's judgment in Babylon, having lost their land and the Temple.

But here God was promising a better covenant that would rest on and be guaranteed by Jesus.

Jesus Christ through His death and resurrection brings that better covenant.

When we remember the Lord's death at His table, this New Covenant language is used.

So all the Scripture that has to do with Israel is Old Covenant Scripture and everything that records the work of Jesus and His followers is New Covenant Scripture.

In fact the stages of God's covenant development are 6 in number.

1. The Adamic Covenant of Creation
2. The Noahic Covenant of Preservation
3. The Abrahamic Covenant of Promise
4. The Mosaic Covenant of Law
5. The Davidic Covenant of Kingdom
6. The New Covenant of Christ

The first 5 covenant instalments are the Old Covenant and the final one is the New Covenant.

The OT was centred upon Law and the NT is centred upon the Spirit.

The OT was a time of anticipation for the Saviour and the NT is the time of fulfilment because the Saviour has come. Hebrews 10:1 (look at it) speaks about the law (OT) being only a shadow of the realities to come in the NT.

So the OT Scriptures are constantly pointing forward to the NT with pictures, patterns, symbols and prophecies while the NT is the fulfilment, reality and explanation of everything in the OT.

Interpreting the Bible According to Redemptive History

God revealed His message to us over time.

He did not just drop one book down out of heaven all at once, but progressively revealed His word over a period of 1500 years. This is important to understanding the different books and sections of the Bible.

No passage says everything about anything.

That is, the further we progress through the Bible, the fuller God's revelation is. What God said in the OT anticipates what He is going to say in the NT, and what God says in the NT is built upon what He said in the OT.

In understanding the meaning of what God is saying in any passage of Scripture, we must understand how far along in the progress of revelation and covenantal development that passage is.

We must understand a passage in terms of what God has said before and, since we have the complete Scripture, what God is going to say next.

We call this progress of revelation over time Redemptive History.

It is helpful to see the main stages or movements of Redemptive History and know where each covenant instalment fits.

There are 13 main stages of Redemptive History in the progress of God's revelation.

The books of the Bible that record each stage are listed on the right.

1.	Creation (Covenant with Adam)	Genesis
2.	Fall of Man	Genesis
3.	Flood (Covenant with Noah)	Genesis
4.	Abraham (Covenant with Abraham)	Genesis
5.	Deliverance from slavery in Egypt – (Covenant with Moses) – Law, Tabernacle -	Exodus - Deuteronomy
6.	Conquest of Canaan -	Joshua
7.	The Time of the Judges – sin, judgement, deliverance cycle.	Judges - Ruth
8.	Kingdom (Covenant with David)	Samuel - 2 Chronicles, Poetry & Prophets
9.	Exile & Return	Ezra - Esther, Prophets
10.	Fulfilment of New Covenant in Christ	Gospels
11.	Establishment of New Covenant by Apostles	Acts
12.	Explanation of New Covenant for Believers	Epistles
13.	Declaration of New Covenant Victory	Revelation

Creation as a unifying theme.

Creation – Genesis

Fall – Genesis

Redemption of creation – to restore creation:

Preparation Revealed – types, rituals [Exodus to Malachi]

Restored creation – Christ [see John's gospel].

Spiritual warfare/Conflict.

We can find a unifying theme using the concept of spiritual warfare.

If we go back to Genesis we find that after Adam disobeyed God, God cursed the serpent in these amazing words,

*GE 3:15 And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspringⁿ and hers;
he will crushⁿ your head,
and you will strike his heel."*

This was nothing less than a declaration of war against Satan.

God was declaring war on the serpent and it would be the seed of woman who would crush his head – give him a deathblow.

It was a conflict where God took the initiative.

Man through his disobedience was brought under the control of Satan, now God took the initiative to deliver man.

It was a conflict God took up on man's behalf.

That is sovereign grace - without it there would be no hope for man, for he could not deliver himself, only God could do that.

Paul alludes to this in Ephesians 6

EPH 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

We have a description of this conflict in Revelation 12.

The first part of Revelation is a description of the conflict from the perspective of earth - how it affects the believer.

From Revelation 12 we see below the surface, we see that what is happening on earth is the result of a deeper struggle.

We are brought face to face with the reality of the spiritual struggle.

REV 12:1 A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. ² She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. ³ Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. ⁴ His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. ⁵ She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.

Who is the woman?

None other than the Israel [God's people] in the Old Testament, Israel for it was out of Israel that Jesus was born.

Who is the dragon? See verse 9.

⁹ The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.

His identification with the serpent is deliberate – it takes us back to the Garden of Eden – it is a clear reference to the conflict predicted so many thousands of years earlier.

Who is the child? It should be quite obvious from the description in verses 5.

⁵ She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.

Here is the seed of the woman, the one promised.

It is obvious that **Genesis 3:15** is the basis of this section.

These verses are a summary in symbolic language of the underlying story of the Old and New Testaments.

It is a story of conflict.

It helps us to understand the big picture.

We see that from the beginning Satan did all he could to stop the birth of the promised seed, or to have him killed.

He, of course did not know who He would be and when He would emerge.

Clearly one can identify a spiritual conflict taking place throughout the O.T. – it is a story of warfare.

It's first manifestation was when the serpent used **Cain** to murder his brother **Abel**, thinking he was the promised seed.

Then **Seth** was born and he continued the godly line, the line of promise.

However Satan then tried to pollute the godly line, which resulted in an escalation of wickedness – Genesis 6.

Perhaps he thought he would cause such havoc that God would be forced to destroy the whole human race, but he overlooked the fact that there was one godly man - **Noah** who, with his family were saved from the flood - and so the godly line is preserved.

It looked as if Satan would triumph because **Abraham and Sarah** were too old to have children.

But the miracle happened. And the godly line continued.

Then the dragon had the promised line enslaved in **Egypt** and prompted **Pharaoh** to have all the male children killed - would Satan triumph?

Again he was defeated and God preserved His people and led them out of Egypt.

History moved on and God choose one family of the **tribe of Judah, the family of David**.

Satan prompted **Saul to kill David**.

God again preserved the promised line.

We move on, the **wicked daughter** of Ahab and Jezebel was reigning and to consolidate her power she tried to destroy the seed of David.

She had all the descendants of David destroyed, but we read in II Kings 11:1f that **Joash** was stolen away and hidden.

So the promised line was preserved from the dragon.

We come to the fifth century before Christ and **King Ahasuerus** was reigning.

Israel was in captivity.

Satan prompted **Haman** to get the king to issue a decree to have all the Jews put to death.

But, God raised **Esther**, the Queen - and God used her to intercede on behalf of her people - and the promised line was preserved.

This brings us to **Revelation 12:5** where we see the conflict in the time of our Lord.

Paul puts it like this in *Galatians 4*, ⁴ *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law,* ⁵ *to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*

So we come to **Bethlehem**.

Satan prompted **Herod** the king to destroy the Christ child.

The wise men were warned, so in desperation Herod ordered that all **babies under 2 years old killed**.

Again, he thought he had triumphed, but God preserved the Saviour.

He did not give up.

He tempted Jesus, "*Throw yourself from the top of the tower*".

And then Satan finally thought he had the promised seed.

He instigated one of his **disciples to betray Him**.

He used the **Jewish rulers** to accuse Jesus before the Roman rulers.

And finally, there he had **Jesus on the cross**.

What was the outcome of the conflict?

Yes, the prophecy was fulfilled.

He bruised the heel of the seed of the woman.

But how was he to know that what he put in the minds of these evil men, was only what God had intended all the time?

How was he to know that it was on the cross that the seed of the woman would crush his head?

Jesus overcame Satan when He was weakest, on the cross.

The moment of the crushing of his head came when our Lord cried out victoriously: **"Finished"**.

This is how Paul describes what happened on the cross; *Colossians 2:15* "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

And that is the victory we see described for us from verses 7-12.

And that is the story of the New Testament – how that conflict manifests itself in the Last Days.

Now, this is not chronological but explanatory – it expands the outcome of the conflict from another perspective – we see our Lord's defeat of Satan, the serpent and the result for us believers.

REV 12:7 And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. ⁸ But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. ⁹ The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

REV 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:

*"Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God,
and the authority of his Christ.
For the accuser of our brothers,
who accuses them before our God day and night,
has been hurled down.*

*REV 12:11 They overcame him
by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony;*

On the cross our Lord Jesus defeated Satan, sin and death.

He took the punishment for sin we deserve.
He paid the Penalty in his own body.
He died for us.
He stood in our place.

You see, it was Adam, a man, who brought sin into the world – so it was the Last Adam, the God/man, and Jesus Christ who paid the penalty for that sin.

Isaiah, 800 years earlier explained it like this,

*ISA 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.*

*ISA 53:6 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.*

Notice in Revelation 12:10b

*who accuses them before our God day and night,
has been hurled down.*

He was cast out of heaven.

It is clear that up to the coming of Jesus, Satan has access to God, which is clear from Job where he appears before God with the other angelic beings.

What we need to understand that up to that point he has every reason to bring accusations against believers for it seem that God was simply forgiving and nothing was done to ensure that sin was punished.

The sacrifice of an animal was not sufficient when the one who committed the sin walked away free.

In a sense sin was simply covered, which Paul refers to in Romans 3 where he writes

(Romans 3:21) But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it- (Romans 3:22) the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: (Romans 3:23) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:24) and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, (Romans 3:25) whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. **This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.**

So, before Christ, it looked as if God was light on sin – he was passing over sin.

Think of David's sin – can you imagine what how he would bring accusations against David before God – 'How can you just forgive David or such serious sins?' You are unjust!'

What Satan did not know that God has already planned not just to cover sin, but take it was and to substitute his Son as a sin offering.

So, as Paul states, in verse 26, *It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

From the moment Christ came, Satan could no longer accuse believers for the price was paid, He was the propitiation for our sin.

This is how Jesus put it, *(Luke 10:17) The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!"*

(Luke 10:18) And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

(Luke 10:19) Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.

(Luke 10:20) Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

From that moment he could not bring an accusation against those who placed their faith in Jesus.

This is how Paul explains it in Romans 8,

RO 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,ⁿ

33 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

And in Romans 5 Paul writes,

RO 5:18 Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. 19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

So one can find a unifying theme using the concept of creation, spiritual warfare or the concept of the covenant.

The kingdom as a unifying theme
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It seems to me that there is a more fundamental and more embracing unifying concept – the Kingdom.

It seems to me that the concept of the Kingdom of God involves in a real sense, the total message of the Bible.

You see **Creation** concerns the Kingdom God – it is about the creation of the Kingdom of God.

Likewise, the concept of the **Covenant** concern promises God made relating to the establishment of God's kingdom.

Spiritual warfare shows that there is another kingdom that opposes the Kingdom of God and explains how God's kingdom overcomes all other kingdoms that oppose God's kingdom.

If one reads the gospels carefully, one will note that the concept of the Kingdom looms large in the teachings of Jesus; why?

Well, I want to show that that is the way Jesus was reading the O.T.

My aim is to show that it is found in one form or another through the length and breadth of the Bible.

From **Abraham** who set out to seek *"the city ... whose builder and maker is God"* [Heb. 11:10, Gen 12:1]

Interesting he was not looking for a physical land, he knew it was spiritual.

Until the NT closes with *"the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God"* [Rev 21:2].

Of course the NT concept of the Kingdom of God cannot be imposed on the Old.

Neither does this suggest that the idea of the rule of God did not undergo considerable development within the Old Testament itself.

However, the root of this concept is found in the Old Testament and can be dated back very early.

In our study to discover the flow of God's plan of redemption and how the various books of the Bible relate to this flow, we will use the concept of the Kingdom.

UNIFYING THEME: THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

Matthew begins with these words,

MT 3:1 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea ² and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." ³ This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

*"A voice of one calling in the desert,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.' "*ⁿ

It is significant that he quotes from the O.T.

The Gospel of **Mark** begins the account of Jesus' ministry with these significant words: *"Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe the gospel'."* {1:14-15}

In Matthew 24 Jesus calls it the gospel of the kingdom, i.e., the good news concerning the kingdom.

The Gospels make it plain that the burden of our Lord's preaching was to announce the Kingdom of God.

A reading of the **teachings of Jesus** as they are found in the Gospels only serves to bear this statement out.

The term "Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven", "Kingdom" occurs thirty eight times in Matthew, fourteen times in Mark, thirty-four times in Luke and three times in John, six times in Acts, nine times in Paul, twice in Revelation.

That does not even include the term "Your kingdom", "his kingdom", "the kingdom of their Father", "the gospel of the kingdom" etc. [all these are linguistic variations of the same idea].

What is it like?

It is like a sower who goes forth to sow; it is like a costly pearl; it is like a mustard seed.

Jesus taught that kingdom is working quietly and secretly among men.

Look at the parables of the kingdom - that was the whole point Jesus was making: -

Mark 4:24-26 - a seed sown and growing secretly

Matthew 13:1-23 - Parable of the sower - not all will accept the kingdom.

Matthew 13:31-32 - like a mustard seed - it is hidden, although already present, but now insignificant form but one day, like a great tree.

Matthew 13:33 - leaven - spreading slowly, gradually.

Matthew 13:24-30

In the Parable of the tares and wheat - the kingdom co-exists with the kingdoms of the world - it will not at first root them out - that waits until the final consummation.

This is what is called the secret of the kingdom.

MT 13:10 The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?"

MT 13:11 He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them."

MT 13:16 But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. ¹⁷ For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

The present existence of the kingdom was something most of the Jews did not understand - and the fact that they did not accept Jesus in no way nullified its existence.

How does one enter?

One sells all that he has and gives to the poor; one become as a little child.

One is not naturally born into the Kingdom - John 3.

Is it a matter of importance?

Yes. It would be better to mutilate oneself and enter maimed than not to get in at all.

So important was the concept of the Kingdom of God in the mind of Jesus that one could scarcely grasp his meaning at all without some understanding of it.

But for all his repeated mention of the Kingdom of God, Jesus never once paused to explain it or define it.

Nor do you find any of his hearers interrupt him to ask him to explain what he meant.

On the contrary, Jesus used the term as it assured it would be understood.

And it was.

Every Jew grew up with the idea of the Kingdom of God.

It was something they understood and indeed longed for.

It was as well known to them just as the concept of the Second Coming is to us Christians.

The reason why the Jews understood this concept is that it has a long history in one form or another in the Old Testament.

What does the Bible mean when it speaks of the Kingdom of God?

When we speak about a kingdom, we immediately think of a nation, a specific geographical area – thus we speak of the United Kingdom.

The **United Kingdom** comprises the island of Great Britain--consisting of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, also known as Ulster, with an estimated population in 1990 of 57,376,000, with Queen Elizabeth II as monarch.

However, when the Bible speaks of the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven, or simply the Kingdom, it is not referring to a particular nation, a specific geographical area or some earthly kingdom.

Nor must we confuse the Kingdom of God with the Church.

The Kingdom of God is greater than the Church – the Church points to, proclaims and exemplifies the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God basically means the rule of God, his Kingship – his Sovereignty, his Lordship, and rule.

Consistently it referred to the rule of God, the Lordship of God.

“The Kingdom of God is a growing new world-order, in heaven and on earth, produced by the revolutionary changes brought about in Jesus’ fulfilment of the Old Covenant in his life, death, resurrection and ascension which is finally consummated at the end of the age.”[Peter Leithart – Beginning with Moses]

In the Old Testament it almost always refers to God’s authority or his rule as the heavenly King.

Summarised in Lord’s Prayer – “***Your kingdom come, your will be done....***”

See Psalm 22:27-28,

PS 22:27 All the ends of the earth
will remember and turn to the LORD,
and all the families of the nations
will bow down before him,
PS 22:28 for dominion belongs to the LORD
and he rules over the nations.

103:19,

PS 103:19 *The LORD has established his throne in heaven,
and his kingdom rules over all.*

145:11, 13,

PS 145:10 *All you have made will praise you, O LORD;
your saints will extol you.*
PS 145:11 *They will tell of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might,*
PS 145:12 *so that all men may know of your mighty acts
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.*
PS 145:13 *Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures through all generations.*

Daniel 4:34-35, 6:26,

DA 4:34 *At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes
toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most
High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever.*
*His dominion is an eternal dominion;
his kingdom endures from generation to generation.*
DA 4:35 *All the peoples of the earth
are regarded as nothing.*
*He does as he pleases
with the powers of heaven*

*and the peoples of the earth.
No one can hold back his hand
or say to him: "What have you done?"*

*DA 6:26 "I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must
fear and reverence the God of Daniel.
"For he is the living God
and he endures forever;
his kingdom will not be destroyed,
his dominion will never end.*

That was the Kingdom that the Jews longed for.

Now they looked in particular for a Redeemer, or Messiah, who would establish the Kingdom of God victoriously.

David is seen as the prototype of the coming Messiah and his kingdom the prototype of the Kingdom. [II Sam 7]

" 'The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: ¹² When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. ¹⁵ But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. ¹⁶ Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before meⁿ; your throne will be established forever.' "

We think of **Isaiah**, who gave the hope of the coming Prince of the line of David [Isa. 9:6]

*ISA 9:6 For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor,ⁿ Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

It was in this context that Jesus declared the arrival of the Kingdom.

Thus, in the New Testament "the Kingdom" refers to the divine authority and rule given by the Father to the Son.

The idea of the Kingdom, then, goes back into the early history of Israel.

And it is very significant that at the time of Jesus the Jews were waiting for something to happen, they were waiting for the coming of the Kingdom of God, of course they thought of it in nationalistic terms.

All their hopes and expectations - their hopes for the Messiah, their hopes to get their land back free of the Romans, their hopes for the new covenant that had been promised in Jeremiah - all these hopes came under the umbrella of the kingdom of God and the great question was how it would be realized, Zealots, through revolution, the Pharisees, through strictly keeping the Law etc.

The Jews believed that when God's kingdom finally arrived they would get their Messiah, their King; they'd get their land back; they'd have the new covenant.

The kingdom would enter dramatically – end of the old age, beginning of new age – Davidic time.

Jesus arrived on the scene and proclaimed that the time of waiting was over, God's kingdom was about to arrive – but of course he had to correct their understanding of the Kingdom – not national or earthly, but spiritual and universal, Messiah would conquer, not through the sword but by dying on the cross.

And this means that as we read the Old Testament, those books that make all the promises, that create all the expectations and hopes of fulfilment, we need to see the OT as being fundamentally about the kingdom of God.

So in a very real sense, the kingdom of God is what the Bible is all about.

This means at the very least that it is wrong to view of kingdom of God as an order that only is realized at the end of the age.