

What Is the Good News of the Kingdom?

The Reign of God in Christ, and the Good News of the King

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I. The Heart of the Good News

When Jesus of Nazareth began to preach, he announced not himself, in the first instance, but a kingdom: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). This was the heart of his message. The phrase “kingdom of God” appears some 122 times in the New Testament, ninety of them on his own lips—it is, by a wide margin, the dominant theme of his teaching. To understand what Jesus came to do is, before anything else, to understand what he meant by the kingdom of God.¹

Yet the phrase is easily misunderstood, because the word “kingdom” calls up images of territory, armies, and thrones—earthly dominion of the ordinary kind. Sometimes familiarity with a term is mistaken for understanding of it. The kingdom Jesus proclaimed is richer and stranger than any worldly realm: it is the reign of God himself, breaking into history in the person of his Son, taking root in human hearts, gathered and made visible in the Church, and destined for a glory that will be revealed only at the end of time. This essay sets out that Catholic understanding of the kingdom—what it is, where the Scriptures locate it, and how it is both already present and still to come.

The aim here is positive: to say what the kingdom of God is, as the Scriptures, the Fathers, and the Church’s teaching present it. Where other accounts differ—and some modern movements understand the kingdom very differently—those differences are taken up elsewhere. Here the concern is to lay the Catholic understanding out plainly and on its own foundations, so that it may be seen whole.

II. A Curse on “Another Gospel”

There are few sterner words in all of Paul’s letters than the ones he writes, white-hot, to the Galatians: “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, If any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8–9). Twice in two verses Paul pronounces the *anathema*. He will not soften it even for himself, even for an angel. Whatever else this tells us, it tells us that the *content* of the gospel is not a matter of indifference. To get it wrong is not a minor error of emphasis; it is to fall under a curse.²

That is why the question “What is the good news?” is worth asking with care, and why it is the right question to put to the Jehovah’s Witnesses. For the Watchtower has a very definite and very public answer. The “good news” its eight million members carry from door to door, in more than a thousand languages, is, in their own words, “the good news of God’s Kingdom” — and by this they mean something quite specific: the announcement

that God's heavenly government was established in the year 1914 and will soon rule the earth. The question this essay asks is whether that is the good news the apostles preached — or whether it is, in a subtle but serious way, *another* gospel.

Let me say at the outset what this essay does *not* claim. It does not claim that the Kingdom of God is unimportant, or that Jesus did not preach it, or that the Watchtower invented it. The Kingdom is gloriously real, and Jesus made it the theme of his preaching; on that, a Catholic and a Witness can agree. The claim is narrower and, I think, decisive: that the Watchtower has *reduced* the gospel to the announcement of a government, and in doing so has moved the center of the good news away from where the apostles fixed it — the person of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen for our salvation.

III. What “Good News” Meant

The word translated “gospel” is the Greek *euangelion*, “good news.” It is an old word, and it carries an Old Testament freight that matters here. When the prophet Isaiah looked for the day of redemption, he described a herald running over the mountains with *good tidings*: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings ... who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns’” (Isa. 52:7). “Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings ... say to the cities of Judah, ‘Behold your God!’” (Isa. 40:9–10). The good news, in Isaiah, is double: that God reigns, *and* that God himself comes.³

This is the very passage Jesus takes up. In the synagogue at Nazareth he unrolls the scroll to Isaiah 61 — “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor” — and then says the astonishing thing: “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:18–21). Notice what has happened. The good news Isaiah promised is no longer merely a future reign; it has become a present *person*. The herald and the message have converged: the one who *brings* the good news is himself the content of it. From the very first, the good news is inseparable from the Anointed One in whom it is fulfilled.

IV. What Israel Awaited: The Kingdom in Prophecy

Jesus did not introduce the idea of the kingdom of God from nothing; he proclaimed the fulfillment of a hope that God had been cultivating in Israel for centuries. Though the exact phrase is uncommon in the Old Testament, the conviction beneath it is everywhere: that the Lord, the God of Israel, is the true and eternal King—“The Lord reigns” is the refrain of psalm after psalm—and that his reign, now acknowledged by his covenant people, would one day be acknowledged by all the earth.⁴

From the prophets, Israel learned to expect a kingdom marked by four things. It would be *divine*—established and ruled by God himself, not merely by men. It would be

everlasting—without end, like the stone in Daniel’s vision that becomes a mountain and “shall stand for ever” (Dan. 2:44), or the everlasting dominion given to the son of man in Daniel 7. It would be *universal*—beginning with Israel but reaching out to embrace all the nations of the earth. And it would be *spiritual*—heavenly in its very essence, a reign of God in the hearts and lives of his people, even though it is begun on earth. These four notes—divine, everlasting, universal, spiritual—define the kingdom the prophets foretold.

It must be admitted that by the time of Jesus this hope had, for many, grown distorted. Longing for deliverance from Roman rule, much of Israel had come to expect a political Messiah who would raise an army, restore the throne in Jerusalem, and subject the nations by force. The divine, everlasting, and universal notes were retained, but the *spiritual* note—the very heart of the matter—was largely lost. The Gospels show this expectation at every turn: a crowd tries to seize Jesus “to make him king” (John 6:15); even after the resurrection the apostles ask, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). A great part of Jesus’ teaching on the kingdom is devoted to correcting precisely this earthly, political misreading—and the correction remains necessary, for the temptation to reduce God’s kingdom to a this-worldly program, whether political or institutional, recurs in every age.

V. “The Kingdom of God Is at Hand”

Into that expectation Jesus came, announcing that the long-awaited kingdom had arrived—and arrived in him. This is the great surprise at the center of the good news: the kingdom is not merely near in time but *present in his person*. When the Pharisees charge that he casts out demons by the prince of demons, he answers, “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God *has come upon you*” (Matt. 12:28). The verb is past tense: where the King is and acts, there the kingdom already is. In Jesus’ healings and exorcisms, his forgiving of sins and raising of the dead, the reign of God is breaking visibly into the world.⁵

This is why, when asked *when* the kingdom would come, Jesus turns his questioners away from spectacle and calculation: “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, ‘Lo, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you” (Luke 17:20–21). The kingdom is not to be located by external portents or future datings; it is already present among them, in the person standing before them. To look for it elsewhere—in political upheaval, in a calculated date, in any “Lo, here it is!”—is to miss it.

And what was inaugurated in his ministry was established in power by his death, resurrection, and ascension. Before ascending, the risen Christ declares, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matt. 28:18)—the universal kingship of the

son of man whom Daniel saw receiving “dominion and glory and kingdom” as he came to the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:13–14). The apostles preach this reign as an accomplished fact: at Pentecost Peter announces that God “has made him both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36), and Paul tells the Colossians that God “has transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son” (Col. 1:13). The kingdom is not a distant prospect for the first Christians; it is a reality they already inhabit.

VI. Three Dimensions of the One Kingdom

Because the kingdom of God is so central and so rich, the Scriptures use the phrase for several related realities at once. Pope Benedict XVI helpfully distinguishes three dimensions of the one kingdom, each of which illumines a facet of the whole.¹

The Christological dimension.

First and most fundamentally, the kingdom is a person. “The Kingdom is not a thing,” Benedict writes; “it is not a geographical dominion like worldly kingdoms. It is a person; it is he.” In the way Jesus speaks of the kingdom, he quietly reveals that in him God himself has drawn near and begun to reign. The early Father Origen captured this by calling Christ the *autobasileia*—the Kingdom in person. This is why the kingdom “has come upon” those who witness his works: the King is among them, and where the King is, there is the kingdom. To grasp the kingdom of God, then, is finally to grasp Christ himself.⁶

The interior dimension.

Second, the kingdom is a reign of God within the human heart. Commenting on the petition “Thy kingdom come,” Origen taught that those who pray it are asking for the kingdom of God already within them to grow and bear fruit until it attains its fullness. Jesus’ own words point the same way: the kingdom comes not “with observation” but is “in the midst of you,” taking root quietly like a seed sown in the soul and nurtured by grace, by prayer, and by the sacraments. The kingdom of God begins, in this sense, in the heart—wherever Christ is welcomed as King and his will is done.⁷

The ecclesial dimension.

Third, the kingdom is present here and now in and through the Church. This is the sense in which the kingdom is most visible in the world, and it requires a section of its own.

VII. The Kingdom and the Church

The relationship between the kingdom and the Church must be stated with care, for the two are neither simply identical nor wholly separate. The Church is not yet the kingdom in its final glory; that fullness will come only at the end of time. But the Church is the

kingdom as it exists now on earth. In the words of the Second Vatican Council, the Church is “the kingdom of Christ now present in mystery,” which “grows visibly through the power of God in the world.” The Catechism says it as plainly: “The Church is the Reign of Christ already present in mystery.”⁸

The clearest scriptural anchor is Christ’s charge to Peter. In the same breath in which he founds his Church—“on this rock I will build my Church”—Jesus adds, “I will give you the keys of the *kingdom* of heaven” (Matt. 16:18–19). Church and kingdom are named together, the keys of the one being the keys of the other; they are two ways of speaking of a single reality. Kingdom and Church are not the same in every respect—the kingdom is larger, embracing heaven and the angels and the consummation still to come—but on earth, the kingdom subsists in the Church, which is its “seed and beginning.”⁹

St. Augustine drew the point out long ago, commenting on the parable of the wheat and the weeds. Christ’s “kingdom is here until the end of time,” he wrote, “and until the harvest comes will contain weeds ... And this could not happen if the kingdom were not here.” The very fact that the Church on earth is a mixed field of saints and sinners, growing toward a future harvest, is itself a proof that the kingdom is *already* present—for the weeds among the wheat are exactly what Jesus said the kingdom would contain until the end (Matt. 13:24–30, 36–43). A kingdom still wholly in the future could have no weeds growing in it now. The Church, with all its imperfection, is the kingdom in its pilgrim state, on the way to glory.¹⁰

VIII. Already and Not Yet

To say the kingdom is already present is not to say it has arrived in its fullness. The Catholic understanding holds two truths together: the kingdom is *already* here and *not yet* consummated. It came in Christ’s ministry, was established in power in his death and resurrection, grows now in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful, and will be revealed in glory only when he comes again.

Both poles are essential, and the Scriptures hold them together everywhere. On the one hand, the kingdom “has come upon” us, and believers have already been “transferred” into it. On the other, Christ teaches his disciples to pray “Thy kingdom come” (Matt. 6:10), and tells parables—such as the nobleman who goes to a far country to receive a kingdom and then return (Luke 19:11–12)—precisely to teach that its consummation still lies ahead. The kingdom grows now like a mustard seed and like leaven hidden in dough; it will be fully revealed only at the harvest, when the weeds are separated from the wheat and Christ “delivers the kingdom to God the Father” (1 Cor. 15:24).¹¹

This “already and not yet” is the rhythm of the whole Christian life. We live as citizens of a kingdom genuinely present, under the reign of a King who has truly conquered, while

still praying and laboring and longing for the day when that reign will be made complete and visible to all. To collapse the tension in either direction—to deny that the kingdom has come, or to claim it has already come in its fullness—is to lose the shape of the good news itself.¹²

IX. The Kingdom Is Salvation

Beneath all its dimensions, the kingdom of God is, at its core, about salvation. It is not finally a matter of territory or government or institution, but of God reconciling the world to himself in Christ and gathering a people to share his own life. As Pope John Paul II summed it up, “the kingdom of God is the manifestation and the realization of God’s plan of salvation in all its fullness.” To enter the kingdom is to be delivered from the dominion of darkness and brought into the light of the Son; to pray “Thy kingdom come” is to pray that this saving reign would be completed in us and in all the world.¹³

This is why the kingdom can never be separated from Christ himself, nor from the Church through which he continues to pour out his saving grace. A “kingdom” preached apart from the King, or sought apart from the means of salvation he established, would no longer be the kingdom of God of the Scriptures. The kingdom is the King’s own reign, extended to us; it comes to us as he comes to us—in his word, in his sacraments, in his Body the Church—and it draws us toward the day when God will be “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28).

X. The Watchtower’s Good News: An Announcement Dated 1914

Consider how the Watchtower itself defines its good news. “This good news of the kingdom,” it explains, “means the fresh, brand-new information that tells of God’s established kingdom” — and the specific, vital thing “now added to the good news” is “the birth of God’s Messianic kingdom in the heavens ... in 1914.” In another place it states the matter with admirable clarity: “the good news is about the Kingdom, or government, by God that will eliminate all wickedness and then rule over all the earth in peace.”¹⁴

Read those definitions slowly, and notice what is at the center and what is at the edge. At the center is *information* about a *government* and a *date*. The good news is news *about an administration* — that it was born in heaven in a certain year, that it will shortly act, that the nations must be put on notice. Jesus is present in this scheme, to be sure: he is the King installed over the government, and his ransom is the legal basis on which its blessings become available. But the *thing preached*, the content carried from door to door, is the establishment and imminent action of the Kingdom-government. The cross is

in the background as a transaction; the crucified and risen Lord is not himself the burden of the proclamation.

There is a further difficulty, and on the Watchtower's own terms it is fatal. Set aside for the moment the question of whether 1914 can be extracted from Daniel 4, and ask instead what the enthronement of that year is supposed to have conferred. The risen Christ, standing before the eleven in Galilee, told them: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18). Not some authority. Not authority over the Church, pending a later grant of authority over the nations. All authority, in heaven and on earth, already given, and given before the ascension.

If that is so, nothing remained to be conferred in 1914. A kingdom established in that year could add nothing to a sovereignty already total, and an enthronement that adds nothing is not an enthronement at all. The Watchtower's calendar requires that Christ received in 1914 an authority Matthew reports as already granted, in full, nineteen centuries earlier.

Nor is the declaration left hanging in the air. Having stated the authority, Christ does not instruct the eleven to wait for it to come into force, but commissions them on the strength of it: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19–20). The "therefore" carries the whole argument. The mission begins because the authority is already held. And the promise that closes the commission — "I am with you always, to the close of the age" — describes a King already reigning through the entire age in which the Church does its work, not one waiting in the wings until a date in the twentieth century.

And so a fair question presses: when Paul preached the good news — the good news he would curse an angel for contradicting — did he preach the establishment of a government in a calculated year? Or did he preach something, and Someone, else?

XI. The Apostles' Good News: A Person, Crucified and Risen

We are not left to guess, because Paul tells us twice, in so many words, what his good news was. At the head of his letter to the Romans he describes himself as "set apart for the gospel of God ... the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power ... by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 1:1–4). The good news, by Paul's own definition, is "concerning his Son." Its content is a person — his identity (the Son of God), his humanity (descended from David), his resurrection, his Lordship.¹⁵

And when Paul sets out to remind the Corinthians of "the gospel ... in which you stand, by which you are saved," he names its content "of first importance": "that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day ... and that he appeared" (1 Cor. 15:1–5). There it is, the irreducible core of the

apostolic preaching — what scholars call the *kerygma* — and there is not a word in it about a government installed at a future date. Its four beats are *died, buried, raised, appeared*. The center of gravity is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for our sins.¹⁶

Turn to the preaching in Acts, and the same center holds. Luke summarizes the apostles' daily work as “teaching and declaring the good news *about the Christ*” (Acts 5:42) — the phrasing is the Watchtower's own translation. Philip “preached the good news about the kingdom of God *and the name of Jesus Christ*” (Acts 8:12); the two are named together, the King with his Kingdom. Paul describes his whole ministry as “to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24). The apostles did preach the Kingdom — but the Kingdom they preached was never separable from the crucified and risen King whose grace opens it.¹⁷

Paul tells us a third thing: what the good news does. It is “the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith” (Rom. 1:16); it is the message through which Christ Jesus “abolished death and brought life and immortality to light” (2 Tim. 1:10); its ministry to the nations is “the priestly service of the gospel of God” (Rom. 15:15–16). And the claim that a different good news—an announcement dated 1914—now fulfills Matthew 24:14 must reckon with a verse the Watchtower's own translation renders plainly: by Paul's day the good news had already been “preached in all creation that is under heaven” (Col. 1:23). The apostles considered the worldwide proclamation of their gospel a present fact eighteen centuries before the Watchtower's message existed to be preached. The test is open to anyone with a concordance: read every occurrence of “good news” in the New Testament and ask whether a single one announces an invisible enthronement in 1914.¹⁸

XII. Good News About the King, Not Only the Government

Here, then, is the heart of the difference, and it can be put in a single sentence. The Watchtower preaches good news *about a government*; the apostles preached good news *about a King* — his death for our sins, his resurrection, his Lordship, and the reconciliation with God that he accomplished. The two are not unrelated; the King has a Kingdom, and the Kingdom has a King. But which is the *center* makes all the difference, because it determines what is actually proclaimed, and what the hearer is actually asked to believe in order to be saved.

Paul will not let the center drift. “We preach Christ crucified” (1 Cor. 1:23). “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). “Far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6:14). For Paul the cross is not a transaction in the background that makes a future government legally possible; it is the saving heart of the message, the very thing he glories in and preaches. A “gospel” that keeps the cross on the books as a necessary mechanism, while making the

burden of its preaching an administrative announcement, has quietly moved the center Paul refused to move.¹⁹

And the apostolic good news announces something *already* accomplished, not merely something scheduled. “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself” (2 Cor. 5:19); he has “made peace by the blood of his cross” (Col. 1:20); in Christ “you who once were far off have been brought near” (Eph. 2:13). The Kingdom is entered *now*, by reconciliation with God in Christ — “he has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son” (Col. 1:13). Where the Watchtower’s good news points forward to a government that will *soon* act, the apostles’ good news points to a salvation that *has* acted — decisively, on a hill outside Jerusalem, and at an empty tomb.²⁰

XIII. Faith Working Through Love

What, then, does the true good news ask of the one who hears it? Paul answers in the same letter in which he hurls the *anathema*. “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6). The good news does not ask for the bare transfer of information, nor for membership in an organization, nor for a program of works performed to earn a future place. It asks for *faith* — a living trust in the person of Christ — a faith that is not inert but *works through love*.²¹

This is the formula the Catholic Church has always confessed, and it stands as a quiet rebuke to two opposite errors. Against any gospel of works — of earning, of qualifying, of measuring up — Paul insists the avail is *faith*. But against any gospel of mere mental assent — of “accepting facts,” of believing the right information about a government and a date — he insists the faith that avails is faith *working through love*. The good news is not a bulletin to be acknowledged. It is a Person to be trusted and loved, and a life to be transformed by that love. “This is eternal life,” Jesus prayed, “that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3) — not first that they relocate to a paradise, but that they *know* God in Christ, a knowing that begins now and is consummated in the vision of God.²²

XIV. Why the Difference Is Not a Quibble

Someone may object that this is a distinction without a difference — that the Watchtower believes in Jesus’ death and resurrection too, and merely emphasizes the Kingdom. But the objection underestimates how much rides on what is placed at the center, and Paul’s *anathema* shows that he, at least, did not think such things were quibbles.

Three consequences follow from putting a government, rather than the crucified and risen Lord, at the center. First, it changes *what is preached*: the message carried from door to

door becomes the announcement of an administration and a date, rather than “Christ crucified.” Second, it changes *what salvation is*: salvation becomes survival into an earthly paradise under a coming government, rather than reconciliation with God and the knowledge of him, begun now in Christ. Third, it changes *what faith is*: faith becomes the acceptance of correct information mediated by an organization, rather than a personal trust in the Lord himself that works through love. None of these is a small shift. Together they describe a gospel with a different center, a different salvation, and a different act of faith — which is precisely the kind of difference Paul was willing to pronounce a curse upon.

It should be said plainly, and charitably, that this is not to accuse Jehovah’s Witnesses of insincerity, or to deny that they love the Scriptures and proclaim them at real personal cost. It is to say that zeal in carrying a message does not, by itself, make the message the apostolic good news — and that the most loving thing one can do for a sincere Witness is to ask, with him, the question Paul makes unavoidable: is the good news you carry the good news Paul preached, with Christ crucified and risen at its center? Or has the King been quietly moved to the edge of his own Kingdom?

XV. Conclusion

The kingdom of God is the great theme of Jesus’ preaching, and the Scriptures, read in the Church, tell us plainly what it is. It is the reign of God present in the person of Christ the King; it is that same reign welcomed in the hearts of those who receive him; and it is present now, visibly though imperfectly, in and through the Church—“the kingdom of Christ already present in mystery,” growing toward a glory that will be revealed only at the end. It was inaugurated in Jesus’ ministry, established in power at his death, resurrection, and ascension, and it endures, never absent from the earth, until he comes again.

To understand the kingdom rightly is to hold all of this together: the King who is its very presence, the interior reign of grace, the visible communion of the Church, and the “already and not yet” that stretches between the first coming and the second. “The time is fulfilled,” Jesus said at the beginning, “and the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:15). It was at hand then, in him; it is present still, in his Church; and it will come in fullness when he who is its King returns in glory. For that completion the Church prays in every age, in the words the Lord himself gave: *Thy kingdom come*.

Endnotes

1. Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 47–63. Benedict notes that *basileia tou theou* (“kingdom of God”) occurs 122 times in the New Testament, 99 of them in the Synoptic Gospels and about 90 on the lips of Jesus himself.
2. Galatians 1:6–9. Paul pronounces *anathema* (“let him be accursed”) twice — the only place in his letters where he repeats the curse — against anyone, even an apostle or “an angel from heaven,” who preaches “a gospel contrary to” the one the Galatians received. The gravity of the warning is itself evidence of how much turns on getting the content of the good news right.
3. The Greek *euangelion* (“good news, gospel”) translates the Hebrew *basar* of Isaiah’s “glad tidings.” See Isaiah 40:9–10; 52:7; 61:1–2, where the good news is that “Your God reigns” and that the Lord himself comes “with might.” Jesus applies Isaiah 61:1–2 to himself in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16–21), declaring, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” The good news is from the first inseparable from a person: the Anointed One in whom it is fulfilled.
4. The specific phrase “kingdom of God” is rare in the Old Testament, but the underlying conviction that the Lord is eternal King runs throughout it, especially in the enthronement Psalms (e.g., Pss. 93, 96–99, 145:11–13) and the prophets (Isa. 9:6–7; 52:7; Dan. 2:44; 7:13–14; Zech. 14:9). On the kingdom’s development across both Testaments, see Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1:47–63.
5. Matthew 12:28 / Luke 11:20: “the kingdom of God has come upon you” (*ephthasen*, aorist of *phthanō*, “to arrive, have come”), spoken of Jesus’ exorcisms in his own ministry; Luke 17:20–21: “the kingdom of God is *in the midst of you*” (*entos hymōn*); Colossians 1:13: God “has *transferred* us into the kingdom of his beloved Son” (aorist *metestēsen*, a past, accomplished act).
6. Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1:49: “the Kingdom is not a thing, it is not a geographical dominion like worldly kingdoms. It is a person; it is he. ... By the way in which he speaks of the Kingdom of God, Jesus leads men to realize the overwhelming fact that in him God himself is present among them, that he is God’s presence.” Origen, a *third-century Father*, whom Benedict cites in this connection, calls Christ the *autobasileia*—the Kingdom in person.
7. Origen, *On Prayer (De Oratione)* 25, on the kingdom of God within the soul of the one who prays “Thy kingdom come”: those who so pray “pray without any doubt for the

kingdom of God that they contain in themselves, and they pray that this kingdom might bear fruit and attain its fullness.” Cited in Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1:55–57.

8. Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* (1964), 3 and 5: “To carry out the will of the Father, Christ inaugurated the Kingdom of heaven on earth ... The Church, or, in other words, the kingdom of Christ now present in mystery, grows visibly through the power of God in the world.” On the kingdom “shining out” in Christ’s word, works, and presence, and the Church as its “seed and beginning,” see also *Lumen Gentium* 5.

9. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §§763–765: “The Lord Jesus inaugurated his Church by preaching the Good News ... The Church is the Reign of Christ already present in mystery ... This Kingdom shines out before men in the word, in the works and in the presence of Christ.” On the keys of the kingdom given to Peter (Matt. 16:18–19), joining Church and kingdom in a single act, see §§551–553.

10. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 115.2, trans. in J. C. Elowsky, ed., *John 11–21*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 290: “his kingdom is here until the end of time, and until the harvest comes will contain weeds ... And this could not happen if the kingdom were not here.” On the kingdom present in the Church as wheat-and-weeds until the harvest, see Brant Pitre, *The Mass Readings Explained* (catholicproductions.com), on the Kingdom of God and the Church.

11. On the “already and not yet” of New Testament eschatology, see *Catechism* §§671–672: the kingdom is “already present” in Christ and his Church yet awaits its consummation, when Christ “will hand over the kingdom to God the Father” (1 Cor. 15:24). The parables of growth—the wheat and weeds, the mustard seed, and the leaven (Matt. 13:24–33), and the seed growing secretly (Mark 4:26–29)—express this structure.

12. Matthew 6:10 (“Thy kingdom come”); *Catechism* §§2816–2821, on this petition as a prayer for both the definitive coming of God’s reign at the end and its growth in the believer’s life here and now: “the Church looks to and hastens toward the coming of the Kingdom” (§2818).

13. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), 15: “the kingdom of God is the manifestation and the realization of God’s plan of salvation in all its fullness.” On the inseparability of the kingdom from both Christ and the Church—against any attempt to preach a “kingdom” detached from him—see *ibid.*, 17–19.

14. The Watchtower defines “this good news of the kingdom” (Matt. 24:14) as “the fresh, brand-new information that tells of God’s established kingdom” — specifically “the birth of God’s Messianic kingdom in the heavens at the end of the Gentile Times in 1914” (*The Watchtower*, cited from the Watchtower Online Library, “What Now Distinguishes the Good News to Be Preached”). Elsewhere it states plainly that “the good news is about the

Kingdom, or government, by God that will eliminate all wickedness and then rule over all the earth in peace” (“The Kingdom Good News — What Is It?”). The 1914 chronology rests on the Society’s reading of the “seven times” of Daniel 4 and is treated on the Authority and Last Days pages of this site.

15. Romans 1:1–5. Paul opens his greatest letter by defining the gospel he was “set apart” to preach: “the gospel of God ... concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power ... by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.” The content of the good news is a person, and the response it seeks is “the obedience of faith ... among all the nations.”

16. 1 Corinthians 15:1–5. Paul states “the gospel ... in which you stand, by which you are saved,” and gives its content “of first importance”: “that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day ... and that he appeared.” This is the apostolic *kerygma* — the irreducible core of the good news — and its center is the death and resurrection of Christ, not a date or a government.

17. In Acts the apostolic preaching is summarized again and again as “the good news about Jesus” or “about the Christ”: “they continued without letup teaching and declaring the good news about the Christ” (Acts 5:42, NWT); Philip “preached the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12); Paul “testifying ... to the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24). Notably, the Watchtower’s own translation of Acts 5:42 reads “the good news *about the Christ*” — the apostles preached the King, not merely the government.

18. Romans 1:16; 2 Timothy 1:9–11; Romans 15:15–16; Colossians 1:23. The rendering “preached in all creation that is under heaven” is the New World Translation’s own at Colossians 1:23; the RSV reads “preached to every creature under heaven.” The concordance test and the Colossians point are owed to a 1999 letter of the author’s, preserved in the site’s reference library.

19. 1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2. “We preach Christ crucified ... For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” Galatians 6:14: “Far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” A gospel in which the cross is reduced to a transaction enabling a future government, rather than proclaimed as the saving heart of the message, has shifted the center Paul refused to move.

20. 2 Corinthians 5:18–21; Colossians 1:19–20; Ephesians 2:13–16. The gospel announces reconciliation — that God was “in Christ reconciling the world to himself,” making peace “by the blood of his cross.” The Kingdom the gospel proclaims is entered now, by reconciliation with God in Christ; it is not merely a government to be installed later. The Watchtower’s framing tends to defer the good news to a coming administration,

where the apostolic good news is that in Christ the decisive act of salvation has *already* occurred.

21. Galatians 5:6. “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love” (RSV). The same letter that anathematizes “another gospel” states positively what the true gospel produces: not bare assent, and not works apart from grace, but *faith that works through love* — the formula the Catholic Church has always confessed against both legalism and a faith conceived as mere intellectual agreement. See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* §1814 (faith) and §1826–1829 (charity as the form of the virtues).

22. John 17:3; 3:16; 20:31. “This is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” John writes his Gospel “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.” Eternal life is framed not first as residence in an earthly paradise but as *knowing* God in Christ — a communion that begins now and is consummated in the vision of God.

For Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church, §§422–429, 541–560, 668–677, 763–769. Free online at <https://usccb.cld.bz/Catechism-of-the-Catholic-Church2>.

Lumen Gentium, Second Vatican Council. Free online at https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

Dei Verbum, Second Vatican Council. Free online at https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html.

Redemptoris Missio, by Pope John Paul II. Free online at https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio.html.

What Is the Gospel?, Jimmy Akin / Catholic Answers. Free online at <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/what-is-the-gospel>.

Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration, by Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI).

The Mass Readings Explained, by Dr. Brant Pitre.

The Gentile Times Reconsidered, by Carl Olof Jonsson.

Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah’s Witnesses, by M. James Penton.

What Is the Kingdom of God?

* * *

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.*

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A Note on Authority

This essay represents the author's articulation of the Catholic doctrine of the Kingdom and the Gospel of God, drawing on Scripture, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the Church Fathers, and the major theological tradition. It is offered as a personal defense, not as an official statement of the Church's teaching. Where this defense is fortunate enough to align with the magisterial teaching of the Church, the credit belongs to the tradition that formed it. Where it falls short, the responsibility is the author's alone.