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THE KINGDOM IN FIRST CORINTHIANS: REEVALUATING AN
UNDERESTIMATED PAULINE THEME

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THE KINGDOM IN FIRST CORINTHIANS: REEVALUATING
A NEGLECTED PAULINE THEME

Samuel Davidson Burnette

Read and Approved by:

Thomas R. Schreiner (Chair)

Brian J. Vickers

William F. Cook

Date

For Becca,
a wife who fears the Lord

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ANF</i>	<i>The Ante-Nicene Fathers</i> , ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (Buffalo: Christian Literature, 1885-96; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975)
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
BDAG	Walter Bauer, Frederick William Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , 3 rd ed.
BDF	F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and R.W. Funk, <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i>
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>CJT</i>	<i>Canadian Journal of Theology</i>
<i>DJG</i>	<i>Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels</i>
<i>DPL</i>	<i>Dictionary of Paul and His Letters</i>
<i>EDNT</i>	<i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal for the Evangelical Theological Society</i>

<i>JSNT</i>	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplemental Series
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplements
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Review & Expositor</i>
<i>SBJT</i>	<i>Southern Baptist Journal Theology</i>
SBL	Studies in Biblical Theology
SBLDS	SBL Dissertation Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
TCGNT	A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament
<i>TDNT</i>	Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (eds.) <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>TrinJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

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PREFACE

God's grace to me is evident in the many individuals who made this work possible. First and most importantly, the love and support of my wife, Becca, cannot be overstated. God has given me no greater gift in this life. I'm also thankful to Dr. Tom Schreiner for his wise and gracious supervision of this work. His scholarship and theological insight are matched only by his humility and his commitment to Christ. The idea for this topic is probably owing to Dr. Jonathan Pennington's thought-provoking lectures concerning the kingdom. Also influential in many respects was the teaching of Dr. Brian Vickers throughout my time at Southern Seminary. Dr. Mark Seifrid deserves credit for suggesting that I narrow my focus to 1 Corinthians. Unfortunately, there is not enough space to name the many other godly professors and students from Southern Seminary who helped shape this work and, more importantly, my faith.

It should be noted that the influences on this work stretch back much further than any formal theological training. God has used my parents, Sam and Malinda Burnette, to instill in me a desire for the things of the Lord. My mom's sacrificial love and my dad's reverence for the Word of God are gifts that cannot be repaid. Nor can the friendship and love of my brother, Drew, who is also a brother in Christ. There are also countless friends who should be mentioned for their counsel and support through the years. I'm thankful for the many men and women from First Baptist Concord in Knoxville, Tennessee, who ministered to me from the time I was born and continued to support me while in seminary. David Platt and the team at Radical were gracious as well in giving me flexibility with my schedule as I completed this work.

Finally, for Sam and Anna: writing this dissertation was always more difficult

knowing that you were upstairs waiting for dad to finish his “school work.” I pray that, by God’s grace, you will inherit the kingdom that I have been writing about these past few years.

David Burnette

Birmingham, Alabama
December 2015

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Few themes in the New Testament have received as much scholarly attention as the kingdom of God. Both John the Baptist and Jesus began their respective public ministries by announcing the kingdom's arrival (Matt 3:2; 4:17), and the theme continues to feature prominently throughout the life and ministry of Jesus. It is entirely fitting, then, that scholars consider the kingdom to be a hallmark of the Synoptic Gospels. However, when it comes to Paul's letters, the perception changes. The kingdom is no longer prominent, for it is often mentioned as an element of discontinuity between Jesus and Paul, with Paul apparently leaving behind this signature emphasis in Jesus' ministry. Some scholars claim that Paul has *intentionally* avoided the topic, while others claim that the kingdom is no longer important in the apostle's theology. Several Pauline themes have been suggested as taking the place of the kingdom, such as the work of the Spirit and the lordship of Christ. Yet, on the whole, relatively few scholars have examined Paul's view of the kingdom in a thorough, exegetical manner, particularly within the context of a single epistle. The present work seeks to fill in this lacuna.

While examining the theme of God's kingdom throughout the entire Pauline corpus is an important and necessary study,¹ this work will focus more specifically on the epistle of 1 Corinthians. First Corinthians contains five references to the term kingdom (βασιλεία), which is the most in the Pauline corpus. However, this work will offer more than a word study, for an argument will be made that the theme of the kingdom is

¹For a comprehensive treatment of the Pauline conception of the kingdom, see the wide-ranging study in Gary Shogren, "The Pauline Proclamation of the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Christ Within Its New Testament Setting" (Ph.D. diss., University of Aberdeen, 1986).

relevant even in contexts where the word βασιλεία is not used. By focusing on 1 Corinthians it will be easier to see how the kingdom functions within a particular literary context, thus allowing for closer attention to exegetical details and to the nuances of Paul's arguments. It will also be easier to see how the kingdom relates to other theological themes in the near context. This textually-grounded approach is simply one entry-point, but hopefully an effective one, into this discussion.

Thesis

While many scholars have underestimated the theme of the kingdom in Paul's theology, this work will seek to demonstrate its significance by attending to 1 Corinthians. More specifically, the thesis of this work is that the kingdom is a foundational component of God's saving work in Christ in 1 Corinthians.² This thesis can be demonstrated by observing three primary lines of evidence: (1) the relationship of the kingdom to the effects of Christ's death, resurrection, and saving reign, (2) the consistency of Paul's kingdom references with respect to his inaugurated eschatological schema,³ and (3) the relationship between the kingdom and Paul's ethical teaching, or what might also be referred to as the transforming work of the Spirit.⁴ To be clear, the argument being advanced is not that the kingdom is the central or most prominent theme

²Thielman lists several proposed centers for Pauline theology by various scholars, most of which revolve around some aspect of God's salvation in Christ. Frank Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 231.

³L. J. Kreitzer concludes his article on the kingdom of God in Paul by noting that while the theme is not "widespread" in the Pauline corpus, it is nevertheless a "fundamental component of Paul's eschatological perspective and underlies the whole of his teaching." L.J. Kreitzer, "Kingdom of God/Christ," in *DPL*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 526. For more on Paul's eschatology, see C. Marvin Pate, *The End of the Age Has Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953).

⁴Fee notes, "The primary focus in all the Pauline Letters is on salvation in Christ, including Spirit-empowered ethical life as the genuine outworking of such salvation." Gordon D Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 7.

in 1 Corinthians. The point is rather that the kingdom is an integral component of God's saving work in Christ in a variety of ways, and that this reality testifies to the significance of the kingdom. It may be helpful to think of the kingdom as a foundation that sits just below the surface in Paul's teaching, emerging at strategic points, but all the while supporting a more visible structure.⁵ An examination of Paul's explicit and implicit kingdom references will be used to make this argument.

Modern History of Research

For over a century, New Testament scholars have been preoccupied with the theme of God's kingdom,⁶ particularly as the theme appears in the Synoptic Gospels. However, the kingdom has received comparatively little attention from those working in the Pauline epistles. When Paul's view of the kingdom is discussed, it is often treated as an anomaly, as a subset of some broader theological theme, or as an element of comparison between the respective theologies of Jesus and Paul. In the latter case, the question is sometimes posed, Why has Paul abandoned the kingdom? On the other hand, there is evidence that the kingdom is garnering more interest in Pauline studies,⁷ some of

⁵Yarbrough memorably compares the kingdom to "an invisible software program running at all times in the background as Paul ministers and from time to time composes his letters." Robert Yarbrough, "The Kingdom of God in the New Testament: Mark through the Epistles," in *The Kingdom of God*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 148.

⁶Over ten thousand publications related to the kingdom of God have been appeared in the last century alone. Leslaw Daniel Chrupcala, *The Kingdom of God: A Bibliography of 20th Century Research* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 2007), cited in Robert Yarborough, "The Kingdom of God in the New Testament: Matthew and Revelation," in *The Kingdom of God*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 95.

⁷See the relevant discussion in the following publications: Robert W. Yarbrough, "The Kingdom of God in the New Testament: Mark Through the Epistles," in *The Kingdom of God*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 143-49; J. R. Daniel Kirk, *Jesus Have I Loved, But Paul?* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic), 2012; James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011). From a biblical-theological perspective on the kingdom, see the discussion in G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 249-316.

which will be discussed below. This survey will highlight several ways in which scholars have approached this subject over the last two centuries.

This modern history of research on the kingdom of God in Paul is divided into two very general headings, each of which contains a number of thematic subheadings.⁸ The first general heading surveys some common explanations given for Paul's use of (or failure to use) kingdom terminology, as well as the different positions with regard to the significance of the kingdom. Included in this first general heading will be several theological themes that have been suggested as Paul's replacement for the Synoptic emphasis on the kingdom. Under the second general heading, various aspects of Paul's kingdom teaching will be covered, such as the temporal nature of the kingdom, the kingdom of God vis-à-vis the kingdom of Christ, and Paul's theology of the kingdom in light of anti-imperial readings of his letters.

Although the focus will be primarily on 1 Corinthians, this history of research will include contributions to Paul's kingdom theology from across the Pauline corpus. This broader approach is necessary given the way the topic has typically been treated by scholars, and it is also beneficial in terms of situating the present work in the context of Paul's overall kingdom theology. In addition, this history of research complements the exegetical chapters that follow, since Paul's kingdom teaching from outside 1 Corinthians will be used as confirmatory evidence. Studies that compare the respective messages of Jesus and Paul, of which there have been many over the past century, will only be noted insofar as they contribute specifically to an understanding of Paul's view of the kingdom.⁹ However, by way of introduction, it is worth acknowledging some broader

⁸This modern history of research is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather it will seek to highlight some of the common conclusions and arguments put forth by scholars who have written on Paul's view of the kingdom of God in the last two centuries. The scope of this work will not allow for an investigation of the kingdom of God in Paul's epistles from earlier eras; however, contributions prior to the twentieth century could potentially provide fresh insights into the discussion.

⁹Furnish claims that the beginning of the Jesus-Paul controversy in its modern form has been dated back to an article written by F. C. Baur in 1831. Victor Paul Furnish, "The Jesus-Paul Debate: From

theological and hermeneutical concerns that have influenced the way in which scholars have approached Paul's view of the kingdom, even if the effects of these influences cannot be traced out in this work.

Background and Context

Scholars such as F. C. Baur and William Wrede have emphasized the radical discontinuity between Paul's message and the message of Jesus. Baur, for instance, claimed that Paul developed his doctrine "in complete opposition to that of the primitive Christian community."¹⁰ Wrede referred to Paul as "the second founder of Christianity,"¹¹ and according to Albert Schweitzer, Wrede's Paul has "created something essentially new, which has . . . nothing to do with the thought of Jesus."¹² The doctrine of Paul is "an isolated entity without connexion in the past or influence upon the future."¹³ Given these understandings of Paul's theology, it is easy to see why scholars following in the wake of Baur or Wrede would give little attention to Paul's view of the kingdom.¹⁴

Baur to Bultmann," in *Paul and Jesus: Collected Essays*, ed. A. J. M. Wedderburn, JSNTSup 37 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 17.

¹⁰As cited in Albert Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History* (New York: Schocken Books, 1912), 12. As part of his larger program concerning the distinction between Jewish and Gentile Christianity, Baur set Paul's teaching in sharp contrast to that of the Gospel writers. It is, according to Baur, an "historical matter of fact" that the apostle was the founder of Christianity in its "universal historical acceptance," for the apostle's teaching differed greatly from the early Christian community—the latter being influenced heavily by Judaism (F. C. Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teachings* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003], 3).

¹¹William Wrede, *Paul*, trans. Edward Lummis (London: P. Green, 1907), 179.

¹²Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters*, 170. In terms of eschatology and the meaning of Jesus' death, Schweitzer claims that in Wrede's view Paul receives "no impulse of a theological character from Him [Jesus]" (170).

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴On a similar note, in relation to the preaching of Jesus, Bultmann calls the theology of Paul a "new structure," a distinction owing to the apostle's Hellenistic context. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel (London: SCM Press, 1952), 1:189.

While not all scholars followed Baur and Wrede's trajectory, the influence of these scholars on this discussion should at least be acknowledged.¹⁵ How one conceives of Paul's underlying theological concerns affects the interpretation of explicit and implicit kingdom references.

Kingdom Usage and Significance

Many scholars have noted how rarely Paul refers to the kingdom in his epistles. This observation led Youngmo Cho to pose the following question: "Why is Paul cautious in using the term if the concept of the kingdom of God is nonetheless important to him?"¹⁶ Cho notes that scholars have reached no consensus on the answer to this question. Of course, not all scholars agree that the kingdom of God is important for Paul. Nevertheless, in view of the importance of the kingdom in the Synoptic Gospels, it is puzzling that, according to Cho, "Not many experts have in fact addressed the issue."¹⁷ David Wenham and Gary Shogren are exceptions to the rule, with each scholar laying out

¹⁵Concerning the "leading currents in the liberal theology of the nineteenth century," Allison notes, "It is not surprising, given the theological climate of that period, that significant links between the historical Jesus and Paul were roundly denied in some quarters. How could Paul, whose vision focused so one-sidedly on an exalted Lord, have learned his gospel from the man Jesus?" Dale C. Allison, "The Pauline Epistles and the Synoptic Gospels: The Pattern of the Parallels," *NTS* 28 (1982): 24. In contrast to Baur and Wrede, Adolf Schlatter claimed that the "basic shape of religious thought reaches seamlessly from Jesus to Paul." Adolf Schlatter, *The Theology of the Apostles: The Development of New Testament Theology*, trans. Andreas J. Kostenberger (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 292. While Schlatter recognized the significant differences between Jesus and Paul, he also saw an underlying continuity in their teaching (290). Just as Jesus proclaimed the present dimension of God's kingdom, so Paul believed that "God reveals himself in that he demonstrates his grace and righteousness to mankind through the message about Christ" (291). Schlatter shows further continuity, though not uniformity, between Jesus and Paul in the following areas: the aim of their devotion, the church, faith and love, evaluation of the cross, the Spirit, and hope (290-96).

¹⁶Youngmo Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom in the Writings of Luke and Paul: An Attempt to Reconcile These Concepts*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs (Waynesboro, GA; Paternoster, 2005), 53. Gary Shogren poses essentially the same question: "One of the problems with studying Paul's theology of the kingdom is this: if, as we have suggested, the kingdom is such an important concept for Paul, why are there so few βασιλεία references in the Pauline corpus (and a good number of these in traditional formulas)?" (Shogren, "The Pauline Proclamation," 192).

¹⁷Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom*, 53.

a number of explanations for Paul's infrequent use of kingdom terminology.¹⁸ Scholars who have advocated for several of these explanations are noted below.

Avoidance of kingdom language. Scholars have cited various reasons for Paul's avoidance of kingdom language in his letters. F. W. Beare, for example, appeals to Paul's Greek context. According to Beare, the kingdom of God "meant nothing to a Greek," thus Paul "hardly ever makes use of the phrase when writing to Greeks."¹⁹ For Beare, Paul's wording represents a "transposing of the gospel into the language and the thought-forms of another people, the kind of adjustment that was needed if the gospel of Jesus was to be brought effectually into the Greek world."²⁰ Gary Johnston agrees with Beare in affirming that Paul transferred from Hebrew, or Aramaic, modes of thought and expression to Greek modes of thought and expression for apologetic and missionary purposes. However, Johnston notes that this phenomenon must be examined more

¹⁸David Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 78–80. Wenham offers the following explanations as possibilities: (1) kingdom language would have been unintelligible to Greek speakers; (2) kingdom speech may have been extremely sensitive in a Greco-Roman context, and thus ripe for misunderstanding; (3) Paul may have been worried that "kingdom" language was being hijacked by his opponents, such as in 1 and 2 Corinthians, in order to put forward an over-realized eschatology. Wenham does not state which view he sees as more likely, though he does note that a combination of these factors may be at work (80). In addition to the three factors mentioned by Wenham, Shogren has listed two additional possibilities for Paul's sparing use of kingdom language: (1) frequent references to the kingdom could have been confusing in light of the fact that kingdom language was frequently associated with future eschatological realities. Paul would not have wanted to communicate the fact that Christ had "completely negated the dualism of the two ages" (194); (2) Paul's letters would have become excessively wordy if the apostle had always included the word "kingdom" when discussing kingdom-related concepts and teachings (195) (Shogren, "The Pauline Proclamation," 192-95). The combined lists of Wenham and Shogren are not exhaustive, and it is certainly not implausible that multiple factors combined to affect Paul's choice of wording. However, outside of scholars who do not think the kingdom was an important concept for Paul, these options represent common explanations for the infrequency of Paul's kingdom language.

¹⁹F. W. Beare, "Jesus and Paul," *CJT* 5 (1959): 84. For the same reason, Beare claims that the term Messiah was de-emphasized in favor of the term *κύριος*, a "cult-title" with which the Greeks would have been familiar (84). Barnett also explains Paul's terminology by appealing to his Gentile context (in contrast to Jesus' Jewish context). Nevertheless, in his comparison of the respective messages of Jesus and Paul, Barnett claims that their use of the kingdom of God was the "principal point of continuity" (Paul Barnett, *Paul: Missionary of Jesus, After Jesus* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008], 193-94).

²⁰Beare, "Jesus and Paul," 84.

carefully, since Paul actually uses the phrase kingdom of God a number of times while writing in Greek to largely Greek audiences. Since the idea of salvation was well known in the Greco-Roman world, it is not unreasonable that Paul could appeal to the kingdom of God as a phrase that carries the “freight of religious deliverance”²¹ and thus be reasonably understood.²²

Rather than claiming that the kingdom of God would have been unintelligible in a Gentile context, some scholars have argued that references to the kingdom could have posed a threat to existing ruling parties, as the concept of a kingdom was particularly liable to misunderstanding. George Ladd, who maintains that the kingdom of God was a fundamental doctrine for Paul, speculates that Paul’s teaching might have looked different if the apostle had written to a Jewish audience. In Gentile contexts, on the other hand, there was a danger of being misunderstood, for “to proclaim any king other than Caesar made one liable to the charge of sedition (Acts 17:3, 7).”²³ Wedderburn offers a slight variation on Ladd’s explanation, claiming that conceptions of the kingdom would not have been all that different in Galilee and Hellenistic cities, even if there were “further possibilities for interpreting the idea in the latter [Hellenistic cities].”²⁴ It is more likely that references to a “kingdom” or “another king” would be safer in more rural areas, since these areas would be “less under the immediate supervision of pro-Roman

²¹Gary Johnston, “‘Kingdom of God’ Sayings in Paul’s Letters,” in *From Jesus to Paul: Studies in Honour of Francis Wright Beare*, ed. Peter Richardson and John C. Hurd (Waterloo, CA: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984), 144.

²²Johnston notes Jesus’ use of “kingdom of God” terminology with both future and present dimensions and compares this to Paul’s practice of speaking of “salvation” with both present and future dimensions. Ibid.

²³George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 450.

²⁴A. J. M. Wedderburn, “The Problem of Continuity,” in *Paul and Jesus: Collected Essays*, ed. A.J.M. Wedderburn (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1989), 111.

authorities.”²⁵ Wedderburn elaborates further: “It was not that the term was understood differently; rather attitudes to what the term stood for were different.”²⁶

Royce Gruenler adds yet another perspective, for he notes how unlikely it would have been for Paul to abandon certain terminology simply due to its foreign or problematic nature. In support, Gruenler notes that preaching the cross was foolishness to the Gentiles (1 Cor 1:23). In addition, when the Gospels were written, there was a “considerable Gentile mission and a constant threat of persecution from the state, yet the Evangelists never hesitated to record Jesus’ continual use of the kingdom metaphor.”²⁷ Mark and Luke are cited as examples of kingdom-filled writings aimed at largely Gentile audiences. Gruenler points out that the church was not all that pragmatic, as the Christian community continued to preach Christ crucified and risen, even at the cost of their own lives.²⁸ Eckhard Schnabel offers a similar observation:

The central emphasis of Paul’s missionary preaching was the proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah of the Jewish people and the *Kyrios* of the world. This focus of his missionary preaching does not represent an accommodation to concepts that Paul’s audiences would not have found appealing. Rather many, in particular members of the local elites and officials of the cities in which he preached, would have found this emphasis to be provocatively confrontational. The link between the ‘kingdom of God’ and the ‘Lord Jesus Messiah’ in Paul’s preaching implies a political dimension.²⁹

Finally, some scholars have claimed that Paul avoided explicit kingdom references in order to avoid confusion over God’s eschatological timetable. J. Christiaan Beker claims that Paul did not follow the strict temporal dualism of traditional

²⁵Ibid., 112.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Royce Gordon Gruenler, *Jesus, Persons, and the Kingdom of God* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1967), 138.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 183. Schnabel notes that Luke summarizes Paul’s preaching in Acts using the phrase “kingdom of God” several times, despite the fact that this phrase is rarely used elsewhere in Acts (184).

apocalyptic thinking, but instead emphasized the proleptic presence of the new age in the old. The fact that the age to come is now operative in the present time could make references to the kingdom of God confusing, as the kingdom was typically identified with the future.³⁰ In a similar fashion, Wedderburn claims that Paul's caution in using explicit kingdom language may be owing to "the possibility of an enthusiastic misunderstanding of the announcement of God's reign at Corinth."³¹ First Corinthians 4:8 is cited as evidence of this point, for it appears that, along with the Corinthians' experience of the Spirit, the announcement of Christ's present reign (either by Paul or some other preacher) had led to misunderstanding. This eschatological misunderstanding may help explain why Paul is compelled to refer to the kingdom several times in 1 Corinthians, as this is "not seemingly a need that arises elsewhere in his letters."³² Wedderburn notes, "Paul had both to stress that that reign in its fullness still lay in the future, and that participation in it involved both moral and physical transformation."³³ Wedderburn's observations on 1 Corinthians are especially relevant for the present work.

The kingdom replaced. Another explanation for Paul's reluctance to use kingdom terminology is that the kingdom of God has been supplanted by other themes.³⁴ Three of the most common themes proposed include the righteousness of God (and

³⁰Johan Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 146. Beker argues that kingdom material in Paul is often traditional material, with the terms "king" and "kingdom" borrowed from the Jewish-Hellenistic church. On the other hand, Beker does note that the verb βασιλεύω ("to reign") is important for Paul, citing the following texts in support: Rom 5:14, 17, 21; 6:12; 1 Cor 4:8; 15:25.

³¹Wedderburn, "The Problem of Continuity," 112.

³²Ibid., 113.

³³Ibid., 112. First Corinthians 15:23-28 is particularly important for understanding Paul's temporal perspective, for here, Wedderburn notes, there is a "... a particular need to clarify what was already accomplished and what was still to come caused Paul to use this vocabulary" (113).

³⁴H. A. A. Kennedy, *St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things*, 2nd ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904), 290.

related concepts such as justification), the work of the Spirit, and Christ himself (his person, work, and salvation). A number of scholars who have appealed to these themes will be noted below.

Some scholars have argued that the concept of the kingdom of God, which was so prominent in Jesus' ministry, has been replaced by Paul with a focus on God's righteousness and his justification of sinners. Brevard Childs, for instance, claims that Paul has "focussed the christological grounds for salvation under God's rule on his understanding of the 'righteousness of God,' and the traditional Synoptic terminology has been pushed to the periphery."³⁵ This claim was already being made around the turn of the twentieth century by William Sanday.³⁶ Then, much later in the twentieth century, Eberhard Jungel's *Paulus and Jesus* became influential in arguing for this position.³⁷ Paul was aware of the prominence of the kingdom in Jesus' proclamation, but for the apostle the kingdom was not a *Mittelpunkt*, or 'center point'.³⁸ Romans 14:17 provides evidence for Jungel that the kingdom has been replaced with the concept of righteousness, for Paul says explicitly that the kingdom consists in "*righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit*" (emphasis added).³⁹ More recently, Paul Barnett has referred to the kingdom of

³⁵Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 644. Childs claims that the phrase 'kingdom of God' is "usually a stereotyped convention" in Paul's letters (644).

³⁶William Sanday took the term "righteousness," as it is used in the book of Romans, and compared it to the Gospels' teaching on the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. Sanday concludes that Paul's language about righteousness expresses much the same idea as the kingdom of God in the Gospel accounts. William Sanday, "St. Paul's Equivalent for the 'Kingdom of Heaven'," *JTS* 1 (1900): 481-91.

³⁷Eberhard Jungel, *Paulus und Jesus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1967). Prior to Jungel's work, Rudolf Bultmann claimed that for Paul God's message of righteousness, or justification, corresponded with Jesus' message of the kingdom (Rudolf Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding I*, ed. Robert W. Funk, trans. Louise Pettibone Smith [London: S.C.M. Press, 1969], 1:232).

³⁸Jungel, *Paulus und Jesus*, 267.

³⁹*Ibid.*

God as “the principal point of continuity” between Jesus and Paul,⁴⁰ claiming that Paul has spoken of the kingdom of God in his own terms as the “righteousness of God.”⁴¹ Though this position remains popular, some adjustments have been suggested.⁴²

Kim’s treatment of this issue should also be noted, for he claims that among the various categories and metaphors used by Paul in place of kingdom language, “justification is the most prominent.”⁴³ After noting possible reasons for Paul’s preference for righteousness language over kingdom language, Kim argues that the “main reason” lies in Paul’s understanding of Jesus’ death as “the atoning and covenant-establishing sacrifice that has wrought the salvation promised by Jesus in his kingdom preaching.”⁴⁴ This replacement of the kingdom with justification was “not only expedient, but logically required.”⁴⁵

Scholars have also noted the connection between the theme of God’s kingdom and the role of the Holy Spirit in Paul’s theology. James Dunn has drawn parallels

⁴⁰Barnett, *Paul: Missionary of Jesus, After Jesus*, 194.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 195. Barnett attributes Paul’s choice of terminology to Paul’s largely Gentile audience.

⁴²Wedderburn identifies a weakness in Jungel’s position in light of Rom 14:17, where Paul states that the kingdom of God is not only a matter of “righteousness,” but also of “peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” According to Wedderburn, Jungel does not adequately explain why Paul has not also included the terms “joy” and “peace” in lieu of kingdom language. Wedderburn, “The Problem of Continuity,” 102.

⁴³Seyoon Kim, “Jesus, Sayings of,” in *DPL*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 483. Kim notes that for those who understand justification as the central category for Paul’s soteriology, the reason the theme of the kingdom has been replaced must be seen “against the background of ‘righteousness’ being a central concern of the Jews, whether they were trying to earn salvation or remain in a saving covenant relationship with God by keeping the Law” (483). The categories of justification and righteousness expressed well the concerns of atonement, forgiveness of sins, and a covenantal relationship with God, while having the advantage of “perfectly bringing out the intention of Jesus’ kingdom preaching and his conduct in receiving sinners” (484). Later Kim speaks of the “strong continuity between Jesus’ kingdom preaching and Paul’s gospel of God’s salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and his interpretation of this salvation chiefly through the category of justification” (485). In light of these observations, Kim could also be included below among scholars who believe that Paul’s focus on the person and work of Christ have replaced an emphasis on the kingdom.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 484.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 485.

between Luke and Paul in this regard, arguing that for both authors the Spirit is the manifestation of the kingdom. Therefore, those who possess the Spirit possess the blessings of the kingdom.⁴⁶ Cho has modified Dunn's thesis, claiming that Luke views the Spirit as the "source of the inspired preaching of the kingdom which provides for people to enter the kingdom,"⁴⁷ while for Paul the Spirit's role is more comprehensive. In Paul, the Spirit "manifests Himself by breaking into the present as an eschatological instrument of eternal inheritance,"⁴⁸ and thus the Spirit "becomes the source of life in the kingdom in its entirety, mediating all of the blessings of the kingdom."⁴⁹ Therefore, instead of constantly referring to the kingdom, Paul referred to the Spirit, the mediator of the kingdom's blessings.⁵⁰

⁴⁶James D. G. Dunn, *The Christ and the Spirit: Collected Essays of James D.G. Dunn* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 133–41. Dunn discusses the relationship between the Spirit and the kingdom in the ministry of Paul and in the ministry of the Gospels. For both Paul and Jesus, the Spirit's presence is evidence of the present participation in God's saving rule to be consummated in the future. In Paul's epistles the Spirit is the "guarantee" (ἀρραβών) of the believer's inheritance, just as Jesus' casting out demons by the Spirit was evidence that God's kingdom rule was then present (133-36). In his more recent work, Dunn claims that Jesus' message of the kingdom "features hardly at all" for Paul, for the apostle's gospel message is focused on "Christ crucified and risen from the dead, Jesus as Lord, and on the vital importance of being 'in Christ'" (idem, *Jesus, Paul, and the Gospels* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011], 96). These latter claims by Dunn mean that he could also be included in the following section under those commentators who view the kingdom as being replaced by an emphasis on Christ.

⁴⁷Youngmo Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom*, 197.

⁴⁸Ibid., 67. Cho notes that this work of the Spirit is similar to the portrayal of the kingdom in Jesus' ministry, so that there are "common features in the eschatological tension of the breaking of the future into the present." (67). Despite the fact that Jesus and Paul share some common verbal characteristics in their respective kingdom teachings, Cho notes the following differences: (1) Jesus referred to the kingdom more frequently than Paul; (2) unlike Jesus, Paul's kingdom references are not "clearly depicted as pivotal messages about salvation"; (3) though the kingdom-exclusion formulas are common to both Jesus and Paul, Paul uniquely includes the Spirit's role in the kingdom (60).

⁴⁹Ibid., 197.

⁵⁰For a critique of Cho's work, see Carson Timothy Lotz, review of *Spirit and Kingdom in the Writings of Luke and Paul: An Attempt to Reconcile these Concepts*, by Youngmo Cho, *EvQ* 82, no. 2 (2010): 124-41. Lotz counters Cho's claim that Paul's Spirit language has essentially replaced kingdom language. According to Lotz, the future reality of the kingdom is only "partially (not wholly or fully) realized in the presence of the Spirit (136). Paul's shift of emphasis from the kingdom to the Spirit is expected due to the eschatological significance of Pentecost (the outpouring of the Spirit), for the primary subject of the apostolic proclamation shifts from the kingdom of God to the announcement that Jesus is Lord. This shift can also be seen in Luke's writings, as Gospel references to the kingdom give way to an emphasis on the

Some scholars have put forward a third Pauline theme that has replaced the kingdom, namely, the person and work of Christ. H. A. A. Kennedy claimed that the most significant way in which the concept of the kingdom informed Paul's thinking may have been in his conception of the lordship of Christ, for the kingdom is "really concentrated in the person of the exalted Christ," who is "Lord of the realm of His δούλοι."⁵¹ Similarly, Rudolf Schnackenburg claims that the theme at the forefront of Paul's thought is Christ's lordship.⁵² Paul's thought is "Christocentric," so that "the present operation of the *Kurios* Jesus dominates everything."⁵³ For Schnackenburg, the fact that Paul places the "strongest possible emphasis . . . upon the present exercise of Christ's sovereignty [makes it] all the more remarkable that the perfect kingdom of the future does not disappear from Paul's thinking."⁵⁴

The significance of the kingdom. Some scholars have addressed the issue of Paul's references to the kingdom by questioning, or in a few cases affirming, the significance of the concept in Paul's epistles. On one hand, the significance of the kingdom has been implicitly questioned by the lack of coverage it has received in Pauline theologies and in more comprehensive studies of the apostle's life and thought. On the

Spirit in the book of Acts. (137). Lotz notes, "Similar to Paul's writings, Luke's exhibit the *same inverted ratio* of Spirit to kingdom references with the Gospel referring to the Kingdom 31 times and Acts only 6, and inversely the Gospel refers to the Spirit 16 times and the book of Acts 54! *Clearly based on statistical analysis alone, Luke displays the same transference in emphasis from kingdom language to Spirit language as Paul does*" (137, emphasis original). However, see the rejoinder to Lotz in Youngmo Cho, "A Rejoinder to Carsten Timothy Lotz," *EvQ* 83, no. 1 (2011): 73-83.

⁵¹H. A. A. Kennedy, *St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things*, 2nd ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904), 92. Kennedy cites Romans 14:17-18 for evidence of his position, since these verses mention the kingdom of God and serving Christ respectively. Kennedy thus concludes that "membership in the Kingdom and serving Christ are deliberately identified" (289).

⁵²Rudolf Schnackenburg, *God's Rule and Kingdom* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1963), 284.

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴*Ibid.* Schnackenburg notes, "Paul's ideas about Christ's reign are new and theologically they mark a distinct advance" (291).

other hand, several scholars have addressed the issue more directly. For instance, Bultmann claimed that the “Reign of God,” which was so central to Jesus’ own teaching, has “lost its dominant position in Paul.”⁵⁵ Walter goes even further, claiming that Paul shows “no trace of the influence of the theologically central affirmations of Jesus’ preaching, in particular of his characteristic ‘Jesuanic’ interpretation of the kingdom of God.”⁵⁶ Gerd Ludemann has likewise claimed that the kingdom of God is “marginal for Paul,” as it appears in only a handful of texts.⁵⁷

Although relatively few scholars have emphasized the significance of the kingdom in Paul’s epistles, there are a few exceptions. For example, Robert Yarbrough’s investigation of the kingdom throughout the entire Pauline corpus leads him to refer to the kingdom as a “foundational concept.”⁵⁸ In what may be the most comprehensive treatment of the subject to date, Shogren investigates both explicit and implicit references to the kingdom, and he points out various ways in which Paul relates the kingdom to other prominent theological themes. Shogren claims that explicit kingdom references are only the “tip of the iceberg” in Paul’s thinking.⁵⁹ Thus, merely interpreting the term βασιλεία “answers few questions about Pauline kingdom theology.”⁶⁰ After summarizing

⁵⁵Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 1:189. This shift in emphasis is for Bultmann part of a larger pattern in Paul’s theology. The apostle’s teaching is not a recapitulation or further development of Jesus’ own preaching, but rather a “new structure” suited to a new Hellenized context (189).

⁵⁶Nikolaus Walter, “Paul and the Early Christian Jesus-Tradition,” in *Paul and Jesus: Collected Essays*, ed. A. J. M. Wedderburn, JSNTSup 37 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 63.

⁵⁷Ludemann lists only the kingdom references from the undisputed Pauline epistles: Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 4:20, 6:9-10, 15:50; Gal 5:21 (but see 1 Thess 2:12); Gerd Lüdemann, *Paul, the Founder of Christianity* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002), 194.

⁵⁸Robert Yarbrough, “The Kingdom of God in the New Testament: Mark through the Epistles,” in *The Kingdom of God*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 148.

⁵⁹Shogren, “The Pauline Proclamation,” 2.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 117.

the ways in which βασιλεία is used in Paul's letters,⁶¹ Shogren claims that the kingdom has "far-reaching implications for his understanding of history, Christology, salvation, and the church."⁶² The kingdom is also linked to such themes as the Spirit, the new creation, the new exodus, and the new covenant. Shogren concludes his study by claiming that for Paul the kingdom of God has "colored his whole theology."⁶³

Brian Vickers also considers the kingdom of God to be an important theme in Paul's epistles.⁶⁴ Like Shogren, his investigation includes kingdom references that do not use the term βασιλεία. Vickers specifically relates the kingdom to Paul's Christocentric focus, for he notes, "At the heart of Paul's concept of the kingdom of God is the risen and enthroned Christ."⁶⁵ The kingdom is also connected to Paul's soteriology—particularly "redemption through the cross"—so that "Paul's soteriology and his concept of the kingdom are inseparable."⁶⁶ Vickers concludes that for Paul the kingdom is associated with two major themes in his theology: salvation and Christian ethics. By connecting the

⁶¹Shogren lists the following uses of βασιλεία in the Pauline corpus: (1) the traditional sense of the future realm of salvation (1 Cor 6:9; Gal 5:21); (2) the present operation of the kingdom of God, or the "Manifested Rule of God" (Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 4:20); (3) the mediatorial Kingdom of Christ, which is the "Manifested Rule of God" that he [God] "exercises over the believer through the exalted Christ" (Eph 5:5; 2 Tim 4:1); 4) the present existence of a transcendental Heavenly Kingdom of Christ (2 Tim 4:18). Shogren, "The Pauline Proclamation," 116-17.

⁶²Ibid., 117.

⁶³Ibid., 457. For Shogren, Paul's greatest contribution to the kingdom theology of the Scriptures is "to show that God's kingdom is not exhausted by a Social Gospel, renewed human society, an ethic, the church, or interpersonal relationships. When Paul speaks of the kingdom, he follows Jesus in speaking of the acts of God in history, the works which correspond to the crossing of the Red Sea, to the destruction of Israel's slavemasters, to the freedom and tranquility of the Promised Land. The gospel of the kingdom in Paul's mind is that God has acted, acts, will act on behalf of the church through Jesus Christ the Lord" (466).

⁶⁴Brian J. Vickers, "The Kingdom of God in Paul's Gospel," *SBTJ* 12 (2008): 52-67.

⁶⁵Ibid., 53.

⁶⁶Ibid. Vickers cites a number of texts to demonstrate this point (Col 1; 1 Cor 15:20-28; Eph 1). In addition, Vickers notes that the greatest continuity between the concept of the kingdom in the Gospels and the kingdom in Paul may be the focus on ethics, or "the kind of behavior that characterizes those who are in the kingdom over against that which characterizes those who are excluded from the kingdom" (57).

kingdom to these other important Pauline themes, Vickers makes the case that the kingdom is a significant theme in the apostle's theology.⁶⁷ The present work is closest to the respective positions of Shogren and Vickers in arguing for the significance of the kingdom, though the primary focus in the chapters ahead will be on 1 Corinthians.

Various Aspects of the Kingdom

In addition to addressing the usage and significance of the kingdom, scholars have also explored a variety of other aspects of Paul's kingdom theology. Three different aspects of the kingdom that are commonly addressed will be discussed below: (1) the temporal aspect of the kingdom, (2) the kingdom of God vis-à-vis the kingdom of Christ, and (3) the intersection between the kingdom and anti-imperial readings of Paul's theology. Some of the main contributors to these discussions are highlighted under the appropriate subheadings.

The kingdom's temporal nature. Scholars have come to various conclusions with regard to the temporal nature of the kingdom. C. H. Dodd emphasized the *realized*, or present, nature of the kingdom. Just as the Synoptic Gospels announce the surprising reality that God's kingdom has been realized in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, so also Paul brings the death of Jesus into this same schema.⁶⁸ According to Dodd, the eschaton has arrived in Christ's suffering and death, and it is in these events that we find "that timeless reality which is the kingdom, the power and the glory of the blessed

⁶⁷Ibid., 65. Though he leaves it for the reader to decide, Vickers poses the question as to whether the kingdom is central for Paul, or just one of many important concepts. For other examples of scholars who highlight the importance of the kingdom for Paul, see Richard Bauckham, "Kingdom and Church according to Jesus and Paul," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 18 (1996): 3; Frances Young, "Paul and the Kingdom of God," in *The Kingdom of God and Human Society*, ed. Robin Barbour (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 242-55.

⁶⁸C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, 3rd ed. (London: Nisbet, 1936), 77.

God.”⁶⁹ Other scholars have relegated the kingdom almost solely to the future. C. K. Barrett claims that several texts clearly speak of the kingdom as a future reality, while a few texts remain less clear.⁷⁰ Cerfaux likewise relegates the kingdom to the future, so that Paul only uses the phrase kingdom of God to refer to “those benefits which God reserves for Christians in the after-life.”⁷¹

Most scholars who have addressed the topic of Paul’s kingdom theology have recognized that the kingdom has both present and future aspects. Schnackenburg refers to the present and future aspects as the “polarity” of the kingdom.⁷² When Paul says that God calls believers “into his own kingdom and glory” in 1 Thessalonians 2:12, the temporal reference is future, since the word “glory” (δόξα) is associated with the end-time kingdom for Paul.⁷³ In terms of the present dimensions of the kingdom, 1 Corinthians 4:20 indicates that “God’s reign is already showing itself in the power of the [sic] God’s Spirit,” even if the apostles’ experience of suffering points to a yet future kingdom consummation.⁷⁴ Similarly, in Romans 14:17 Paul recognizes “an operation and tangible presence of God’s reign here and now . . . in the presence and operation of the Holy Spirit.”⁷⁵

⁶⁹Ibid., 80.

⁷⁰Barrett lists the following texts as clearly future: 1 Cor 6:9-10, 15:50; Gal 5:21; 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 1:5. Texts that are less clear as to temporal reference include: Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 4:20; Col 4:11. Colossians 1:13 is the only clear reference to the kingdom as a present reality. C. K. Barrett, *From First Adam to Last: A Study in Pauline Theology* (New York: Scribner, 1962), 99–101.

⁷¹Lucien Cerfaux, *The Church in the Theology of St. Paul* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1959), 384. The present reference to the kingdom in Eph 5:5 is no exception to this point, since the kingdom of Christ, as distinguished from the kingdom of God, is to be equated with the church (385). By distinguishing between the two kingdoms, Cerfaux acknowledges the present reality of Christ’s kingdom in the church, while maintaining that the kingdom of God is a future reality (385n1).

⁷²Schnackenburg, *God’s Rule and Kingdom*, 290.

⁷³Ibid., 287.

⁷⁴Ibid., 290.

⁷⁵Ibid., 291.

Karl Donfried has examined the uses of the phrase kingdom of God in the undisputed Pauline epistles, concluding that they display the “already-not yet” tension present in other New Testament writings.⁷⁶ Similarly, in his investigation of the relationship between the eschatological teachings of Jesus and Paul, Witherington notes the “already not-yet” feature of Paul’s kingdom proclamation, a feature the apostle shares in common with Jesus. The future βασιλεία is a realm that one “enters or inherits only upon the return of Christ and after the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the transformation of the living believers.”⁷⁷ With respect to the kingdom’s present dimension, Witherington notes that it is “primarily spiritual in character and effect, not material or physical. He [Paul] sees it as having to do with the spiritual transformation of human beings in the present, not the physical transformation of the cosmos.”⁷⁸

The kingdom of God and of Christ. Scholars have also focused their attention on the relationship between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ in Paul’s writings. There has been disagreement over the timing of these respective kingdoms, and over whether the kingdom of Christ is, in fact, distinct from the kingdom of God.⁷⁹ According to Albert Schweitzer, Jesus taught that the kingdom of God and the

⁷⁶Karl P. Donfried, “The Kingdom of God in Paul,” in *The Kingdom of God in 20th-Century Interpretation*, ed. Wendell L. Willis (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 175-87.

⁷⁷Ben Witherington, *Jesus, Paul and the End of the World: A Comparative Study in New Testament Eschatology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 56.

⁷⁸Ibid., 57–58. Cho also notes the present aspect of the kingdom, focusing especially on the blessings brought about by the presence of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 4:20 and Romans 14:17. (Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom*, 55-60). In addition to the scholars listed in this section, a number of others have argued for an inaugurated eschatological view of Paul’s kingdom theology, including Gary Shogren, “The Pauline Proclamation,” 116-17, and L. Joseph Kreitzer, *Jesus and God in Paul’s Eschatology*, JSNTSup 19 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 132-34.

⁷⁹In three different verses the kingdom is spoken of explicitly as belonging to the Son or to Christ: 1 Cor 15:24, Eph 5:5, and Col 1:13. First Cor 15:20-28 has figured largely in this discussion, for there the Son is explicitly said to “deliver the kingdom to God the Father” (1 Cor 15:24). Most of the relevant exegetical discussion on 1 Corinthians 15 will be reserved for a later chapter.

Messianic kingdom were identical; Paul, on the other hand, distinguishes between the two kingdoms. Schweitzer notes,

The idea of the two kingdoms appears in Paul to this extent that he assumes that the Messianic is something by itself, that only those who belong to the final generation of men have the privilege of belonging to it, and that it lasts only for a fixed time and then it is succeeded by the eternal Kingdom of God.⁸⁰

W. D. Davies argues against Schweitzer's view that Paul taught a future *Zwischenreich*, or interim messianic kingdom. In his discussion of the phrase "the end" (τὸ τέλος) in 1 Corinthians 15:24—the time when the Son hands the kingdom over to the Father—Davies claims that when Paul speaks of the kingdom of God, he speaks of it as future, whereas the kingdom of Christ, mentioned explicitly only in Colossians 1:13, is a present kingdom reality. The resurrection had designated Christ as the Son of God (Rom 1:3-4), and "from that moment on the Kingdom of Christ was 'actualized.'"⁸¹ Davies continues, "The victory of the Cross was the beginning of that triumph of Christ over the evil powers mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:24. It is not after but before the Parousia that the Messianic kingdom lies in the mind of Paul: and as we shall see it was already giving place to the final consummation."⁸² For Davies, then, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ are distinct. The kingdom of Christ describes the present reign of Christ, which began at his resurrection, while the kingdom of God refers to the eternal state.⁸³

⁸⁰Albert Schweitzer, *The Kingdom of God and Primitive Christianity*, trans. L.A. Garrard (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1968), 160. Unlike the apocalypses of Baruch and Ezra, which held that the messianic kingdom did not contain anyone who was risen from the dead, Paul teaches that those who participate in the messianic kingdom must already be in the resurrection state, "either because they actually have risen from the dead, or because they have been transformed" (160). It is in this resurrection, or transformed, state that the kingdom "ceases to be different in kind from the Kingdom of God" (160).

⁸¹W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*, 2nd ed. (London: S. P. C. K., 1955), 296.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³The positions of Schweitzer and Davies were later taken up by Wilber Wallis and Hans-Alwin Wilcke, though the arguments of the latter scholars were not identical to their predecessors. For

Unlike Schweitzer and Davies, Schnackenburg denies that any distinction exists between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of God. The double-reference to God and Christ in Ephesians 5:5 is no exception, for it does not refer to two consecutive stages of God's reign, but rather it implies that "God's eschatological reign is already realized in the rule of Christ."⁸⁴ Schnackenburg thus concludes, "God rules through Christ and consequently the kingdom of God may also be termed kingdom of Christ."⁸⁵

Finally, Kreitzer takes a somewhat different approach to this question. Although his position is closer to that of Schweitzer in terms of assigning the events of 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 to the future, the question of whether or not there is a temporary Messianic reign is to "perhaps misread the whole problem."⁸⁶ The eschatological events may be too difficult for anyone to read, for the meaning of the passage ought to be investigated with an eye to its Christological implications.⁸⁷ Kreitzer's analysis focuses

more on this discussion, see L. J. Kreitzer, *Jesus and God in Paul's Eschatology*, 139-45. Like Schweitzer, Wallis argues for a distinct messianic Age, or millennium, in Wilber Wallis, "The Problem of an Intermediate Kingdom in 1 Cor 15.20-28" *JETS* 18 (1975): 229-42. However, as Kreitzer notes, "There is an essential difference between Wallis and Schweitzer as to the reason for their mutual belief in a Pauline doctrine of two resurrections. For Schweitzer the motivation for its development is the driving logic of Jewish apocalyptic which Paul adopts; while for Wallis the motivation is the comprehensiveness of Christ with respect to his authority and rule over the whole of the created order" (142). Wilcke, on the other hand, agrees with Davies that there is no intermediate messianic kingdom (Hans-Alwin Wilcke, *Das Problem eines messianischen Zwischenreichs bei Paulus*, ATANT 51 [Zurich: Zwingli, 1967]). With regard to 1 Cor 15:23-28, C.K. Barrett takes the position of Schweitzer and Wallis, referring to the kingdom of Christ as a "preliminary and chronologically limited reign" (Barrett, *From First Adam to Last*, 101).

⁸⁴Schnackenburg, *God's Rule and Kingdom*, 286-87.

⁸⁵Ibid., 287. With respect to the debated Corinthians passage, Schnackenburg argues the following: "There exists no contradiction, not even a conscious distinction, between a 'kingdom of Christ' and a 'kingdom of God.'" (297). At the *parousia*, Christ's "office" as a Savior and the "era of salvation" will have "reached its end and goal," which accounts for the variation in Paul's kingdom expressions (298).

⁸⁶Kreitzer, *Jesus and God in Paul's Eschatology*, 148. Kreitzer admits that his interpretation is highly contested and that, according to some, it is not consistent with other eschatological teachings in Paul's letters (see especially 1 Cor 15:50ff. and 1 Thess 4:13ff.) (147). Kreitzer surveys the scholarly debate on this issue with regard to 1 Cor 15:20-28 (134-45). He also investigates the role of Psalm 110 on this question (146-49).

⁸⁷Kreitzer attributes the conceptual overlap between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ to the "eschatological imprecision with regards to the messianic Kingdom and the Eternal Age to Come" (Kreitzer, *Jesus and God in Paul's Eschatology*, 153). This conceptual overlap is highlighted by the "theocentric/christocentric fluctuation which surrounds Paul's discussions about the future" (153).

on the theological and Christological significance of 1 Corinthians 15:20-28. If this emphasis reflects Paul's primary concern, then it may help explain the difficulty in making a precise distinction between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ in this difficult passage.⁸⁸

Anti-imperial readings. More recently, some Pauline scholars, along with New Testament scholars more broadly, have begun to highlight the anti-imperial (AI) nature of Paul's message. This is not an entirely new discovery, nor is the movement itself monolithic. In general, the adherents of AI readings of Paul discern in the apostle's language, rhetoric, and conceptual thought-world a polemical stance toward the imperial cult and the ideology of Rome.⁸⁹ Proclamation of the kingdom of God takes on added significance under such a view, and 1 Corinthians has figured prominently in this discussion.⁹⁰ The AI approach to Paul provides a relatively recent entrée into the discussion of the kingdom.

Richard Horsley, one of the leading proponents of an AI reading of Paul, says the following about Paul's terminology in Romans: "Insofar as Paul deliberately used language closely associated with the imperial religion, he was presenting his gospel as a

⁸⁸Kreitzer notes the difficulty lies in explaining the role of the messianic kingdom with respect to the future Age to Come, for we are "trying to ground that role within a specific conception of temporality which may be totally inapplicable to, and incapable of expressing, the future. . . . Indeed, it is naïve to assume any firm degree of certainty of meaning can be attained when discussing these matters." Ibid., 147.

⁸⁹Kim credits A. Deissmann with inaugurating the "anti-imperial" interpretation of Paul in A. Deissman, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World*, trans. Lionel R.M. Strachan (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965), as cited in Seyoon Kim, *Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 28n1. Whereas many Pauline scholars following in the wake of E.P. Sanders have sought to recover a more accurate picture of Paul's Jewish context, proponents of anti-imperial readings are concerned to understand how Paul's message was shaped by his Greco-Roman context, including his confrontation of its political powers. Anti-imperial proponents differ on whether particular aspects of Paul's theology are owing to his Jewish background or to his Greco-Roman context.

⁹⁰See, for example, Richard Horsley's chapter, "Rhetoric and Empire—and 1 Corinthians," in *Paul and Politics*, ed. Richard Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 72-102.

direct competitor of the gospel of Caesar.”⁹¹ This understanding of Paul’s message is directly related to the kingdom, for Horsley is also able to speak of Paul’s “controlling vision of the ‘kingdom’ of God” in the apostle’s opposition to the Roman patronage system.⁹² Since Paul expected the “imminent end of ‘this evil age,’” and because he was “evidently anticipating a continuation of some sort of societal form in ‘the kingdom of God,’” the apostle was intent on forming what Horsely calls “assemblies,” which were “communities alternative to the existing society.”⁹³ Paul also challenged Rome in terms of the origin of the emperor’s power. Whereas Augustus was given power by Jupiter and the gods, the apostle’s claim was altogether different: “[Paul] insisted that Christ was now reigning in heaven and, ‘after every rule and every authority and power,’ would ‘hand the kingdom over to God the Father . . . so that God may be all in all’” (1 Cor 15:24, 28).⁹⁴

N. T. Wright finds much to commend in the work of Horsley and other AI proponents, though he offers several critiques. One critique has to do with Paul’s fundamental reason for opposing Caesar: “[Paul] was not opposed to Caesar’s empire primarily because it was an empire . . . but because it was Caesar’s, and because Caesar was claiming divine status and honors which belonged only to the one God.”⁹⁵ Though

⁹¹Richard A. Horsley, “Paul’s Counter-Imperial Gospel: Introduction,” in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, ed. Richard Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 140.

⁹²*Ibid.*, 250-51.

⁹³According to Horsley, the term Paul used for his churches—*ekklesia*—was “primarily political” in the Roman context, even as the Greek *polis* was both religious and political. *Ibid.*, 8.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 147. For more on AI readings of Paul (though sometimes from different perspectives), see the following works: *Paul and Politics*, ed. Richard Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000); *Paul and Empire*, ed. Richard Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997); John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus’ Apostle Opposed Rome’s Empire with God’s Kingdom: A New Vision of Paul’s Words & World* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004); Harry O. Maier, *Picturing Paul in Empire: Imperial Image, Text and Persuasion in Colossians, Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013).

Wright does not explicitly emphasize the implications of his view in relation to the term kingdom, his emphasis on Christ as king makes the same point implicitly.⁹⁶ Wright unpacks the significance of Christ's kingship in *What Saint Paul Really Said*, where he claims that Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς might sometimes be translated as "King Jesus."⁹⁷ Though he acknowledges that Paul's emphasis on Jesus as Messiah and king is disputed among New Testament scholars, Wright nevertheless believes this royal announcement to be a crucial aspect of Paul's gospel message.⁹⁸ Such a perspective on Christ's kingship has direct implications for Paul's theology of the kingdom.

Seyoon Kim's monograph, *Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke*, represents one of the more substantial critical responses to AI readings of Paul, and it is especially helpful for the present work in that it deals directly with 1 Corinthians.⁹⁹ Kim agrees with Horsley and others that when Christ hands over the kingdom in 15:24, his destruction of "every rule and authority" likely includes the Roman emperor and his officials, especially since the latter are implicated in Christ's crucifixion in 2:6-8. However, Kim also takes the "rulers of this age" to be a reference to "evil forces broader than human rulers and enemies," for elsewhere the

⁹⁵N. T. Wright, "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire," in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation*, ed. Richard Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 164.

⁹⁶Wright notes, "His [Paul's] missionary work must be conceived not simply in terms of a traveling evangelist offering a people a new religious experience, but of an ambassador for a king-in-waiting . . . This could not but be construed as deeply counterimperial, as subversive to the whole edifice of the Roman Empire; and there is in fact plenty of evidence that Paul intended it to be so construed." Ibid., 161-62.

⁹⁷N. T. Wright, *What St. Paul Really Said* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 52.

⁹⁸Wright points to Paul's programmatic statement in Rom 1:3-4 as evidence that Paul's gospel was the fulfillment of Old Testament promises of a royal figure such as we find in 2 Sam 7 and Pss 2 and 89. Ibid., 53. For more on Wright's explanation regarding Christ as king, see pp. 51-55.

⁹⁹For other works offering critical evaluations of anti-imperial readings, see C. Bryan, *Render to Caesar: Jesus, the Early Church, and the Roman Superpower* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica, eds., *Jesus Is Lord, Caesar Is Not: Evaluating Empire in New Testament Studies* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013).

apostle “speaks of Satan (1 Cor 5:5; 7:5) and demons (1 Cor 10:20-23) and even of ‘the god of *this* age’ (2 Cor 4:4) as the forces that rule the world.”¹⁰⁰ Insofar as the Roman rulers opposed God and the gospel, they represented merely an historical instance of Satan’s opposition to Christ.¹⁰¹

Kim also questions Horsley’s position with regard to the relationship of the church to the kingdom of God. Whereas Horsley understands the *ekklesia* as establishing an “alternative society to the world,” Kim claims that the establishment of the kingdom of God comes via “divine transcendence” at Christ’s imminent *parousia*.¹⁰² For the present, believers should “build up an *ekklesia* that proleptically materializes the ideals of the coming Kingdom of God.”¹⁰³ Kim concludes thus:

So, although he [Paul] has a clear conception of the church as an alternative *ekklesia* of the people of the Kingdom of God over against the *ekklesia* of the citizens of this world—even as the ‘colonial outpost’ of the heavenly (i.e., transcendental) Kingdom of God in this world (Phil 3:20) that materializes the ethos, value system, relationships, and behavioral pattern of the Kingdom (Phil 1:27) and therefore embodies the real ‘justice, peace, and joy’ (Rom 14:17)—Paul does not consider the church eventually replacing the Roman Empire in this world. Nor does he project any political, social, and economic program with which the King and Lord Jesus Christ will rule this world for more adequate justice, peace, freedom, and well-being than those of the Roman Empire.¹⁰⁴

Method

The first step in demonstrating the thesis of this work will be to exegete the relevant kingdom texts in 1 Corinthians by using the best exegetical tools and reference

¹⁰⁰Kim, *Christ and Caesar*, 24. On a similar point concerning Elliott’s anti-imperial reading of Paul’s doctrine of the cross in N. Elliott, “The Anti-Imperial Message of the Cross,” in *Paul and Empire*, ed. Richard Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 167, Kim objects with the following: “Paul did not regard the Roman imperial politics as the sole reality of evil, not even as the greatest manifestation of it; rather, he thought more fundamentally about the human predicaments—sin and death” (23).

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 23-25.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 66-67.

works available. Special attention will be given to Paul's explicit kingdom references, since these are the clearest indications of Paul's kingdom theology. However, examining Paul's kingdom theology in 1 Corinthians involves more than a word study of the term βασιλεία. Implicit references to the kingdom, such as the reign of Christ, as well as verbal references like ἐβασιλεύσατε in 1 Corinthians 4:8, will also be considered.¹⁰⁵ For each kingdom reference, close attention will be given to the context of Paul's argument. Then, based on the results of the exegesis, theological conclusions will be drawn in each chapter. These conclusions will include highlighting connections between the kingdom and other important themes. Paul's kingdom references outside of 1 Corinthians will be cited in order to provide confirmatory evidence for the exegesis and theological conclusions. The final chapter will play a similar confirmatory role by comparing the findings in 1 Corinthians with the rest of Paul's letters in a survey-like fashion. Each chapter will also make observations concerning other aspects of the kingdom that are important for this discussion. These other aspects include the following: (1) the assumed familiarity of the concept of the kingdom among Paul's readers, (2) the definition of the kingdom, and (3) the ways in which Paul's theology of the kingdom intersects with the anti-imperial polemic that some interpreters have detected in his epistles.

One additional note on method may help clarify the approach and the arguments made in succeeding chapters. As noted above, the goal will not be to argue that the kingdom is the main *subject* of Paul's discussion in 1 Corinthians, but rather that it is a foundational component of a number of aspects of God's saving work in Christ. However, this point should not be taken to mean that the thesis of this work depends primarily on arguments from silence. The question of why Paul rarely refers to the kingdom—leaving aside for the moment whether that is a fair observation—will be

¹⁰⁵The verb ἐβασιλεύσατε occurs twice in 1 Cor 4:8, while the verb συμβασιλεύσωμεν occurs once.

addressed based primarily on what Paul *does* say about the kingdom and kingdom-related concepts. It is what the apostle says that supports the idea that the kingdom is integral to and consistent with other prominent elements of Paul's teaching on God's salvation in Christ.

Subsequent chapters of this work will proceed as follows. Chapters 2 through 4 will each follow the same outline: exegesis of the relevant texts about the kingdom, theological conclusions and various observations based on the exegesis, and an application of the findings from the chapter to the three lines of evidence outlined in the thesis. Chapter 2 will examine what Paul means when he says in 4:20 that the kingdom "consists in power," a concept that relates directly to the word of the cross. Then Paul's use of various forms of the verb βασιλεύω in 4:8 will be examined. Although Paul refers to the reign of the Corinthians sarcastically in 4:8, it will be argued that he uses the eschatology of the kingdom to address ethical issues among the Corinthians.

Chapter 3 begins by focusing on Paul's warning about failing to inherit the kingdom in 6:9-10. This passage uses the language of eschatological fulfillment in relation to the kingdom, but it also has implications for the lives of believers in the present. The transforming and justifying work of the Spirit and of Christ in 6:11 makes inheriting the kingdom possible. Then in 6:2-3 the concept of the future judgment of the saints is examined. Although the actual term kingdom is absent from these verses, the judgment of the saints is closely related to the reign of believers referenced in 4:8.

Chapter 4 deals with the kingdom in relation to Paul's overarching concern in 1 Corinthians 15, namely, to demonstrate to the Corinthians that the physical resurrection of the saints is a certain future reality. The reign of Christ is of particular interest in 15:20-28, since this, along with Christ's resurrection, is what guarantees the resurrection of the saints. Paul also makes another explicit reference to the kingdom in 15:24, a reference that comes in the midst of a difficult and highly contested passage about the ordering of eschatological events. Chapter 4 closes by considering Paul's final reference

to the kingdom in 15:50. The apostle again talks of inheriting the kingdom, only this time he is not referring to the righteous conduct required, but rather to the bodily transformation that “flesh and blood” must undergo. Bound up with the kingdom in the surrounding context of this discussion are the themes of resurrection, Spirit, and new creation.

Chapter 5 compares the findings in chapters 2-4 with kingdom references in the rest of Paul’s letters. This comparison involves looking at the various ways Paul refers to the kingdom (both explicitly and implicitly), various observations made about the kingdom, and, most importantly, the application of Paul’s kingdom references outside 1 Corinthians to the three lines of evidence identified in the thesis. Chapter 5 provides confirmatory evidence for the thesis of this work, as well as evidence that there is continuity in the Pauline corpus regarding the apostle’s conception of the kingdom. Finally, after summarizing the argument of this work in chapter 6, some of its implications will be highlighted and suggestions will be made for future studies on this topic.

CHAPTER 2

THE KINGDOM IN 1 CORINTHIANS 4

Paul's theology of the kingdom is addressed in at least two ways in 1 Corinthians 4. First, in 4:20 Paul says that the kingdom of God consists not in "in talk" (ἐν λόγῳ), but "in power" (ἐν δυνάμει). First Corinthians 4:20 is the apostle's first explicit reference to the kingdom in this epistle. Important to the discussion will be the ways in which the kingdom is connected to other important themes in 1 Corinthians 1-4. Second, it will be argued that Paul's use of three forms of the verbal βασιλεύω 'to reign or become king' in 4:8 is relevant to his conception of the kingdom. In order to examine each of these kingdom references within the flow of Paul's argument, the context of chapters 1 through 4 needs to be considered briefly.

The Context of 1 Corinthians 1-4

Immediately following his opening thanksgiving, Paul admonishes the Corinthians for their divisive and partisan outlook with regard to spiritual leadership (1:10-17).¹ Many in Corinth were identifying with a particular spiritual leader over

¹Mitchell takes 1:10 to be the thesis statement for the overall argument of 1 Corinthians, which is an argument for ecclesial unity. M. M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 1. Likewise Collins claims that Paul's warning against divisions in 1:10 "makes a statement that defines the rest of the letter." Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 69. In his breakdown of Paul's rhetorical structure, Witherington likewise takes 1:10 to be the *propositio* in this epistle. Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 94-97. However, contra Witherington, not all commentators are convinced that 1:10 is part of this rhetorical structure. Thiselton cites Bjerkelund's study on the form and function of παρακαλῶ clauses in support of a non-rhetorical use of the word (See Carl Johan Bjerkelund, *Parakalō: Form, Funktion und Sinn der Parakalō-Sätze in den paulinischen Briefen*, Bibliotheca Theologica Norvegica, 1 [Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1967]). Thiselton notes that Paul's request "draws its force from a relationship of friendship, trust, or official status between the writer and the addressee(s)." Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the*

against other leaders (see 1:10-17; 3:1-9, 21-22). Such jockeying is characteristic of worldly wisdom, but as Paul points out in 1:18-2:5, the word of the cross sets forth an altogether different conception of power and wisdom. God's wisdom is revealed by the Spirit, and this spiritual wisdom hails from the age to come (2:6-13), thus making it folly to the "natural person" (2:14). The issue of divisiveness over leaders continues to surface in 3:1-5, forcing Paul to remind the Corinthians that he and Apollos were merely servants who watered. God is responsible for the growth, i.e., effectiveness in ministry (3:5-7). Boasting in men is foolish—"whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas" (3:22)—since all things belong to the Corinthians through Christ (3:22).

In chapter 4 the imagery shifts slightly, though the subject remains the same. Paul and Apollos are merely stewards of God's mysteries, and while stewards must be found faithful, it is God's judgment and not that of the Corinthians that counts in such matters (4:1-5). In 4:6-7 Paul confronts the arrogance of the Corinthians by reminding them that any distinctions or gifts they possess have been given by God.² Moreover, the very apostles the Corinthians were elevating had become "a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men" (v. 9). Paul thus sets the pride and posturing of the Corinthians in sharp contrast to the suffering and ridicule experienced by the apostles (4:8-13). This contrast helps set the stage for Paul's admonitions in 4:14-21 concerning how the

Greek Text, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2000), 112. Ciampa and Rosner argue that while disunity is a major theme in the letter, there are other "equally important concerns." Roy E. Ciampa and Brian Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 73. Ciampa and Rosner note, "... Paul must seek not only to unify the Corinthian Christians but, just as importantly, to rid them of pagan influences other than disunity, in particular sexual immorality (cf. 6:18), idolatry (cf. 10:14), and greed. Paul's task is to seek the Corinthians' transformation by the renewing of their mind, so that they might live lives that are holy (1 Cor. 1:2) and pleasing to God (Rom 12:2; Titus 2:11-13)" (74).

²While 1 Cor 4:6 begins a new unit, Kleinknecht refers to this verse as the culmination or high point of 1 Cor 1-4, as Paul continually refers back to 1:10-4:5. Karl Theodor Kleinknecht, *Der leidende Gerechtfertigte: die alttestamentlich-jüdische Tradition vom "leidenden Gerechten" und ihre Rezeption bei Paulus*, WUNT 13 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988), 222.

Corinthians should think about their “countless guides in Christ” (v. 15).³ As the “father” of the Corinthians through the gospel (v.15), Paul wanted them to imitate him, which is why he sent them Timothy, his like-minded fellow worker (v.17). Some in Corinth had become arrogant in Paul’s absence, supposing the apostle would not come to correct them (v.18). Verses 19-20 represent Paul’s response to these arrogant persons,⁴ and it is in verse 20 that he refers explicitly to the kingdom of God. This brief overview of chapters 1 through 4 is critical for understanding how Paul conceives of the kingdom and of power.

1 Corinthians 4:20

In 4:20 Paul says, “For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power.”⁵ Haufe rightly notes that Paul is not giving a full definition of the kingdom in this verse, but rather an important feature of it.⁶ Likewise Donfried has noted that the

³On the importance of 1 Cor 4:6-21 for the rest of the epistle, see E. Coye Still, “Divisions Over Leaders and Food Offered to Idols,” *TynBul* 55 (2004): 17-41. Although Still focuses primarily on the thematic parallels between 4:6-21 and 8:1-11, he offers support for Dahl’s theory that the “theological basis for Paul’s answers to the problems of 1 Cor 5-15 is set forth in chapters 1-4, and calls attention especially to 4:6-21 as foundational to Paul’s understanding of Christian existence in community” (41). Dahl’s theory can be found in Nils A. Dahl, “Paul and the Church at Corinth According to 1 Corinthians 1:10-4:21,” in *Christian History and Interpretation*, ed. W. R. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule, and R.R. Niebuhr (Cambridge, MA: University Press, 1967), 313-35. Ciampa and Rosner are in the minority of commentators in terms of taking 4:18-21 with the next section of this epistle, which stretches from 4:18 to 6:20. (Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 189–91). While this structuring of the passage is certainly plausible, this matter does not significantly affect one’s understanding of the kingdom in 4:20.

⁴These arrogant persons are likely among the “countless guides in Christ” the apostle references in 4:15. So Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 147.

⁵The οὐ γὰρ . . . ἀλλὰ structure of 4:20 is unique to Paul in the New Testament (see also Rom 14:17) and in Jewish literature, though 1 Macc. 3:19 is similar in style. So Gary Shogren, “The Pauline Proclamation of the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Christ within Its New Testament Setting” (Ph.D. diss., University of Aberdeen, 1986), 58; Günter Haufe, “Reich Gottes bei Paulus und in der Jesustradition,” *NTS* 31 (1985): 469. Haufe classifies the construction in 1 Cor 4:20 as an *antithetischer Definitionssatz* ‘antithetical definition,’ though he notes that Paul may have adapted it for his own purposes (469). Given the parallel in 1 Macc 3:19, Cho believes it is unnecessary to look for Hellenistic philosophical parallels (Youngmo Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom in the Writings of Luke and Paul: An Attempt to Reconcile These Concepts*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs [Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2005], 59); so also Shogren, “Pauline Proclamation,” 58.

⁶Haufe, “Reich Gottes bei Paulus,” 469.

immediate context in 1 Corinthians has influenced what Paul chose to say about the kingdom: “It [1 Cor 4:20] is concentrating on one dimension of that new reality in light of certain misunderstandings present in the Corinthian congregation.”⁷ In the context of 4:14-21, Paul is responding to the arrogance of the Corinthians as well as certain “guides” (v.15) with whom the Corinthians were enamored. In 4:19 the apostle threatens to come and evaluate these so-called guides firsthand, which leads to his statement about the kingdom in 4:20.

Paul’s warning in 4:19 is important for understanding his reference to the kingdom in 4:20 for at least two reasons: (1) the *γάρ* in verse 20 signals that it is the ground for verse 19,⁸ and (2) the same contrast between *λόγος* and *δύναμις* in verse 19 is used in verse 20 to characterize the kingdom of God.⁹ Concerning the first point, Paul claims that the litmus test for these so-called guides in Corinth would not be their “talk” (*λόγον*) but rather their “power” (*δύναμιν*) (v.19). The reason (*γάρ*) power serves as the standard is because the kingdom “consists in power” (*ἐν δυνάμει*) (v.20).¹⁰ We may conclude, therefore, that in order for one’s ministry and proclamation to receive Paul’s apostolic approval, it must manifest the same power that characterizes the kingdom of God. Given this understanding of the relationship between verses 19-20, we now turn to consider the second point above—Paul’s use of the terms *λόγος* and *δύναμις*.

⁷Karl Donfried, “The Kingdom of God in Paul,” in *The Kingdom of God in 20th-Century Interpretation*, ed. Wendell L. Willis (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 179.

⁸So Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 93.

⁹So Schrage, who seeks to derive the meaning of *δύναμις* from this contrast. Wolfgang Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, EKKNT 7 (Zürich: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1991), 1:362–63. For more on this contrast, see below. The repetition of the terms *λόγος* and *δύναμις* in vv. 19 and 20 likely explains the lack of a verb in 4:20.

¹⁰Paul’s statement in 4:20 is elliptical, with the ESV and NASB supplying the verb “consists” to characterize the relationship of the kingdom to “talk” and “power.”

Understanding the contrast between these terms sheds light on what Paul means when he says that the kingdom consists in δύναμις.

Paul's Use of Λόγος and Δύναμις

Paul uses the preposition ἐν in verse 20 in conjunction with the terms λόγον (ἐν λόγῳ) and δύναμις (ἐν δυνάμει). These prepositional phrases serve to characterize the kingdom by way of contrast.¹¹ At first glance, the contrast between the λόγος and the δύναμις of certain persons in Corinth may appear to be a contrast between verbal proclamation and powerful actions. However, Schrage rightly notes that the immediate and wider context of 1 Corinthians 1-4 makes it clear that Paul is not disparaging verbal proclamation *per se*.¹² In fact, a certain kind of verbal proclamation is foundational to the apostle's purposes and calling. For example, Paul is a steward of the mysteries of God (4:1), and he has fathered the Corinthian believers "through the gospel" (4:15). Both of these realities require verbal proclamation. The wider context makes this point as well, for Paul speaks of the character and content of his verbal proclamation in 2:1-4. The very purpose for which Christ sent him was to "preach the gospel" (1:17); it is the "word (λόγος) of the cross" which God uses to save the foolish, the weak, and the low and despised among both Jews and Greeks (1:18-31). In 2:13 Paul imparts wisdom via "words" (λόγοις) that must be taught and interpreted by the Spirit. Clearly, then, the apostle is not denigrating verbal proclamation *per se* in 4:20. Furthermore, as Pogoloff

¹¹The ESV translation of 4:20 adequately captures the sense of Paul's elliptical statement by supplying the verb "consists." However, the flexibility of the preposition ἐν is reflected in various translations of this verse, so it is probably preferable not to be overly precise in this instance. It may be that the phrases ἐν δυνάμει and ἐν λόγῳ are intended to convey a combination of concepts—in the sphere of, associated with, with reference to, etc. These glosses should not be seen as mutually exclusive, and the context must ultimately determine the sense in which the kingdom consists ἐν δυνάμει and not ἐν λόγῳ.

¹²Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 1:362–63.

points out, Paul himself uses rhetoric in the very passages in which he rejects it.¹³ It still remains, then, to find out specifically what Paul means by the term λόγος.

Examining the term λόγος. In order to understand how Paul is using the term λόγος in 4:19-20, a distinction must be made between the two uses of the term in the early chapters of 1 Corinthians. In 1:18, for example, the λόγος of the cross is said to be the “power of God” to those who are being saved. This use of λόγος is close to the English terms message and proclamation, terms that carry no necessary negative connotations for Paul. On the other hand, Paul uses the term λόγον with a negative connotation in 4:19-20, particularly as the term is contrasted with δύναμις. It is this contrast of the terms λόγος and δύναμις, along with the immediate context, that is most helpful interpreting what the respective terms mean. Ciampa and Rosner correctly identify the contrast as one between “mere words or rhetorical artistry, and the power of God to change lives and destinies.”¹⁴ A similar contrast appears in 2:4-5, where “plausible words of wisdom” (ἐν πειθοῦ[ς] σοφίας λόγοις) are contrasted with the “demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως) (v .4). Another example of a negative use of λόγος occurs in 1:17, where Paul says he was not sent to preach the gospel with “words of eloquent wisdom” (ἐν σοφίᾳ λόγου). There is, therefore, good reason to believe that in 4:19-20 Paul uses the term λόγος to refer to mere talk or rhetoric that is characterized by worldly wisdom and eloquence.¹⁵ This kind of λόγος is what Paul rejects as being inconsistent with the kingdom of God in 4:19-20.

¹³Stephen M. Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia: The Rhetorical Situation of 1 Corinthians*, SBLDS 134 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 121.

¹⁴Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 195.

¹⁵Litfin examines Paul’s proclamation in light of Greco-Roman rhetoric and comes to a similar conclusion. A. Duane Litfin, *St. Paul’s Theology of Proclamation: 1 Corinthians 1-4 and Greco-Roman Rhetoric*, SNTSMS 79 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 244–62. Winter agrees with Litfin that the issue for Paul is not the content but the form of preaching by certain persons in Corinth (Bruce W. Winter, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists*, SNTSMS 96 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 186–87). Winter examines Paul’s critique of the sophistic tradition (179-202). Pogoloff examines how

Examining the term δύναμις. The interpretation of λόγος suggested above informs Paul's use of the term δύναμις in 1 Corinthians 1-4. Marshall claims that it was common for the term δύναμις to be associated with rhetoric in a first-century Greco-Roman context to denote "strength, power, influence."¹⁶ Such an association would add rhetorical force to the contrast Paul draws between the δύναμις of God's kingdom and that of traditional Greek rhetoric, the latter being implied in the phrases "lofty speech or wisdom" (ὑπεροχὴν λόγου ἢ σοφίας) (2:1) and "plausible words of wisdom" (πειθοῖ[ς] σοφίας λόγοις) (2:4).¹⁷ Other ideas of what Paul means by δύναμις have also been suggested.¹⁸ The idea that God's power in 4:20 is a reference to Spirit-produced signs goes back at least as far as Chrysostom.¹⁹ Donfried understands the term similarly in 4:19-20, so that it refers to "the powerful deeds which accompanied his [Paul's] apostolic preaching."²⁰ Several Pauline passages are cited to support this understanding, including 1 Corinthians 2:4.²¹ Hays likewise speculates that God may need to "unleash some

rhetoric and eloquence are linked with status in Paul's Greco-Roman context, claiming that Paul has "radically reversed" these cultural narratives. "What persuades is speech about what is ordinarily unfit for contemplation: not a life which is cultured, wise, and powerful, but one marked by the worst shame and the lowest possible status. Paul's rhetoric of the cross thus opposes the cultural values surrounding eloquence" (Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia*, 120).

¹⁶Peter Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth: Social Conventions in Paul's Relations with the Corinthians*, WUNT 23 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 387.

¹⁷Ibid., 388.

¹⁸For a list of several interpretations offered by scholars concerning Paul's use of the term "power" in 4:20, see William David Spencer, "The Power in Paul's Teaching (1 Cor 4:9-10)," *JETS* 32 (1989): 51-61. Spencer argues that Paul's power is his "display of his life of suffering as an imitation of Christ" (54), which is closer to the position in this work insofar as it distances God's power from worldly conceptions of the concept. However, Spencer does not include proclamation in his conception of power.

¹⁹Chrysostom, *1 Corinthians Homily 14.2*, trans. A. Roberts and W.H. Rambaut, *ANF*, American ed., vol. 1 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 1: 448.

²⁰Donfried, "The Kingdom of God in Paul," 180; so Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom*, 58.

²¹Donfried, "The Kingdom of God in Paul," 180. See also Rom 15:19; 2 Cor 12:12; 1 Thess 1:5.

manifestation of the power of the Spirit,” something on the order of Elijah’s triumph over the prophets of Baal, in order to silence the arrogant in Corinth.²²

While Hays rightly points to the Old Testament as the background for the concept of God’s power, he and others fail to note the primary means through which this power is exercised in the early chapters of 1 Corinthians—the word of the cross.²³ It is not miraculous signs that demonstrate God’s power, but rather the seemingly foolish message of Christ crucified. Though initially Paul may seem to be touting an outwardly impressive kind of power with his comments in 4:19-20, Conzelmann’s analysis is correct: “[Paul] has not forgotten that *δύναμις* appears in weakness. The power in virtue of which he will put them to the test is no other than the power indicated in 2:1ff.”²⁴ To support the idea that in 1 Corinthians 1-4 God’s *δύναμις* is manifested primarily through the proclamation of the cross, Paul’s five references to *δύναμις* prior to 4:19-20 will be examined below.

Prior to 4:19-20, the term *δύναμις* is used in 1:17, 1:18, 1:24, 2:4, and 2:5. In 1:17 Paul wants to avoid emptying the cross of its *δύναμις*, which happens when one relies on “words of eloquent wisdom.” In 1:18 Paul makes his second reference to God’s power. While the word of the cross is “folly” in the world’s estimation, it is “the power (*δύναμις*) of God” to those who are being saved (v.18). Garland notes the association of God’s Word with power in the Old Testament (Jer 23:29; Wis 18:14-16), and in verse 18 he takes power to refer to “the effectiveness of the cross to make God known to

²²Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), 75.

²³Garland notes the association of God’s power and God’s word in the Old Testament (Jer 23:29; see also Wis 18:14-16). Garland also rightly connects God’s power to the message of the cross in the context of 1 Cor 1-4. David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 62.

²⁴Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 93. Paul’s threat to come to the Corinthians with a “rod” in 4:21 may seem to speak against Conzelmann’s interpretation of *δύναμις* in 4:19-20, but Conzelmann claims that such a gesture would be for Paul an *opus alienum*, or a work that goes against his normal character.

humankind, to accomplish salvation, to defeat evil, and to transform lives and values.”²⁵ Paul’s third use of the term δύναμις occurs in 1:24, where Christ is referred to as the θεοῦ δύναμιν ‘power of God.’ When this statement is taken together with Paul’s reference to “Christ crucified” as the subject of his preaching in 1:23, this usage of δύναμις in 1:24 is consistent with the previous examples. The Christ who is the power of God in 1:24 is the Christ crucified of 1:23, thus connecting δύναμις to the message of the cross. An example from outside 1 Corinthians provides confirmatory evidence for this understanding of δύναμις. In Romans 1:16 Paul refers to the gospel as the “power (δύναμις) of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” Like the word of the cross in 1 Corinthians 1-4, the gospel in Romans 1:16 is God’s powerful means of bringing about salvation.²⁶ Moo also draws this parallel between Romans 1:16 and 1 Corinthians 1:18, with both verses connecting the gospel to God’s saving power.²⁷

The final two occurrences of δύναμις in 1 Corinthians 1-4 are in 2:4 and 2:5 respectively. Paul’s reference to the Spirit in 2:4 anticipates his subsequent discussion in 2:6-3:1 in which the Spirit figures prominently.²⁸ The apostle’s speech was “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως) (2:4).

²⁵Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 62. The salvific aspect of the word of the cross is confirmed by Paul’s claim in 1:21 that God is using his message to “save those who believe.”

²⁶When 1 Cor 1:17 and 18 are taken together, the word of the cross is seen to be synonymous with the gospel. Paul has chosen to refer to the gospel primarily as the word of the cross in 1 Cor 1-4, likely because a focus on Christ’s crucifixion fits with the apostle’s desire to undermine worldly wisdom and promote humility and unity among the Corinthians. Nevertheless, the term gospel is used 8 times in this epistle: 1:17; 4:15; 9:12, 14, 16, 18, 23; 15:1.

²⁷Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 66. Moo cites 1 Cor 4:19-20 as evidence of the relationship between δύναμις and the word of the gospel (66 n14), presumably drawing a very close connection between the kingdom and the gospel. Schreiner draws essentially the same connection between Rom 1:16 and 1 Cor 1:18, noting, “The succeeding context of 1 Cor 1 clarifies that the power of the gospel lies in its effective work in calling believers to salvation (1 Cor 1:23-24, 26-29),” (Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998], 60).

²⁸See also 1 Cor 3:16 where the Spirit marks out the people of God as God’s new temple—the church at Corinth in this instance—by His indwelling presence. In 2:6-3:1 the Spirit’s role is discussed with regard to his ministry of revealing (2:10) and interpreting (2:13) God’s hidden wisdom to spiritual persons (2:15), the latter being understood as believers indwelt and animated by God’s Spirit.

Commentators differ over how to understand the genitives *πνεύματος* and *δυνάμεως*—whether subjectively (Paul’s message was itself a demonstration of the Spirit), objectively (the Spirit’s presence was demonstrated via Paul’s message), or both—and while a decision is difficult, the meaning of the verse is not affected significantly. Taking the genitives to be objective (ESV and NASB) may be preferable, resulting in a translation such as “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” Regardless of how one understands these genitives, it is the relationship of the Spirit to power that is significant.²⁹ The Spirit is characterized by power, even though the two are distinguishable. Garland rightly grasps the main point: “What is clear is that Paul attributes the Corinthians’ conversion to the powerful intervention of the Spirit.”³⁰ First Corinthians 2:5 appears to offer support for this understanding, as Paul’s desire is that the Corinthians’ faith might rest in God’s power and not in the wisdom of men. Therefore, when 2:4 and 2:5 are taken together, Paul’s goal is that the demonstration of the Spirit’s power in his [Paul’s] proclamation will lead the Corinthians to put their faith in God’s powerful saving work rather than in the wisdom of men. Witherington concludes, “God’s dominion is not just rhetoric or eloquent talk, but is in the end a matter of the transforming power of the Spirit.”³¹

Unlike the previous references to *δύναμις*, Paul’s two uses of the term in 2:4-5 do not refer explicitly to the word of the cross. However, several observations support the idea that Paul’s references to the Spirit are closely related to the word of the cross. First, Paul’s demonstration of the Spirit and power in 2:4 took place in his initial proclamation among the Corinthians, the theme of which was “Jesus Christ and him crucified” (2:1-2).

²⁹The Spirit is closely associated with power elsewhere in Paul’s epistles. For example, see Rom 1:4; 15:13, 19; 1 Thess 1:5. Fee takes the terms “Spirit” and “power” to be close to a hendiadys given their close association in Paul’s writings. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 95.

³⁰Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 87.

³¹Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 48.

Second, Paul emphasizes the Spirit's role as the revealer (2:10) and interpreter (2:13) of "a secret and hidden wisdom of God" (2:7), a wisdom that has been identified in chapters 1-2 as Christ (1:24, 1:30) and him crucified (2:2). Third, there is a close connection between the "things of the Spirit" (2:14) and the "word of the cross" (1:18), as both are considered to be "folly" (μωρία) to unbelievers. There is strong evidence, then, that the Spirit's power is integrally connected to the message of the cross in the context of 1 Corinthians 1-4. To add support to this conclusion, Paul's grouping of the same concepts in 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5 is worth looking at briefly.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5 Paul is confident that God has chosen the Thessalonian believers (v. 4), and he gives the reason in verse 5: "Because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction." The term "only" (μόνον) is important, for Paul is not denigrating the role of verbal proclamation, but rather he is pointing out that his preaching was accompanied by power and by the Holy Spirit. Just as Paul's words came in the demonstration of the Spirit and power in 1 Corinthians 2:4, so too in 1 Thessalonians 1:5 the gospel is attended with power and with the Holy Spirit.³² Although the Spirit and power are distinguishable, it is the close association of the two that is emphasized in 1 Thessalonians 1:5. Wanamaker notes, "It is difficult to separate 'in power' from the subsequent words 'in the Holy Spirit,' because the source of the power for Paul was the Holy Spirit."³³ The power associated with the Spirit is, therefore, closely associated with the message of the gospel in both 1 Thessalonians 1:5 and 1 Corinthians 2:4.³⁴

³²In 1 Thess 1:5 Paul adds the phrase "and with full conviction." In his discussion of the parallel between Rom 1:16 and 1 Cor 1:18, Schreiner likewise draws the connection in 1 Thess 1:4-5 between God's election and his power (Schreiner, *Romans*, 60).

³³So Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 79.

³⁴Wanamaker appeals to Rom 15:18ff., Gal 3:5, and 2 Cor 12:12ff. to support the idea that δύναμις in 1 Thes 1:5 is a reference to the "miraculous signs and wonders that accompanied the preaching of the gospel." Ibid., 79. While it is certainly possible that Paul's gospel proclamation among the

Conclusions on Δύναμις

The exegesis above indicates that Paul's use of the term δύναμις in 1 Corinthians 1-4 is integrally related to his proclamation of the word of the cross. In the case of 2:4-5, the Spirit is also involved in this manifestation of power through the proclamation of Christ crucified. God's power, then, may be defined as his effective means of using the proclamation of the cross to bring about his saving purposes.³⁵ Schrage defines power similarly in this context by using the term *Durchschlagskraft*, a reference to the effectiveness of something.³⁶ While the term δύναμις may carry different associations later in 1 Corinthians, including the power of the resurrection (6:14; 15:43), a different idea is expressed in 1 Corinthians 1-4 where power is set over against words of worldly wisdom. Paul is speaking of "effectiveness in life as against mere rhetoric."³⁷ This understanding of power, specifically as it is contrasted with the term λόγον, is that which characterizes the kingdom of God in 4:20. Thus, to say that the kingdom of God consists in power rather than talk is to say that the kingdom is manifest where God's saving purposes are effected through the proclamation of the cross.³⁸

Thessalonians was accompanied by miraculous signs and wonders as it was at other times (see Rom. 15:18-19), there is nothing in the context of 1 Thess 1 which demands that the reference to power in 1:5 has such powerful works in view. The fact that Paul highlights the conversion of the Thessalonians (1:9-10) and their reception of his [Paul's] message as the Word of God makes it more likely that his reference to δύναμις in 1:5 refers to the saving power of the gospel rather than signs and wonders.

³⁵Schreiner strikes a similar note regarding the parallel passage in Rom 1:16-17 noted above. The gospel is the "power (δύναμις) of God for (εἰς) salvation" (v. 16). The εἰς here indicates a result, so that the gospel is God's power resulting in salvation. Schreiner observes, "The δύναμις θεοῦ in the gospel signifies the effective and transforming power that accompanies the preaching of the gospel." As it relates to 1 Cor 1:18, Schreiner notes that the context of 1 Cor 1:23-24; 26-29 "clarifies that the power of the gospel lies in its effective work in calling believers to salvation" (Schreiner, *Romans*, 60).

³⁶Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 1:362-63.

³⁷Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 376. Thiselton makes a similar point with regard to the λόγος vs. δύναμις contrast in 4:19: "When the semantic opposition is that of wind, air, gas bags, or being inflated with these, δύναμις represents solidity or substance" (376).

³⁸A reference to God's saving purposes here does not deny that the proclamation of the word of the cross has other effects, sometimes resulting in judgment when this message is rejected. However,

Theological Conclusions

A number of theological conclusions arise from the exegesis of 1 Corinthians 4:20. The kingdom's relationship to the cross, to Christ, to the Spirit, and to eschatology will be noted below.

The kingdom and the cross. The relationship between the kingdom and the cross is perhaps the most obvious connection in 1 Corinthians 4:20. The power (δύναμις) that characterizes the kingdom in 4:20 is the very power manifested through the proclamation of the cross in 1 Corinthians 1-4. The word of the cross is synonymous with the gospel (compare 1:17 with 1:18), and it is the means by which the saving power of the kingdom is manifest in this present age. On a similar note, Vickers refers to the "cruciform shape" of Paul's teaching on the kingdom,³⁹ which fits precisely with the apostle's emphases in 1 Corinthians 1-4. Paul is trying to convince the Corinthians that their worldly wisdom and arrogance is incompatible with God's cross-shaped wisdom. While the cross certainly receives a greater emphasis than the kingdom in chapters 1-4, the two themes are interrelated rather than competing.

The kingdom and Christ. As a part of recognizing the kingdom's relationship to the proclamation of the cross, the centrality of Christ in the kingdom should not be overlooked. The kingdom's cruciform shape means that it is necessarily Christocentric, for the word of the cross is the message of *Christ* crucified (2:2).⁴⁰ Paul even refers to Christ as the "power of God" in 1:24. In other epistles, Paul refers to God's kingdom as "the kingdom of his beloved Son" (Col 1:13) and "the kingdom of Christ and

Paul's primary emphasis in these chapters is on the saving power of a message that is deemed to be foolish and weak according to worldly wisdom.

³⁹Brian J. Vickers, "The Kingdom of God in Paul's Gospel," *SBJT* 12 (2008): 63.

⁴⁰Van Bruggen rightly notes the close connection between the kingdom and the person of Christ. J. Van Bruggen, "Kingdom of God or Justification of the Sinner? Paul Between Jesus and Luther," *In die Skriflig* 35 (2001): 260.

God” (Eph 5:5). We should be careful, then, not to separate the kingdom from Christ’s person and work.⁴¹

The kingdom and the Spirit. The role of the Spirit in the proclamation of the word of the cross is highlighted in 2:4-5. Just as the kingdom consists in power in 4:20, so Paul’s message was “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (2:4).⁴² The demonstration of the Spirit—however one understands that phrase—is inseparable from the display of God’s power as the gospel is proclaimed. Moreover, the Spirit is both the revealer and interpreter of God’s “secret and hidden wisdom” (2:7), which in the context of chapters 1-4 clearly refers to the message of the cross and its implications. The Spirit’s work in preparing one for the kingdom is even more clear in 6:11, which we will examine in the next chapter.

The kingdom and eschatology. First Corinthians 4:20 also contributes to our understanding of the temporal nature of the kingdom. While Cerfaux has argued that the kingdom is exclusively a future reality, most commentators rightly see both present and future dimensions to the kingdom in Paul’s teaching.⁴³ Paul’s teaching in 4:20 supports

⁴¹Seeing Jesus as central to the kingdom is consistent with the witness of the Synoptic Gospels. To take but one example, Yarbrough draws the following conclusion concerning the theme of the kingdom in Matthew’s Gospel: “At stake in ‘the kingdom of God’ in Matthean definition is not some literary or conceptual ‘center’ of early church teaching. It is rather the short- and long-term destiny of every individual soul and indeed of the entire world with Jesus, or personal faith commitment to him, as decisive criterion, and with Jesus also the ultimate Judge” (Robert W. Yarbrough, “The Kingdom of God in the New Testament: Matthew and Revelation,” in *The Kingdom of God*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012], 122).

⁴²Fee emphasizes the Spirit’s role in the demonstration of God’s power, so that the crucial matter for Paul is the “powerful, dynamic presence of the Spirit to save and to sanctify (cf. [1 Cor] 5:1-5).” Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 191.

⁴³Lucien Cerfaux, *The Church in the Theology of St. Paul* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1959), 385. For commentators who see both present and future aspects of the kingdom, see Rudolf Schnackenburg, *God’s Rule and Kingdom* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1963), 290; Donfried, “The Kingdom of God in Paul,” 175-90; Ben Witherington, *Jesus, Paul and the End of the World: A Comparative Study in New Testament Eschatology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 56-58; Gary Shogren, “The Pauline Proclamation of the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Christ within Its

the idea that the kingdom has a present aspect, for the power that characterizes the kingdom is effected through the word of the cross in this present age.⁴⁴ Admittedly, Paul does not say explicitly that the kingdom is present, but according to 4:19 the power that characterizes the kingdom is the litmus test for whether or not one's ministry and proclamation receive Paul's apostolic commendation. Furthermore, as Shogren notes, the idea that the power of the kingdom is present but not the kingdom itself should be rejected. God's power is a "token" of his kingdom, and we should understand 1 Corinthians 4:20 as teaching that the kingdom is partially manifested in this age.⁴⁵ In this sense, then, we can say that the kingdom is a present reality without denying its full future manifestation.

Confirmatory evidence for the present aspect of the kingdom can be found in other Pauline passages. Lietzmann cites Romans 14:17 as the closest parallel, where Paul says the following: "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."⁴⁶ This verse is a helpful parallel with 1 Corinthians 4:20, not only because of its similar structure—the kingdom is not about x but about y⁴⁷—but also because Paul uses the nature or character of the kingdom to support his argument in both verses. Paul begins this section in Romans 14:13 by addressing the "strong" believers in Rome (those who feel the liberty to eat and drink), but rather than encouraging them to exercise their own liberty, he exhorts them to walk in

New Testament Setting" (Ph.D. diss., University of Aberdeen, 1986), 116-17; L. Joseph Kreitzer, *Jesus and God in Paul's Eschatology*, JSNTSup19 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987) 132-34.

⁴⁴So Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom*, 58; Shogren, "Pauline Proclamation," 60.

⁴⁵Shogren, "The Pauline Proclamation," 60. Godet rightly notes the present aspect of the kingdom in 4:20, though his characterization of it is too narrow when he refers to Paul's use of the kingdom "in the spiritual sense in which it already exists in the souls of believers" (Frédéric Louis Godet, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971], 236).

⁴⁶Hans Lietzmann, *An die Korinther I,II*, HNT 9 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1969), 22.

⁴⁷Haufe also notes the similar form of these verses. Haufe, "Reich Gottes bei Paulus," 469.

love and so avoid grieving their weaker brothers (those who feel that eating and drinking are forbidden by God). Offending the weak destroys those for whom Christ died (v.15). Based on his argument in verses 13-15, Paul draws an inference for the strong in verse 16: “So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil.”⁴⁸ The ground for this inference is found in 14:17, where the apostle appeals to the character of the kingdom.⁴⁹ The kingdom is not a matter of eating and drinking—the very things the believers in Rome were at odds over—but rather of “righteousness”⁵⁰ and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”⁵¹ The kingdom has a present dimension, then, insofar as its values and character ought to animate the lives of believers in this age.⁵²

Identifying the kingdom as present in 1 Corinthians 4:20 and Romans 14:17 is not a denial of its fundamentally eschatological cast. In fact, Barrett claims that the kingdom is always eschatological but that it is sometimes “brought forward into the present.”⁵³ To speak of the present aspect of the kingdom, then, is to speak of an

⁴⁸Schreiner, *Romans*, 727.

⁴⁹Ibid. Schreiner notes that v. 17 supports the inference in v. 16, and not vv. 15 and 16 combined. Thompson puts vv. 17-18 at the center of a chiasmic structure in 14:13-21, so that the kingdom (17) and that which is acceptable to God (18) grounds Paul’s exhortation to the strong. (Michael B. Thompson, *Clothed with Christ: The Example and Teaching of Jesus in Romans 12.1-15.13*, JSNTSup 59 [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991], 201–5).

⁵⁰Jungel points to Rom 14:17 to support the idea that righteousness has replaced the kingdom for Paul. Eberhard Jungel, *Paulus und Jesus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1967), 267. However, Wedderburn claims that Jungel does not adequately explain why Paul has not also included the terms “joy” and “peace” in lieu of kingdom language (A. J. M. Wedderburn, “The Problem of Continuity,” in *Paul and Jesus: Collected Essays*, ed. A. J. M. Wedderburn [Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1989], 102).

⁵¹Barrett notes that righteousness, peace, and joy might also be described as the fruit of the Spirit according to Galatians 5:22. C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, rev ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1991), 243. Moo rightly notes that all three terms—righteousness, peace, and joy—are a result of the “believer’s experience of the Holy Spirit” (Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 857). Moo thus connects the phrase ἐν πνεύματι ἀγίῳ to all three qualities and not just χαρὰ “joy” (857n46).

⁵²Moo claims that there are multiple references to the ministry of Jesus in the context of Rom 14, thus Paul may be referencing Christ’s teaching on the true nature of the kingdom (Moo, *Romans*, 857).

⁵³Elsewhere Barrett assigns the kingdom in Paul’s epistles primarily to the future, though with regard to 1 Cor 4:20 and Rom 14:17 he sees the “partial anticipation in the present of the future kingdom.”

eschatological reality that has dawned in the present age. According to Barrett, the power of the kingdom works by the power of the Holy Spirit “by which God’s purpose is put into effect and the future anticipated in the present.”⁵⁴ Similarly, Collins refers to the apocalyptic tradition in which the kingdom is the “ultimate manifestation of God’s power.”⁵⁵ In Paul’s case, the power of the kingdom was being manifest paradoxically through the word of a crucified messiah. This understanding of power as an eschatological reality is a constant theme in Jesus’ own ministry as portrayed in the Synoptic Gospels.⁵⁶

The Reign of Believers in 4:8

Having examined Paul’s first explicit reference to the kingdom in 1 Corinthians 4:20, it will be argued below that Paul’s reference to the reign of believers in 4:8 also contributes to his theology of the kingdom. Just as the kingdom is recognized to be central to Jesus’ ministry even when the term is not used, so also Paul is able to speak about the kingdom without using the noun βασιλεία. Examining Paul’s uses of the verb βασιλεύω presents another angle from which to analyze his theology of the kingdom. Of

C.K. Barrett, *From First Adam to Last: A Study in Pauline Theology* (New York: Scribner, 1962), 100. Similarly, Lietzmann claims that the kingdom is typically eschatological for Paul, though in a few cases it is manifested in the present. He lists the following passages in support: Col 1:13, 4:1; Rom 14:17. (Lietzmann, *An die Korinther I-II*, 22).

⁵⁴Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 118.

⁵⁵Collins, *First Corinthians*, 202. When Paul speaks of the power of the word of the cross in 1:18-31, his reference to “this age” in 1:20 is seen as evidence of an eschatological context, which reflects a “Jewish apocalyptic notion of time” (93). Collins refers to the “eschatological motif of the power of God that is manifest in the message of the cross and divides humanity into two groups...” (92). The antithesis between “being saved” and “perishing” in 1:18 and 1:21 is the “most significant” eschatological theme in these verses (93).

⁵⁶Numerous examples could be cited to demonstrate this point from the Synoptics. Allo links the power referred to in 1 Cor 4:20 with the following statement by Christ in Mark 9:1: “Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power” (ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι εἰσὶν τινες ὧδε τῶν ἐστηκότων οἵτινες οὐ μὴ γεύσωνται θανάτου ἕως ἂν ἴδωσιν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐληλυθυῖαν ἐν δυνάμει.). E. B. Allo, *Saint Paul: Première épître aux Corinthiens* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1956), 79.

the twenty-one uses of the verb βασιλεύω and its compounds in the New Testament, ten of these uses occur in Paul's epistles,⁵⁷ with three occurring in 1 Corinthians. All three occurrences in 1 Corinthians appear in 4:8, where Paul uses the aorist ἐβασίλευσατε twice before using the subjunctive συμβασιλεύσωμεν. Before examining Paul's use of these verbs in 4:8, it will be helpful to briefly review the context of 4:1-7.

In 4:1-7 Paul addresses the very issue he highlighted near the beginning of the letter, namely, the partisan attitude among the Corinthians (1:10-12). Individual believers were seeking to distinguish themselves by identifying with particular leaders. In 4:1 Paul says that he and Apollos are merely "servants" and "stewards." Thus Paul cares little for human opinions, but is instead concerned with the Lord's judgment, a judgment that will be fully manifest at Christ's second coming (v. 5). Paul applies this truth to himself and to Apollos in order to teach the Corinthians not to go beyond Scripture and so be "puffed up in favor one against another" (v. 6), for everything they have is a gift from God (v. 7). The prideful attitude of one-upmanship leads to Paul's rebuke in verse 8: "Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings (ἐβασίλευσατε)! And would that you did reign (ἐβασίλευσατε), so that we might share the rule with you (συμβασιλεύσωμεν)!"

Whether the Corinthians would have described themselves using such exalted language in 4:8 is uncertain, but it does seem clear that Paul is employing what Schrage refers to as a *bitteren Ironie* 'bitter irony.'⁵⁸ Paul sarcastically uses these lofty descriptions to "stamp the Corinthians' self-esteem as wildly inflated."⁵⁹ They already

⁵⁷The reference in 1 Tim 6:15 is a participial form of βασιλεύω (τῶν βασιλευόντων).

⁵⁸Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 338. So Collins, *First Corinthians*, 183, who refers to it as a "biting irony." Collins claims that Paul's argument is a "classical example of paradoxical irony" (182). Witherington likewise notes the ironic cast of Paul's rhetoric. Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 141-42.

⁵⁹Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 179.

possessed “all that this Kingdom was to bring . . . a private millennium of their own.”⁶⁰

The conduct of the Corinthians was clearly incongruent with the message of the cross, a point Paul underlines in verses 9-13 by describing the lot of the apostles as endangered, shamed, weak, hungry, and suffering. In order to understand how Paul’s description of the Corinthians in 4:8 contributes to his theology of the kingdom, the verb βασιλεύω needs further analysis.

Examining βασιλεύω

The ESV translates the first use of ἐβασιλεύσατε in 4:8 as “you have become kings,” while the second is rendered, “And would that you did reign.” Although becoming a king is conceptually parallel with reigning, the consistency of the NIV’s translation may be preferable, where both occurrences of ἐβασιλεύσατε are translated as reigning.⁶¹ These aorists should be understood as ingressive, describing the entrance into a royal status. That a present state of affairs is in view is confirmed by the initial perfect periphrasis κεκορεσμένοι ἐστέ.⁶² The Corinthians were acting as if they presently enjoyed a royal status, but Paul knew better. He chides them by saying that he could only wish

⁶⁰Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, ICC 33 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1915), 84.

⁶¹With respect to the NIV’s translation, Fee notes that Paul’s language is “thoroughly eschatological and reflects his Jewish heritage, which viewed the saints as sharing the reign at the End, but not themselves as becoming kings.” Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 173. Fee prefers the Jewish apocalyptic emphasis on the dynamic character of the kingdom over against the “static, positional character of the Stoic . . .” (173n43). The translation of the NASB is also consistent in 1 Cor 4:8, where both uses of ἐβασιλεύσατε are translated as “become kings.” The translations “to obtain royal power” and “to become king” are listed as possibilities, especially in the aorist, according to BDAG, s.v. “βασιλεύω.” See also K. L. Schmidt, “βασιλεύω,” in *TDNT*, 1:590.

⁶²Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 178n47. According to Ciampa and Rosner, the stative lexeme of the aorists means that Paul is speaking of the entrance into a state, namely, the state of reigning or royal status (178n47). Campbell claims that the entrance of the state is in view when a perfective aspect is combined with a stative lexeme. He refers to this as an ingressive *Aktionsart* (Constantine R Campbell, *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008], 87). See also Wallace’s discussion of ingressive aorists in Daniel B Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 558–59.

that this were the case, for then he and the other apostles could leave behind their present sufferings and enjoy their eschatological reward.⁶³ Paul's third use of βασιλεύω in 4:8 is the compound form συμβασιλεύω. He assumes that if the Corinthians were in fact reigning, then he and the other apostles would be reigning with them.

One might object to the analysis above by arguing that Paul's use of the verb βασιλεύω in 4:8 does not in and of itself make the kingdom a relevant topic. However, several factors make it likely that the kingdom is relevant to Paul's rebuke. First, the immediate context makes it likely that Paul has in mind the future reign of believers in the kingdom, as the concepts of being rich and filled fit with the idea of a future reward. Second, Paul refers explicitly to the kingdom in 4:20, so the concept is informing his instructions in 1 Corinthians 4 at some level. Third, the lexical meaning and common usage of the verb βασιλεύω in the New Testament make it likely that the future reign of believers is in view.⁶⁴ The concept of reigning is, in fact, constitutive of the kingdom. Fourth, the only other use of the term συμβασιλεύω is in 2 Timothy 2:12, where Paul uses it to refer to the future reign of the saints. This latter usage is worth a brief look given the close parallel.

In an attempt to strengthen Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:11-13, Paul reminds his young co-worker that suffering and perseverance in this life will result in an eternal reward. Paul says in verse 12, "If we endure, we will also reign (συμβασιλεύσωμεν) with him" (v.12). Endurance in this present age will result in reigning with Christ in the age to come. That reigning is a future reality in 2:12 is supported in 2:10, where Paul says that he endures so that the elect may "obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal

⁶³The particle ὅφελόν in 4:8 speaks to the notion of an unfulfilled wish. BDAG, s.v. "ὅφελόν." 743; BDF §359 (1); see the brief discussion in A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 4th ed. (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1923), 1003–4. Collins notes that the particle γε adds emphasis. Collins, *1 Corinthians*, 187.

⁶⁴BDAG, s.v. "βασιλεύω."

glory.”⁶⁵ The final phrase, “eternal glory,” confirms the future aspect of this salvation.⁶⁶ We may conclude, then, that Paul’s use of *συμβασιλεύσωμεν* in 2 Timothy 2:12 is a reference to the future reign of believers with Christ. This is further support for seeing Paul’s use of the same verb in 1 Corinthians 4:8 as a reference to the future reign of believers.⁶⁷

Understanding Paul’s Critique

In addition to Paul’s use of *βασιλεύω* in 4:8, the nature of his critique about the reign of the Corinthians must also be understood. Thiselton claims that two factors are indispensable for understanding Paul’s critique: (1) the problem of over-realized eschatology,⁶⁸ and (2) the effects of perceived conversion experiences within many Greco-Roman and especially Greco-Oriental cults.⁶⁹ As evidence of the first factor, an over-realized eschatology, Paul accuses the Corinthians of already “having all you want,” “being rich,” and “reigning.” These related concepts of reigning and obtaining fullness and wealth are connected to the believer’s eschatological reward elsewhere in Scripture.⁷⁰

⁶⁵Knight notes that the New Testament concept of endurance “always has an expectant eschatological note.” He cites the following texts in support: Matt. 24:13; 10:22; Mark 13:13; Heb 12:2; Jas 1:12. George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 405.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 400.

⁶⁷Roose draws a distinction between the references to the believer’s rule in 1 Cor 4:8 and 2 Tim 2:12, claiming that the latter passage refers exclusively to a reward for leaders who suffer for the gospel, while the former refers to an eschatological gift for all believers. Hanna Roose, “Sharing in Christ’s Rule: Tracing a Debate in Earliest Christianity,” *JSNT* 27, no. 2 (2004): 138-45. Roose’s view is addressed in chapter 5, but for now it should be noted that the categories of gift and reward-for-endurance are not incompatible in Paul’s eschatology. For example, compare Col 1:22 and Col 1:23.

⁶⁸For a more thorough treatment of the topic of realized eschatology throughout 1 Corinthians, see Thiselton’s earlier article: Anthony Thiselton, “Realized Eschatology at Corinth,” *NTS* 24 (1978): 510-26.

⁶⁹Roose, “Sharing in Christ’s Rule,” 139. So also Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 357.

⁷⁰For example, see Isa 25:6; Matt 5:6; Rev 3:18.

While the apostles were “like men sentenced to death” (v.9), facing countless sufferings and hardships (vv.9-13), the Corinthians were acting as if they were already enjoying the full blessings of the future age. One might also argue that the denial of the resurrection of the dead in 1 Corinthians 15 is further evidence of this over-realized eschatology. Paul makes clear, however, that the full realization of the believer’s reward awaits the final, bodily resurrection (1 Cor 15:50; 6:9-10).

There are other reasons to support the idea that Paul was critiquing an over-realized eschatology. Paul’s use of the adverb ἤδη “already” implies that the Corinthians were claiming certain blessings prematurely, particularly as ἤδη is used in conjunction with the phrase χωρὶς ἡμῶν “apart from us.”⁷¹ Certainly Paul and the other apostles would be reigning with Christ if the Corinthians were. While Paul is clearly using sarcasm in 4:8, his comments assume that there will be a time in the future when he and the other apostles will reign with the Corinthian believers. The eschatological nature of this reign finds support in the near context in the references to the Lord’s coming. In 4:5 Paul urges the Corinthians not to make judgments prematurely, but rather to wait for the coming of Christ who is able to look upon the secret purposes of the heart. Similarly, Paul appeals to Christ’s second coming to validate his labors, for the Day, i.e., the Day of the Lord, will test each one’s work (3:13).⁷² The apostle is clearly concerned that believers in Corinth should act in accordance with God’s eschatological reckoning.

The second factor Thiselton cites for understanding Paul’s comments in 4:8 is the similarity of the language to descriptions of Greco-Roman and Greco-Oriental conversion experiences. The descriptions of these experiences bear similar marks to the errors associated with an over-realized eschatology. Gentile converts to these pagan

⁷¹Roose, “Sharing in Christ’s Rule,” 358.

⁷²In support of seeing this as a reference to the Day of the Lord, Ciampa and Rosner note the parallel in 1 Cor 1:8, where Paul refers to the “day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 154.

religions claimed to be entering into a new realm of existence, a realm free from the limitations and hardships of the present age.⁷³ Thiselton also points to Stoic parallels in Paul's language. For the Stoics, the images of reigning as a king, as well as being rich and filled, were common.⁷⁴ Collins notes, "Wisdom, riches, and royalty appear as a triad in the discourse of the Stoics."⁷⁵ It seems plausible that Paul would employ similar language for the purpose of rebuking the proud Corinthians. However, these parallels, along with other aspects of Paul's argument, have led some scholars to dispute the idea that Paul was correcting an over-realized eschatology.

Like Thiselton, Garland cites various parallels in Greco-Roman religious and philosophical thought to explain Paul's references to wealth, fulfillment, and regal status. However, Garland understands the primary problem to be ethical rather than eschatological. He points to Philo's characterization of the proud person: "[The proud person] considers himself superior to all in riches, estimation, beauty, strength, wisdom, temperance, justice, eloquence, knowledge; while everyone else he regards as poor, disesteemed, unhonoured, foolish, unjust, ignorant, outcast, in fact good for nothing."⁷⁶ Kuck likewise notes that Stoic/Cynic parallels support this ethical interpretation: "The philosophical σοφὸς is rich and a king because he has achieved the intellectual and moral

⁷³Nock claims the following of Gentile converts, who had no prior tradition to regulate their instincts as did the Jewish Christians: "Many of the [Gentile] converts, convinced that they were on a new plane of life, felt that they could do anything: they were kings (iv. 8), they were in the Spirit, they were dead to the flesh and emancipated—so that their physical conduct might seem to them a matter of indifference; they were altogether superior to the unchanged men around them." Arthur Darby Nock, *St. Paul* (New York: Harper, 1948), 174. So Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 357.

⁷⁴Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 357–58; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 137; Collins, *First Corinthians*, 186–187. Moffat notes that Diogenes, whose tomb was shown at Corinth, had taught a Stoic to maintain "'I alone am rich, I alone reign as king' in the world" (James Moffatt, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, Moffatt New Testament Commentary [New York: Harper, 1938], 49).

⁷⁵Collins, *First Corinthians*, 186–187. Collins also points out that wisdom is a royal theme in the Jewish tradition (187). He cites Wis 6:21: "If your delight be then in thrones and scepters, O ye kings of the people, honour wisdom, that ye may reign for evermore."

⁷⁶Philo, *On the Virtues* 32.174 (LCL 341[1939]: 270–71).

ideal.”⁷⁷ Paul was therefore censuring the Corinthians in 4:8 for following worldly conceptions of wisdom. The most important evidence for Garland’s position comes from the context of verses 9-13, where Paul contrasts the “cross-centered lifestyles of the apostles with the Corinthians’ vainglory.”⁷⁸ Paul’s exhortation in 4:8 is not about an over-realized eschatology, but rather it speaks to the same antithesis he has been addressing throughout 1 Corinthians 1-4: the wisdom of the world vis-à-vis the wisdom and power of God revealed in the cross.

Determining whether to side with Garland and Kuck or with the Thiselton is difficult, in part because our knowledge of the Corinthians’ beliefs is incomplete. Both sides of this issue cite Greco-Roman religious and philosophical influences on the Corinthians, influences that likely contributed to the Corinthians’ distorted view of the Christian life. These commentators also agree that Paul was concerned with rebuking the pride of the Corinthians in this passage. However, the fact that Paul was mainly concerned with the pride of the Corinthians does not rule out an eschatological component to his critique. Thiselton’s claim that the Corinthians had an over-realized eschatology is certainly plausible, particularly in a congregation where some were denying the future, bodily resurrection of believers (15:12). Other issues that arise in 1 Corinthians may add support to this position.⁷⁹ Even if one remains unconvinced that the

⁷⁷David W. Kuck, *Judgment and Community Conflict: Paul’s Use of Apocalyptic Judgment Language in 1 Corinthians 3:5-4:5*, NovTSup 66 (New York: E.J. Brill, 1992), 217. Citing the work of Marshall, Kuck notes the “impressive evidence for seeing the Corinthians under the influence of a broad Greek tradition which stressed status, excess, superiority, arrogance, freedom, and wisdom, with the related social conduct of arrogance and indifference” (218). See Peter Marshall, “Hybrists Not Gnostics in Corinth,” SBL Seminar Papers 23 (1984): 277-87; See also Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth*, 181–218.

⁷⁸Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 139. Kuck takes the ἤδη “already” in 4:8 to refer to the moral and spiritual perfection that the Corinthians claimed to have achieved (Kuck, *Judgment and Community Conflict*, 216).

⁷⁹Schreiner notes other factors that may provide evidence for an over-realized eschatology on the part of the Corinthians, including their distorted view of spiritual gifts. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL; InterVarsity Press; Leicester, UK: Apollos, 2001), 92. For more, see Thiselton, “Realized Eschatology at Corinth,” 510-26.

Corinthians held to an over-realized eschatology, it is not speculative to say that Paul *appeals* to eschatology in 4:8, as he points the Corinthians to the futurity of the believer's reward.⁸⁰ Whether or not the Corinthians realized it, they were repudiating an important feature of Paul's teaching and example in ministry. Suffering and weakness are the norm in the present age, while inheriting the kingdom and the fullness of its blessings would require a future, bodily resurrection (15:50-53). There is no reason, then, to draw a false dichotomy: Paul does not address ethics *instead of* eschatology, but rather ethics—along with other errors and misunderstandings—*with* eschatology.⁸¹ Hays notes, "The eschatological framework is [Paul's] way of getting critical leverage on the Corinthian boasting, as he tries to encourage them to understand themselves in terms of an apocalyptic perspective that locates present existence between the cross and the *parousia*."⁸² As will be shown below, this approach is evident elsewhere in 1 Corinthians.

Paul uses eschatology to critique the errors of the Corinthians when he contrasts the wisdom of the world with the wisdom of God in chapters 1-3. This is not only a contrast between two sources of wisdom, but also a clash of the present age with the future. In 2:6 Paul says the wisdom of the cross is "not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away."⁸³ Then in 3:18 Paul addresses those who see themselves as wise "in this age" (ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ). To operate based on worldly wisdom is not only arrogant, but also an eschatological misunderstanding of what the Christian life ought to look like in the present. Thus Paul appeals to God's

⁸⁰Ciampa and Rosner note, "But eschatology is not so much the problem as it is the solution." Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 180.

⁸¹Roose notes that Paul's comments in 1 Cor 4:8 should be taken both ethically and eschatologically. Roose, "Sharing in Christ's Rule," 139.

⁸²Hays, *First Corinthians*, 71. Hays notes that Paul rather than the Corinthians has addressed the situation in theological categories. The Corinthians were "uncritically perpetuating the norms and values of the pagan culture around them" (71).

⁸³According to Gal 1:4, Christ's work on the cross is that which rescues us from the "present evil age."

promises for the future age in order to implore believers to shun boasting in the present: “So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s” (1 Cor 3:21-23). Other examples from 1 Corinthians indicate a similar strategy by the apostle.⁸⁴ Regardless of whether or not the boasting of the Corinthians was a direct result of consciously-held eschatological views, Paul’s responses were explicitly tied to God’s eschatological timetable.

Conclusions on the Reign of the Saints

It has been shown that Paul’s three uses of the verb βασιλεύω in 4:8 carry the idea of becoming a king or reigning. Reigning, as it is conceived of in this context, is a reward for the age to come. For those in Christ, the present age is marked by weakness, suffering, and contempt from the world, realities that are consistent with the wisdom of the cross. Paul assumes that the Corinthians would understand his rhetorical reference to a future reign in 4:8, as there is no accompanying explanation of this concept. He refers to the believer’s reign as a future reality in order to admonish the arrogance of the

⁸⁴A number of other texts from this epistle could be cited to demonstrate that Paul’s eschatology significantly informed his ethical instructions. Here are three examples, which will only be outlined briefly: (1) In 10:11 Paul refers to himself and the Corinthians as those “on whom the end of the ages has come.” The Corinthians’ privileged place in redemptive history should afford them the opportunity to learn from Israel’s failures and so flee idolatry. (2) In 1 Cor 7, Paul responds to the Corinthians’ prior correspondence regarding marriage and sexual conduct. His counsel to the betrothed in vv. 25-28 is based on the fact that he wants to spare the Corinthians from “worldly troubles” (v. 28). However one understands Paul’s instructions concerning the betrothed in vv. 25-28, it is clear that his eschatology informs his counsel, for he claims that the “appointed time has grown short” (v. 29), and that the “present form of this world is passing away” (v. 31). The apostle’s instructions concerning the ethical conduct of those who are betrothed is motivated, at least in part, by the place in which the Corinthians find themselves on God’s eschatological timetable. (3) Paul also draws upon the interrelation of eschatology and ethics in 13:8-13. He addresses the Corinthians’ distortion of the role and import of spiritual gifts by pointing to the superiority of love. One of the reasons the Corinthians should pursue love is that, unlike the spiritual gifts, it will endure even after Christ’s second coming (vv. 12-13). The second coming is what Paul means when he speaks of seeing “face to face” (v. 12), and it is this eschatological event that will bring full knowledge of Christ, thereby rendering the pursuit of knowledge and the gift of knowledge obsolete. The ethic of love, on the other hand, will continue to be operative in the eschaton. Paul’s eschatology figures prominently in his instructions regarding the priority of love.

Corinthians, and possibly to correct some form of an over-realized eschatology. Regardless of whether or not the Corinthians explicitly held to an erroneous eschatology, which is not implausible given that some in Corinth were denying the resurrection (15:12), they were living as if they had already inherited the kingdom. A proper view of God's eschatological schema was needed to correct such misguided conceptions.

Other Aspects of the Kingdom

Based on the exegesis of 1 Corinthians 4:20 and 4:8 above, three different aspects of the kingdom are worth commenting on: the familiarity of the concept of the kingdom, the definition of the kingdom, and the intersection of the kingdom with AI readings of Paul's theology. Each of these aspects will be further developed in subsequent chapters based on Paul's other references to the kingdom.

The Familiarity of the Concept

It is worth noting that Paul offers little in the way of an explanation of the concept of the kingdom in 1 Corinthians 4. He simply assumes that the Corinthians understand what he is talking about.⁸⁵ One could object that the Corinthians may not have understood Paul's reference to the kingdom, or that the apostle simply borrowed the phrase from traditional material with little concern for its actual content. However, given that Paul appeals to the nature of the kingdom in 4:20 to undergird his warning in 4:19, it is unlikely that the concept was unintelligible to the Corinthians.⁸⁶ Moreover, his ironic reference to the reign of believers in 4:8 would also lose its force if the kingdom was a foreign concept to the believers in Corinth. It is much more likely that Paul used a term

⁸⁵In this sense, Paul's initial reference to the kingdom of God in 1 Corinthians is much like the introduction of the phrase in the Gospels. See for example Matt 3:2, 4:17; Mark 1:15; John 3:3. Though the kingdom is expounded upon throughout the Synoptic Gospels, there seems to be an assumption that the hearers will have some understanding of the phrase.

⁸⁶Contra Beare's claim that the kingdom would have been unintelligible to a Gentile audience. F. W. Beare, "Jesus and Paul," *CJT* 5 (1959): 84.

with which the believers in Corinth were at least somewhat familiar, even if certain aspects of the kingdom needed to be clarified or corrected.⁸⁷

The scope of this work will not allow for an investigation of the ways in which the Corinthians could have become familiar with the concept of God's kingdom prior to receiving the epistle of 1 Corinthians. In any case, all such explanations will be somewhat speculative, since Paul does not address the issue directly. However, if it is assumed that the Corinthians had some understanding of the kingdom, as suggested above, it seems likely that Paul or someone else had instructed them previously on this important concept, whether by letter or in person. Such a theory would fit well with Luke's description of Paul's ministry in Acts, a ministry that is repeatedly characterized as a proclamation about the kingdom of God (Acts 19:8, 20:25, 28:23, 28:31). Paul's relationship with the Corinthians, which included a prior visit (1 Cor 5:9), makes it plausible that the kingdom was a part of his initial evangelistic work in Corinth. Regardless of how the Corinthians first learned of the kingdom, it is Paul's use of this concept that must guide an evaluation of his kingdom theology.

Toward a Definition

Although Paul offers no formal definition of the kingdom, some initial observations can be made about the defining characteristics of the kingdom. First, Paul's claim in 4:20 that the kingdom consists in power fits with the idea that God's kingdom refers to his rule or reign. God exercises this saving reign as the word of the cross is proclaimed. However, there is another dimension of the kingdom that surfaces in 1 Corinthians 4, for the future reign of the saints in 4:8 implies that there is some kind of

⁸⁷Concerning Paul's reference to the kingdom in Rom 14:17, Thompson concludes, "Paul's brief sentence in Rom 14:17 reflects the assumption that his readers have been instructed in the idea of the kingdom and its nature. What he says is not new to them, but an appeal which needs no justification." Thompson, *Clothed with Christ*, 207. Thompson's conclusions are particularly relevant since Paul is addressing a predominantly Gentile audience in both Romans and 1 Corinthians.

sphere or realm over which the saints will reign. This latter aspect of the kingdom is picked up in later chapters (see the discussion on 6:2-3 and 15:50), but for now it should simply be noted that the kingdom is made up of both of God's reign *and* the sphere over which his people will reign in the age to come.

Anti-Imperial Readings

In light of the relationship of the kingdom to the cross, a brief observation is in order with regard to AI readings of Paul in 1 Corinthians. AI proponents have emphasized that Paul's confrontation of the "rulers of this age" (2:6) has in view human political rulers. Horsley, for example, claims that the "most important casualties of God's implementation of his plan (mystery) . . . are the imperial 'rulers of this age' (2:6-8)."⁸⁸ However, the rulers of this age are confronted not primarily because of their political allegiance, but rather because they imbibe in the "wisdom of this age" (2:6), a wisdom that puts them at odds with God's wisdom manifested in the cross of Jesus Christ.⁸⁹ Rejecting the cruciform shape of God's wisdom is characteristic of all men who are merely "natural" (2:14), thus these rulers prove to be part of the larger scheme of Satan's opposition to Christ's kingdom.⁹⁰ Paul's contention with the rulers of this present age is thus not primarily political, but spiritual in nature. These rulers have rejected the means by which the power of God's kingdom is effected in the present age—the message of Christ crucified.

⁸⁸Richard A. Horsley, "1 Corinthians: A Case Study of Paul's Assembly," in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 244.

⁸⁹Paul contrasts the wisdom of the present age with the wisdom that God reveals by his Spirit (2:10-16).

⁹⁰On this point, see Seyoon Kim, *Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 23-25.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings in this chapter can be shown to be consistent with the overarching thesis of this work, namely, that the kingdom is a foundational component of God's saving work in Christ in 1 Corinthians. The three primary lines of evidence identified at the outset will be referenced. First, the kingdom is integrally related to the effects of Christ's death in 4:20, for the power of the kingdom is effected through the proclamation of the cross. God's reign is working in and through the proclamation of Christ crucified (2:2), making it effective in those who are being saved (1:18). Second, in terms of Paul's eschatological schema, both present and future aspects of the kingdom have been identified in 1 Corinthians 4. In 4:20 the kingdom is present, as it consists in the very power that is manifest in the proclamation of the cross. On the other hand, the kingdom clearly has future and as yet unfulfilled aspect in 4:8. The time for reigning and reward is reserved for the age to come. Paul's kingdom theology is thus consistent with his inaugurated eschatology that many commentators have identified throughout his writings.⁹¹ The eschatological kingdom continues to break into the present age via the message of the cross, even as its full realization is yet future. Third, Paul's eschatological conception of the kingdom is foundational to his ethical exhortations in 4:8. The fact that the reign of believers is a future reward is emphasized in order to keep the pride of the Corinthians in check. The present age is marked by the wisdom of the cross and the reality of suffering, not riches and fulfillment. It is not until the age to come that Paul expects to reign with the Corinthians.

⁹¹Beale argues that throughout Paul's letters Christ's resurrection establishes the "inaugurated end-time new-creational kingdom." G.K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 249. See pp. 249-97 for Beale's exegesis of the relevant texts related to the resurrection as the inaugural eschatological event in Paul's letters. For a brief overview of Paul's inaugurated eschatology pertaining to the kingdom in 1 Corinthians, see Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ*, 92-94.

CHAPTER 3

THE KINGDOM IN 1 CORINTHIANS 6

After 1 Corinthians 4:8 and 4:20, Paul's next references to the kingdom come in 6:1-11. Like the previous chapter, Paul's explicit references to the kingdom will be examined first, which includes a double-reference to inheriting the kingdom in 6:9-10. Then Paul's reference to the future judgment entrusted to the saints in 6:2-3 will be examined in order to determine how these verses inform the apostle's teaching on the kingdom. In order to get a better understanding of Paul's kingdom references in 6:1-11, the immediate context of 1 Corinthians 5-6 first needs to be sketched in briefly.

The Context of 1 Corinthians 5-6

Paul concluded 1 Corinthians 4 by warning certain arrogant persons in Corinth that he planned to visit them and to find out whether their ministry consisted in mere talk or in God's power (vv.18-19). It was argued above that in 1 Corinthians 1-4 God's power is effected through the word of the cross, and it is this power that characterizes the kingdom of God (v.20). Paul's closing question in 4:21, "Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?" presents the Corinthians with a choice: either they will abandon their arrogant attitudes and be met with Paul's gentle love, or else they will receive the "rod" of his corrective discipline. The arrogance of the Corinthians is all the more striking in light of Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 5-6.

First Corinthians 5 is Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians to exclude a man from the congregation who is having an adulterous relationship with his step-mother. Such behavior leaves Paul incredulous, for even pagans do not imbibe in such immorality (5:1). The willingness of the Corinthians to tolerate such behavior makes their boasting

all the more foolish and misplaced.¹ Paul orders them to remove this man from the congregation so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord (vv. 3-5). Tolerating such behavior is also a danger to the congregation, since “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (v. 6).² In light of the sacrifice of Christ, the new Passover lamb, the Corinthians should “cleanse out the old leaven” (v. 7). Paul concludes the chapter by clarifying his previous remarks about dissociating with those who are sexually immoral (vv. 9-13). His concern is with sexual immorality (as well as a number of other sins) *within* the believing community (v. 11), for it is not possible to avoid exposure to such sinful behavior in the world. In any case, it is God’s prerogative to judge “those outside”; the Corinthians must deal with evil in the church (v. 13).³

Paul offers more evidence in 6:1-8 that the Corinthians’ boasting was completely out of step with their behavior. The same persons who failed to judge unrighteousness within the congregation were now more than willing to take one another to civil court to be judged by the “unrighteous” (τῶν ἀδίκων) (6:1).⁴ Schrage notes that

¹Minear rightly points out that Paul’s primary concern is with the Corinthian community as a whole, and not simply the sexual offender in 5:1. Paul Sevier Minear, “Christ and the Congregation: 1 Corinthians 5-6,” *RevExp* 80 (1983): 343.

²Roy E. Ciampa and Brian Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 212.

³Ciampa and Rosner note that Paul’s exhortation “Purge the evil person from among you” in v. 13 is a quotation of a recurring expression in Deuteronomy (13:5; 17:7; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21; 24:7; cf. Judg 20:13). Ibid., 220. Only the verb tense changes—from ἐξάρεῖς in Deut to ἐξάρατε in 1 Cor 5:13—probably to suit the epistolary context. In Deut 13:5 (13:6 in the LXX) the verb ἀφανιεῖς is used (220n136). For a case that 1 Cor 5-6 is informed by Deut 17, see Sean M. McDonough, “Competent to Judge: The Old Testament Connection between 1 Corinthians 5 and 6,” *JTS* 56 (2005): 99-102; Peter Richardson, “Judgment in Sexual Matters in 1 Corinthians 6:1-11,” *NovT* 25 (1983): 46-47.

⁴David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 193. Deming connects 1 Cor 5 and 1 Cor 6 by claiming that the sexual offender in 5:1 was taken to court, which would explain the legal context of 6:1-8. Will Deming, “The Unity of 1 Corinthians 5-6,” *JBL* 115 (1996): 289-312. However, it is more likely that Paul is highlighting the contrast between the Corinthians’ lack of concern regarding extreme sexual sin and their willingness to take one another to court for the sake of their own financial gain.

the verb κρίνειν “to judge” links the end of chapter 5 with chapter 6.⁵ Though these saints would one day judge the world and the angels (vv.2-3), they were apparently unfit to try “trivial cases” (v. 2). That the church has no one wise enough to settle such disputes is shameful (v. 5). Rather than laying their cases before civil authorities who have “no standing in the church” (v.4), Corinthian believers should be willing to be wronged. Instead, some were even guilty of wronging and defrauding their own brothers (v.8). This scenario leads to Paul’s warning about those who will not inherit the kingdom in 6:9-10.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Paul’s rhetorical question in 6:9a serves as a sharp rebuke to the proud Corinthians. He asks, “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?” (Ἡ οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ἄδικοι θεοῦ βασιλείαν οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν). This question is followed in 6:9b-10 with a list of persons who will not inherit the kingdom.⁶ Following these warnings is a reminder in 6:11 of God’s saving work among the Corinthians. This analysis of 6:9-11 will begin by examining the term ἄδικοι in 6:9 and its relevance to the context of 6:1-8.

The Term ἄδικοι

Paul’s use of the term ἄδικοι “unrighteous” in 6:9 is significant in this context for at least two reasons. First, he uses a closely related term in the previous verse, where he makes the following accusation: “But you yourselves wrong (ἀδικεῖτε) and defraud—even your own brothers!” (6:8).⁷ Collins captures the seriousness of the connection

⁵Wolfgang Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, EKKNT 7 (Zürich : Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1991), 1:403; So also Richardson, "Judgment in Sexual Matters," 42n21.

⁶Garland notes that the phrase “they will not inherit the kingdom of God” brackets the catalog of sins in 6:9-10. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 211.

⁷Lindemann notes that the verb ἀδικεῖτε in 6:8 looks forward to the ἄδικοι in 6:9 who will not inherit the kingdom. Andreas Lindemann, *Der erste Korintherbrief* HNT 9 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 1:134.

between 6:8 and 6:9: “It is preferable to be wronged than to do wrong not only because that is the moral thing to do but also because doing wrong has serious eschatological consequences.”⁸ The believers in Corinth were conducting themselves like those who will be excluded from the kingdom, so Paul exhorts them not to be “deceived” about the consequences of such behavior (v. 9a). Second, the term ἄδικοι in 6:9 also picks up on the previous use of the term in 6:1. Rather than presenting their cases to the “saints,” the Corinthians took them before the “unrighteous” (τῶν ἀδίκων) (1), that is, the unbelieving civil authorities.⁹ If the ἄδικοι will not inherit the kingdom (6:9), then it is not fitting that they should settle the church’s disputes.¹⁰

After saying that the ἄδικοι will not inherit the kingdom in 6:9a, Paul then gives specific examples in 6:9b-10 of those who fit this description. He mentions the following persons: the sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, men who practice homosexuality, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, and swindlers. Before commenting on various aspects of this vice list, Paul’s reference to inheriting the kingdom needs some explanation.

Inheriting the Kingdom

To understand what Paul means by inheriting the kingdom, the temporal reference of the kingdom needs to be addressed, as well as the likely background source(s) for Paul’s use of the concept of inheritance.

⁸Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 235.

⁹So López, who correctly links the use of ἀδικεῖτε in 6:8 with ἄδικοι in 6:9 as well as τῶν ἀδίκων in 6:1. René López, “Does the Vice List in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Describe Believers or Unbelievers?” *BSac* 164 (2007): 65-66.

¹⁰Outside of 1 Corinthians, Paul’s only other use of ἄδικοι (in an adjectival or nominal form) occurs in Rom 3:5. Paul contrasts our ἀδικία “unrighteousness” with God’s δικαιοσύνην “righteousness,” and then asks rhetorically whether God is ἄδικος “unrighteous” for inflicting wrath on us. Like 1 Cor 6:9, Paul uses ἀδικία in Rom 3:5 to characterize sinful actions.

Future inheritance. In terms of temporal reference, commentators agree that inheriting the kingdom in 6:9-10 refers to the future reward of believers in the age to come. Shogren notes that for these kingdom-exclusion texts “hardly any commentator sees anything but an eschatological reference in 1 Corinthians and Galatians.”¹¹ The future aspect of inheriting the kingdom is most clear in 1 Corinthians 15:50, where Paul says that one must be resurrected to inherit the kingdom because “flesh and blood” cannot enter.¹² The future aspect of the kingdom is also implied in the immediate context of 6:9-11, for it is God’s saving work in 6:11 that makes inheriting the kingdom possible. Paul frequently speaks of God’s saving work in terms of its future, eschatological implications. For instance, of the three verbs used to describe God’s saving work in 6:11—“washed” (ἀπελούσασθε), “sanctified” (ἡγιασθήτε), and “justified” (ἐδικαιώθητε)—the eschatological implications of that latter term, ἐδικαιώθητε, find a helpful parallel in Romans 5:9. In Romans 5:9 Paul says, “Since, therefore, we have now been justified (δικαιωθέντες) by his [Christ’s] blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.” Being saved from God’s end-time wrath, then, is based on God’s justifying work. So also in 6:9-11 God’s justifying work qualifies one to inherit the kingdom of God. Two kingdom-inheritance texts outside of 1 Corinthians furnish additional evidence that for Paul inheriting the kingdom is synonymous with a future, eschatological reward.

First, the future aspect of the kingdom-exclusion warning in Galatians 5:19-21 can be demonstrated by comparing it with Galatians 6:8. In 5:19-20 Paul speaks of the “works of the flesh” (v. 19) that prevent one from inheriting the kingdom, and these works comprise a vice list similar to (though not identical with) the one in 1 Corinthians

¹¹Gary Shogren, “‘The Wicked Will Not Inherit the Kingdom of God’: A Pauline Warning and The Hermeneutics of Liberation Theology and of Brian McLaren,” *TrinJ* 31 (2010): 96.

¹²Ibid.

6:9-10.¹³ Then, using a similar expression, Paul speaks of one who “sows to his own flesh” in Galatians 6:8, and the result is that such a person will “reap corruption” (θερίσει φθοράν). That this latter phrase speaks of God’s end-time judgment is evident, for it is contrasted in the same verse with those who “sow to the Spirit” and thus reap “eternal life” (ζωὴν αἰώνιον). Therefore, when Galatians 5:21 is taken together with Galatians 6:8, the contrast is between not inheriting the kingdom, on the one hand, and reaping eternal life on the other. A similar point can be made by examining the kingdom-exclusion saying in Ephesians 5:5-6. After listing certain sins that characterize those who will have “no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God” (v.5), Paul says, “For because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience” (v.6). Not inheriting the kingdom thus describes the same fate as experiencing God’s wrath. In conclusion, Galatians 5:19-21 and Ephesians 5:5-6 provide confirmatory evidence that inheriting the kingdom in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 is a future, eschatological reference.¹⁴

The background to inheritance. To have a robust understanding of what it means to inherit the kingdom, the background to the concept of inheritance also needs to be examined. Peppard has argued for a Roman background to Paul’s inheritance sayings by pointing to the corpus of extant *controversiae* ‘legal case studies’ in Roman society. He points out that fraternal lawsuits, which were very common, were often inheritance lawsuits. The fraternal aspect of these inheritance disputes allows Paul to point to the church as the new family of God.¹⁵ In support, Peppard points out that Paul’s uses of the

¹³In addition to the difference in the specific vices listed, the vices in 1 Cor 6:9-10 are plural and thus refer to persons who practice them, while the vices in Gal 5:19-20 are singular, referring to the vices themselves. Nevertheless, the effect of both lists is similar, for Paul is clearly warning these respective churches that practicing such sins carries eschatological consequences.

¹⁴The fact that the Synoptic Gospels refer to inheriting eternal life adds further support to the idea that inheritance is an eschatological concept. See, for example, Matt 19:29; Mark 10:17; Luke 10:25; Luke 18:18.

¹⁵Michael Peppard, “Brother against Brother: *Controversiae* about Inheritance Disputes and 1 Corinthians 6:1-11,” *JBL* 133 (2014): 179-92. Peppard claims that the relationship of the familial and

inheritance metaphor (in the undisputed Pauline letters) are in close literary proximity to familial metaphors.¹⁶ Other backgrounds for Paul's concept of inheritance have also been suggested. Haufe, for example, notes that Paul is drawing on earlier tradition and that his references to inheriting the kingdom are close to the Jesus tradition.¹⁷ Similarly, Conzelmann claims that the terms inherit and kingdom in 6:9-10 are "not specifically Pauline," but rather they are likely drawn from "common Christian parlance."¹⁸ The positions of Haufe and Conzelmann may be supported by the fact that the phrase "inherit the kingdom" is used by Jesus in Matthew 25:34. It is therefore likely that many early Christians would have been familiar with the concept. Paul's use of a standard catalogue of vices in 6:9b-10 is another reason these verses have been labeled as traditional.¹⁹

Shogren, on the other hand, points out that Paul has not simply commandeered traditional Jewish terminology about not inheriting the kingdom, since his statements are "without Jewish parallel."²⁰ The term kingdom, as denoting the eschatological age, is

inheritance metaphors explains Paul's rhetorical move from 6:1-8 to 6:9-11, since it is brothers who are contending against one another according to 6:5-6. Paul's use of the term ἀδελφοῦ is important here, but according to Peppard, the significance of the term is not captured well by the translation "believer" (180-182). On the difficult phrase ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ in 6:5, translated by the ESV as "between the brothers," see the proposed textual solutions in Jeffrey Kloha, "1 Corinthians 6:5: A Proposal," *NovT* 46 (2004): 132-42.

¹⁶Peppard, "Brother against Brother," 189. Peppard notes the examples of Gal 3:23-4:7 and Rom 8:1-30. He also notes in 1 Cor 15:50 that inheritance comes "through spiritual sonship and not a lineage of 'flesh and blood'" (189).

¹⁷Günter Haufe, "Reich Gottes bei Paulus und In der Jesustradition," *NTS* 31 (1985): 467-470.

¹⁸Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 106. See also Richard Bauckham, "Kingdom and Church According to Jesus and Paul," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 18 (1996): 3.

¹⁹For commentators who claim that Paul is drawing on traditional material here, see Karl P. Donfried, "The Kingdom of God in Paul," in *The Kingdom of God in 20th-Century Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 183; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 106; Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 235. Donfried sees the phrase as deriving from a "baptismal-parenetic context of the early church." Donfried notes that along with Gal 5:21, the two kingdom references in 1 Cor 6:9-10 are the only ones to omit the article before βασιλείαν (183n34).

²⁰Gary Shogren, "The Wicked Will Not Inherit the Kingdom of God," 97.

“extremely rare in Second Temple Judaism.”²¹ The situation is similar in the New Testament:

... in the rest of the New Testament there is nothing corresponding to the formulaic style that we encounter in the Pauline passages. Rather, it looks likely that Paul himself combined certain elements from Judaism and from the dominical tradition, with liberty to express himself in accordance with his own teaching needs.²²

Like Shogren, Cho also highlights Paul’s originality on this point. For although the exclusion formula in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 is “conceptually synonymous” with the Synoptic accounts, Paul’s reference to the Spirit in this context is nevertheless unique.²³ These latter observations by Shogren and Cho are the most convincing on the question of background, since they deal directly with what Paul has said rather than speculating about how he was influenced. While it is plausible that Paul was influenced by Roman legal cases, and it is almost certain that the apostle was aware of oral traditions concerning Jesus and the kingdom, Paul is capable of using the inheritance metaphor for his own purposes in a given context. Therefore, this examination of the background to Paul’s concept of inheritance will be primarily restricted to Paul’s (discernable) allusions.

James Hester notes that, with the exception of Galatians 4:30, Paul always uses the kingdom of God as the object of the verb *κληρονομέω* (1 Cor 6:9, 10; 15:50; Gal 4:30, 5:21).²⁴ Hester has argued that Paul’s concept of inheriting the kingdom is the

²¹Ibid., 97. Shogren points to the evidence as presented by C. Caragounis, “Kingdom of Heaven/Kingdom of God,” in *DJG*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 418-20. Rather than kingdom, the age to come is often used with the phrases “will not inherit” and “be excluded from” (Shogren, “The Wicked Will Not Inherit the Kingdom of God,” 97).

²²Shogren, “The Wicked Will Not Inherit the Kingdom of God,” 97.

²³Youngmo Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom in the Writings of Luke and Paul* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2005), 60.

²⁴James D. Hester, *Paul’s Concept of Inheritance: A Contribution to the Understanding of Heilsgeschichte*, Scottish Journal of Theology: Occasional Papers, no. 14 (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1968), 79. Hester acknowledges, however, that the actual *concept* of inheritance should not be equated with cognates of a particular word group (vii). Of the 163 uses of the noun *κληρονομία* in the LXX, the word is used as a translation for נחלה “possession, property, inheritance” in the MT 145 times. The verb *κληρονομέω* is used to translate נהל and ירש, both of which refer to taking possession of or inheriting (5).

eschatological fulfillment of Israel's inheritance of the Promised Land.²⁵ The promise of Canaan originally given to Abraham eventually extended to all Israel, particularly in Deuteronomy, the Psalms, and the Prophets.²⁶ Jeremias observes something similar in the intertestamental literature, for the verb term κληρονομέω became “an eschatological technical term in late Jewish literature, implying a share in the coming Kingdom.”²⁷ According to Jeremias, Jesus always uses κληρονομέω in this sense.²⁸ Garland notes the following texts where Jesus uses κληρονομέω to speak of eschatological reward in the age to come: Matthew 25:34 (cf. Matt 19:29); Mark 10:17; Luke 10:25; 18:18.²⁹ There is strong support, then, for seeing inheritance in the kingdom of God as a Pauline antitype to the promised land-inheritance in the Old Testament.

Ciampa and Rosner also note the allusion to inheriting the Promised Land in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, citing Exodus 18 and Deuteronomy 1 as a possible background for 1 Corinthians 6:1-6.³⁰ However, they claim that the strongest Old Testament connection in 6:9-10 may be found in Daniel 7. The judgment entrusted to the saints in Daniel 7:22 fits well with 1 Corinthians 6:2-3, where Paul says that the saints will judge both the world and the angels. Daniel 7 and 1 Corinthians 6:1-11 are also connected by the theme of suffering: in Daniel 7 the saints must endure until the Son of Man's kingdom demolishes the beastly kingdoms of this world, while in 1 Corinthians 6:7 Paul urges the Corinthians

²⁵Ibid., 79.

²⁶Ibid., 25.

²⁷Joachim Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise to the Nations*, trans. S.H. Hooke, SBT 24 (London: SCM Press, 1958), 68. See also W. Foerster, “κληρονομος,” in *TDNT*, 3:779-81.

²⁸Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise to the Nations*, 68.

²⁹Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 211. Garland also notes that Paul's words here fit with the rabbinic topos in m. Sanh. 10:1-4, which contains the refrain “they have no share/portion in the world to come” (211).

³⁰Ciampa and Rosner claim that Paul has an affinity for Exodus traditions in 1 Corinthians, including his own self-portrayal as a Moses figure. Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 238.

to suffer wrong at the hands of their brothers in order to inherit the kingdom. Most convincing of all is the fact that Daniel 7 contains nine explicit references to the kingdom, and unlike the temporal Deuteronomic references, the kingdom in Daniel's vision is an "everlasting kingdom" (7:27).

Undoubtedly, a strong case can be made that Daniel 7 forms part of the background for Paul's reference to the kingdom in 1 Corinthians 6:1-11, particularly as it pertains to verses 1-6 and the judgment entrusted to the saints. Such an influence makes it plausible that the eschatological cast of Daniel 7 has informed Paul's kingdom-inheritance saying in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. The frequent occurrence of the term "kingdom" (βασιλεία) in Daniel, a relatively rare word in the Old Testament, is also suggestive. Nevertheless, the inheritance of the Promised Land is likely the primary allusion in 6:9-10, since Paul specifically mentions *inheriting* the kingdom of God, a concept that is not explicitly in the foreground of Daniel 7. Neither the noun nor the verbal forms of κληρονομέω appear in the LXX of Daniel 7. Furthermore, contra Ciampa and Rosner, the temporal and physical nature of the land-inheritance in Deuteronomy does not make it less likely as a primary allusion, for the nature of typology is such that the fulfillment is expected to expand on the earlier promise.³¹ Support for this understanding of Paul's typological treatment of the promised land-inheritance comes from Romans 4:13.

In Romans 4:13 Paul says that the promise to Abraham and his offspring was that he would be "heir of the world" (τὸ κληρονόμον αὐτὸν εἶναι κόσμου).³² The original promise of land, however, focused more narrowly on the physical land of Canaan (Gen 12:7; 15:7; 17:8). Paul has clearly expanded the original promise to Abraham in Romans

³¹Ciampa and Rosner point out that the promise of land is temporary and limited in Deuteronomy. Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 239.

³²The term κληρονόμον "heir" here is the nominal form of the verb κληρονομέω Paul uses in 1 Cor 6:9-10.

4:13, for it is no longer Canaan but the entire “world” (κόσμου) that will be his possession. There is precedent in Paul’s theology, then, for seeing the eternal inheritance of God’s kingdom as the eschatological fulfillment of the more limited land-promise in the Old Testament. This is likely Paul’s primary background for inheriting the kingdom in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, though Daniel’s reference to the judgment entrusted to the saints and their eventual possession of God’s eternal kingdom may simultaneously be informing Paul’s thinking.

The Unrighteous

Before discussing God’s saving work in 6:11, some attention needs to be given to those who will not inherit the kingdom, those whom Paul calls the “unrighteous” (ἄδικοι) (v. 9). Paul says in 6:9b-10 that the following persons will not inherit the kingdom of God: the sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, men who practice homosexuality, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, and swindlers. Commentators disagree on whether this list relates to specific patterns of sin within the Corinthian community, or whether Paul is simply repeating a stock list of vices. Collins claims that Paul was shaming the Corinthians’ pride by appealing to this vice list, since such lists were normally used by the philosophical moralists to “caricature the behavior of the unlettered masses.”³³ Conzelmann thinks it is clear in this instance that Paul was drawing on “set tradition.”³⁴ To be sure, the vices Paul mentions in 6:9-10 are general enough to apply to a number of congregations, and Paul does in fact repeat some of these vices in others letters. Without more background information, it is difficult to be certain as to why Paul chose to include certain vices. However, there is some evidence that the vices mentioned in 6:9-10 have immediate application to 1 Corinthians.

³³Collins, *First Corinthians*, 229.

³⁴Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 106.

The strongest support for seeing the list in 6:9-10 as immediately applicable to the Corinthians is Paul's comment in 6:11 that "such were some of you."³⁵ Apparently some of the Corinthians had a history with the vices mentioned in 6:9-10. It may also be significant that, as Ciampa and Rosner point out, six of the ten vices listed in 6:9-10 are repeated from 5:11, with the four additional vices expanding on the most relevant items from chapters 5 and 6.³⁶ The examination of these two vice lists by Zaas supports the idea that the sins mentioned were relevant to Paul's exhortations in this letter.³⁷ Similarly, Oropeza's analysis of the vices mentioned throughout 1 Corinthians leads him to conclude that they "reflect the actual practices of some of the members."³⁸

The term "sexually immoral" (πόρνοι) that heads the list in 6:9-10 is also the focus of the surrounding context—see chapters 5 and 6:12-20—which may explain why this sin was mentioned first. Sexual immorality serves as a general heading for a host of sexual sins, two of which are mentioned in this list—adultery and homosexuality.³⁹ While the term πόρνοι heads up other Pauline vice lists, including those that mention inheriting the kingdom (see Gal 5:19 and Eph 5:3), there are additional examples in 1 Corinthians of the vices listed in 6:9-10. Paul's reference to "thieves" (κλέπται), the "greedy" (πλεονέκται), and "swindlers" (ἄρπαγες) may relate to the context of 6:1-8, where the Corinthians were defrauding one another and making use of the civil courts to secure

³⁵The fact that some of the Corinthians were implicated in the sexual sins of 1 Cor 6:9-10 is an argument against Deming's claim that only one sexual sin—the offender in 5:1—is in view in 1 Cor 5-6. Deming, "The Unity of 1 Corinthians 5-6," 312.

³⁶Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 240-41.

³⁷Peter S. Zaas, "Catalogues and Context: 1 Corinthians 5 and 6," *NTS* 34 (1988): 622-29.

³⁸B. J. Oropeza, "Situational Immorality—Paul's 'Vice Lists' at Corinth," *ExpTim* 110 (1998): 10.

³⁹A massive amount of literature exists related to the term ἀρσενικοῦται "men who practice homosexuality" (and related terms), as well as the issue of homosexuality in general. However, given our focus on the kingdom, an extensive examination of these debates lies outside the scope of this work.

their possessions.⁴⁰ Also, the sin of idolatry mentioned in 5:11 and 6:9 features prominently in chapters 8 and 10.⁴¹ To take one final example, Paul mentions “drunkards” among those who will be excluded from the kingdom in 6:10, and the Corinthians were even getting drunk at the Lord’s table (11:21).⁴² There are good reasons, then, for thinking that Paul’s vice list was strategically chosen to match the situation at Corinth.

God’s Saving Work in 1 Corinthians 6:11

Finally, Paul’s kingdom-inheritance saying in 6:9-10 must be understood in light of God’s saving work in 6:11, for it is God’s saving work that qualifies one for the kingdom. Although some of the Corinthians used to be included in the catalog of persons in 6:9b-10, they have since been “washed” (ἀπελούσασθε), “sanctified” (ἡγιασθητε), and “justified” (ἐδικαιώθητε). All three of these verbs describe the conversion of the Corinthians as an accomplished reality. Schrage notes the contrast between these aorists and the imperfect ἦτε “were,” with the latter verb referring to the former life of the Corinthians.⁴³ The use of ἀλλά before each of the verbs emphasizes this contrast.⁴⁴ Due to the relationship between God’s saving work and inheriting the kingdom, each of the verbs in 6:11 will be briefly considered below, as well as the role of Christ and the Spirit in carrying them out.

⁴⁰Ciampa and Rosner note a number of connections between the vices listed in 6:9-10 and the sins Paul addressed elsewhere in this epistle. Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 243.

⁴¹Oropeza, “Situational Immorality,” 9.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 433. Thiselton notes that the aorists in 6:11 speak to the definitive character of the Corinthians’ conversion. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 453-54.

⁴⁴Ibid.

Washed, sanctified, and justified. Some commentators understand the verb “washed” (ἀπολούω) to be an allusion to water-baptism.⁴⁵ Fee, on the other hand, claims that there may be an “indirect allusion to baptism,” but he thinks that Paul’s main concern is with the “spiritual transformation made possible through Christ and effected by the Spirit.”⁴⁶ Dunn’s argument that baptism is a sign for the broader “conversion-initiation contexts” is helpful here, for even if washing alludes to water baptism, spiritual transformation is thereby implied.⁴⁷ The second verb, “sanctified” (ἡγιασθητε), should be understood as a reference to God’s definitive setting apart of persons as holy at conversion. Paul’s use of the root ἁγιάζ– and the related noun ἅγιος in 1:2 lends support for this understanding of the verb: the Corinthians are ἡγιασμένοις “those sanctified in Christ Jesus” and κλητοῖς ἁγίοις “called to be saints.”⁴⁸ Likewise, in 1:30 he refers to Christ as the believer’s “sanctification” (ἁγιασμός), which again pictures sanctification as a definitive act and not as a process. The third verb in 6:11 is “justified” (ἐδικαιώθητε), a highly disputed term among Pauline scholars. While a full discussion of this verb and the associated noun δικαιοσύνη lies outside the scope of this work, there is good reason to believe that ἐδικαιώθητε in 6:11 refers to God’s declaring the Corinthians to be righteous (in terms of their status).⁴⁹ Even if one understands the verb differently, the context

⁴⁵See Haufe, “Reich Gottes bei Paulus,” 468.

⁴⁶Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 247. Fee argues that Paul does not use the preposition ἐν with baptism elsewhere.

⁴⁷James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-Examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 104. Dunn is probably right that in light of the sins mentioned in 1 Cor 6:9-10, the washing in 6:11 probably has a primary reference to spiritual cleansing (121).

⁴⁸Ibid., 104.

⁴⁹Romans 3:24 is another example of this usage, where Paul says that believers are “justified (δικαιούμενοι) by his [God’s] grace as a gift.” Lindemann links the verb ἐδικαιώθητε “justified” in 6:11 with ἄδικοι “unrighteous” in 6:9, and the verb ἡγιασθητε “sanctified” in 6:11 with ἁγίων “saints” in 6:1. Lindemann, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, 134.

requires that it refers to a definitive, saving work of God that qualifies one for the kingdom.

Christ and the Spirit. According to 1 Corinthians 6:11, Paul expects the Corinthians to act like kingdom citizens because they have been transformed “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (6:11b).⁵⁰ The role of Christ and the Spirit in God’s saving work is not only significant for this work because it qualifies one for the kingdom, but also because it provides evidence that Paul is not mindlessly adopting a stock Christian phrase when he speaks of inheriting the kingdom. The apostle explicitly connects inheritance in the kingdom to his teaching on Christ and the Spirit. It may be unwise to draw too sharp of a distinction between the respective roles of Christ and the Spirit based solely on this verse. However, Garland may be right that the name of Christ is a reference to his authority in 6:11, with 1:10 and 5:4 serving as other examples, while the Spirit of God is pictured as the agent of transformation.⁵¹ In the wider context of 1 Corinthians, salvation in the name of the Lord Jesus probably includes the idea of being united to him. The idea of union with Christ is present in 1:30, where the believer is placed “in Christ Jesus,” who becomes for that person “wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”⁵² That the Spirit is the agent of God’s saving work in 6:11 also fits with Paul’s previous teaching in this epistle. It is the Spirit who reveals God’s saving wisdom to believers (1 Cor 2:6-16), and it is the demonstration

⁵⁰Fee rightly notes that both prepositional phrases in 6:11 (ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν) modify all three verbs in the same verse. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 246. Concerning the variant in 6:11, Metzger notes that the inclusion of ἡμῶν may be a scribal assimilation to the succeeding phrase, πνεύματι τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν ‘Spirit of our God.’ Bruce Metzger, *TCGNT*, 3rd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1975), 552.

⁵¹Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 217. Fee, on the other hand, takes both occurrences of ἐν instrumentally (Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 247). Thiselton may be correct that the idea of incorporation into Christ is in view (see 6:17) (Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 455).

⁵²The language of being “in Christ” is present throughout 1 Corinthians. For other examples, see 1 Cor 1:2, 4; 3:1; 4:10; 15:18, 22; 16:24.

of the Spirit (and of power) in 2:4 that accounts for the Corinthians' reception of Paul's gospel proclamation. In the end, regardless of how or whether the respective roles of Christ and the Spirit are to be distinguished in God's saving work, it is clear in 6:11 that both are necessary for entrance into the kingdom.

The Function of 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Having examined the details of 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, it may be helpful to conclude the exegesis of this text by stepping back to consider the function of these verses in Paul's wider argument. In short, Paul warns the Corinthians that they will not inherit the kingdom of God if their lives are characterized by the vices listed in 6:9-10 or the practice of defrauding one another mentioned in 6:1-8. Such unrighteous conduct is not fitting for believers, but is instead characteristic of the unrighteous. Thus Paul reminds the Corinthians in 6:11 of God's saving work among them—they have been washed, sanctified, and justified. He expects them to live righteously and so inherit the kingdom.

One potential difficulty with the above interpretation should be noted. In light of the fact that Paul consistently addresses the Corinthians as believers (see 1:2, 26-31; 3:16; 6:11), commentators have understood Paul's threat of eschatological judgment in 6:9-10 in different ways. The fact that Paul often assures believers that they will *not* face God's wrath has led some commentators to deny that God's eschatological judgment is in view in 6:9-10;⁵³ other commentators have denied that Paul's warning is aimed at believers.⁵⁴ However, based on the exegesis of 6:9-10, there is no reason to doubt that Paul is giving a genuine warning to believers about the prospect of eschatological

⁵³For example, see Rom 5:9; 8:1, 29-39; 1 Thess 5:9.

⁵⁴For a survey of different interpretations of Paul's warning in 6:9-10, see René López, "Does the Vice List in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Describe Believers or Unbelievers?" *BSac* 164 (2007): 59-64. After describing the various interpretations, López argues that Paul is exhorting believers to live like saints (64-73). See also René López, "Views on Paul's Vice Lists and Inheriting the Kingdom," *BSac* 168 (2011): 81-97.

judgment.⁵⁵ The apostle takes a similar approach in a number of other texts. For example, after referring to the Ephesians as “beloved children” in Ephesians 5:1, he proceeds to warn them about the consequences of taking part in the list of vices in 5:3-5a. Such conduct means that they will have “no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God” (v.5). This latter phrase is explicitly identified with God’s judgment in the next verse, where Paul says, “For because of these things [the sins listed in 5:3-5a] the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.” There is, then, strong supporting evidence that Paul intends to warn believers in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 that they will face God’s eschatological judgment if they persist in unrighteous behavior. While a full treatment of Paul’s warning passages lies outside the scope of this work, it is probably best to see warnings such as 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 as God means of preserving believers until the last day. Despite the genuine nature of Paul’s warning, he nevertheless ends this section by reminding the Corinthians of their salvation in 6:11. He assures them that God has qualified them to inherit the kingdom.

Theological Conclusions

Based on the exegesis of 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 above, a number of theological conclusions are worth noting. In addition to the role of Christ and the Spirit in qualifying persons for the kingdom, the kingdom is also connected with righteousness, eschatology, and ethics.

Christ and the Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 4:20 the power of the kingdom is foundational to the effectiveness of the saving message of the cross. God’s saving work is also related to the kingdom in 6:9-11, for the righteousness required of kingdom citizens is made possible by God’s work of washing, sanctification, and justification (v. 11). More

⁵⁵See Fee’s discussion of the genuine nature of this warning. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 242–45.

specifically, this saving work is carried out (according to 6:11) by Christ and the Spirit. These Christological and pneumatological aspects of God's salvation are present throughout 1 Corinthians. For example, God has sanctified the Corinthians "in Christ" (1:2; 1:30), and it is Christ crucified which serves as the touchstone for Paul's proclamation (2:2). In relation to the Spirit, Paul tells us that God has transformed the Corinthians' spiritual understanding by his Spirit (2:6-16), and that they can now "understand the things freely given us by God" (v. 12). Dunn notes the Spirit's preparatory work in 6:9-10, as one must experience the work of the Spirit in order to inherit the kingdom.⁵⁶ Support for this connection between the kingdom and the Spirit can be found by looking again to Romans 14:17.

In Romans 14:17 Paul says that the kingdom is a matter of "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (δικαιοσύνη καὶ εἰρήνη καὶ χαρὰ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ). This verse supports the idea that there is a present aspect to the kingdom, as was noted previously. It is also worth noting that the Spirit is the source for kingdom-related virtues.⁵⁷ Schreiner notes, "Righteousness, peace, and joy, then, are all gifts of the Spirit. As a corollary they are also gifts of the kingdom. The kingdom of God consists in his transforming power, induction into eschatological peace, and supernatural joy (cf. 1 Thess 1:6)."⁵⁸ The virtues that characterize the kingdom are brought about in the believing community by the Spirit's power. Dunn states it this way: "The Spirit . . .

⁵⁶James D. G. Dunn, *The Christ and the Spirit: Collected Essays of James D.G. Dunn* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 133. Dunn notes that one must continue to experience the work of the Spirit throughout the Christian life in order to combat the "impulses and desires of the flesh," which threaten one's inheritance of the kingdom (133-34).

⁵⁷Schreiner and Moo rightly connect the phrase ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ "in the Holy Spirit" with all three items at the end of Rom 14:17—righteousness, peace, and joy. Schreiner, *Romans*, 741; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 857n46. Contra Michael B. Thompson, *Clothed with Christ: The Example and Teaching of Jesus in Romans 12.1-15.13*, JSNTSup 59 [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991], 204.

⁵⁸Schreiner, *Romans*, 741. Schreiner correctly notes that righteousness, peace, and joy refer not only to dealings within the believing community, but also to eschatological gifts of the kingdom brought about by the power of the Spirit (741). So Moo, *The First Epistle to the Romans*, 857n46.

enables the Christian to experience the future kingdom in the present.”⁵⁹ Cho points to several passages outside of 1 Corinthians to make the point that the Spirit allows the believer a “foretaste of the future kingdom in the present because the Spirit is the ἀρραβὼν of the coming age.”⁶⁰

The kingdom and righteousness. The saving work of Christ and the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 also connects the kingdom with another prominent Pauline theme—righteousness. In the history of modern research several scholars were noted who claim that Jesus’ emphasis on the kingdom has been replaced by Paul’s emphasis on God’s righteousness. This is a larger discussion that cannot adequately be addressed here, but it is worth noting a couple of ways that the themes of kingdom and righteousness are brought together in 6:9-11. First, righteous living must be the mark of those who hope to inherit the kingdom. Paul refers to the catalogue of persons who will not inherit the kingdom as ἄδικοι, or “unrighteous” (6:9a), thus implying that kingdom citizens live righteously. Second, Paul expects heirs of the kingdom to avoid the sins mentioned in 6:9-10 because God has declared them to be righteous (ἐδικαιώθητε) (v.11). Here Paul has in mind what is typically referred to as God’s forensic righteousness, or his justifying verdict. God’s justification—in tandem with his washing (ἀπελούσασθε) and sanctifying (ἡγιασθήτε) work (v.11)—qualifies the Corinthians to inherit the kingdom. The kingdom is therefore connected to both the forensic and ethical aspects of God’s righteousness, with the former grounding the latter.⁶¹

The kingdom and eschatology. It was demonstrated in the exegesis of 6:9-10 that the kingdom of God is the eschatological fulfillment of the Promised Land in the Old

⁵⁹Dunn, *The Christ and the Spirit*, 134.

⁶⁰Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom*, 63. See also Bauckham, “Kingdom and Church,” 15-16.

⁶¹The relationship between the kingdom and righteousness in 1 Cor 6:9-11 is an argument against the idea that Paul has abandoned the kingdom in favor of the theme of righteousness.

Testament. Israel's inheritance of the land of Canaan has expanded in the new age to include the eternal inheritance of God's kingdom. The kingdom thus has a decidedly future cast in this particular context. Nevertheless, the kingdom also has effects and implications for the lives of believers in the present age. This observation overlaps significantly with the ethical implications highlighted in the succeeding section. Paul's warning about those who will not inherit the kingdom serves as a "tacit invitation *to change*."⁶² Similarly, López refers to 6:9-10 as an "exhortation to lead godly lives."⁶³ Thiselton interprets 6:9-10 in light of the fuller treatment of inheriting the kingdom in 15:50, where the apostle says, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Since inheriting the kingdom requires a "fully transformed humanity" according to 15:50, Thiselton draws the following conclusion for 6:9-10:

[Paul] is not describing the qualifications required for an entrance examination; he is comparing habituated actions, which by definition can find no place in God's reign for the welfare of all, with those qualities in accordance with which Christian believers need to be transformed if they belong automatically to God's new creation in Christ. Everything which persistently opposes what it is to be Christlike must undergo change if those who practice such things wish to call themselves Christians and to look forward to resurrection with Christ.⁶⁴

The righteous character of God's kingdom should affect the lives of believers in the present. This is made possible, according to 6:11, through the saving work of Christ and the Spirit. As with 4:20, the character of the kingdom ought to shape Christian life in the present.

The idea that inheriting the kingdom calls for present righteousness in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 finds a parallel in Ephesians 5:3ff. Paul uses a vice list (similar to the one found in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10) to warn the Ephesians about those who have "no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God" (5:5). The prospect of not inheriting the

⁶²Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 439. (Italics original.)

⁶³René López, "Does the Vice List in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Describe Believers or Unbelievers?," 72.

⁶⁴ Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 439.

kingdom prompts Paul to give an exhortation in 5:7ff.⁶⁵ He exhorts the Ephesians not to be “partners” with such people, but instead to “walk as children of light” (5:8b). Several other ethical imperatives follow in the subsequent verses. Since certain persons won’t inherit the kingdom—“everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater)” (5:5)—it follows that believers should live righteously. The kingdom, then, has present effects in the lives of God’s people.⁶⁶

The kingdom and ethics. The eschatology of the kingdom naturally leads into the discussion of kingdom ethics. Shogren notes that in a number of passages in 1 Corinthians, “Future events provide the basis for ethical exhortation.”⁶⁷ Similarly, Hays claims that Paul’s eschatology leads him to view the Christian community “within a cosmic, apocalyptic frame of reference.”⁶⁸ Paul’s eschatology of the kingdom informs his ethical exhortations in at least two respects. First, as has been noted above, the eschatological threat of not inheriting the kingdom is intended to compel the Corinthians to turn away from unrighteous behavior. Though Hays denies that 6:9-10 serves as a threat to the Corinthians, Haufe rightly refers to these verses as a *Drohwort*, or threatening word.⁶⁹ Thus Donfried is correct to note that inheriting the kingdom is “dependent on a certain type of ethical behavior.”⁷⁰ The Corinthians will not enter the

⁶⁵The conjunction οὖν “therefore,” should be understood as inference in Eph 5:7.

⁶⁶Paul makes a similar point in Rom 14:17, where he claims that the kingdom is a matter of “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” Instead of fixating on more trivial matters, like eating and drinking, the apostle exhorted the believers in Rome to concern themselves with these kingdom priorities.

⁶⁷Shogren, “Pauline Proclamation,” 55. Shogren lists 7:29, 31, and 10:11.

⁶⁸Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 27.

⁶⁹So also Donfried, “The Kingdom of God in Paul,” 183. Hays acknowledges that God’s judgment, though not Paul’s most frequent motivation for ethical instruction, is nonetheless an integral part of his proclamation (Hayes, *The Moral Vision*, 39).

kingdom on the last day if they continue unchecked in sinful patterns.⁷¹ Second, the eschatological gift of the Spirit is that which effects righteous conduct in the heirs of the kingdom. Cho rightly refers to the believer's present possession of the Spirit as "an eschatological sign which becomes their 'hallmark' and a representation of the power of the age to come."⁷² Likewise Hays notes that the Spirit's work is the primary motivation for righteous living in Paul's theology.⁷³ The Spirit's transforming work—which is based on Christ's cross-work (2:1-5)—explains why the sins mentioned in 6:9-10 are incompatible with life in the kingdom.

The Judgment of the Saints in 6:2-3

It was argued in the previous chapter that the concept of the kingdom informs Paul's exhortations in 1 Corinthians 4:8, even though Paul only uses the verb βασιλεύω and not the noun βασιλεία. In 6:2-3 Paul does not use any form of the βασιλ- word group, yet it will be argued below the future judgment of the saints is an aspect of Paul's teaching on the kingdom. Just as the apostle spoke of the future *reign* of believers in 4:8, so now he refers to the *judgment* they will exercise in the age to come. The fact that the kingdom is explicitly mentioned in the near context (6:9-10) adds support to the idea that

⁷⁰Donfried, "The Kingdom of God in Paul," 185. Donfried notes the continuity with Matt 25:34, where Jesus only allows those who have acted with love and mercy to inherit the kingdom (185).

⁷¹López claims that Paul was not giving a warning, but rather an exhortation for the Corinthians to recall God's work in their lives and to quit behaving like those who have no inheritance in the kingdom. López, "Does the Vice List in 1 Cor 6:9-10 Describe Believers or Unbelievers?," 72-73. However, the categories of exhortation and warning are not mutually exclusive in this instance. Paul uses the warning about the fate of those who live unrighteously to exhort the Corinthians to obedience. The language of warning is made explicit in Gal 5:21b, where Paul says, "I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." In Ephesians 5:5-6 a similar warning is given in view of sins that will disqualify one from inheriting the kingdom. After listing several sins, Paul says, "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience" (5:6). Although this verse may function in part as an exhortation, it is nonetheless a strong warning, particularly in light of the threat of God's judgment.

⁷²Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom*, 63.

⁷³Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 40–41.

it informs, or is inseparable from, Paul's teaching about the future judgment of the saints. Though a number of questions will be addressed concerning the nature of this judgment and its background source, the main focus below will be on those questions that are most relevant to Paul's theology of the kingdom. First, the role of 6:2-3 in its immediate context needs to be reviewed.

The Immediate Context

Paul rebuked the Corinthians in the previous chapter for not removing a member of the congregation who committed incestuous adultery (5:1). The apostle reminded them of their responsibility to judge evil within the congregation (12-13). The failure of the Corinthians to deal with this serious internal matter makes their practice of taking fellow believers to court for "trivial cases" (κριτηρίων ἐλαχίστων) in 6:2 all the more inappropriate. Winter and Clarke are probably correct that calling these disputes "trivial cases" indicates that they were civil rather than criminal disputes.⁷⁴ These disputes may have been another example of factionalism in Corinth, as believers were making use of the Roman legal system in their disputes with one another.⁷⁵ The argument in 6:1-4 runs from the greater to the lesser: in light of the fact that the saints will judge the world and the angels on the last day (2-3), it is inconceivable that they would take "trivial cases" (2), or "matters pertaining to this life," (3) before the "unrighteous" (ἀδίκων) (1), that is, those who have "no standing in the church" (4). The future judgment entrusted to the saints is thus Paul's basis for why the Corinthians should be able to settle intramural disputes without resorting to the Roman law court. Clarke notes Paul's belief

⁷⁴Bruce W. Winter, "Civil Litigation in Secular Corinth and the Church: The Forensic Background to 1 Corinthians 6:1-8," *NTS* 37 (1991): 561. So Andrew D. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth: A Socio-Historical and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1-6*, *Arbeiten Zur Geschichte Des Antiken Judentums Und Des Urchristentums* 18 (New York; Leiden: Brill, 1993), 59–60. Clarke also points to 1 Cor 6:7-8 and the references to being wronged and defrauded as further evidence that the matters in view are civil and not criminal.

⁷⁵Winter, "Civil Litigation in Secular Corinth," 571-72. So also Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth*, 71.

that “whatever status a man might have in the world, that status is of no avail within the Kingdom of God.”⁷⁶

Paul upbraids the Corinthians for not knowing about their future role of judgment, or at least for failing to consider its implications. Twice he asks, “Do you not know?” (οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι) (vv. 2-3).⁷⁷ The phrase οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι in 6:2-3 is the same one used to introduce Paul’s warning in 6:9 about failing to inherit the kingdom. In both cases he instructs the Corinthians based on their future place in the kingdom of God. Thiselton claims that the phrase “the saints will judge the world” represents a “self-congratulatory catchphrase” of the Corinthians, and he cites as evidence the Corinthians’ claim to be full, rich, and reigning in 4:8. This is possible, though there is nothing in the context that demands this understanding. What is clear is that the Corinthians have failed to reckon with the present implications of their future role in the kingdom. The background to Paul’s references to judging the world (and angels) in 6:2-3 deserves further comment, for as Roose notes, Paul’s apocalyptic eschatology in 6:1-3 is the basis for his instructions.⁷⁸

The Old Testament Background

A number of commentators believe that 1 Corinthians 6:2-3 is an allusion to Daniel 7:22, where the Ancient of Days comes to put an end to the fourth beast—likely a reference to the Roman empire—and its persecution of the saints (Dan 7:21-22). Daniel prophesies that “*judgment* was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the *kingdom*” (emphasis added). The term “judgment” (κρίσιν)

⁷⁶Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth*, 70.

⁷⁷Roose notes that Paul’s double use of the question, “Do you not know,” in 1 Cor 6:2-3 indicates that he expected the Corinthians to share (already) his apocalyptic eschatology. Hanna Roose, “Sharing in Christ’s Rule: Tracing a Debate in Earliest Christianity,” *JSNT* 27, no. 2 (2004): 138.

⁷⁸Ibid. Allo also notes Paul’s eschatological emphasis as signaled in 1 Cor 6:2-3. E.B. Allo, *Saint Paul: Première épître aux Corinthiens* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1956), 133-34.

in Daniel 7:22 (LXX) is relevant to 1 Corinthians 6:2-3, especially since Daniel seems to be referring to end-time judgment. Garland doubts this allusion due to the uncertain identity of “the saints” (τοῖς ἁγίοις) in Daniel 7:22 (LXX) and because the context does not envision a worldwide judgment.⁷⁹ However, the near context gives no reason to doubt that τοῖς ἁγίοις is a reference to God’s people, nor is there evidence that the judgment is not universal, for 7:27 says that the “greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven (πασῶν τῶν ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸν βασιλειῶν) shall be given to the people of the saints (λαῷ ἁγίῳ) of the most high” (7:27). There is evidence, then, for seeing Daniel 7:22 in the background of 1 Corinthians 6:2-3, though it is difficult to be certain. There is a possibility that Paul is alluding to other passages as well. Postbiblical Jewish writings make similar apocalyptic claims, and more importantly, the New Testament contains a number of parallels to 1 Corinthians 6:2-3.⁸⁰ For example, Jesus promises the Twelve that when he sits on his throne “in the new world,” then “you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging (κρίνοντες) the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt 19:28). It may be best, therefore, to cite Daniel 7:22 as a *likely* background source for 1 Corinthians 6:2-3, given that it is one of the clearest prophecies in this regard, while keeping in mind that Paul’s words are also consistent with some postbiblical Jewish writings and with the words of Christ.

Questions about Judgment

A number of questions remain in 1 Corinthians 6:2-3: (1) Who will be judged? (2) What kind of judgment is being referred to? (3) When will this judgment take place?

⁷⁹Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 202.

⁸⁰Roose notes that in the *Acts of Paul 3.1*, the author promises that those who love God will judge angels at the right hand of the Father. Roose, “Sharing in Christ’s Rule,” 138n56. Among other texts, Ciampa and Rosner note the following postbiblical Jewish writings: Wis 3:7-8; Sir 4:15. The following New Testament texts are also cited: Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30; Jude 14-15; Rev 2:26-27; 20:4. Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 227. See also Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth*, 59–60.

(4) In what way will the saints participate in this judgment? On the topic of judgment, Paul has already spoken of himself and the works of other believers as the object of the Lord's judgment (3:13-15; 4:3-5). In these latter references, the apostle probably has in mind the Lord's decisive assessment of the lives of all persons (both believers and unbelievers) following the *parousia*. This is the same judgment Paul references in 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." The "world" that is the object of the saints' judgment in 1 Corinthians 6:2 has already been identified in 6:1 as the "unrighteous" (i.e., unbelievers). In 6:3 Paul also includes the angels as those whom believers will judge, which is likely a reference to fallen angels.⁸¹ The judgment of fallen angels may also be in view in 1 Corinthians 15:24, where "every rule and every authority and power" are destroyed by Christ before he hands over the kingdom to the Father.⁸² The judgment in 6:2-3 should therefore be understood primarily as the final judgment of the wicked. The eternal dimension of this judgment is confirmed in 6:3, for the judgment of the angels is set over against "matters pertaining to this life" (*βιωτικά*).

The final question above is perhaps the most difficult to answer, namely, how will the saints take part in judging the wicked (both persons and angels) in the age to come? Thiselton notes that some patristic commentators were reluctant to assign

⁸¹Derrett's view is doubtful, as he sees the angels to be judged as "the angels of the nations, not merely wicked angels." J. Duncan M. Derrett, "'Judgment and 1 Corinthians 6,'" *NTS* 37 (1991): 28. Ciampa and Rosner cite the following verses to point to the role of good angels in the future judgment: Matt 13:41; 16:27; 25:31. They also note that Jude 6 refers to God's future judgment of the wicked angels (cf. 1 Enoch 10:12; 12:3-5; 22:11; 54:5-6) (Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 228). Garland notes, however, the reference in Heb 2:5-9 (cf. 2 Bar 51:8-12) to man's dominion over the world to come viz-a-viz the dominion of angels, both good and bad (Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 202).

⁸²Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 228. So also Frédéric Louis Godet, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 288.

judgment to anyone other than God-in-Christ.⁸³ Paul's negative assessment of human judgment in 4:3-5 may offer support for such a view:

But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

Those who see final judgment as a strictly divine prerogative offer a helpful caution at this point. Nevertheless, it is doubtful that the judgment in view in 6:2-3 is merely accusatory, for Paul explicitly compares the judgment of the saints to judgments rendered in human courts in 6:1-3. The logic of his overall argument in 6:1-8 implies that the saints will in some way participate in rendering a final verdict over unbelievers and wicked angels.⁸⁴ So how can 6:2-3 be reconciled with Paul's portrayal of human judgment in 4:3-5 (even by believers) as irrelevant, and does the saints' participation in the final judgment impinge on a strictly divine function?

In 4:3-5 Paul contrasts fallible human judgments with the Lord's infallible and authoritative judgment. The Corinthians were trying to boost their spiritual status by identifying with certain ministers—Paul, Apollos, Cephas, etc. (3:21)—and Paul wanted to remind them that the true and decisive assessment of such persons will only happen at the Lord's coming (4:5). Human judgments remain imperfect in this present age. Yet, for Paul, this reality did not remove the need for human judgment altogether. In the following chapter he claims to have already pronounced judgment on the man who had committed adultery with his mother-in-law (5:1), and he encouraged the Corinthians to formally carry out this sentence (5:3-5). Furthermore, the reference to the saints'

⁸³Thiselton lists the following church fathers who held to the idea that the judgment of the saints was accusatory in nature: Chrysostom, Ambrosiaster, Theodoret, Theophylus, Photius, and Erasmus. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 426.

⁸⁴So Godet, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 286-89.

judgment of the world and of angels in 6:2-3 does not belong to the present age. Paul is speaking of a reality that obtains only after Christ's second coming and the resurrection of the saints (15:22-25). Therefore, the saints will participate in the final judgment only after they are free from sin, death, and the power of the law (15:54-56). In other words, the judgment mentioned in 6:2-3 is not marked by the same imperfections that characterize the present age.⁸⁵

The final question in 6:2-3 is whether or not the saints' judgment impinges on Christ's role as judge. Thiselton addresses this question by pointing to the believer's identification with Christ in the events of 1 Corinthians 15:22-24. Just as believers are united to Christ in his resurrection, so also “. . . the Christian corporeity cannot but be likewise in the event of judgment, in the sense of its being-in-Christ as Christ takes his throne and pronounces judgment.”⁸⁶ This interpretation can be made to fit the timeline of 1 Corinthians 15:22-24, wherein Christ's destruction of every rule, authority, and power is subsequent to the resurrection of the saints at his second coming.⁸⁷ There is good reason, then, to see the saints' role in the final judgment as an aspect of their union with Christ. They participate in the judgment, not independently, but only insofar as they are united to the Lord who renders the final verdict over all persons and angels. That there is not more information in 6:2-3 regarding the saints' role in judgment is not surprising, for as Garland notes, Paul's primary purpose is to “. . . point out a disturbing inconsistency between what [the saints] will doing at the end of this age and what they are doing now.”⁸⁸

⁸⁵Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 233. Fee compares 6:2-3 to 5:12a and says the difference is in perspective—present judgments verses the final judgment.

⁸⁶Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 427.

⁸⁷The phrase “rule, authority, and power” (1 Cor 15:24) will be examined in the subsequent chapter.

⁸⁸Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 203.

Though Garland hesitates to assign the role of judging to the saints, he makes a helpful connection between judging and ruling. He points out that Jesus promised the disciples that they would rule over the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt 19:28; Lk 22:30), and that believers are given authority to rule over the nations in Revelation 2:26-27 (cf. Rev 20:4). This connection between judging and ruling brings together 1 Corinthians 6:2-3 and 1 Corinthians 4:8, as the latter passage refers to the saints' reign (note the three uses of βασιλεύω). Similarly, Lightfoot notes: "Just as the faithful reign with Christ as kings (2 Tim 2:12; Rev 22:5), so they shall sit with Him as judges of the world."⁸⁹ It may be concluded that the saints' future reign with Christ includes the idea of their sitting in judgment over the world and over angels.

Other Aspects of the Kingdom

Paul's references to the kingdom in 1 Corinthians 6 allow for further comment on the three aspects of the kingdom noted in the previous chapter, beginning with the apparent familiarity of the concept among the Corinthians.

The Familiarity of the Concept

Paul refers to the kingdom of God in 1 Corinthians 6 without offering a definition or explanation of the concept. As in 4:20, he takes it for granted that the kingdom is familiar to the Corinthians, repeatedly asking, "Or do you not know . . ." (ἢ οὐκ οἶδατε) when the concept is in view (6:2-3, 9). With regard to 6:2, White notes that this introduction "makes it clear that Paul assumed the Corinthians would, in fact, be familiar with this tenet, possibly because he had expounded on the subject during his one

⁸⁹J. B. Lightfoot, *Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul* (London: Macmillan, 1885; repr., Winona Lake, IN: Alpha, n.d.), quoted in David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 202.

and a half year sojourn in Corinth.”⁹⁰ Paul’s reference to inheriting the kingdom in Galatians 5 adds support for this point. After listing the works of the flesh in 5:19-21a, the apostle says, “I warn you, *as I warned you before*, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (21b; emphasis added). The fact that Paul had already warned the Galatians of the prospect of not inheriting the kingdom implies that this subject was part of his initial gospel proclamation in Galatia. In addition, the fact that Luke repeatedly summarizes Paul’s gospel ministry with reference to the kingdom adds support for this point.⁹¹ Regardless of *how* the concept was first communicated to the Corinthians, it seems unlikely that Paul would use a concept that was unintelligible to them given that part of his purpose was to warn them of the prospect of facing God’s final judgment.

Toward a Definition

Thus far a number of characteristics pertaining to the kingdom of God have been examined, though little has been offered in terms of a definition of the concept. Scholars following in the wake of Dalman’s influential study of kingdom-related terminology have conceived of the kingdom almost exclusively as God’s sovereign rule.⁹² This aspect of the kingdom is implied in 1 Corinthians 6:11, for Paul expects the Corinthians to live righteously and so inherit the kingdom due to God’s saving work among them. Defining the kingdom as God’s reign fits with 4:20 as well, where God’s

⁹⁰Joel White, “Anti-Imperial Subtexts in Paul: An Attempt at Building a Firmer Foundation,” *Commentarii Periodici Pontificii Instituti Biblici*, 90 (2009): 327. So also Shogren, “The Pauline Proclamation,” 50.

⁹¹See Acts 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31. Shogren points to Acts 14:22 as evidence that Paul may have included the warning of exclusion from the kingdom in his initial proclamation in Corinth. (Shogren, “The Wicked Will Not Inherit the Kingdom of God,” 96).

⁹²Gustaf Dalman, *The Words of Jesus. Considered in the Light of Post-Biblical Jewish Writings and the Aramaic Language* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909), 91-147. For a survey of the kingdom of God and its history of interpretation, see Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 624-57.

power is associated with the kingdom. However, many commentators recognize that the kingdom can also refer to a realm or sphere in which God rules.⁹³ First Corinthians 6:9-10 fits this latter definition, since inheriting the kingdom, like inheriting the Promised Land, implies the presence of a location or sphere that believers will inherit on the last day. The physical component of the believer's inheritance is confirmed in 15:50, for inheritance is contingent upon a resurrected body. Romans 4:13 offers support for this conception of the kingdom, as Paul refers to Abraham and his offspring as the "heir of the world" (τὸ κληρονόμιον . . . κόσμου). Being an heir is parallel to the concept of inheritance, as the noun κληρονόμιον in Romans 4:13 matches the verb κληρονομήσουσιν in 1 Cor 6:9 and 6:10. Both passages envision a new creation that believers will inherit on the last day. It may be concluded that Paul's conception of the kingdom in 1 Corinthians refers both to God's rule or reign, and to the realm or sphere that believers will inherit at the final resurrection.

Anti-Imperial Readings

Paul's references to the kingdom in 1 Corinthians 6:1-11 intersect with Horsley's AI reading of Paul's view of the church. Horsley defines Paul's ἐκκλησίαι, of which the Corinthians were one example, as "local communities of an alternative society to the Roman imperial order."⁹⁴ Support for this definition can be found in 6:1-8, where Paul exhorts the Corinthians to handle their disputes "in absolute independence of the established courts."⁹⁵ Paul's instructions are not simply religious in nature, for Horsley

⁹³G.E. Ladd claims that the kingdom can also refer to "the people belonging to a given realm." George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 19.

⁹⁴Richard A. Horsley, "Building an Alternative Society," in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 209.

⁹⁵Richard A. Horsley, "1 Corinthians: A Case Study of Paul's Assembly," in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 246.

characterizes an ἐκκλησία as follows: “Its primary meaning in the Greek-speaking eastern Roman empire was the citizen ‘assembly’ of the Greek *polis*.”⁹⁶ Horsley acknowledges the יהוה קהל ‘assembly of Yahweh’ as the Old Testament background for the term ἐκκλησίαι, yet he understands the term ἐκκλησία as serving primarily a political function vis-à-vis the Roman imperial order. Another related concern of Paul in 6:1-8 was the economic relations among the Corinthians. The wealthy and the powerful used the courts as “instruments of social control,” thus Paul wanted the believers in Corinth to establish their independence from the governing authorities.⁹⁷

In response, there are good reasons to question whether Paul wanted the Corinthians to be set apart from the surrounding culture primarily for political reasons. For instance, Paul indicates that the Roman authorities were unfit to settle the Corinthian disputes, not due to political or economic concerns, but rather due to God’s eschatological reckoning. The Roman legal authorities are part of the “unrighteous” (ἀδίκων) to be judged by the saints on the last day. According to 6:9, such unrighteous persons (ἄδικοι) will not inherit the kingdom. Therefore, the Corinthians are to form an alternative society, but only insofar as they manifest the righteousness characteristic of God’s kingdom. By focusing on the need for the Corinthians to be politically autonomous and independent of the Roman authorities, Horsley has missed the main purpose of Paul’s exhortation, namely, to encourage the Corinthians to turn from their sins, like defrauding one another in court (6:8), and instead to live righteously. Their conduct should be consistent with those who have experienced the saving work of Christ and the Spirit (6:11).

There are other reasons to doubt Horsley’s reading at this point, one of which has to do with Paul’s characterization of the disputes in 1 Corinthians 6:1-8. The reason

⁹⁶Horsley, "Building an Alternative Society," 208.

⁹⁷Horsley, "1 Corinthians," 246-47.

certain disputes should be handled internally is not due to political reasons, but because they pertain to “this life” (βιωτικά) (v. 3). Paul contrasts the ephemeral matters of the present age with the weightier matters of the age to come. While political concerns may not be irrelevant to Paul, the scope of his argument is cosmic and eschatological rather than political. The Corinthians are fit to handle their internal disputes, not fundamentally because they are politically independent of Rome, but because they are destined to judge even greater matters in the age to come. Rome represents merely an historical instance of the rulers of the present age, all of whom are unqualified to handle the internal disputes of God’s people.

Finally, there is additional evidence in the wider context of 1 Corinthians that Paul viewed the Corinthians as set apart in spiritual matters rather than in politics or economics. For instance, in 1:26-31 the apostle distinguishes the weak Corinthians from the wise and powerful in society due to the fact that believers have been elected in Christ (v.30). The Corinthians are also set apart from the rulers of this age in terms of their possession of the Spirit, which allows them to understand God’s hidden wisdom (2:6-13). The Corinthian believers formed an alternative society because they belonged to God and not to the powers of sin and death; their lives were to be governed by inheritance in his kingdom. Kim’s conclusion is worth citing at length:

So, although he [Paul] has a clear conception of the church as an alternative *ekklesia* of the people of the Kingdom of God over against the *ekklesia* of the citizens of this world—even as the ‘colonial outpost’ of the heavenly (i.e., transcendental) Kingdom of God in this world (Phil 3:20) that materializes the ethos, value system, relationships, and behavioral pattern of the Kingdom (Phil 1:27) and therefore embodies the real ‘justice, peace, and joy’ (Rom 14:17)—Paul does not consider the church eventually replacing the Roman Empire in this world. Nor does he project any political, social, and economic program with which the King and Lord Jesus Christ will rule this world for more adequate justice, peace, freedom, and well-being than those of the Roman Empire.⁹⁸

⁹⁸Kim, *Christ and Caesar*, 66-67.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is evidence that Paul's references to the kingdom in 1 Corinthians 6:1-11 fit with the three aspects of God's saving work identified in the thesis. First, as noted in the exegesis of 6:11, inheritance in God's kingdom comes about through the saving work of Christ and the Spirit. Paul reminds the Corinthians that they have been "washed," "sanctified," and "justified," all verbs that describe an aspect of their conversion. That latter verb, "justified" (*ἐδικαιώθητε*), speaks to God's declaration of the sinner as righteous. Based on previous chapters (1 Cor 1:30), as well as the rest of the Pauline corpus (Rom 3:21-25), God's declaration of righteousness is based on Christ's atoning death. This relationship between the kingdom and Christ's death is consistent with 1 Corinthians 4:20, where the power of the kingdom is effected through the word of the cross.

Second, the fact that the kingdom has both present and future aspects in this chapter is consistent with Paul's inaugurated eschatological schema. First Corinthians 6:1-11 is primarily future-oriented, as the concept of inheriting the kingdom is an eschatological fulfillment of the promised land-inheritance in the Old Testament. Those persons who persist unchecked in unrighteous behavior will be barred from the kingdom in the age to come (vv. 9-10). According to 6:2-3, inheriting the kingdom includes participating with Christ in judging both the unbelieving world and the wicked angels. This focus on the age to come, however, does not leave the present unaffected. The righteous character of the kingdom should affect the lives of believers now, for they must avoid the catalogue of sins listed in 6:9-10. Likewise the future judgment of the saints in 6:2-3 makes it unthinkable that the Corinthians would prosecute and defraud one another over trivial matters (6:1-8). The kingdom shapes the conduct of believers in the present age.

Third, in connection with the present manifestation of the kingdom, Paul's eschatological outlook drives his ethical exhortations and warnings.⁹⁹ Kingdom citizens must not participate in the sins listed in 6:9-10, nor should they be taking one another to court over trivial matters (6:1-8). The entire section in 6:1-11 may even be characterized as an appeal to ethical righteousness based on Paul's eschatology.¹⁰⁰ Witherington rightly brings together these two strands to diagnose the problem in Corinth:

The Corinthians' problems arose not just from bad ethics or bad social values but from bad theology, which affected all worldly affairs and matters including sexual and legal matters. They had an inadequate if not non-existent sense of future eschatology, or at least future eschatology was not shaping their values and decision making.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹Still notes that eschatology informs Paul's instructions about lawsuits in 6:1-11, and this is one of several parallels to the apostle's approach in 4:6-21. E. Coye Still, "Divisions Over Leaders and Food Offered to Idols," *TynBul* 55 (2004): 41. Still cites 6:2-3, 6:9-10, and 4:8 as evidence of this point.

¹⁰⁰Roose notes that Paul's apocalyptic eschatology is the basis for his instructions in 6:1-3. Roose, "Sharing in Christ's Rule," 138.

¹⁰¹Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 165.

CHAPTER 4

THE KINGDOM IN 1 CORINTHIANS 15

So far Paul's references to the kingdom in 1 Corinthians 4 and 1 Corinthians 6 have been examined. It has been demonstrated that the kingdom is integral to Paul's proclamation of the cross (4:20), the future reign of believers and its effect on ethics (4:8; 6:2-3), and the righteous living required of those who would inherit the kingdom (6:9-10). This chapter will examine Paul's final references to the kingdom in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 and 15:50 respectively in order to demonstrate the relationship of the kingdom to God's salvation in Christ. Although this chapter presents a host of interpretive challenges, the focus of this work means that the discussion will be limited to those questions that directly affect Paul's concept of the kingdom. Before looking at the context of 1 Corinthians 15:1-19, the absence of explicit kingdom references in 6:12-14:40 needs to be addressed briefly, as this phenomenon may initially appear to undermine the idea of the significance of the kingdom in 1 Corinthians.

At least two factors should be considered before claiming that the kingdom is irrelevant in 6:12-14:40. First, the fact that 1 Corinthians is an occasional letter means that Paul is, at least in part, responding to specific questions, practices, and situations in the Corinthian church. It is thus difficult to assess the relative importance of a theme based solely on the number of times a term appears. Second, though the kingdom is not referenced in these intervening chapters, the eschatological perspective that characterizes Paul's theology of the kingdom in 1 Corinthians 1-6 continues to inform his exhortations in chapters 7-14. Several brief examples support this latter point.

Paul's counsel concerning singleness and marriage in 1 Corinthians 7 is (in part) based on his eschatology, for he notes, "the appointed time has grown very short" (ὁ

καιρὸς συνεσταλμένος ἐστίν) (7:29), and the “present form of this world is passing away” (παράγει . . . τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου) (7:31). Next, when the apostle warns against idolatry in chapter 10, he appeals to the place of the Corinthians in God’s eschatological schema. They are those on whom “the end of the ages has come” (τὰ τέλη τῶν αἰώνων κατήντηκεν) (10:11), thus giving them the advantage of learning from Israel’s negative example. Finally, in chapter 13 Paul prioritizes love over spiritual gifts based on the fact that spiritual gifts serve their purpose in the present age only. Love, on the other hand, is a preview of the age to come, for it remains even after Christ’s second coming (13:8-12). In sum, Paul’s eschatological outlook in 1 Corinthians 7-14, particularly his use of eschatology to address ethical concerns, is consistent with the findings above in 1 Corinthians 1-6 concerning the eschatology and ethics of the kingdom.

The Context of 1 Corinthians 15:1-19

In order to examine Paul’s kingdom-related references in 15:20ff., it is important to understand these references in the context of Paul’s overarching argument in concerning the future, bodily resurrection of believers. Paul begins by reminding the Corinthians of the gospel message which he preached and they believed—the message of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection (15:1-4). Christ’s death has already featured prominently in 1 Corinthians 1-4, but now it is the resurrection that occupies Paul’s attention. The apostle mentions a long list of witnesses to Christ’s resurrection: Cephas, the twelve apostles, over five hundred brothers (simultaneously), James, and then the rest of the apostles (vv. 5-7). Paul includes himself as the “last of all” (ἔσχατον δὲ πάντων) to receive a resurrection appearance (v. 8). Verses 9 and 10 underscore the fact that Paul’s privileged position is solely a result of God’s grace. Paul bookends this opening section by speaking of what he has preached and what the Corinthians have believed (compare

15:2 and 15:11).¹ Paul’s emphasis on the veracity and foundational importance of Christ’s resurrection in 15:1-11 sets the stage for his argument in 15:12-19. In 15:12 he reveals the question and the topic that occupies the rest of the chapter: “Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” Though it is clear that some of the Corinthians were denying the resurrection of the dead, scholars continue to disagree over the specifics of this denial.² Paul’s follow-up questions in 15:35—“How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?”—along with his response to these questions in 15:36ff., seem to indicate that he is responding, at least in part, to the idea that an earthly body would be unfit for a heavenly existence.³ Paul responds by pointing the Corinthians back to what they already affirmed—Christ’s resurrection.

While the Corinthians affirmed Christ’s resurrection, they failed to grasp its inseparable connection to the future resurrection of believers. Since Christ’s resurrection

¹In both 15:2 and 15:11 Paul uses the verb ἐπιστεύσατε “you believed.” The term εὐηγγελισάμην “I preached” is used in 15:2, while in 15:11 he uses the related term κηρύσσομεν “we preach.”

²Vos claims that three positions stand out over the last quarter of the twentieth century concerning the denial of the resurrection of the dead in 1 Cor 15:12: (1) the belief that there is no existence after death, (2) the denial of the futurity of the resurrection (which is replaced by an enthusiastic awareness that one’s redemption is complete) and (3) the idea that postmortal salvation is only for the mind and soul, but not for the body. Vos notes that positions two and three, or some combination thereof, have the most adherents. Johan S. Vos, “Argumentation und Situation in 1 Kor. 15,” *NovT* 41 (1999): 313. Vos notes that positions two and three, or some combination thereof, have the most adherents (314). Mitchell opts for a fourth position, namely, that different positions on the resurrection may have been held among the Corinthians, and that this disagreement contributed to their disunity. Paul’s mention of “some among you” (ἐν ὑμῖν τινες) in 15:12 refers to a certain segment of the Corinthian community. M. M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 176-77. For additional articles that survey and interact with various positions regarding the denial of the resurrection in 1 Cor 15, see Jack H. Wilson, “Corinthians Who Say There is No Resurrection of the Dead,” *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 59 (1968): 90-107; A. J. M. Wedderburn, “The Problem of the Denial of the Resurrection in I Corinthians 15,” *NovT* 23 (1981): 229-41.

³Jeffrey R. Asher, *Polarity and Change in Corinthians 15*, *Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie* 42 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 91. Asher claims that the Corinthians would have held to the “impossibility of raising a terrestrial body to the celestial realm.” See also Joost Holleman, *Resurrection and Parousia: A Traditio-Historical Study of Paul’s Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 35-40.

guarantees the future resurrection of the saints, it follows that a denial of the saints' resurrection is, in turn, a denial of Christ's resurrection (vv. 13, 16). Denying Christ's resurrection carries disastrous entailments: the preaching of Paul and the faith of the Corinthians is in vain (v. 14), Paul and the other apostles have been misrepresenting God in their proclamation of Christ's resurrection (v. 15), the Corinthians' faith is futile and thus they remain in their sins (v. 17), and the future hope of believers (both those living and those who have died) is lost (vv. 18-19). In short, the truth and integrity of the gospel are at stake in a denial of the resurrection, as well as the eternal destiny of believers. In 15:20-28 Paul returns to his underlying assumption that Christ has in fact been raised from the dead, and he appeals to the kingdom to make his argument.

1 Corinthians 15:20-28

First Corinthians 15:20-28 is important not only because it contains references to the noun βασιλείαν “kingdom” (v. 24) and the verb βασιλεύειν “to reign” (v. 25), but also because of the role that Christ's reign—an integral component of the kingdom—plays in Paul's argument concerning the resurrection of the dead. These kingdom references will be examined below in the context of Paul's argument, beginning with his firstfruits metaphor and his Adam-Christ comparison.

Eschatological Order and a Better Adam

Paul's argument in 15:20ff is based on the belief that Christ has in fact risen from the dead. Christ's resurrection is referred to as the “firstfruits” (ἀπαρχή) (v. 20) of the resurrection of believers. The firstfruits metaphor is derived from the Old Testament, and as Holleman notes, it carries both a temporal and a representative denotation.⁴ That is, Christ's resurrection both precedes and guarantees the resurrection of those who belong to him. Schrage highlights parallel texts in Romans 8:29 (πρωτότοκον ἐν πολλοῖς

⁴Holleman, *Resurrection and Parousia*, 49-51.

ἀδελφοῖς) and Colossians 1:18 (πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν) as evidence that Christ's resurrection also places him first in terms of rank.⁵ Concerning the representative aspect of Christ's resurrection, Gaffin refers to the "organic connection between the two resurrections," even going so far as to call the two resurrections "two episodes of the same event."⁶ Paul draws on this connection to point out that Christ's resurrection was not an isolated event, but rather a guarantee of a future resurrection-harvest of all God's people.

This idea of Christ's representation of his people is carried forward in 15:21-22, where Christ and Adam are set forth as the twin representatives of the human race. Those who are in Adam experience death, while those who are in Christ are raised from the dead.⁷ Christ's resurrection is thus integrally connected to the resurrection of believers. However, these resurrections are separated by time, for there is a particular "order" (τάγματι)⁸ to be followed (v. 23). This order is explicated in 15:23-24: "But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power." According to this sequence, Christ's

⁵Wolfgang Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, EKKNT 7 (Zürich: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1991), 4:160.

⁶Richard Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul's Soteriology* (Phillipsburg, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1987), 35.

⁷This theme of resurrection life also shows up in the Adam-Christ typology in Rom 5:12-21 (see 5:17, 18, 21). See also the subsequent discussion in Rom 6, where Christ's resurrection grounds the believer's future resurrection (6:5), as well as the believer's present freedom from the enslaving power of sin (6:9-11).

⁸Although BDAG includes the use of τάγματι in 15:24 under the gloss of "class, group," it is probably better to include this usage under BDAG's third heading, which refers to a "stage in a sequence." BDAG, s.v. "τάγμα." Paul is giving an explanation for the temporal delay between the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of believers. The gloss "order, turn" seems more appropriate, particularly given Paul's use of the same word (τάξις) in 1 Cor 14:40. In this latter case, he is urging the Corinthians to conduct their gatherings in an orderly manner.

resurrection is the first event, and “then” (ἐπειτα)⁹ believers will be raised at Christ’s second coming (23). The next event in this sequence occurs in verse 24: “Then comes the end” (εἴτα τὸ τέλος). The word translated “then” in 15:24 is now εἴτα instead of ἐπειτα (see 15:23), though there is no significant difference in meaning between the terms.¹⁰ In both cases Paul identifies an event that occurs subsequent to the previous event, which in the latter case means that τὸ τέλος (v. 24) follows the resurrection of those who are in Christ. The meaning of τὸ τέλος has long been contested, as has been the interpretation and timing of the events in 15:23-27. These questions have been bound up with the controversial issue of an intermediate messianic kingdom. Since these questions require a closer look at the entire passage, they will be discussed below following the exegesis of 15:24ff.

Psalms and the Reign of Christ

According to 1 Corinthians 15:24, τὸ τέλος is the time when Christ will hand over the kingdom to the Father. The fact that this handing over occurs “after” Christ’s destruction of all rival powers (ὅταν καταργήσῃ) leads Paul to address the reign of Christ in 15:25-27. The apostle cites Psalm 110:1 (Ps 109:1 LXX) in 1 Corinthians 15:25 and then Psalm 8:6 (Ps 8:7 LXX) in 1 Corinthians 15:27, making use of verbal, thematic, and redemptive-historical connections.¹¹ The verbal similarities between these psalmic

⁹Here the adverb ἐπειτα indicates being next in order of time. BDAG, s.v. “ἐπειτα,” 1b. One example of this meaning has appeared already in 15:5, where we read that Christ appeared first to Cephas and “then to the twelve” (εἴτα τοῖς δώδεκα).

¹⁰Though the adverb εἴτα does not have to serve as a marker of chronological sequence (as in Heb 12:9), its pairing with ἐπειτα makes it almost certain that it serves this function here. Furthermore, Paul’s use of εἴτα with ἐπειτα in 1 Cor 15:5-7 clearly carries the idea of events in a chronological sequence. BDAG, s.v. “εἴτα,” 1.

¹¹The combined use of Ps 110 and Ps 8 finds a Pauline parallel in Eph 1:20-22. See also the use of these psalms in close proximity in Heb 1:13 and Heb 2:5-9 respectively.

allusions can be seen in figure 1 below,¹² where the language of putting something under Christ's feet is similar:

Ps 110:1 (Ps 109:1 LXX): θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου
 Ps 8:6 (Ps 8:7 LXX): πάντα ὑπέταξας ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ

Figure 1. Alignment of Psalm 110:1 (109:1 LXX) with
 Psalm 8:6 (8:7 LXX)

Paul's use of Ps 110:1 (Ps 109:1 LXX) in 1 Corinthians 15:25 will be examined first.

The reign of Christ in Psalm 110:1. In 1 Corinthians 15:25 Paul says, “For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.” This is an allusion to Ps 110:1 (109:1 LXX), though Paul has adapted it for his purposes. Schrage notes that Paul does not refer explicitly to Christ being at the right hand of God, as at other times.¹³ Instead, the phrase δεῖ . . . αὐτὸν βασιλεύειν ‘he must reign’ is used in 15:25. The verbal similarities between 1 Corinthians 15:25 and Psalm 110:1 (109:1 LXX) can be seen in figure 2 below:

1 Corinthians 15:25: ἄχρι οὗ θῇ πάντας τοὺς ἐχθρούς ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ.
 Psalm 110:1 (109:1 LXX): ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου

Figure 2. Alignment of 1 Corinthians 15:25
 with Psalm 110:1 (109 LXX)

Paul has changed the direct speech of Psalm 110:1 to indirect speech in 1 Corinthians 15:25, shifting from first person (θῶ) to third person (θῇ). Lambrecht calls this a

¹²Though it is not included in figure 1, Ps 110:1 (Ps 109:1 LXX) begins with the superscription τῷ Δαυιδ ψαλμός “a Psalm of David.”

¹³Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 4:155. Schrage notes Col 3:1 and Eph 1:20 as two examples of references to Christ at God's right hand (155).

“Christological transposition,” since the subject (arguably) shifts from God to Christ.¹⁴ This adaptation of the allusion serves Paul’s purpose of demonstrating why Christ must destroy all other powers before “the end” (τὸ τέλος) (v. 24).¹⁵ The infinitival construction δεῖ . . . αὐτὸν βασιλεύειν ‘he must reign’ (v. 25) captures the necessity and certainty of this messianic promise.¹⁶

It should be noted that there is some disagreement about the subject of θῆ in 1 Corinthians 15:25. Lindemann, for instance, identifies God as the subject,¹⁷ an interpretation that is not without support. Since God is the one who puts enemies under the feet of his messianic king in Psalm 110:1, it is reasonable that he would be the one to put all enemies under Christ’s feet in 1 Corinthians 15:25. This interpretation also has in its favor the fact that God is likely the subject of the allusion in 15:27: “For he [God] has put all things in subjection under his [Christ’s] feet” (πάντα γὰρ ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ).¹⁸ However, there are also good reasons for seeing Christ as the subject of θῆ in 15:25. For example, in 15:24 Christ is the subject of καταργήσῃ ‘destroy,’ the one who puts down all rival powers. This makes it plausible that Christ would be the one to put enemies under his feet in 15:25b. Moreover, as Lambrecht notes, “after the active

¹⁴Jan Lambrecht, “Christological Use of Scripture in 1 Cor 15:20-28,” *NTS* 28 (1982): 507.

¹⁵Hay notes that Paul has adjusted the forms of θῶ ‘make’ and τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ‘your enemies’ to suit his context. David M Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973), 36. See also Joseph Kreitzer, *Jesus and God in Paul’s Eschatology*, JSNTSup 19 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987) 150.

¹⁶According to Hay, the clause δεῖ γὰρ αὐτὸν βασιλεύειν ‘for he must reign’ may be “an allusion to, or paraphrase of, vs 1b of the psalm: ‘Sit at my right hand’ is interpreted as a commission to reign.” Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand*, 36.

¹⁷Lindemann takes God to be the subject in 15:25b-27. Lindemann, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, HNT 9/1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 200), 345. So also Paul J. Brown, *Bodily Resurrection and Ethics in 1 Corinthians 15: Connecting Faith and Morality in the Context of Greco-Roman Mythology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 148. On God as the subject in 15:25b, see also C.K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, BNTC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1968), 358.

¹⁸According to Holleman, there is a change in subject within 15:25. Jesus is the subject in 15:25a (δεῖ γὰρ αὐτὸν βασιλεύειν), while God is the subject in 25b (θῆ). Holleman, *Resurrection and Parousia*, 59.

Christological δεῖ . . . αὐτὸν βασιλεύειν (v. 25a) the reader expects that Christ remains the agent in v. 25b.”¹⁹ It seems best, therefore, to take Christ as the subject of θῆ in 15:25, so that he is actively putting his enemies beneath his feet.

It is also worth noting Paul’s addition of the word πάντα “all” in 15:25, a word that is surely implied in Psalm 110:1.²⁰ This addition probably looks forward to the Psalm 8 allusion in 1 Corinthians 15:27, where it says that πάντα “all (things)” have been put in subjection to Christ. Paul is interpreting Psalm 110:1 in light of God’s creation mandate (Gen 1:26ff.) as the latter is reflected on in Psalm 8:6.²¹ The apostle’s purpose is to highlight the fact that death is not yet fully subject to Christ’s reign. According to 1 Corinthians 15:26, the last enemy to be destroyed is death, thus the resurrection of the saints must occur in order to fulfill God’s promise in Psalm 110:1.

By including death as an enemy over which Christ must reign, Paul expands the original scope of Psalm 110:1. The subjugation of the king’s enemies in Psalm 110:1 has in view Israel’s military rivals,²² but now Paul includes death, man’s ultimate enemy, in the purview of Christ’s reign. This observation provides another link to Psalm 8, for it is death that threatens man’s ability to carry out the divine mandate given to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:26ff. This connection between Adam and death was made explicit in the preceding verses where Adam was identified as the one through whom death entered the world and spread to all men (15:21-22). Since death was brought about by a man, it must

¹⁹So Lambrecht, “Paul’s Christological Use of Scripture,” 509.

²⁰Hay also notes the significance of the term πάντα “all” in Paul’s argument in 15:20-28, as the term occurs eleven times in this passage. Ibid., 37.

²¹Hay notes that the two texts interpret one another. Ibid., 37. See also Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 110-11.

²²For example, note the word “kings” (βασιλεῖς) in 110:5 (109:5 LXX).

be undone by a man, namely, Christ.²³ Therefore, the reign of Christ over his enemies in 15:25 should not be understood narrowly to include only military and political opponents, but more broadly to encompass spiritual powers opposed to God, including death itself.²⁴

The reign of Christ in Psalm 8. Paul alludes to Psalm 8:6 (Ps 8:7 LXX) in 1 Corinthians 15:27 with the words, “For God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” Psalm 8 is a reflection on the divine mandate to rule over creation originally given to the first couple in Genesis 1:26ff. A comparison of Paul’s words with the psalmist can be seen in figure 3 below:

1 Corinthians 15:27: πάντα γὰρ ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ

Psalm 8:6 (Ps 8:7 LXX): πάντα ὑπέταξας ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ

Figure 3. Alignment of 1 Corinthians 15:27
and Psalm 8:6 (8:7 LXX)

Paul has again altered the wording of the psalm to suit his purposes, switching from the direct speech of Psalm 8 to the indirect speech of 1 Corinthians 15:27. The subject is referred to in the third person rather than the second person.²⁵ This time, however, it is

²³In 15:45 Paul refers to Adam and Christ respectively as the first and last Adam (15:45). This Adam-Christ typology works at different levels according to Paul. The two figures are alike in terms of their humanity and in regard to their roles as human representatives. However, their actions and the effects of their actions are contrasted sharply. To demonstrate this latter point, Adam’s sin brings about death for the human race, while Christ’s resurrection brings about life for his people (15:21-22).

²⁴Koenig says that death is referred to as the last enemy due to its ongoing reality in spite of Christ’s resurrection, and likely because “the other powers which oppose God and Christ derive their authority from death.” John Koenig, “Christ and the Hierarchies in First Corinthians,” *Anglican Theological Review Supplement Series* 11 (1990): 103.

²⁵So Scott M. Lewis, *So That God May Be All in All: The Apocalyptic Message of 1 Corinthians 15:12-34* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1998), 62-63. Paul’s other changes are not significant. The preposition γὰρ is added in 15:27 in order to fit this verse in the flow of Paul’s argument in 15:20-28. The preposition ὑποκάτω is changed to ὑπὸ, though both translations may be glossed as “under” or “underneath.” The term τῶν ποδῶν has been changed to τοὺς πόδας, though this does not affect the interpretation of the passage.

God who places all things under Christ's feet.²⁶ Psalm 8 reflects on the commands given to the first couple in Gen 1:26-28, commands to "rule" (ἀρχέτωσαν) the earth (v. 26), to "exercise authority" (κατακυριεύσατε) over it (v. 28), and to "rule" (ἄρχετε) over all living things (v. 28). These verbs, which fall within the same semantic range as βασιλεύω, speak to the idea of ruling and reigning. Paul is interested in this concept of reigning because his purpose in 1 Corinthians 15:27 is to show that Christ's reign over death fulfills the original creation mandate given to Adam. The death brought about by Adam's sin is decisively defeated through the life-giving resurrection and reign of Christ.²⁷

The Function of 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

Before proceeding to the question of an intermediate messianic kingdom in 15:20-28, it will be helpful, based on the exegesis above, to state the function of this passage in Paul's argument. In response to those in Corinth who denied the resurrection of the dead (v. 12), Paul argues for its necessity based on Christ's own resurrection as well as God's promises concerning Christ's reign. To make his case, Paul appeals to the Old Testament firstfruits metaphor (vv. 20, 23), the typological parallels between Adam and Christ (vv. 21-22), and to two different psalms that forecast the success and comprehensive nature of Christ's reign (vv. 25, 27). Concerning this latter point, God has promised to put "all enemies" (πάντας τοὺς ἐχθρούς) in subjection to Christ (25), which means that death too must be overcome, since it is the "last enemy" (ἔσχατος ἐχθρὸς) (26).

²⁶Contra Lambrecht, who argues that Christ is the subject of ὑπέταξεν in 15:27. Lambrecht, "Paul's Christological Use of Scripture," 510-11. However, the parallel Lambrecht identifies in Phil 3:21, where Christ is the subject of the verb ὑποτάξαι (τοῦ δύνασθαι αὐτὸν . . . ὑποτάξαι), is worth noting (511).

²⁷In addition to the Psalms allusions, Ciampa and Rosner point to similar wording and themes in Dan 7:27: "And the kingdom and the power and the greatness of the kings that are under the whole heaven were given to the saints of the Most High; and his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all powers shall serve and obey him." Like 1 Cor 15:24-28, God's kingdom in Dan 7:26-27 is pictured as victorious over all rival powers. Roy E. Ciampa and Brian Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 768-69.

The future resurrection of the saints is the signal that death has succumbed to Christ's rule (15:26) and that God's promises have been fulfilled.

This passage also explains the sizeable time interval between Christ's resurrection and the resurrection of believers (vv. 22-23). Since these inseparable events are not simultaneous, Paul must instruct the Corinthians that there is an "order" (τάγματι) to be followed, which implies that the interval is part of God's sovereign design. Finally, this passage explains why the believer's future resurrection is integral to the accomplishment of God's ultimate purposes for creation. Believers must be resurrected in order for the final eschatological events in this passage to take place—Christ's handing over of the kingdom (v. 24) and his subjection to the Father (v. 28). The resurrection functions, therefore, to fulfill God's kingdom purposes.²⁸ According to 15:28, the *telos* of Christ's reign and of the resurrection of the dead is "that God may be all in all" (ἵνα ᾗ ὁ θεὸς τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν) (v. 28). This latter phrase, πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν, speaks to God's "undivided and total power over his creation."²⁹ Christ's reign and the resurrection of the saints are thus spoken of in terms of their full Trinitarian and eschatological significance.

An Intermediate Kingdom

Discussion of 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 has been dominated by the debate over whether or not Paul allows for a temporary, earthly messianic kingdom—sometimes referred to as a *Zwischenreich*, or intermediate kingdom. Integral to this discussion is the question of whether or not this kingdom precedes or follows Christ's second coming. How scholars answer these questions also affects whether or not it is proper to refer to a kingdom of Christ that is distinct from the kingdom of God. While a more thorough discussion is needed to address these questions exhaustively, including their modern

²⁸Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 555.

²⁹Lewis, *So That God May Be All in All*, 68.

history of interpretation, the scope of this study will limit the discussion to the ways in which these issues contribute to Paul's theology of the kingdom in 1 Corinthians. The historical debate will be sketched in briefly in order to highlight the relevant interpretive issues.

The view that 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 speaks of a temporary messianic kingdom that begins with the second coming of Christ is closely associated with Albert Schweitzer.³⁰ Not surprisingly, Schweitzer's view is based on the idea that Paul has adapted traditional Jewish apocalyptic expectations. The apocalypses of Baruch and Ezra, for example, held that the messianic kingdom would only contain those who were living at the time of its inauguration. Paul, on the other hand, claimed that those who participate in the kingdom must already be in the resurrection state, "either because they actually have risen from the dead, or because they have been transformed."³¹ The delay of the *parousia* and the death of Christians during that delay had, according to Schweitzer, forced Paul to posit two resurrections with the messianic kingdom coming in between them.³² This concept of a messianic kingdom subsequent to Christ's *parousia* was countered by W. D. Davies, who believed that the messianic kingdom was a present reality that was "actualized" at Christ's exaltation as the Son of God (Rom 1:3-4).³³ For Davies, Paul's primary organizing principle was Christ rather than Jewish apocalyptic expectations.³⁴ Christ's destruction of earthly powers, as referenced in 1 Corinthians

³⁰This summary of Schweitzer's view, along with the modern history of this debate given below, is taken largely from L. Joseph Kreitzer, *Jesus and God in Paul's Eschatology*, JSNTSup 19 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987) 135-45. However, Kreitzer's evaluation of the respective positions is not necessarily followed here.

³¹Albert Schweitzer, *The Kingdom of God and Primitive Christianity* (London: Black, 1968), 160.

³²Kreitzer, *Jesus and God in Paul's Eschatology*, 136.

³³W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*, 2nd ed. (London: S. P. C. K., 1955), 296.

³⁴Kreitzer, *Jesus and God in Paul's Eschatology*, 136.

15:24, began at the cross and will continue until Christ's *parousia*, at which time it will give way to the kingdom of God.³⁵

This debate between Schweitzer and Davies was later taken up by Wallis and Wilcke, though the arguments of these latter scholars differed in certain respects from their predecessors.³⁶ The same two questions, however, remained at the forefront of the debate: (1) Does 1 Cor 15:22 speak of two resurrections? (2) Is τὸ τέλος 'the end' (15:24) synonymous with the *parousia*?³⁷ Wilcke claims that the concept of a temporary messianic kingdom is not present in any other Pauline letters, and he denies that Paul speaks of two resurrections. Only the resurrection of believers is in view in 1 Corinthians 15, an event that will take place at the *parousia*. Wilcke rejects attempts to interpret τὸ τέλος adjectivally, as in the case of Weiss's translation, "the rest,"³⁸ the latter referring to the resurrection of unbelievers. In response, Wallis has argued for a second resurrection based on the comprehensiveness of the term πάντες "all" in 15:22. Just as πάντες died in Adam, so also πάντες (both believers and unbelievers) must be raised in Christ. Wallis notes, "The comprehensiveness of the "all" in Psalm 8:6 must decide the interpretation of "all" in verse 22b: 'In Christ all will be made alive.' If "all" in verse 22 does not have the same completeness as the "all" in verse 27, a logical weakness enters Paul's argument."³⁹

³⁵Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 296.

³⁶See Hans-Alwin Wilcke, *Das Problem eines messianischen Zwischenreichs bei Paulus*, ATANT 51, (Zurich: Zwingli, 1967); Wilber B. Wallis, "The Problem of an Intermediate Kingdom in 1 Cor 15.20-28," *JETS* 18 (1975): 229-42.

³⁷Kreitzer, *Jesus and God in Paul's Eschatology*, 139.

³⁸Johannes Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 358.

³⁹Wallis, "The Problem of an Intermediate Kingdom," 234. Wilcke rejects the idea that 1 Cor 15:20 and 15:22 can be used to argue for a general resurrection (Wilcke, *Das Problem eines messianischen Zwischenreichs bei Paulus*, 69-75).

Concerning the interpretation of εἴτα τὸ τέλος in 15:24, Wallis claims that εἴτα, following ἔπειτα in 15:23, “seems to measure a time-sequence of greater or less extent between Parousia and *telos*.”⁴⁰ In other words, Paul implies that there will be a time period of unspecified length between Christ’s second coming and the handing over of the kingdom at the end. That this period is the time of Christ’s reign is supported by the ὅταν clauses in 15:24. Wallis notes,

The aorist subjunctive in the second *hotan* clause [ὅταν καταργήσῃ πᾶσαν ἀρχὴν καὶ πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν καὶ δύναμιν] indicates that the destruction of Christ’s enemies is prior to the event of the first *hotan* clause [ὅταν παραδιδῷ τὴν βασιλείαν τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ], the delivering over of the Kingdom at the *telos*; the delivering over follows the subjugation.⁴¹

This sequence—destruction of enemies followed by delivering over of the kingdom—finds a parallel in 15:28, where the subjection of Christ’s enemies precedes Christ’s subjection to the Father.⁴² The subjection of Christ’s enemies, also known as the messianic kingdom, takes place prior to τὸ τέλος, and is identified in 15:25 as the reign of Christ.

Scholars continue to debate the question of an intermediate kingdom, adding additional arguments to those already mentioned.⁴³ Although more space is needed to address all the relevant questions, a few responses and observations are in order. The concept of two resurrections may find support in the near context, as Paul refers to

⁴⁰Wallis, “The Problem of an Intermediate Kingdom,” 230.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³For instance, Turner, who rejects the idea that Paul refers to unbelievers in this passage, makes the case for an interim, earthly kingdom of Christ based in part on Paul’s use of the nominal βασιλείαν in 15:24 and the infinitive βασιλεύειν in 15:25. He claims that these terms, which were unique for Paul in reference to Christ, would have been reserved for Christ’s future reign rather than the present age. Seth Turner, “The Interim, Earthly Messianic Kingdom in Paul,” *JSNT* 25, no. 3 (2003): 333-34. Turner also argues that Paul has avoided referring to Ps 110:1b, “where the language of being at the right hand would imply Christ’s present position is in mind” (334). In response, such a view fails to account for the present manifestation of what Paul calls the “kingdom of his [God’s] beloved Son” (τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ) in Col 1:13.

multiple orders—note the plural *τάγματι* in 15:24—one of which could refer to unbelievers. In fact, this notion of a dual resurrection is required if, as Wilcke argues above, the “all” (*πάντες*) who will be raised in 15:22 is comprehensive of all humanity.⁴⁴ The concept of two resurrections also finds support in Christ’s teaching in John 5:28-29. For these and other reasons it is not implausible that the resurrection of unbelievers could be implied in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28. Nevertheless, at least five different factors call Wilcke’s view into question.

First, Hill argues that *τὸ τέλος* should not be taken to mean “the rest,” and he bases this on the term’s normal linguistic usage and its function in this passage.⁴⁵ The term is overwhelmingly used to refer to the end, goal, or outcome, and there is nothing in the near context to suggest a departure from this common usage.⁴⁶ Lambrecht’s observation that *τέλος* in 15:24 is a temporal term governed by the use of *ὅταν* “when” in verses 24b and 24c supports Hill’s argument.⁴⁷ For Hill, *τὸ τέλος* marks the time of the Son’s submission and of God becoming “all in all” (v. 28), not of another resurrection.⁴⁸ It is difficult to imagine that the climactic and singularly significant events in this passage would be signaled by and revolve around the resurrection of the wicked.⁴⁹ Second, concerning the plural *τάγματι* ‘orders’ in 15:23, the concept of multiple orders more

⁴⁴Lindemann likewise favors the interpretation that Paul refers to the resurrection of all humanity in 15:22. Andreas, Lindemann, “Paulus und die Korinthische Eschatologie: zur These von einer ‘Entwicklung’ im paulinischen Denken,” *NTS* 37 (1991): 383.

⁴⁵C. E. Hill, “Paul’s Understanding of Christ’s Kingdom in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28,” *NovT* 30 (1988), 309.

⁴⁶Contra BDAG, which notes the possibility that *τὸ τέλος* means “rest, remainder” in 1 Cor 15:24, though this is the only such example cited in the New Testament. BDAG, s.v. “τέλος,” 2b. In light of the word’s common usage, and in light of its role in Paul’s argument in 1 Cor 15:20-28, it is unlikely that the phrase should be translated as rest or remainder in 15:24.

⁴⁷Lambrecht, “Paul’s Christological Use of Scripture,” 519n16.

⁴⁸So Hill, “Paul’s Understanding of Christ’s Kingdom,” 309.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

naturally refers to the two resurrections specifically mentioned in this passage—the resurrection of Christ and the subsequent resurrection of believers. Third, Wilcke’s claim that the resurrection of unbelievers is demanded by the term πάντες “all” in 15:22 does not adequately account for the immediate context. The term πάντες is qualified in the next verse by the phrase “in Christ” (ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ) (v. 23). Likewise, the apostle’s reference to “those who have fallen asleep” in 15:20—the verse that frames the entire discussion—is qualified in 15:18 as “those who have fallen asleep *in Christ*” (οἱ κοιμηθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ) (emphasis added). Fourth, the metaphorical reference to Christ as the “firstfruits” (vv. 20, 23) makes it likely that Paul is talking about the resurrection of believers in the near context. Fifth, as Hill notes, Paul is not merely referring to the general concept of the resurrection in 15:22, but rather to “that ‘life’ which the pneumatic, risen Christ imparts to those who have the Spirit, by means of the Spirit.”⁵⁰

Concerning the question of an intermediate kingdom, the key issue becomes whether or not the text allows for a time interval between the resurrection of believers at Christ’s *parousia* (v. 23) and Christ’s handing over of the kingdom to the Father (v. 24). If the handing over of the kingdom follows immediately after the resurrection of believers, then no room is left for a future messianic reign. However, if the adverb εἶτα is intended to convey sequence rather than immediacy, then it is possible that the handing over of the kingdom occurs at an unspecified time after the resurrection of believers. This latter scenario would make room for a temporary reign of Christ. Since there is a significant time interval between Christ’s resurrection and the resurrection of believers, then it is at least plausible that a comparable interval exists between the resurrection of believers and the handing over of the kingdom. The two realities that signal the end in verse 24—the handing over of the kingdom and the destruction of all rule and authority

⁵⁰Hill cites 1 Cor 15:45 and Rom 8:11 in support of this point. Hill, “Paul’s Understanding of Christ’s Kingdom,” 309.

and power—are both preceded by the particle *ὅταν*, and as Thiselton notes, this particle leaves the time frame “unspecified and open-ended.”⁵¹ The reign of Christ in 15:25 (*δεῖ γὰρ αὐτὸν βασιλεύειν*) could, then, be a description of the future messianic age that precedes the final handing over of the kingdom. Passages like Revelation 20:3-4 are sometimes used to support this concept of an intermediate kingdom of Christ.⁵²

A number of counter-arguments have been offered to the points above, not least of which is the fact that a messianic reign may render the resurrection of believers—the overarching subject of this chapter—somewhat anti-climactic. Perhaps the strongest argument against a post-*parousia* messianic kingdom is the fact that Paul explicitly refers to death as the “last enemy” (*ἔσχατος ἐχθρὸς*) in 15:26. Since death is defeated through the resurrection of believers, this is the expected climax of Christ’s saving reign.⁵³ In the end, the exegetical evidence appears to favor the view that Paul is not explicitly referring to a future messianic kingdom in this passage. Nevertheless, as Lewis notes, caution should be exercised in making definitive statements for or against a future messianic kingdom based on this text alone. He notes, “There is no conclusive argument preventing one from holding that Paul believed in an intermediate kingdom between the *parousia* and the final resurrection, but if he did, he failed to develop it in any of his works.”⁵⁴ Given that Paul’s primary focus in 1 Corinthians 15 is to argue for the necessity of the resurrection of believers, it is not surprising that the apostle does not include more

⁵¹Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2000), 1231.

⁵²The reign of the saints with Christ in Rev 20:3-4 is sometimes used to support the idea of an intermediate kingdom in 1 Cor 15:24ff., though the interpretation of the former text is also widely contested.

⁵³For a defense of the view that the reign of Christ in 1 Cor 15:24-28 refers only to his present, cosmic reign from heaven and not an earthly reign commencing at his second coming, see C. E. Hill, “Paul’s Understanding of Christ’s Kingdom,” 308-20.

⁵⁴Johnson, *So That God May Be All in All*, 55.

specificity and detail about the timing of the events in 15:20-28.⁵⁵ While it is possible that Paul leaves room for an intermediate reign of Christ in this passage, this text does not require such an interpretation. One would arguably need to appeal to texts outside of 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 to make such a case.

Χριστὸς and Κύριος

Before addressing some theological implications of 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, some additional observations should be made with regard to Paul's use of the terms Χριστὸς and Κύριος in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28. These terms carry messianic, and therefore royal and kingdom-related, import. Fee points out that Paul uses Χριστὸς exclusively in 15:1-27, and that the thirteen references to Χριστὸς in this passage comprise over one-fourth of the total uses in the entire epistle.⁵⁶ This usage might be insignificant if, as some commentators have supposed, the term functions simply as a name for Christ. However, Wright offers several lines of evidence that the term Χριστὸς is instead a title, and that it refers specifically to Israel's messiah.⁵⁷ Particularly significant is Paul's use of Psalm 110:1 in 1 Corinthians 15:25, which Wright refers to as an "overtly royal Psalm" with "clear messianic overtones."⁵⁸ Paul's use of Psalm 8 in 1 Corinthians 15:27 continues this messianic theme.⁵⁹ Fee, who refers to Χριστὸς as a "title-turned-name," notes, "Even though the future bodily resurrection of believers is the primary focus here, the whole

⁵⁵So *ibid.*

⁵⁶Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 108. Fee also notes that the other place in this letter where Paul uses the term Χριστὸς predominantly is in 1:13-25. In at least one instance (1:22), Χριστὸς is "titular before it is nominal" (109). Of all Paul's uses of the term Χριστὸς by itself, forty-three percent of them occur in 1:13-25 and 15:1-27 (109n68).

⁵⁷N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 46.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 28.

⁵⁹Wright concludes, "The resurrection of Jesus is thus interpreted by Paul through the widening categories of messiahship, Israel and humanity." Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 29.

paragraph [1 Cor 15:20-28] is placed squarely within the framework of Jewish messianism.”⁶⁰ This royal, messianic framework is yet another indication that aspects of the kingdom are informing Paul’s thinking. Christ’s fulfillment of promises like Psalm 110:1 identifies him as the “currently reigning King.”⁶¹

With regard to the term *Κύριος*, Paul uses the term 49 times in 1 Corinthians. Like *Χριστός*, the term *Κύριος* is also relevant to the discussion of Christ’s kingship. Fee notes that the term is evidence that the church had “come to think of [Christ] in terms of Ps 110:1” in light of his resurrection and exaltation.⁶² Referring to Christ as Lord is not only a reference to his deity, wherein he shares in the divine identity of *Yahweh* of the Old Testament, but also to his royal position at God’s right hand.

Theological Conclusions

A host of theological conclusions emerge from the exegesis above. The reign of Christ deserves mentioning first, given its integral relationship to the kingdom of God and to the subject of this chapter—the final resurrection of believers.

Although Ps 8 has in view the Gen 1 creation mandate and not only the messiah, Wright points to the thematic unity between Israel, the Messiah, and the human family in Jewish thought. Regardless of whether one adopts Wright’s argument in full on this point, it is clear, as noted earlier, that Paul uses Ps 110 and Ps 8 to interpret one another.

⁶⁰Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 108-109.

⁶¹Ibid., 110. It is also worth noting that Fee, along with other commentators, argues for the messianic significance of Paul’s use of *υἱός* “Son” in 15:28. The term is as an allusion to God’s royal promise given to David in 2 Sam 7:14 and reflected on in Ps 2:7 (111-112). See also Roy E. Ciampa and Brian Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 776-78. In support of the connection between the term *Χριστός* and the concept of kingship, Lk 23:2 notes that the chief priests and scribes accused Jesus of “saying that he himself is Christ, a king” (*λέγοντα αὐτὸν χριστὸν βασιλέα εἶναι*). Although the charge is in the mouths of the enemies of Christ, and though they misunderstood the nature of his kingship, the connection between messiahship and kingship is still worth noting. On the subject of Christ’s kingship, see also Acts 17:7, where Paul, Silas, and other believers are accused of “saying that there is another king, Jesus.”

⁶²Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 122.

The reign of Christ. First Corinthians 15:20-28 is especially significant for this work because it explicitly connects the kingdom to the reign of Christ. For instance, the handing over of the kingdom in 15:24 is a direct result of Christ's successful reign in 15:25. Barrett's translation of the present infinitive δεῖ . . . βασιλεύειν as "must continue to reign" (25) captures the ongoing nature of Christ's reign,⁶³ for Christ must destroy God's enemies, including death itself, in order to ensure the resurrection of believers and thus bring the kingdom to its appointed consummation. Christ's resurrection and ascension inaugurated this reign, as this was the time of his enthronement. Support for this idea comes in Ephesians 1:19-20, where Paul says that God "raised him [Christ] from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places."⁶⁴ The reign of Christ is also implied by Paul's frequent use of the terms Χριστός and Κύριος (in this and in other passages), as these terms carry messianic, and therefore royal, overtones.

Given the centrality of the reign of Christ in Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, it may be helpful to offer further evidence that Christ's reign is, in fact, an essential feature of God's kingdom. Neil Richardson has pointed to the "implicit identification" between the kingdom of God and the reign of Christ—the latter of which he refers to as Christ's lordship—in Paul's instructions about eating and drinking in Romans 14:17-20. Immediately after appealing to the Spirit-produced righteousness, peace, and joy of God's kingdom in 14:17, Paul says in 14:18, "Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men." The phrase "thus serves Christ" (ἐν τούτῳ δουλεύων τῷ Χριστῷ) is conceptually parallel to what Paul says about the kingdom,

⁶³Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 358.

⁶⁴Lincoln notes that the idea of Christ's present reign may also be implied in Eph 2:6, where Paul says of God: "[He] raised us up with him [Christ] and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC (Waco: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 325.

so that serving Christ is equated with life in God's kingdom.⁶⁵ The particle γὰρ in 14:18—translated by the NASB, but not by the ESV—confirms the close connection between these verses.⁶⁶ There is further support, then, for identifying Christ's lordship, or his reign, with the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of Christ and of God. The subject of Christ's reign, as well as the discussion surrounding an intermediate messianic kingdom, raises the question of whether or not it is proper to draw a distinction between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of God. Paul frequently ascribes the kingdom to God, both in 1 Corinthians (4:20; 6:9-10; 15:50) and in his other epistles (Rom 14:17, Gal 5:21, Col 4:11, 1 Thess 2:12, 2 Thess 1:5). However, in 1 Corinthians 15:24 the kingdom is ascribed to Christ, at least for a time, since he "delivers the kingdom to God the Father" (παραδιδῶ τὴν βασιλείαν τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ) (24). Paul also says in 15:25 that "he [Christ] must reign until he puts his enemies under his feet" (δεῖ γὰρ αὐτὸν βασιλεύειν ἄχρι οὗ θῇ πάντας τοὺς ἐχθρούς ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ).⁶⁷ This idea of a kingdom of Christ also finds explicit support in Colossians 1:13, where Paul refers to the "kingdom of his [God's] beloved Son" (τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ).⁶⁸ There is biblical precedent, then, for the idea that the kingdom can be ascribed to God or to Christ. Some scholars have characterized the distinction temporally, assigning the kingdom of Christ to this present

⁶⁵Neil Richardson, *Paul's Language about God*, JSNTSup 99 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 193. This connection between the kingdom of God and serving Christ is also made by H.A.A. Kennedy, *St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things*, 2nd ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904), 289.

⁶⁶Richardson, *Paul's Language about God*, 193.

⁶⁷Although they disagreed on the timing of the kingdom, both Schweitzer and Davies argued for a distinct messianic kingdom. Schweitzer argued that the messianic kingdom would begin at Christ's *parousia* and give way to the kingdom of God in the eternal state. Davies, on the other hand, argued that the messianic kingdom was inaugurated with Christ's resurrection and that it would last until his *parousia*. For these respective views, see Schweitzer, *The Kingdom of God and Primitive Christianity*, 160; Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 296.

⁶⁸See also 2 Tim 4:1, where Paul refers to Christ's kingdom and his "appearing" (ἐπιφάνειαν).

age while the kingdom of God obtains in the age to come (following Christ's second coming). Or, in the case of Schweitzer and others, the messianic kingdom is yet future, and it will be occupied only by the final generation of men before giving way to the eternal kingdom of God.⁶⁹ In reply, several factors should argue against drawing an absolute distinction between these respective kingdoms, whether for temporal or other reasons.

First, a strict temporal distinction between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of God cannot be maintained in the light of all the relevant texts. The kingdom in its present manifestation is not solely ascribed to Christ, but can also be ascribed to God. As noted in 1 Corinthians 4:20, Paul says that the power that characterizes the kingdom of God is effected in this present age through the proclamation of the word of the cross.⁷⁰ On the other hand, the kingdom of Christ is not only described as a present reality, but also as a future hope. This is evident in Ephesians 5:5, where the kingdom of Christ (and God) is pictured as an "inheritance" (κληρονομίαν).⁷¹ Another example of the future cast of Christ's kingdom occurs in 2 Timothy 4:18, where Paul expresses his confidence that "the Lord" (κύριος)—a reference to Christ in this context⁷²—will bring

⁶⁹Schweitzer, *The Kingdom of God and Primitive Christianity*, 160. Although there is a difference in the timing of the messianic kingdom in the respective views of Schweitzer and Davies, both scholars believed that the messianic kingdom was in some sense distinct from the kingdom of God. Kreitzer, *Jesus and God in Paul's Eschatology*, 137.

⁷⁰Romans 14:17 was cited previously as another example of the present manifestation of the kingdom of God in this age: "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

⁷¹O'Brien understands the present tense of "has an inheritance" (ἔχει κληρονομίαν) in Eph 5:5 to refer not to the future, but rather as signifying a "process, without reference to past, present, or future." Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 363-64. O'Brien assigns the kingdom of Christ largely to the present, while the kingdom of God is primarily a future reality. However, Schreiner rightly refers to the inheritance of believers in Eph 5:5 as an "eschatological inheritance" (Thomas Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008], 376).

⁷²So George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles* in NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 473. The reference to the Lord's "appearing" (ἐπιφάνειαν) in 2 Tim 4:8 confirms that Christ (rather than God) is in view in 2 Tim 4:18.

him into “his heavenly kingdom” (εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐπουράνιον). A number of other texts could be added to these Pauline examples, both from the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ ministry and from other New Testament epistles, to demonstrate that Christ’s kingdom extends into the age to come.⁷³

A second reason not to draw too sharp of a distinction between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ has to do with the considerable overlap in Paul’s kingdom language. For example, Christ is (arguably) the subject of θῆ in 15:25, which means that he is pictured as actively subduing his enemies. In 15:27, on the other hand, Paul identifies God as the one who subjects all things under Christ’s feet (see also 15:28). Rather than seeing this as an inconsistency, Holleman is right to note, “it is God who acts through Jesus.”⁷⁴ Likewise Garland notes, “It is impossible for Paul to think of Christ’s acting independently of God, or of God’s acting independently of Christ.”⁷⁵ Thus both God and Christ share in the act of reigning or ruling. The clearest evidence for this overlap in terms of kingdom language comes in Ephesians 5:5, where Paul refers to the “kingdom of Christ and God”⁷⁶ (βασιλεία τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ).

⁷³For examples of the eternity of Christ’s kingdom, see the following references: Lk 1:33, Heb 1:8, 2 Pet 1:11. Schweitzer held that Christ’s teaching on the kingdom, unlike Paul’s, treated the respective kingdoms of Christ and God as identical. Schweitzer, *The Kingdom of God and Primitive Christianity*, 160.

⁷⁴Holleman, *Resurrection and Parousia*, 60. The fact that God rules through Christ leads Schnackenburg to reject the idea that the kingdom of Christ is distinct from the kingdom of God. (Rudolf Schnackenburg, *God’s Rule and Kingdom* [New York: Herder & Herder, 1963], 286-87.

⁷⁵Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 712.

⁷⁶Hoehner correctly notes that Paul’s point here is that the kingdom belongs to both God and Christ. Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 662. Similarly, Lincoln says that these are not two successive forms of God’s rule as there may be in 1 Cor 15:24-28. Rather, there is an “identity of the two kingdoms in terms of their time and their nature. The kingdom of Christ is the kingdom of God and has both present and future aspects from which the fornicators and impure and covetous persons are excluded.” (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 325). Lincoln also notes that the kingdom is ascribed to both God and Christ in Rev 11:15: “Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become *the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ*, and he shall reign forever and ever’” (emphasis added). Schnackenburg claims that Paul has used the double-ascription of Christ and God because of its “curious combining of

Given the above cautions, the question remains as to whether there is any sense in which Paul considers the kingdom of Christ as distinct from the kingdom of God. While a strict temporal distinction fails, Paul does seem to mark out Christ's reign in the present age as a distinct phase of the kingdom. Not only does Christ hand over the kingdom in 1 Corinthians 15:24, but his royal enthronement occurred in history, that is, at his resurrection and exaltation (Eph 1:20; cf. Rom 1:4). In the present age the kingdom appears to be bound up with Christ's saving reign on behalf of his people as their mediatorial king.⁷⁷ Paul's Christological declaration in Philippians 2 offers support for this idea, for it is *after* Christ's resurrection-ascension that the superlative divine name is bestowed on him (v. 9). O'Brien is probably correct that this "name that is above every name" is a reference to κύριος, or *Yahweh* of the Old Testament.⁷⁸ Paul refers not to a conferral of deity, but rather to an appointment Christ received from God's in light of his Christ's humiliation and saving work.⁷⁹ Acts 2:36 confirms this interpretation, for Peter proclaims that as a result of Christ's resurrection and ascension, "... God has made him both Lord and Christ" (κύριον αὐτὸν καὶ χριστὸν ἐποίησεν ὁ θεός). This latter reference is particularly germane to 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, since Peter cites Psalm 110:1 as evidence of Christ's identity (Acts 2:34-35).

present and future (cf. 1 Cor 15:25-28)" in keeping with the inaugurated eschatology of the epistle (Rudolph Schnackenburg, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991], 220).

⁷⁷Though his argument cannot be adequately addressed in this work, Potgieter wrongly concludes that Christ's role as mediator will cease when he hands over the kingdom in 1 Cor 15:24-28. In addition, his suggestion that Christ will no longer be human in the eternal state is also unfounded. P. C. Potgieter, "The Consummation of the Kingdom of God: Reflections on the Final Victory of Christ as Portrayed in Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians," *In die Skriflig* 35 (2001): 215-24.

⁷⁸O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 238.

⁷⁹So *ibid.*

It may be concluded, therefore, that the designation *kingdom of Christ* is a way of describing the manifestation of God's kingdom in this present age through the mediation of Christ's lordship.⁸⁰

The kingdom and eschatology. Paul's eschatology in 15:20-28 once again evidences the already-not yet schema noted in previous chapters. There is clearly a future cast to the events in this passage, as the resurrection of believers and the handing over of the kingdom await Christ's second coming (vv. 23-24). These events help make up the believer's future hope and thus fall under the 'not-yet' aspect of Paul's eschatology. However, it is also true that the kingdom has dawned in the present reign of Christ. The infinitival phrase δεῖ . . . βασιλεύειν "he must reign" in 15:25 refers to a present and ongoing reign of Christ,⁸¹ as the destruction of death represents the goal, not the commencement, of his rule. Christ's enthronement began with his resurrection and ascension (Eph 1:20).

The kingdom and ethics. While the Corinthians' denial of the resurrection was a doctrinal problem, Garland rightly notes the far-reaching implications of such a

⁸⁰Contra Lietzmann, who claims that only God reigns following Christ's intermediate messianic reign. Hans Lietzmann, *An die Korinther I,II*, HNT 9 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1969), 81. In response, the understanding of the kingdom of Christ vis-à-vis the kingdom of God suggested here should prevent us from concluding that Christ ceases to reign when he hands over the kingdom (1 Cor 15:24) and subjects himself to the Father (28). As Thiselton notes, the fact that God and Christ are one according to 15:28 indicates that Paul is not speaking of the discontinuation of Christ's lordship, but rather of its "culmination within the terms of its purpose for this world and Christ's kingdom here." Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1231. The above references to the eternity of Christ's kingdom outside the Pauline epistles supports this point. We cannot be certain in each instance why Paul chose to ascribe the kingdom to either God or Christ, but it is probably best to attend to the immediate context to attempt an answer. To take but one example, ascribing the kingdom to Christ in Col 1:13 fits the apostle's purpose in that context, which is to establish the preeminence and sufficiency of Christ for believers (see Col 1:15-20). On the significance of the kingdom in the context of Col 1, see Robert Yarbrough, "The Kingdom of God in the New Testament: Mark through the Epistles," in *The Kingdom of God*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 146-47. On the centrality of Christ in Colossians, see Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 61-63.

⁸¹Barrett translates the present infinitive as "must continue to reign in his kingdom." C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 358.

view: “. . . the ethical admonitions in this discourse betray his [Paul’s] conviction that errant belief inevitably leads to inadmissible behavior.”⁸² This point is most evident in 1 Corinthians 15:34: “Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning.”⁸³ At stake in this entire discussion is both right belief *and* right living in light of the believer’s future hope. Brown notes, “Because they [the Corinthians] would rise, certain behaviors modeled by Paul, the apostles, and ultimately Jesus the Messiah were incumbent upon them.”⁸⁴ Paul’s eschatology continues to shape his ethical admonitions.

1 Corinthians 15:50

Paul’s final reference to the kingdom in 1 Corinthians occurs in 15:50: “I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the imperishable inherit the perishable.” To understand this second kingdom-exclusion reference within the flow of Paul’s argument, it will be necessary to briefly summarize the context of 15:29-49.

The Context of 1 Corinthians 15:29-49

After laying out the necessary connection between Christ’s resurrection and the general resurrection of believers in 15:20-28, Paul once again considers the implications of denying the resurrection of the dead in 15:29-34. The apostle’s dangerous and sacrificial labors are futile if there is no hope of a resurrected existence in the future

⁸²Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 678.

⁸³Garland points out that Paul’s warning in 15:33-34 draws a close connection between belief in the resurrection and ethical living. He also cites 1 Cor 6:12-14 as another instance where the believer’s resurrection is linked to ethics. *Ibid.*, 715.

⁸⁴Brown, *Bodily Resurrection and Ethics in 1 Corinthians 15*, 174. Brown attributes the Corinthian denial of the resurrection to Greco-Roman influence: “What seems certain is that the Greco-Roman beliefs that encouraged a denial of the resurrection by some resulted in sinful behavior that Paul needed to redress” (172). Regardless of one’s view of the background here (whether Greco-Roman or otherwise), Brown is correct to point out the ethical consequences of denying the resurrection.

age (vv. 30-32). In 15:33-34 Paul urges the Corinthians to repent of their immorality, as some who had no knowledge of God were apparently leading others astray.

The remainder of 1 Corinthians 15 is a response to the two objections Paul mentions in 15:35: “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” The second question likely frames the first in order to suit Paul’s purpose in this context.⁸⁵ Paul begins his explanation in verses 36-38 by pointing to the paradoxical truth that new life is preceded by death, a truth embedded in nature itself. Along with new life, God also gives a new body that is significantly different from the old body (v. 38). Paul points to the material, physical creation in verses 39-41 to demonstrate that God is able to create different kinds of bodies, and that these bodies differ in respect to their “glory” (δόξα) (vv. 40-41). God’s ability to create bodies with different levels of glory is what Paul appeals to in 15:42ff. to support the plausibility of the resurrection of the dead.

In 15:42-44, 50-57 Paul highlights the transformation that takes place at the resurrection of the dead in order to explain how the death of an earthly body could result in the greater glory of a resurrected heavenly body.⁸⁶ The apostle uses the following polarities in verses 42-44 to describe the respective differences between the body that is sown and the body that is raised: perishable vs. imperishable (v. 42), dishonor vs. glory

⁸⁵On this point, see Asher, *Polarity and Change in Corinthians 15*, 66. Asher claims that Paul’s purpose in the two questions of 15:35 is not to address specific questions of his opponents, but is instead didactic. It is Paul who introduces the term σῶμα “body” in order to direct the discussion for his own purposes. Thiselton notes that in Jewish apocalyptic, specifically 2 Baruch 49:2, 50:1-2, the idea was present that the resurrected body would consist of the reassembling of the particles of the deceased body. This, Thiselton notes, is in stark contrast to Paul’s view that the body would undergo change (1 Cor 15:51) (Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1262).

⁸⁶Brown argues that the Corinthians’ issue with the resurrection stemmed from a “culturally pervasive Homerically-informed Roman religion that was extant among both the elite and the non-elite. This religion allowed for a belief in the resurrection of Jesus, but neither assured them of their own resurrection nor was connected to their current behavior.” Brown, *Bodily Resurrection and Ethics in 1 Corinthians 15*, 102. For more on Brown’s proposal, see pp. 79-102. However, Asher claims that the issue for the Corinthians was not simply the body and the afterlife: “The problem was that of the relation between cosmology and the resurrection, that is, the impossibility of raising a terrestrial body to the celestial realm.” Asher, *Polarity and Change*, 91. For more on Asher’s argument concerning the philosophical objections that the Corinthians would have had regarding cosmic polarity, see especially pp. 91-145.

(v. 43a), weakness vs. power (v. 43b), and natural vs. body (v. 44). In verses 45-49 Paul elaborates on this final contrast—natural vs. spiritual—by once again referring to the typological relationship between Adam and Christ (see 15:21-22). Paul’s goal is to demonstrate that the natural body must precede the spiritual body, yet it is the latter that is to be preferred over the former. In other words, partaking in Christ’s heavenly, resurrection life is to be preferred over belonging to Adam, the “man of dust” (v. 47). The adjective *πνευματικόν* “spiritual” in verses 44 and 46 does not simply describe a non-corporeal body, but rather a body that is animated and influenced by the Holy Spirit.⁸⁷ First Corinthians 2:14-16 offers support for this interpretation, where the spiritual person is contrasted with the natural person in that only the spiritual person can accept “the things of the Spirit of God” (*τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ θεοῦ*) (14). The same Spirit who indwells believers now (6:19) will bring about their full transformation at the resurrection of the dead.⁸⁸ Paul’s contrast between the first and last Adam culminates in 1 Cor 15:49: just as believers have borne Adam’s earthly image, so also in the resurrection they will bear Christ’s heavenly image.⁸⁹

Resurrection and Kingdom-Inheritance

The kind of transformation outlined in 15:42-49 necessitates a bodily resurrection, and this reality leads to Paul’s straightforward declaration about the kingdom in 15:50. He assures the Corinthians that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” This is the second time in this epistle that Paul speaks of those who

⁸⁷Contra Brown, *Bodily Resurrection and Ethics in 1 Corinthians 15*, 202-7.

⁸⁸The Holy Spirit is also in view in Paul’s reference to Christ as a “life-giving Spirit” in verse 45. This latter phrase is likely an allusion to Ezekiel 37:1-14 and the life-giving power that God promised to exercise through his Spirit (14). The image of God bringing new life to dry bones fits perfectly with the resurrection theme of 1 Cor 15. The giving of the Spirit is also linked to Christ in 1 Cor 12:13, where he, Christ, is the one who baptizes believers in the Spirit. So Thomas R. Schreiner, “Baptism in the Epistles: An Initiation Rite for Believers,” in *Believer’s Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2006), 71-72.

⁸⁹The use of the future *φορέσομεν* “we will bear” renders this eventuality certain.

will not inherit the kingdom. However, unlike 6:9-10, Paul is not primarily addressing patterns of sin, but rather the bodily transformation that must take place if one is to enter the kingdom.⁹⁰ Prior to this transformation, the bodies of believers are characterized by the following terms: “perishable” (φθορᾶ) (v. 42), “dishonor” (ἀτιμία) (v. 43), “weakness” (ἀσθενεία) (v. 43), and “natural” (ψυχικόν) (v. 44). In 15:50 Paul uses the perishable-imperishable contrast to make the point that the resurrection is necessary to make one fit to enter God’s kingdom on the last day.⁹¹ Paul goes on in 15:51 to describe the resurrection as a “mystery” (μυστήριον) in which believers will be “changed” (ἀλλαγησόμεθα). That this change takes place at Christ’s second coming is stated explicitly in 15:23, and implied in 15:52 by the reference to the “last trumpet.” The final resurrection of God’s people represents the consummation of their salvation and the *telos* of Christ’s reign.

Theological Conclusions

Paul’s reference to the kingdom in 1 Corinthians 15:50 builds on his previous kingdom references in 15:20-28. Several theological conclusions arise from this final kingdom passage.

The kingdom and eschatology. It was argued in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 that inheriting God’s kingdom is an eschatological fulfillment of the promised land-

⁹⁰Jeremias claims that in 1 Cor 15:50 Paul is concerned primarily with the change of the living at the *parousia* (as per 15:51) rather than the resurrection. Joachim Jeremias, “Flesh and Blood Cannot Inherit the Kingdom of God,” *NTS* 2 (1956): 158. In reply, it is more likely that Paul’s statement in 15:50 applies to both the change that takes place for the living at the *parousia* and for the change that takes place for those who must be raised from the dead at that time. This latter point is supported by the immediately preceding context (see especially 15:42ff.), where Paul has noted the contrasts between (merely) earthly bodies and those that have been resurrected from the dead.

⁹¹Although in 15:50 Paul only mentions the perishable-imperishable contrast from verses 42-44, the other contrasts are implied: dishonor-glory, weakness-power, natural-spiritual. In 15:54 Paul adds the mortal-immortal contrast to this list.

inheritance in the Old Testament.⁹² This holds true in 15:50 as well, which clearly points to the future aspect of the kingdom. Christ's second coming and the resurrection of believers will usher in this final stage of God's redemption. The future cast of the kingdom puts it in contact with a number of related eschatological themes in this final section of 1 Corinthians 15, including resurrection, the Spirit, and new creation. These themes will be briefly considered below.

The relationship of the kingdom to the resurrection is the most obvious connection in this chapter, since Paul says that the resurrection is necessary to inherit the kingdom (1 Cor 15:50). Leander Keck notes, "Paul's whole theology, then, spells out, in various circumstances and with varying concepts, the consequences of Jesus' resurrection, understood in light of the two ages."⁹³ The resurrection of believers is the signal that Christ's reign has reached its goal with the destruction of death (15:24-26). There is a parallel to this line of thought in Romans 6:1-14, where Paul speaks of the effects of Christ's resurrection using kingdom-related language. Death's "dominion" (κυριεύει) (9) and sin's reign (βασιλεύτω) (12) are broken in the life of the believer via his or her union with the resurrected Christ.⁹⁴

Along with the theme of resurrection, the work of the Spirit is also connected to the kingdom in 1 Corinthians 15. The person who inherits the kingdom has his "natural body" (σῶμα ψυχικόν) transformed into a "spiritual body" (σῶμα πνευματικόν) (v. 44). As noted earlier, the adjective πνευματικόν is a reference to that which is animated or

⁹²For a fuller discussion on the inheritance of the kingdom as an eschatological fulfillment of the promised land-inheritance in the Old Testament, see the previous discussion on 1 Cor 6:9-10.

⁹³Leander Keck, "Paul in New Testament Theology: Some Preliminary Remarks," in *The Nature of New Testament Theology*, ed. Christopher Rowland and Christopher Tuckett (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 113.

⁹⁴The overlap of the semantic domains of the verbs κυριεύω and βασιλεύω is evidenced by the interchangeability of the terms in Rom 6:12 and 6:14 respectively. The concept of ruling and reigning is also evident in Paul's reference to serving sin (δουλεύειν) (cf. Rom 6:6). Like Rom 6:14, Paul includes the law in 1 Cor 15:56 as an integral component of sin's dominion.

influenced by the Holy Spirit.⁹⁵ Romans 8:11 provides a helpful parallel in terms of connecting the Spirit to the resurrection, for the same Spirit who raised up Jesus will raise up believers on the last day.⁹⁶ We may conclude, therefore, that inheriting the kingdom comes about through the transforming work of the Spirit in the resurrection. Believers receive a foretaste of this new life through the Spirit's work in the present age (1 Cor 2:10-16; 6:11).⁹⁷

Given the relationship of the kingdom to the Spirit and the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, it is not surprising to find the closely related theme of new creation in the same context. This latter theme shows up in the Adam-Christ contrast in 15:21-22, where Adam heads up the first and older creation (marked by death), while Christ is the head of the new creation (characterized by life). Although the precise term *καινή κτίσις* 'new creation' does not occur in this context,⁹⁸ Paul's allusion to Psalm 8 in 1 Corinthians 15:27 highlights Christ's fulfillment of the original creation mandate given in Genesis 1:26-28. The allusion to Psalm 110:1 in 1 Corinthians 15:25 confirms that this is a royal allusion, for it is a Davidic king who heads up the new creation, with death included in

⁹⁵It is also worth noting the Spirit's connection to Christ and the resurrection in this passage, as Christ is referred to as a "life-giving spirit" (*πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν*) (15:45). It was argued above that 15:45 is an allusion to Ezekiel 37 and the new life God promises to his people via the Spirit (and possibly to the related concept of return-from-exile). This promise is fulfilled in Christ who is the "true resurrection of the dead, the one whose Spirit brings the rest of us to resurrection life" (Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 820). Beale rightly calls 1 Cor 15:45 an elaboration of 1 Cor 15:22, where Paul says, "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011], 263).

⁹⁶In Romans 8:9b, the Spirit is so closely connected to Christ that he [the Spirit] is called "the Spirit of Christ" (*πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ*).

⁹⁷In a previous chapter it was noted that the life of the kingdom is tied to the Spirit in Rom 14:17, as "righteousness and peace and joy" are a result of the Spirit's work.

⁹⁸The precise term "new creation" (*καινή κτίσις*) only appears in 2 Cor 5:17 and Gal 6:15, though the theme is likely implied in a number of texts.

the purview of his reign (1 Cor 15:24-26). Thus Beale rightly notes, “Christ’s resurrection establishes the inaugurated end-time new-creational kingdom” (249).⁹⁹

The kingdom and ethics. While Paul’s primary focus is on the bodily resurrection of believers in 15:50, he points out the present ethical implications of the believer’s resurrection hope and kingdom inheritance. To take a negative example, Paul claims that his present sufferings would be pointless without an expectation of the resurrection, and that there would be no reason *not* to imbibe in an idolatrous, self-gratifying lifestyle (15:30-34). Those who denied the resurrection posed a great danger to the Corinthians, which is why the apostle warns them, “Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning” (v. 34).¹⁰⁰ Positively, belief in the resurrection and inheritance in the kingdom leads to Paul’s concluding exhortation in 15:58: “Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” Believers should be motivated to labor for the Lord based on the certainty that they will share in Christ’s triumph over death (vv. 50-57).

⁹⁹Beale comments further on the relationship of these themes: “The repeated references in [1 Cor 15:45-48] to the contrast between the first Adam in the first prefall creation and the last Adam enhances the notion that Christ’s resurrected state is a new-creational state that has transcended the primordial prefall state. Hence, again we see that resurrection and new creation are two sides of one coin or that the former is a subset of the latter. And again we see that Christ’s resurrection as new creation is so closely linked to kingdom and Adam as a king that the notions of resurrection as new creation and kingdom are inextricably linked.” Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 263. On a similar note, Wright says that 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 “takes the form of a small apocalyptic account of the coming of God’s kingdom, establishing God’s rule over the world and defeating all the enemies of his kingdom, much as Daniel 7, itself drawing on the creation account in Genesis 2 [*sic*, 1], in YHWH’s kingdom as a new creation.” (N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003], 313).

¹⁰⁰So Brown, *Bodily Resurrection and Ethics*, 171-72. Brown notes that the sinful behavior to which Paul referred in 15:34 is unknown, though he may be speaking “metaphorically about their [the Corinthians’] need to see clearly that the negative examples with whom they were associating was causing them to sin” (172).

Other Aspects of the Kingdom

Paul's final references to inheriting the kingdom in 1 Corinthians 15 are consistent with the findings in previous chapters concerning the familiarity of the kingdom, the defining characteristics of the kingdom, and the relationship of the kingdom to selected AI readings of Paul's theology.

The Familiarity of the Concept

As with 1 Corinthians 4 and 6 respectively, Paul largely assumes that the Corinthians will understand his final references to the kingdom in 15:20-28 and 15:50. In his previous kingdom references, he offered little in the way of an introduction or an extended explanation of the concept. Not only is it possible that he taught the Corinthians about the kingdom prior to this epistle, but it also appears from the psalmic allusions in 15:25 and 15:27 that Paul expected them to have some knowledge of the kingdom based on the Old Testament's witness to the reign of the messiah. Throughout this epistle the kingdom of God seems to form part of the underlying structure of the early apostolic witness to Christ and the gospel.

Toward a Definition

In the previous chapter it was noted that the kingdom can be described in two complementary ways: (1) the reign or rule of God (4:8, 20; 6:2-3, 11), and (2) the location or sphere of God's reign (6:9-10). Both of these aspects of the kingdom are present in 1 Corinthians 15. For instance, the reign of God is manifest in Christ's messianic reign in 15:24-28, where the infinitival phrase *δεῖ . . . βασιλεύειν* "he must reign" appears (v. 25). On the other hand, Paul implies in 15:50 that the kingdom can be located spatially, for only resurrected persons will inherit it. This spatial component of the kingdom is also supported by the fact that Christ's physical, resurrected body—a

body that was seen by the apostles and by other believers (15:4-8)—serves as the pattern for the resurrected bodies of believers.¹⁰¹

Anti-Imperial Readings

Commentators have pointed to various evidences of an anti-imperial polemic in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28. Witherington notes Paul's emphasis on the fatherhood of God (15:28) vis-à-vis the emperor who was known as *pater patriae* "father of the fatherland."¹⁰² Ciampa and Rosner make their case for an AI polemic by arguing for a Danielic background, where the prophet speaks of the triumph of God's kingdom over earthly kingdoms and powers (see Dan 2:44; 7:14, 27).¹⁰³ They note that the terms ἀρχήν "rule" and ἐξουσίαν "authority" in 1 Corinthians 15:24 are also present in Daniel 7:14 and 7:27 (in both the Old Greek and in Theodotion's version).¹⁰⁴ In addition, Paul's reference to Christ's παρουσία in 15:23 was a technical term in Hellenistic literature that could be used to refer to a visit made by a Roman emperor or official.¹⁰⁵ This notion that Paul had

¹⁰¹The close relationship between Christ's resurrected body and the resurrected body of believers is also taught in Phil 3:21, where Paul says that Christ will "transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body." The physical component of Christ's resurrected body finds confirmation in his post-resurrection appearance to his disciples in Lk 24:36-43.

¹⁰²Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 304-5. Lassen points to the father image in the imperial propaganda of Paul's day to make the case that Paul's reference to himself as the "father" of the Corinthians in 1 Cor 4:15 is an attempt to use this imperial imagery to shape his relational dynamics toward the Corinthian church. Eva Maria Lassen, "The Use of the Father Image in Imperial Propaganda and 1 Corinthians 4:14-21," *TynBul* 42 (1991): 127-36.

¹⁰³Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 768-69.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 768. For a Danielic background to 1 Cor 15:24-28, see also Joel White, "Anti-Imperial Subtexts in Paul: An Attempt at Building a Firmer Foundation," *Commentarii Periodici Pontificii Instituti Biblici*, 90 (2009): 326-27.

¹⁰⁵Walter Radl, "παρουσία," in *EDNT*, ed. Gerhard Schneider and Horst Robert Balz (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 3:44. Radl notes that in Hellenistic literature, the term παρουσία can refer either to the epiphany of God (or a god), or to the visit of an emperor or high-ranking official. He suggests that the latter sense may be closer to Christian usage, though he admits that the question cannot be answered with certainty (44).

in mind earthly rulers in 15:20-28 finds support in his earlier reference to the “rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away” (2:6; see also 2:8).

In response, it should not be denied that Paul’s words in 15:20-28 had serious implications related to the authority of Rome. Neither is it implausible that he *intentionally* used politically-loaded terms and phrases that implicated the political powers of his day. However, such a view does not exclude the idea that the apostle’s concerns went beyond Rome. The confluence of multiple (potentially) significant terms and phrases may be suggestive, but it is difficult to know in any one instance if Paul’s words are *intended*, even secondarily, as an anti-imperial polemic. What *can* be demonstrated, on the other hand, is that Paul’s primary aims in this chapter go well beyond his political context. Even if political rulers are included in “every rule and every authority and power” that Christ must destroy (15:24), it is the last enemy, death (15:26), that occupies Paul’s attention. The believer’s kingdom-inheritance will require a bodily resurrection (15:50). The primary challengers to Christ’s reign, even in this age, are sin, death, and the law (15:56). Rome’s imperial claims are in view in chapter 15 only insofar as they conspire with these forces.

Conclusions

The exegetical and theological conclusions above can now be applied to the overarching thesis concerning the kingdom’s foundational place in Paul’s teaching on God’s salvation in Christ. The three lines of evidence used in previous chapters find additional support. First, Christ’s resurrection and saving reign ground the believer’s future resurrection according to 15:20-28 (see especially vv. 25-27). Paul also points out that inheritance in the kingdom requires a bodily resurrection in 15:50. The related salvific themes of Spirit and new creation are bound up with Paul’s teaching on the kingdom and the resurrection (see especially vv. 21-22 and 45-46). It is also worth noting that Paul’s teaching on the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 serves as a fitting bookend to

his earlier focus on the word of the cross in 1 Corinthians 1-4. These twin realities—Christ’s death and resurrection—form the basis of the gospel message according to 15:3-4, and the kingdom is integral to both of them. The power of the kingdom stands behind the proclamation of the cross (4:20), and it is Christ’s resurrection and reign that ground the resurrection of believers (15:20-28).

Second, it was noted in previous chapters that Paul’s theology of the kingdom contains both present and future dimensions. This inaugurated eschatological schema is also evident in 1 Corinthians 15. Christ is reigning in this present age (vv. 25-27), even though inheriting the kingdom is held out as a future hope for believers (15:50). Christ’s handing over of the kingdom at the consummation of all things (15:24) is another future reference to the kingdom.

Third, the kingdom is also tied to Paul’s ethical teaching in 1 Corinthians 15, though, admittedly, this connection is not as transparent as it was in 6:1-11. Denying the resurrection would effectively undermine the basis for living righteously (15:30-34), and it seems that this was already going on in Corinth according to 15:34. Whether or not one expects to be raised from the dead (and thereby inherit the kingdom) should affect behavior in the present. The believer’s future hope of resurrection and inheritance in the kingdom leads Paul to encourage the Corinthians to persevere in the Lord’s work (v. 58).

CHAPTER 5

COMPARING PAUL'S KINGDOM REFERENCES

This final chapter will compare Paul's teaching on the kingdom in 1 Corinthians with the kingdom theology in the rest of his epistles.¹ Given the scope of the Pauline corpus, what follows will be less like an exhaustive analysis and more like a comparative survey. The main goal will be to demonstrate that Paul's theology of the kingdom in 1 Corinthians finds parallels in his other epistles, thus adding support to the idea that the kingdom is a significant concept for Paul. This comparison will be divided into four sections. First, the various ways in which Paul refers to the kingdom—both directly and indirectly—will be identified. Second, the three aspects of the kingdom identified in previous chapters will be highlighted in Paul's other letters: (1) the familiarity of the concept of the kingdom, (2) the definition of the kingdom, and (3) the implications of the kingdom for selected anti-imperial readings of Paul's theology. Third, Paul's kingdom references outside of 1 Corinthians will be considered in light of the thesis of this work, namely, that the kingdom is a foundational component of God's saving work in Christ. The same three lines of evidence used in 1 Corinthians will be appealed to: (1) the saving effects of Christ's death, resurrection, and saving reign, (2) Paul's inaugurated eschatological schema, and (3) Paul's ethical teaching, or the transforming work of the Spirit. Fourth, the significance of the kingdom in Romans and Colossians will be considered briefly in order to offer further evidence that 1 Corinthians is not an anomaly in terms of Paul's theology of the kingdom.

¹As in the rest of this work, this chapter assumes Pauline authorship of all thirteen letters traditionally attributed to Paul. Therefore, kingdom-related references will be drawn from each of these letters.

Types of References to the Kingdom

In previous chapters it was argued that Paul's teaching on the kingdom of God should not be restricted to those instances where he uses words from the βασιλ— word group. A similar approach will be taken in this chapter, though it will be helpful to begin by identifying Paul's explicit references to the βασιλεία, as these are the easiest places to identify when the kingdom is in view.

Explicit βασιλεία References

In addition to the five references to the noun βασιλεία in 1 Corinthians 4:20, 6:9, 6:10, 15:24, and 15:50, the rest of the Pauline corpus contains the following nine references: Romans 14:17, Galatians 5:21, Ephesians 5:5, Colossians 1:13, 4:11, 1 Thessalonians 2:12, 2 Thessalonians 1:5, 2 Timothy 4:1, 2 Timothy 4:18. The kingdom may also be in view in certain instances where Paul uses the verb βασιλεύω (or another form of the verb). In addition to the three references in 1 Corinthians 4:8, there are seven other verbal references, including the term συμβασιλεύσομεν “we will reign with him” in 2 Timothy 2:12. The other six references occur in Romans 5-6: 5:14, 5:17 (2x), 5:21 (2x), and 6:12. Only in 1 Corinthians 15:25 is the infinitival construction δεῖ . . . βασιλεύειν used. Finally, unlike 1 Corinthians, Paul uses the nominal βασιλεύς “king” in 1 Timothy 1:17 and 6:15, and in the latter instance he combines this with a participial form of the word (ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν βασιλευόντων), translated by the ESV as “the King of kings.”

The Reign of Christ

In addition to Paul's kingdom references in the βασιλ— word group, the concept may also be analyzed by considering one of its essential components, namely, the reign of Christ. It was noted in the previous chapter that the association between Christ's reign and the kingdom of God is reasonably inferred from the “implicit

identification” between the two concepts in Romans 14:17-18.² The significance of Christ’s reign was highlighted in 1 Corinthians 15:25 and 15:27, where psalmic allusions refer to Christ’s enemies being subdued beneath his feet. Schrage notes that Paul normally refers to Christ being at the right hand of God, or otherwise the entirety of Psalm 110:1 is mentioned.³ Several ways in which Christ’s reign appears are highlighted below.

At the right hand of God. In several instances Paul refers to the reign of Christ by referring to Christ’s position “at the right hand of God” (ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ). This phrase is an explicit allusion to Psalm 110:1 (LXX 109:1), and it occurs in Romans 8:34, Ephesians 1:20, and Colossians 3:1.⁴ The Ephesians 1:20 reference is an especially significant parallel to 1 Corinthians 15:24-27, since both passages contain allusions to Psalm 110:1 and Psalm 8:6 in close proximity, as well as a reference to Christ’s rule over all other authorities and powers (see Ephesians 1:21).⁵ While Paul alludes to Psalm 110:1 (109:1 LXX) in 1 Corinthians 15:25, he does not use the phrase ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ. However, this omission may be due to the fact that Paul is highlighting the wording that Psalm 110:1 (LXX 109:1) and Genesis Psalm 8:6 (LXX 8:7) hold in common, namely, the references to that which is subdued under Christ’s feet (see figure 1 above).

²Neil Richardson, *Paul’s Language about God*, JSNTSup 99 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 193. Richardson refers to Christ’s lordship, though the reign of Christ is certainly implied in this concept.

³Wolfgang Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, EKKNT 7 (Zürich: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1991), 4:155.

⁴Hay argues that “a considerable number” of Christian allusions to Ps 110:1 come not directly from Psalm 110:1, but rather from “primitive church confessions or hymns in which were embedded phrases or ideas ultimately drawn from Ps 110.” David M Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973), 39. In support, Hay points to the identity of the allusions in Rom 8:34, Col 3:1, and 1 Pet 3:22, despite the fact that “none of the three has a single word in common with the OG [Original Greek]” (40).

⁵Ephesians 1:21 speaks of Christ’s rule over “all rule and authority and power and dominion” (πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ κυριότητος), while 1 Cor 15:24 refers to Christ’s destruction of “every rule and every authority and power” (πᾶσαν ἀρχὴν καὶ πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν καὶ δύναμιν).

Fulfillment of the Old Testament. In addition to Psalm 110:1 (109:1 LXX), Paul refers to other Old Testament texts that forecast the coming reign of Christ (and God). In Romans 1:3-4, which will be examined more closely below, Paul alludes to the royal promises in 2 Samuel 7:12-14 and Psalm 2:7 respectively. The former prophecy is captured in Christ's Davidic lineage (Rom 1:3), while the latter is fulfilled in his appointment as messiah, which Christ receives by virtue of his resurrection and exaltation (v. 4).⁶ Schweizer notes that the Davidic promise is also behind the reference to the kingdom of the Son in Colossians 1:13.⁷ To these references 2 Timothy 2:8 could be added, where Christ's kingship is implied by his being the "offspring of David" (ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυίδ).

In Romans 15:12 Paul cites the following prophecy about Christ from Isaiah 11:10 LXX: "The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles."⁸ The infinitive ἄρχειν "to rule" carries the same idea as the infinitive βασιλεύειν "to reign" in 1 Corinthians 15:25. God's long-standing plan to show mercy to the Gentiles is accomplished through the rule of his messiah.⁹ The citation of Isaiah 52:7 in Romans 10:15 also situates Paul's gospel proclamation in the context of the kingdom. The

⁶Pokorny includes Rom 1:3ff as one of the passages that reference the reign of Christ. Petr Pokorny, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Epheser*, THKNT 10/2 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1992), 201.

⁷Eduard Schweizer, *Der Brief an die Kolosser*, EKKNT 12 (Zurich: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1989), 48.

⁸This citation of Is 11:10 LXX is one of four Old Testament citations in this context that Paul uses to demonstrate God's intent to include the Gentiles in his saving work (Rom 15:9-12). Shogren notes that Is 11:10 shows that Christ presently rules over Gentiles "for the sake of their redemption" (Shogren, "Pauline Proclamation," 263).

⁹The LXX of Is 11:10 suits Paul's purposes better than the MT, as the latter refers to one who would "stand as a signal for the peoples" (עֲמֻלִּים לְנֶס עַמֵּי), while the former refers to the messiah's "rule" (ἄρχειν). In either case, the prophecy is messianic, as is evident by the reference to the root of Jesse. So Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 880. Moo lists the follow texts as evidence of a messianic allusion: Jer 23:5; 33:15; Sir 47:22; 4QFlor 1:11; 4QPat 3-4; Rev 5:5; 22:16 (880n45). The concept of a messiah for both Isaiah and Paul is bound up with royal imagery.

exclamation “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news” is followed in the same verse by the declaration to Zion that “Your God reigns” (βασιλεύσει σου ὁ θεός). God’s saving reign is thus manifest as the good news of his salvation is announced.

The reign of sin and death. Another way in which Paul speaks of the reign of Christ is by setting it over against the reign of sin and death. In 1 Corinthians 15:26 death is identified as the last enemy to be subdued by Christ’s reign, which will happen when God’s people are raised from the dead. Romans 5-6, on the other hand, speaks of God’s triumph in Christ over the reign of sin and death *in this age*.¹⁰ The reason for these different temporal references concerning the reign of sin and death is probably owing to Paul’s context. In 1 Corinthians 15 he is countering those who were questioning the idea of a bodily resurrection, thus the physical consequences of death’s reign are highlighted. However, in Romans 5-6 Paul is highlighting the fact that sin’s enslaving power has been broken in the believer’s life via union with Christ. The death that “reigned” (ἐβασίλευσεν) from Adam to Moses has been overcome through the reign of Christ (5:14); believers are now free to live righteously. Thus Paul says in Rom 5:17, “For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned (ἐβασίλευσεν) through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life (ἐν ζωῇ βασιλεύσουσιν) through the one man Jesus Christ.”¹¹ Similarly, in Rom 5:21 Paul notes that “. . . just as sin reigned (ἐβασίλευσεν) in death, grace also might reign (βασιλεύσῃ) through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Regardless of whether Paul speaks of believers reigning (5:17) or of grace reigning (5:21), the idea is

¹⁰For a convincing argument that Romans 5-6 should be included in the discussion of Christ’s reign, see Roy E. Ciampa, “Genesis 1-3 and Paul’s Theology of Adam’s Dominion in Romans 5-6,” in *From Creation to New Creation: Essays in Honor of G.K. Beale*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and Benjamin L. Gladd (Peabody, MA: Hendricksen, 2013), 112-17.

¹¹Ciampa notes, “The references to ‘righteousness’ and ‘life’ [in Rom 5:17] also reinforce the understanding that the reign instituted by Christ (and which is a reflection of his own reign) is the antithetical counterpart to the ‘sin’ and ‘death’ that have come to reign through Adam.” *Ibid.*, 114.

the same: the reign of sin and death has been overcome by God's saving reign through Jesus Christ. This is why sin no longer has "dominion" (κυριεύσει) over the lives of believers (6:14).

Titular references. Paul's use of the term Χριστός in 1 Corinthians has been noted, a title that carries royal, messianic overtones. The term is used 45 times in 1 Corinthians and 211 times throughout the Pauline corpus, which suggests that it had become common for Paul to refer to Jesus in this manner.¹² The term Κύριος is also significant in this regard, for as Rosner notes in Rom 5-6, "The reference to Christ as 'Lord' reinforces (along with the term 'Christ' or 'Messiah') the presence of the idea of a reigning king, empowering the reign of grace under his authority."¹³ It was suggested earlier that the term Κύριος is evidence that Christ had come to be viewed as the one at God's right hand as per Psalm 110:1.¹⁴ In addition to the 49 references to Jesus as Κύριος in 1 Corinthians, the term is used another 115 times in the Pauline corpus, bringing the total to 164.¹⁵ Bauckham claims that the title Κύριος indicates "Jesus' messianic exercise of the divine sovereignty over the world."¹⁶ Paul also uses the verbal form of Κύριος, κυριεύω, which carries similar royal allusions and can be used almost synonymously with βασιλεύω. For instance, Paul can say that death "reigned" (ἐβασίλευσεν) (5:17) through Adam, but that it no longer has "dominion" (κυριεύει) (6:9) over Christ.

¹²Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody, MA: Hendricksen Publishers, 2007), 26.

¹³Ciampa, "Genesis 1-3 and Paul's Theology of Adam's Dominion in Romans 5-6," 115.

¹⁴Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 122.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁶Richard Bauckham, "Kingdom and Church According to Jesus and Paul," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 18 (1996): 15.

There is also evidence of overlap in these terms in 1 Tim 6:15, as Paul ascribes to Christ the title ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν βασιλευόντων καὶ Κύριος τῶν κυριευόντων “King of kings and Lord of lords.”

The Reign of Believers

Closely related to the concept of the reign of Christ is the reign of believers. This concept surfaces during Paul’s sarcastic rebuke in 1 Corinthians 4:8, and it is expressed again in 2 Timothy 2:12. In the latter text, Paul says, “If we endure, we will also reign with him [Christ].” Roose claims that the idea of reigning as a reward in 2 Timothy 2:12 contrasts with 1 Corinthians 4:8 (as well as some other Pauline texts about reigning), since in the latter texts reigning with Christ is presented not as a reward for martyrs but as a gift to all Christians.¹⁷ Roose’s argument should be rejected, however, for the respective concepts of reward and gift are not mutually exclusive. In the same context that Paul refers to the certain future reign of all believers (1 Cor 6:1-2), he also warns the Corinthians that only those who live righteously will inherit the kingdom (1 Cor 6:9-10). These complementary ideas of gift and reward can be found elsewhere in Paul’s writings, even when the kingdom is not in view.¹⁸

In contrast to the future reign of believers referenced in 1 Corinthians 4:8 and 2 Timothy 2:12, Paul also speaks of the present reign of believers in Romans 5-6. For example, he says that believers will “reign in life” (ἐν ζωῇ βασιλεύουσιν) (5:17) through

¹⁷Hanna Roose, “Sharing in Christ’s Rule: Tracing a Debate in Earliest Christianity,” *JSNT* 27.2 (2004): 136-46. Roose restricts the reward to teachers due to the context of 2 Timothy 2. Roose does not hold to Pauline authorship of 2 Timothy.

¹⁸To take one example, see Col 1:22-23. Although believers have already been “reconciled” (ἀποκατηλλάγητε) through the death of Christ (22), they must still persevere in the faith (23). While the phrase “if you continue in the faith” (εἰ γὰρ ἐπιμένετε τῇ πίστει) in 1:23 does not express doubt that the Colossians will endure in faith, the implication is still that they must continue believing the gospel if they hope to receive their reward.

Christ.¹⁹ The fact that life is paired with justification as a gift of God's grace in the next verse (5:18) lends support to the idea that the believer's reign is at least partially experienced in the present age. Schnackenburg and Lincoln have noted a similar idea in Ephesians 2:6, where Paul says that God has "seated us with him [Christ] in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."²⁰ Paul's teaching on the reign of the believer, then, displays the same eschatological tension present in his other kingdom references. While believers are destined to reign with Christ in the age to come, they participate in this reign now as their union with Christ frees them from the enslavement of sin and death and secures their privileged position alongside the exalted Christ.

Other Aspects of the Kingdom

Based on the exegesis of Paul's kingdom references in 1 Corinthians, observations were made in each chapter concerning three different aspects of the kingdom: the apparent familiarity of the concept of the kingdom, the definition of the kingdom, and the relationship of the kingdom to AI readings of Paul's epistles. These aspects of the kingdom will now be briefly addressed in Paul's other epistles.

The Familiarity of the Concept

There is neither a formal definition nor an extended explanation of the kingdom in 1 Corinthians, and the same holds true for Paul's other letters. The apostle apparently expects that his readers will have at least a basic understanding of the

¹⁹Dunn understands the future verb βασιλεύσουσιν "they will reign" in 5:17 to refer to the believer's reign at the eschaton. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 282. However, Schreiner is probably correct that Paul conceives of believers participating now in God's gracious reign, even as the fullness of that reign is realized in the future (Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998], 286). Believers may be said to reign insofar as they are no longer enslaved to the power of sin and death (Rom 6:14).

²⁰So Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Die Brief an die Epheser*, EKKNT 10 (Zurich: Benzinger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1982), 224; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 325.

kingdom, even as he continues to address their conceptions (and misconceptions) of it.²¹ An example of the apparent familiarity of the concept appears in Colossians 4:11, where Paul sends greetings on behalf of his “fellow workers for the kingdom of God.” The idea of working for the kingdom not only requires no explanation, but also it serves as a succinct summary of Paul’s gospel ministry. This latter point makes it highly unlikely that the kingdom was an unfamiliar concept to the Colossian believers. This characterization of Paul’s ministry in Colossians 4:11 is consistent with what we find in Acts, where Luke describes Paul’s ministry on four different occasions as kingdom proclamation (Acts 19:8; 20:25; 28:23; 28:31).

In addition to the apparent familiarity with the term kingdom, Donfried has pointed out that in Galatians 5:21 and in 1 Thessalonians 2:12—both of which contain explicit references to the kingdom—Paul refers to what he has previously taught. It is likely that the concept of the kingdom was part of his initial instruction to the churches, so that in Galatians 5:21 the kingdom was “not a novelty but was included in [Paul’s] previous communications to this congregation.”²² Making the same point, Shogren points to the conjunction ὅτι “that” in Galatians 5:21 as a marker of indirect discourse to argue that this particular kingdom-exclusion formula was used previously with the Galatians.²³

Toward a Definition

Although Paul never formally defines the kingdom, he characterizes it in 1 Corinthians as the reign (or rule) of Christ *and* as a location or sphere to be entered. This dual conception of the kingdom is present throughout his letters. In Colossians 1:13 the

²¹Haacker remarks on the abruptness of Paul’s reference to the kingdom in Rom 14:17. Klaus Haacker, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer* THNT (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2006), 322.

²²Karl P. Donfried, “The Kingdom of God in Paul,” in *The Kingdom of God in 20th-Century Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 185.

²³Gary Shogren, “The Pauline Proclamation of the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Christ Within Its New Testament Setting” (Ph.D. diss., University of Aberdeen, 1986), 50.

kingdom carries the idea of God's saving reign, as believers have already been placed into the kingdom of God's Son after being delivered from the "domain of darkness" (τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκότους). Romans 14:17 also portrays the kingdom in terms of God's reign, since the kingdom is a matter of "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." However, the kingdom is also portrayed as a sphere or location in other texts. For instance, the kingdom-inheritance texts in Galatians 5:21 and Ephesians 5:5 picture the kingdom as a fulfillment of the promised land-inheritance in the Old Testament. Likewise, in 2 Timothy 4:18 Paul describes his final reward as being brought "into his [God's] heavenly kingdom." Finally, the idea that believers will reign with Christ (συμβασιλεύσομεν) in 2 Timothy 2:12 seems to imply that there is a sphere over which believers will share in Christ's rule. Christ's repeated references to entering (εἰσερχομαι) the kingdom of God (or heaven) offer support for this view.²⁴ Shogren captures well the dual conception of the kingdom: "[Paul] uses the word [kingdom] to denote either the exercise of God's sovereign rule or the eschatological realm where that rule will be fully and immediately manifested."²⁵

Anti-Imperial Readings

In comparing Paul's theology of the kingdom in 1 Corinthians with AI readings of his letters, it has been stressed that Paul's overriding concerns were not with the Roman Empire, even if his rhetoric (at times) indicted Rome as part of the larger world system opposed to Christ. The apostle's emphasis is on the clash of Christ's kingdom with the trans-historical rulers of this age, i.e., the supernatural forces opposed to the gospel (1 Cor 15:25). Although a number of similar examples could be adduced throughout the Pauline corpus, Ciampa's discussion concerning the reign of sin and death

²⁴For some examples, see Matt 7:21, 18:3; Mk 9:47, 10:15; Lk 18:17; Jn 3:5.

²⁵Shogren, "The Pauline Proclamation," 457.

in Rom 5-6 is a helpful parallel. He admits that “many of Paul’s statements could easily provoke reflection on relationships with pagan imperial ideology,” an observation that fits with Paul’s explicit reference to the “rulers of this age” in 1 Corinthians 2:6 and 2:8. The fact that these rulers “crucified the Lord of glory” (2:8) makes it likely that Paul is at least including the political rulers of his day. However, the clash between the reign of Christ (and his people) and the reign of sin and death in Romans 5-6 moves beyond the Roman Empire, for Paul claims that sin and death spread to all men—both before and after Rome’s imperialism—through Adam (Rom 5:12ff.). In light of the ways Paul *could* have addressed imperial ideology, Ciampa claims that the “evident lack of interest in making any such [anti-imperial] rhetoric explicit is remarkable.”²⁶ The discussion in Romans 5-8 (as well as in the letter as a whole) seems to suggest that Paul “thinks his readers should be focused more on the imperialism of sin and death than on Roman imperialism.”²⁷

One more example of Paul’s alleged anti-imperialism is his use of the term *Κύριος*, a term that was cited above as an example of Christ’s royal status. Harrison, for instance, notes that the term *Κύριος* was an “imperial honorific” used from the time of Augustus.²⁸ Referring to Christ in this way would have been a direct challenge to Rome’s authority. In response, while Christ’s lordship was a challenge to Caesar’s rule, White is rightly cautious about identifying an anti-imperial polemic based on Paul’s use of this term. Like other common Pauline terms that have imperial resonances, the term *Κύριος*

²⁶Ciampa, “Genesis 1-3 and Paul’s Theology of Adam’s Dominion in Romans 5-6,” 117.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 117.

²⁸J. R. Harrison, “Paul and the Imperial Gospel at Thessaloniki,” *JSNT* 25 (2002): 82. Harrison also notes that *Κύριος* is linked with the imperially significant *παρουσία* in 1 Thess 2:19; 3:14; 4:15; 5:23) (78 n25). See pp. 76-80 for more on the significance of *Κύριος* and other terms in Thessalonica. Georgi claims that terms such as *εὐαγγέλιον* “gospel”, *πίστις* “faith”, *δικαιοσύνη* “righteousness”, and *εἰρήνην* “peace” were associated with Roman political theology. Dieter Georgi, “God Turned Upside Down,” in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 148.

also has a strongly attested Old Testament and Septuagintal background.²⁹ In addition, its use prior to Paul’s writings—possibly in the first several decades of the first century—makes it unlikely that the term is primarily intended to undermine Rome’s totalizing claims. Burk, who also points to the possibility of a Septuagintal background, notes that the similarity in language may be owing to the fact that terms like *Κύριος* were part of the *lingua franca* in Paul’s day. Paul and the imperialists may simply have been “grabbing theopolitical language from the same linguistic bag.”³⁰ Paul’s theology of the kingdom may have had unique implications for his historical setting, but his conception of the kingdom indicates that his primary concerns were with God’s saving work in Christ vis-à-vis the powers of sin and death, a subject that transcends any political context.

God’s Saving Work in Christ

Paul’s kingdom references outside of 1 Corinthians will now be applied to the overarching thesis of this work. The kingdom’s relationship to God’s saving work in Christ will be evaluated in light of the three lines of evidence noted in 1 Corinthians: (1) the saving effects of Christ’s death, resurrection, and saving reign, (2) Paul’s inaugurated eschatological schema, and (3) Paul’s ethical teaching, or the transforming work of the Spirit.

Death, Resurrection, and Saving Reign

In 1 Corinthians 4:20 it was argued that the power of the kingdom is effected through the proclamation of the word of the cross.³¹ The kingdom is also related to

²⁹Burk argues that Paul’s choice of terminology may plausibly be connected to the LXX rather than current political terminology. Denny Burk, “Is Paul’s Gospel Counterimperial? Evaluating the Prospects of the ‘Fresh Perspective’ for Evangelical Theology,” *JETS* 51 (2008): 317.

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹Young attempts to show the relationship between the kingdom and the cross at a general theological level in Paul’s writings. Frances Young, “Paul and the Kingdom of God,” in *The Kingdom of God and Human Society*, ed. Robin Barbour (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 249-52. Young examines 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans.

Christ's death in Colossians 1:13, since belonging to "the kingdom of his [God's] beloved Son" means experiencing "redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col 1:14).³² That this redemption comes through Christ's death is supported in the near context by the reference to the "blood of his [Christ's] cross" (20). Christ's resurrection is also featured in the near context, for he is called the "firstborn from the dead" (πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν) (v. 18).

The role of Christ's reign, which was highlighted in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, is also integral to the believer's salvation in a number of other texts. In Romans 8:34 Paul emphasizes Christ's intercession, for he answers his own rhetorical question, "Who is to condemn?" with the following: "Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—*who is at the right hand of God*, who indeed is interceding for us" (emphasis added). Christ's position at God's right hand is paired with his death, resurrection, and intercession on behalf of God's people. The reign of Christ is thus integral to God's saving work in this text.

Finally, at a more general level, there is (indirect) evidence of the close relationship between the kingdom and the gospel. In Colossians 4:11 Paul refers to his "fellow workers for the kingdom of God," a shorthand expression for those who were partnering with him in proclaiming the gospel (or, as he calls it in Col 4:3, the "mystery of Christ"). Working for the kingdom, then, was for Paul a way of referring to the proclamation of Christ's gospel.

Inaugurated Eschatological Schema

Paul's references to the kingdom in 1 Corinthians consistently bear the marks of his inaugurated eschatological outlook, as there are both present and future

³²Pokorny refers to this transfer into the kingdom as the prerequisite for qualification. Petr Pokorny, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Kolosser*, 2nd ed. THKNT 10/1 (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1990). 45.

manifestations of the kingdom (compare 4:20 with 15:50). The examples below demonstrate that this same phenomenon is present in the rest of the Pauline corpus. Young claims that the phrase kingdom of God “appears to cohere with that frequently observed feature of his understanding, the ‘overlapping of the ages.’”³³ It is also worth noting at the close of this section a few eschatological themes that are bound up with the kingdom in Paul’s theology.

The presence of the kingdom. Although the dominant note in Paul’s theology of the kingdom is future, the kingdom also has present manifestations. The reign of Christ and the partially realized reign of believers was noted earlier in the discussion surrounding Romans 5-6 (see above). A number of other passages suggest that the kingdom has present implications for the Christian life (some of which will be highlighted below with regard to Paul’s ethical teaching). For example, Paul reminds the believers in Rome that the kingdom does not consist in eating and drinking—the very things they were quarreling over—but rather in “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17).³⁴ Lopez admits that Romans 14:17 pertains to life in the present, but he maintains that the kingdom is still a literal future reality with “present operative principles to be fully realized in the future after Christ returns.”³⁵ However, these “operative principles,” as Lopez calls them, seem to fit better with the idea that the kingdom is present, even if its full realization awaits the age to come. Paul clearly intends for the character and the ethics of the kingdom to guide believers now. The same point can be made with reference to Paul’s kingdom-inheritance texts, Galatians 5:21 and

³³Ibid., 246.

³⁴Although Wilckens claims that Paul has in mind the baptismal tradition in Rom 14:17 (as well as in his other references to the kingdom of God), the context does not require such an interpretation in this instance. Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, EKK 6 (Zurich: Benzinger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1987), 3:93.

³⁵René López, “A Study of Pauline Passages on Inheriting the Kingdom,” *BSac* 168 (2011): 453.

Ephesians 5:5, where the apostle warns against a number of vices based on the possibility of being disqualified from the future kingdom. Even in a text like 2 Thessalonians 1:5, where Paul speaks of “suffering” in light of the future kingdom, Johnston claims that the present tense *πάσχετε* “you are suffering” is evidence that the kingdom is a “trans-temporal” experience and therefore not “wholly futurist.”³⁶ At the very least, the future kingdom has present, and rather concrete, implications for the lives of believers.

Finally, in what may be the clearest indication of the presence of the kingdom, Paul says that believers have been “transferred” into the kingdom of the Son in Colossians 1:13. That this transfer has already taken place finds support in the immediate context. First, the aorist *μετέστησεν* “transferred” indicates that entrance into the kingdom has already happened.³⁷ Second, being transferred into the kingdom is the counterpart to being delivered from “the domain of darkness” (*τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκούτου*) (v. 13); it is unlikely that Paul conceives of believers as still belonging to this domain. Even in contexts where Paul speaks of the ongoing battle with sin, such as Romans 6:1-14, he assures believers that sin and death have no “dominion” (*κυριεύσει*) over them (v. 14). Third, the benefits of belonging to Christ’s kingdom include experiencing “redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (*τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν*) (Col 1:14).³⁸

³⁶George Johnston, “‘Kingdom of God’ Sayings in Paul’s Letters,” ed. Peter Richardson and John C. Hurd in *From Jesus to Paul: Studies in Honour of Francis Wright Beare* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984), 145. Johnston also notes that this suffering is grounded in the past works of redemption in 2 Thess 2:13, 14, 16 (145). Donfried, on the other hand, views 2 Thess 1:5 strictly as future, though he emphasizes that 1 Thess 2:11-12 has a strong present component. In this latter text, Paul says that God is the one who “calls you into his own kingdom and glory” (Karl P. Donfried, “The Kingdom of God in Paul,” in *The Kingdom of God in 20th-Century Interpretation*, ed. Wendell L. Willis [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987], 182-83).

³⁷So Nicole Frank, *Der Kolosserbrief im Kontext des paulinischen Erbes: eine intertextuelle Studie zur Auslegung und Fortschreibung der Paulustradition* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 56.

³⁸This observation concerning the present experience of redemption does not imply that there is no future component, as Paul makes clear elsewhere (Rom 8:23). A number of commentators have noted that Colossians, along with Ephesians, presents an over-realized eschatology, such that future blessings are assigned to the present age. We cannot here address these observations adequately, but it should be noted

The forgiveness of sins is a gift of the present age, as Paul makes clear in the next chapter. God has already forgiven believers of their trespasses by canceling their legal debt at the cross (2:13-14).³⁹

The kingdom and the future. The future aspect of the kingdom is easy to identify in Paul's letters. In 1 Corinthians 4:8 Paul implies that the reign of believers is reserved for the age to come. This may initially sound like a contradiction to Romans 5-6, where Paul highlights the present reign of believers in Christ. However, the respective contexts of these passages help explain their different temporal perspectives. Believers reign now insofar as they are no longer enslaved to sin and death (Rom 5-6), but the fullness of that reign will not be realized until the age to come (1 Cor 4:8). The future reign of believers is also in view in 2 Timothy 2:12, where this reign is held out as a reward for endurance (*εἰ ὑπομένομεν, καὶ συμβασιλεύσομεν*).

First Corinthians 15:50 is perhaps the clearest text on the future aspect of the kingdom, for Paul says that inheriting the kingdom requires a bodily resurrection. The kingdom-inheritance texts in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Ephesians 5:5, and Galatians 5:21 are also evidence of the kingdom's future cast; even the present implications of these texts draw their impetus from the prospect of being excluded from the kingdom in the age to come. In addition to the kingdom-inheritance texts, there are several other indications of the future aspect of the kingdom. Sanday links 2 Thessalonians 1:5 with the inheritance sayings, for Paul says that the Thessalonians' endurance in afflictions is evidence of God's righteous judgment, a judgment that has the following purpose: "... that you may

that Paul's mention of the presence of the kingdom in Col 1:13 is in close proximity to his mention in 1:5 of the "hope laid up for you in heaven." The apostle does have a category, then, for blessings that will only be experienced in the age to come.

³⁹In the context of Col 2, the aorist participles *χαρισάμενος* "forgiven" (Col 2:13) and *ἐξαλείψας* "cancelled" (14) are both indications that Paul is speaking of the forgiveness of sins as an accomplished reality.

be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering.”⁴⁰ That the kingdom here is future is confirmed in the immediate context, for the apostle promises relief to the Thessalonian believers “when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire” (2 Thess 1:7-8).

The themes of eschatological judgment and Christ’s second coming are also linked to the kingdom in 2 Timothy 4:1. Paul instructs Timothy to “preach the word” (v. 2), and he conveys the gravity and sacredness of this task by introducing it with the following charge: “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom” (v. 1). Paul’s reference to Christ’s role as judge and to Christ’s “appearing” (*ἐπιφάνειαν*) locates the kingdom in the future. Paul closes the letter with another eschatological reference to the kingdom in 2 Timothy 4:18: “The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.” The adjective “heavenly” (*ἐπουράνιον*) indicates that the kingdom belongs to the age to come.

Other eschatological themes. The kingdom is related to several eschatological themes in 1 Corinthians, including the Spirit (6:11), resurrection (15:20-28, 50), and new creation (15:21-22, 45). These themes belong to the age to come, but they have broken into the present in conjunction with the Christ-event. These themes connect with the kingdom in Paul’s other epistles as well. For example, inheritance in the kingdom in Galatians 5:19-21 is connected to the Spirit’s transforming work. The “works of the flesh” (v. 19) that exclude one from the kingdom are contrasted with the “fruit of the Spirit” (vv. 22-23) in the lives of believers. Vickers goes so far as to say that the “fruit of the Spirit” could “justly be called the ‘fruit of the kingdom.’”⁴¹ As in 1 Corinthians

⁴⁰William Sanday, “St. Paul’s Equivalent for the ‘Kingdom of Heaven’,” *JTS* 1 (1900): 483.

⁴¹Brian J. Vickers, “The Kingdom of God in Paul’s Gospel,” *SBJT* (Spring 2008): 58. Commenting on the point by Vickers, Vlach makes the insightful observation that the Spirit’s work links

6:11, it is the transforming work of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 that makes one fit to inherit the kingdom. Thus Cho is correct to claim that the Spirit is manifest in the present age as an “eschatological instrument of eternal inheritance.”⁴² Further examples of the Spirit’s work will be considered below in connection with Paul’s kingdom-related ethical teaching.

Paul also relates the kingdom to the theme of resurrection, particularly as that latter theme is present in Romans 5-6. Christ’s resurrection is the signal that the reign of sin and death has been overcome in the lives of believers (5:14; 6:9, 12, 14). Believers participate in this victory via their union with Christ in his death and resurrection (6:3-4).⁴³ Paul’s focus is no longer on the physical effects of death’s reign, as it was in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 and 15:50, but rather on the enslaving power of sin and death in this present age (see Rom 6:12). Finally, along with the Spirit and resurrection, Paul’s kingdom-related references are closely associated with another eschatological theme—new creation. Although the term “new creation” (*καὶνὴ κτίσις*) does not appear in 1 Corinthians, the concept is likely implied in Paul’s references to Christ as a new Adam in 15:21-22 and 15:45, as well as in the psalmic allusion to the creation mandate in 15:27. The resurrection of believers is put forward in 1 Corinthians 15 as the pinnacle of Christ’s new creational work. Similarly, in Rom 5:12ff. Paul appeals to Christ as a new

the kingdom closely with the new covenant. Michael J. Vlach, “The Kingdom of God in Paul’s Epistles,” *Masters Seminary Journal* (2015): 60n5.

⁴²Youngmo Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom in the writings of Luke and Paul* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2005), 67. Cho notes that this work of the Spirit is similar to the portrayal of the kingdom in Jesus’ ministry, so that there are “common features in the eschatological tension of the breaking of the future into the present.” (67). Despite the fact that Jesus and Paul share some common verbal characteristics in their respective kingdom teachings, Cho notes the following differences: 1) Jesus referred to the kingdom more frequently than Paul; 2) unlike Jesus, Paul’s kingdom references are not “clearly depicted as pivotal messages about salvation”; 3) though the kingdom-exclusion formulas are common to both Jesus and Paul, Paul uniquely includes the Spirit’s role in the kingdom (60).

⁴³Christ’s resurrection should not be separated from his death in terms of its saving effects, as the former indicates that the latter is efficacious. See Rom 6:4-8 for evidence that Christ’s death and resurrection should be considered together.

and better Adam who enables his people to reign in life through his [Christ's] death and resurrection.⁴⁴ This work of new creation is also implied in Colossians 1:13: being transferred into the “kingdom of his [God's] beloved Son” (v. 13) means belonging to the one who is the “firstborn of all creation” (v. 15).⁴⁵ In other words, believers already participate in the end-time, new creational-kingdom by virtue of their identification with Christ.⁴⁶

The Kingdom and Ethics

The kingdom has been linked to Paul's ethical teaching, or the transforming work of the Spirit, at several points in 1 Corinthians. This connection is found throughout Paul's letters. Yarbrough notes, “The ethical expectations of kingdom membership, a staple in Jesus' talk of kingdom, are seen to be in operation in Paul's understanding, too.”⁴⁷ Cho goes so far as to claim that the Spirit “becomes the source of life in the kingdom in its entirety, mediating all of the blessings of the kingdom.”⁴⁸ While a more thorough analysis of Paul's pneumatology is necessary to confirm Cho's thesis, there are

⁴⁴Ciampa demonstrates that Paul has Genesis 1-3 in mind as he contrasts the work of Adam and Christ respectively. Ciampa, “Genesis 1-3 and Paul's Theology of Adam's Dominion in Romans 5-8,” 112-17. The precise term “new creation” (καινή κτίσις) only appears in Gal 6:15 and 2 Cor 5:17, but the concept is implied in a number of Pauline texts.

⁴⁵The theme of new creation is also present in Col 3, as Paul states that the “new self” of believers is being “renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (10).

⁴⁶There is an eschatological tension to Paul's new creational language even when the kingdom is not in view. For instance, those who are in Christ are referred to as a “new creation” in 2 Cor 5:17, and the same idea is present in Gal 6:15. On the other hand, the new creation is clearly a future reality in Rom 8:21. In this latter text, Paul says, “. . . the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption . . .” The Spirit and resurrection figure prominently in this discussion in the near context (Rom 8:18-25).

⁴⁷Robert Yarbrough, “The Kingdom of God in the New Testament: Mark through the Epistles,” in *The Kingdom of God*, ed. Christopher A. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 146.

⁴⁸Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom in the Writings of Luke and Paul*, 197. On the relationship between the Spirit and the kingdom, see also James D. G. Dunn, *The Christ and the Spirit: Collected Essays of James D. G. Dunn* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 133–41. For a brief summary of the views of Dunn and Cho, see above in the history of modern research.

multiple examples of the Spirit's kingdom-related work in the Pauline corpus. This ethical teaching is grouped under different subheadings below.

Inheriting the kingdom. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Paul warned the Corinthians that they would not inherit the kingdom if they indulged in the sinful vices listed in those verses. A similar strategy is used in the kingdom-inheritance texts in Galatians 5:21 and Ephesians 5:5. In this latter text, the works of darkness are contrasted with the works of light (Eph 5:7-11). The image shifts in Galatians 5:19-23, but the point is the same: the works of the flesh (vv. 19-21) are diametrically opposed to the fruit of the Spirit (vv. 22-23).⁴⁹ It is the fruit of the Spirit that must characterize the lives of kingdom citizens. Inheritance in the kingdom thus requires and motivates righteous living.

The character of the kingdom. In Romans 14:17 Paul appeals to the kingdom in order to instruct believers how to make decisions regarding what is permissible in terms of eating and drinking. Haufe notes that this verse, along with 1 Corinthians 4:20, is similar to the kingdom-inheritance sayings in that it serves a corrective function against inappropriate behavior.⁵⁰ In Romans 14:17 Paul's exhortations are based on the fact that the kingdom is characterized by righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (v. 17). It is these Spirit-produced qualities that ought to be the basis for kingdom living. Thus Young is correct to note that the kingdom "has an ethical dimension in that it is anticipated in the Christian way of life, in obedience to the will of God through the Spirit which has created new hearts and minds in believers, so producing love, joy, peace and righteousness."⁵¹

⁴⁹Two of the virtues mentioned in Gal 5:22—joy and peace—are also mentioned in Rom 14:17, where the work of the Spirit is connected to the kingdom.

⁵⁰Günter Haufe, "Reich Gottes bei Paulus und in der Jesustradition," *NTS* 31 (1985): 470.

⁵¹Frances Young, "Paul and the Kingdom of God," 245.

The kingdom and perseverance. Several texts link the concept of the kingdom with the need to persevere in righteous living. In 1 Thessalonians 2:12 Paul urges the Thessalonians to live “worthy of God” based on the fact that God has called them to his own “kingdom and glory” (βασιλείαν καὶ δόξαν) (12).⁵² Donfried stresses the ongoing ethical imperative in this text, as the Thessalonians are “expected to live a life that is being transformed continually by the gospel.”⁵³ Paul uses a similar expression in 2 Thessalonians 1:5, where he says that the afflictions and the suffering of believers (vv. 4-5) are designed to make them “worthy of the kingdom of God” (τὸ καταξιοθῆναι ὑμᾶς τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ). This idea of endurance is also present in 2 Timothy 2:12: “If we endure, we will also reign with him.” The reward of God’s eschatological kingdom is intended to motivate righteous living in the present.

Two Additional Evidences

In addition to the three lines of evidence noted in the thesis, the significance of the kingdom can also be demonstrated at a more general level by noting its relationship to the overarching themes and concerns of Paul’s epistles. To take two examples, the role of the kingdom in Colossians and Romans will be considered briefly below. These examples cannot be worked out extensively here, but they should be suggestive for further studies on this topic. In addition, these examples are evidence that 1 Corinthians is not an anomaly in terms of the significance Paul attaches to the kingdom.

The kingdom in Colossians. The kingdom is foundational to the primary theme of Colossians, which Hurtado refers to as “the centrality and supremacy of

⁵²Schwemer points to 1 Thess 2:12 as evidence of a parallel between Paul’s conception of the kingdom and the Essene cultic conception, as both highlight God’s ethical demands. Anna Maria Schwemer, “Gott als König und seine Königsherrschaft in den Sabbatliedern aus Qumran,” in *Königsherrschaft Gottes und himmlischer Kult: im Judentum, Urchristentum und in der hellenistischen Welt*, ed. Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, WUNT 55 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 117-18.

⁵³Donfried, “The Kingdom of God in Paul,” 182.

Jesus.”⁵⁴ Not only is the kingdom ascribed to the Son in Colossians 1:13, but as Yarbrough notes, this kingdom reference serves as a “hinge” connecting the opening sections of the letter (1:3-12 and 15-24), for it “. . . points to the centrality of Paul’s kingdom conviction, not only in his understanding but in the outlook of the recently planted Gentile churches.”⁵⁵ Yarbrough continues, “Given the literary placement of Colossians 1:13, it could be argued that the rest of Colossians is a commentary on the meaning of ‘kingdom’ for the Colossian readers.”⁵⁶ For the Colossians, the transfer of kingdoms results not only in redemption and forgiveness (v. 14), but also in the blessing of belonging to Christ, the one who is supreme over all things (vv. 15-20). Such an emphasis was important in a context where the sufficiency of Christ was being undermined through various false teachings.⁵⁷

Further support for the significance of the kingdom in Colossians may be found in 1:18, where Paul highlights Christ’s preeminence by referring to him as the “firstborn from the dead” (πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν). Moo notes that in Jewish theology the resurrection from the dead was an eschatological event “signaling the coming of God in final kingdom power.”⁵⁸ Schreiner also links the term πρωτότοκος to the Old Testament, noting that Israel is God’s firstborn son (Exod 4:22) charged with “ruling the

⁵⁴Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 505.

⁵⁵Yarbrough, “The Kingdom of God in the New Testament: Mark through the Epistles,” 147. On the significance of the kingdom in the context of Col 1, see pp.146-47.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 147.

⁵⁷For more on the false teaching(s) Paul was addressing at Colossae, see Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and Philemon*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 46-60.

⁵⁸Moo, *The Letter to the Colossians and Philemon*, 129. Moo points to Dan 12:1-2 and Ezek 37 as evidence. For more on the understanding of the resurrection of the dead in Judaism (both in the Old Testament and in post-biblical Judaism), see N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 85-206.

world for God.”⁵⁹ Perhaps the clearest connection to the kingdom in 1:18 is the relationship of the term *πρωτότοκος* to the Davidic king, as God gives the following promise to David in Psalm 89:27: “I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.” The term *πρωτότοκος* is used by the LXX (Ps 88:28) to designate David as the earth’s sovereign king.⁶⁰ It may be concluded, therefore, that Paul’s reference to Christ as the *πρωτότοκος* carries kingdom-related import due to its royal associations.

The kingdom in Romans. The kingdom also figures into Paul’s letter to the Romans at a number of points. A number of examples have already been identified in previous chapters, including the reign of Christ and his people vis-à-vis the reign of sin and death (5:12-6:14), Christ’s intercession at God’s right hand (8:34), the saving reign of Christ as a fulfillment of Old Testament expectations (10:15; 15:12), and the relationship of the kingdom to Christian living, as that latter concept is characterized by the righteousness, peace, and joy produced by the Holy Spirit (14:17). Although the kingdom is not typically identified as a central concern in Romans, the fact that it resurfaces in a variety of ways should not be too surprising given the way Paul characterizes his apostolic commission at the outset of this epistle.⁶¹

In Romans 1:1 Paul claims to be “set apart for the gospel of God,” a gospel which concerns his [God’s] Son (v. 3). It is in Paul’s description of the Son in 1:3-4 that the concept of the kingdom becomes relevant in several ways. First, in Romans 1:3 Paul says that Christ was “descended from David according to the flesh.” This Davidic lineage establishes Christ as the promised royal son of 2 Samuel 7:14, the one about whom God gave the following guarantee: “I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (v. 13).

⁵⁹Thomas Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 327.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹The argument being made here is not that the kingdom is *the* central theme in Romans, but rather that it is a foundational component of the gospel, which is explicitly a central concern in the epistle.

The gospel that Paul expounds throughout Romans is therefore bound up with Christ's identity as king. As Vlach notes, "The heart of the kingdom program is the resurrected Jesus who is the 'descendant of David' (Rom 1:3; 2 Tim 2:8). Thus, any kingdom truths in Paul are ultimately tied to Jesus the Messiah who brings fulfillment of the Davidic covenant (see 2 Sam 7:12-16) over the course of his two advents."⁶² Second, Paul says in the next clause that Christ was "declared to be the Son of God in power" (τοῦ ὁρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει) (v. 4). The apostle is likely alluding to Psalm 2:7, where Israel's king is referred to as God's Son. In support, Allen argues that the participle ὁρισθέντος, as well as most occurrences of the verb ὀρίζω (and προορίζω), are derived from the royal coronation in Psalm 2.⁶³ The previous verse, Ps 2:6, confirms that this is a royal declaration: "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill."⁶⁴ Thus Schreiner is right to point out that Psalm 2:7 speaks not simply of Christ's eternal sonship, but of his enthronement as messiah. In support of this latter point, this messianic enthronement was "according to the resurrection of the dead," which implies that Jesus received an appointment he did not previously have—that of Lord and Christ.⁶⁵ In sum, Christ's exaltation as king shapes the content of Paul's message throughout Romans, and it adds support to the idea that the kingdom was a significant concept in the apostle's thinking.

⁶²Vlach, "The Kingdom of God in Paul's Epistles," 60.

⁶³Leslie C. Allen, "The Old Testament Background of (IIPO) 'OPIZEIN in the New Testament," *NTS* 17 (1970): 105.

⁶⁴The reference to God's "Anointed" in Ps 2:2 also supports the idea that the king is in view.

⁶⁵To support this interpretation, Schreiner points to the common use of the verb ὀρίζω as 'appoint,' and to Acts 2:36, where Peter says that God has made Jesus both (κύριον . . . καὶ χριστὸν) 'Lord and Christ' in light of his resurrection. Schreiner, *Romans*, 42. Allen also notes the link to the resurrection in both Rom 1:4 and Acts 10:42 (Allen, "The Old Testament Background of (IIPO) 'OPIZEIN in the New Testament," 105).

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated a number of similarities between Paul's kingdom references in 1 Corinthians and his kingdom references in the rest of his epistles. At the most basic level, the *types* of references to the kingdom in 1 Corinthians find parallels in Paul's other epistles. Most importantly, the kingdom is integrally connected to God's saving work in Christ as evidenced by the same three lines of evidence adduced in previous chapters. It has also been demonstrated that the kingdom is integrally related to Paul's overarching purposes in Romans and Colossians respectively.

Other observations about the kingdom in 1 Corinthians have also found counterparts in Paul's other epistles, including the familiarity of the concept of the kingdom, the definition of the kingdom, and the ways in which the kingdom intersects with anti-imperial readings of Paul's letters. These points of continuity should not be mistaken for absolute uniformity in Paul's theology of the kingdom, and they do not (in and of themselves) prove that the kingdom was a central theme for the apostle. Nevertheless, the consistency in Paul's references to the kingdom, including the ways in which the kingdom is consistently bound up with God's saving work in Christ, adds support to the idea that it is a significant concept in his theology.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The centrality of the kingdom in the ministry of Jesus is often set in sharp contrast to Paul's epistles. Historically, a number of different explanations have been given to account for why the kingdom seems to be rather obscure in the apostle's writings, but on the whole, relatively few scholars have examined Paul's view of the kingdom in a detailed exegetical manner. Even fewer have approached the question from the context of a single epistle. Therefore, it has been the goal of this work to highlight the significance of the kingdom in Paul by focusing on his use of the concept in 1 Corinthians, the epistle where it appears most frequently.

Admittedly, focusing on 1 Corinthians does not present the entire picture of Paul's theology of the kingdom, nor is it intended to. However, this more narrow approach does have a major advantage over other (much-needed) studies that examine all of Paul's kingdom references. Focusing primarily on a single epistle has allowed for a more robust exegetical approach, where the kingdom is considered in the context of Paul's arguments and his specific concerns. Each explicit noun and verbal reference to the term βασιλεία has been examined, as well as some kingdom-related references that do not use the term. It has been demonstrated that the kingdom is a relevant concept even when the term βασιλεία is not used, with the reign of Christ in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 serving as perhaps the clearest example. Paul's kingdom references outside of 1 Corinthians have provided confirmatory evidence along the way. Three primary lines of evidence have been used to show that the kingdom is a foundational component of God's saving work in Christ in 1 Corinthians. These lines of evidence include (1) the relationship of the kingdom to the effects of Christ's death, resurrection, and saving

reign, (2) the consistency of Paul's kingdom references with respect to his inaugurated eschatological schema, and (3) the connection between the kingdom and Paul's ethical teaching—what may also be referred to as the transforming work of the Spirit. Each chapter has closed by appealing to these lines of evidence based on an examination of the relevant texts. As was noted at the outset, the demonstration of this thesis is not tantamount to claiming that the kingdom is Paul's primary focus in 1 Corinthians. Neither has an attempt been made to argue from silence, merely assuming that the kingdom is present even though the term βασιλεία only appears a handful of times. Rather, what Paul *does* say about the kingdom has been the focus. Paul's references to the kingdom (both explicit and implicit) provide evidence that the concept undergirds and is consistent with a number of other critical elements in his theology.

Other relevant observations about the kingdom have also been made in each chapter. For instance, with respect to the familiarity of the kingdom, the concept is nowhere given an extended introduction or explanation. Paul seems to assume that his hearers will know what he is talking about, even if he has to clarify their conceptions of the kingdom. This implies that the kingdom was a familiar concept to the Corinthians. Second, while no formal definition of the kingdom is given, two fundamental aspects of the kingdom have emerged. The kingdom is conceived of as both the reign (or rule) of God and as the location or sphere in which his rule is fully realized, a realm that believers will inherit on the last day. Third, while Paul's instructions concerning the kingdom may carry anti-imperial significance, and at times this may be intentional, the apostle's primary concern is with God's saving work over against the supernatural, and therefore trans-historical, enemies of Christ and his people. The reign of sin and death comes into direct conflict with Christ's reign throughout the present age, and it is only the end-time resurrection of believers that will signal the final victory (1 Cor 15:26).

Summary

After laying out the thesis of this work, chapter 1 provides a modern history of research related to the kingdom in Paul's theology. Following a brief introduction that offers background and context, there is a discussion of what scholars have said about the significance and usage of the kingdom in Paul's epistles. They have come to different, and sometimes polar-opposite, conclusions: the kingdom has been intentionally avoided, deemed unimportant, replaced by other themes, and, in a few cases, seen as significant. Next, there is a discussion of various aspects of Paul's kingdom teaching that have received attention, including its temporal nature (present vs. future), the appropriateness of ascribing it to either God or Christ (or to both), and the kingdom's relevance to anti-imperial readings of Paul's epistles.

Chapter 2 examines Paul's kingdom references in 1 Corinthians 4:20 and 4:8 respectively. In 4:20 it was argued that the power of the kingdom is effected through the proclamation of the cross. The kingdom is therefore a present reality that is intimately related to Christ's death and its saving effects. In 4:8 Paul uses a form of the verb βασιλεύω three times, and although he refers to the reign of the Corinthians sarcastically, he uses this eschatological reality of the kingdom to address ethical issues in the congregation. The fact that the reign of believers still awaits its consummation should serve as a rebuke to those prideful Corinthians who think that they are reigning already.

Chapter 3 examines Paul's reference to inheriting the kingdom in 6:9-10 and his implicit reference to the future reign of the saints in 6:2-3. Inheriting the kingdom in 6:9-10 is a reference to the future reward of believers in the age to come. This inheritance of the kingdom is an eschatological fulfillment of the Old Testament concept of the land-inheritance in Canaan. While the concept of inheritance is forward-looking, it has present ethical implications. The prospect of not inheriting the kingdom is intended to motivate the Corinthians to avoid the catalogue of vices listed in 6:9-10 (and, by implication, others as well). Paul assures them in 6:11 that the saving work of Christ and the Spirit is

sufficient to make them fit for the kingdom. Paul also appeals to the eschatological kingdom to address an ethical issue in 6:2-3, namely, taking legal action against fellow believers over trivial matters. In this instance he refers to the future role of judgment assigned to believers, which is nearly synonymous with the idea of the future reign of believers in 4:8.

Chapter 4 examines the kingdom references in 15:20-28 and 15:50. In the former passage, the reign of Christ features prominently, and it is actually the goal of Christ's reign—the destruction of all God's enemies, including death (v. 26)—that Paul appeals to in order to argue for the necessity of the resurrection of believers. At the last day Christ will hand over the kingdom to the Father (v. 24), an event that marks not the end of his reign, but rather its *telos* in the purposes of God for redemption and for all creation. Paul's final reference to the kingdom occurs in 15:50. Inheritance in the kingdom requires the future, bodily resurrection of believers, for God's eschatological kingdom is of such a kind that "flesh and blood" cannot enter it. In addition to resurrection, the kingdom is also connected to the closely related eschatological themes of new creation (vv. 21-22, 45) and the Spirit (15:45).

In chapter 5 the findings in 1 Corinthians are compared with the rest of Paul's epistles. After listing out all of Paul's explicit references to the kingdom, this chapter looks at the various ways that Paul refers to the kingdom without using a noun or verbal form of the word βασιλεία. The reign of Christ is the most prominent example, and it appears in a number of different forms, both directly (Eph 1:20) and indirectly (Rom 1:3-4). The reign of believers is also highlighted (cf. 2 Tim 2:12), as is the reign of Christ (and believers) vis-à-vis the reign of sin and death (Rom 5-6). In all these ways, Paul's references to the kingdom in 1 Corinthians find support in his other epistles, though certain emphases and perspectives differ due to the occasional nature of Paul's writings. Also noted in this chapter was the consistency with respect to earlier observations

concerning the familiarity of the kingdom, the definition of the kingdom, and the relationship of the kingdom to anti-imperial readings of Paul's theology.

Finally, Paul's kingdom references outside 1 Corinthians were applied to the overarching thesis of this work concerning the kingdom's foundational relationship to God's saving work in Christ. The three lines of evidence used throughout 1 Corinthians were also evident in Paul's other epistles. Finally, the role of the kingdom in relation to some of the dominant themes in Colossians (the centrality and supremacy of Christ in Col 1:15ff) and Romans (the gospel of God's royal Son in Rom 1:3-4) was explored briefly. This latter section is further proof that the kingdom was a significant concept for Paul, and it provides evidence that 1 Corinthians is not an anomaly in this regard.

Implications

The thesis of this work has a number of important implications for the study of Paul's theology, as well as for the New Testament more generally. These implications will be touched on briefly followed by some suggestions for (potentially) fruitful areas of future study. First, at the most basic level, this work should give one pause before dismissing the kingdom as a significant Pauline theme. The fact that the kingdom is integral to so many aspects of God's saving work in Christ in 1 Corinthians means that it should at least be *considered* among the theological themes that undergird Paul's thought. The idea that the kingdom is an afterthought, or that Paul simply borrowed the concept from the early Christian communities without reflecting on it, should be rejected.

Second, this is one of the few studies in which the kingdom is studied within the context of a single Pauline epistle. Paul's theology of the kingdom is therefore explored in a manner that is sensitive to the immediate literary context of his writings. This approach also offers a new window through which to look at 1 Corinthians—a worthwhile result in itself. Third, while the present work is not the first to suggest that the theme of God's kingdom should not be restricted to Paul's use of the term βασιλεία,

several specific examples of themes that are essential to the kingdom have been suggested. The reign of Christ and the royal associations of his messiahship (1 Cor 15:25, 27) are probably the most obvious examples. The reign of sin and death (1 Cor 15:26; Rom 5-6), on the other hand, has too often been left out of this discussion. This study has offered support for the idea that these and other themes deserve to be in the kingdom conversation.

Fourth, this study demonstrates that there is a level of consistency in Paul's kingdom theology throughout his epistles. This point is especially evident in chapter 5, where the kingdom references in 1 Corinthians were compared with Paul's other epistles. Similar evidence appears throughout chapters 2-4, as references to the kingdom outside of 1 Corinthians are used as confirmatory evidence. The continuity in kingdom references adds support to the idea that for Paul the kingdom was a developed theological concept rather than a mere borrowed expression.

Fifth, although the focus has been on 1 Corinthians, and then secondarily on Paul's other epistles, this work is also relevant for the rest of the New Testament. For instance, by connecting Paul's kingdom references to God's saving work in Christ, there is evidence of continuity between Paul's epistles and Luke's portrayal of Paul's ministry in Acts. As noted in previous chapters, Luke characterizes Paul's ministry as the proclamation of the kingdom of God on four separate occasions (Acts 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23). This description of Paul's ministry is also consistent with the idea that the Corinthians—who received no extended explanation of the kingdom—were likely familiar with the concept. The kingdom was likely a component of Paul's initial evangelizing efforts and his subsequent instruction to the churches.

Another reason this work is relevant for the rest of the New Testament has to do with the relationship between Paul's theology of the kingdom and the theology of the kingdom in the Synoptic Gospels. Historically, scholars have viewed the kingdom as a significant point of *discontinuity* between Jesus and Paul. While Paul certainly

approaches the kingdom from a different vantage point than the Gospels, the death of Christ is integral to both. Paul and Jesus were not pursuing altogether different programs. In fact, the kingdom of God may actually be a way to explore the theological continuity of the New Testament authors, albeit from different angles.

Sixth and finally, this work may help explain why a number of themes have been put forward as Paul's replacement for the Synoptic emphasis on the kingdom. If the kingdom's significance can be seen in its relationship to a variety of aspects of God's saving work in Christ, then Paul's emphasis on other salvific themes may not necessarily be a move *away* from the kingdom. Rather, Paul may be highlighting particular aspects of the kingdom that suit the point he is making in a given context. For example, Paul's emphasis on the lordship of Christ may not be a replacement for Jesus's emphasis on the kingdom, as Schnackenburg claims, but rather a central element of God's kingdom (1 Cor 15:25-27). Even familiar references to Jesus as Χριστός and Κύριος carry royal, kingdom-related import.¹ By emphasizing Christ's lordship, Paul is highlighting a central feature of God's kingdom. The same point could be made about other prominent Pauline themes, themes like God's righteousness (Rom 5:17) and the Spirit (cf. Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 6:11).²

Limitations and Suggestions

A couple limitations of the present study should be noted, both of which naturally lead to suggestions for further studies on this topic. First, while narrowing the focus to 1 Corinthians has been an advantage in some respects, this more textually-

¹Rudolf Schnackenburg, *God's Rule and Kingdom* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1963), 284; so also H. A. A. Kennedy, *St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things*, 292; Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 183.

²Both Dunn and Cho have claimed that the Spirit is the manifestation of the kingdom in this present age. James D. G. Dunn, *The Christ and the Spirit: Collected Essays of James D.G. Dunn* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1998), 133–41; Youngmo Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom in the Writings of Luke and Paul: An Attempt to Reconcile These Concepts*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2005), 197.

grounded approach also means that more exegetical and theological work from Paul's other epistles is required on this subject. The comparative survey in chapter 5 is a good start in this direction, but it is beyond the scope of this work to trace out the role and significance of the kingdom throughout the Pauline corpus. Even if continuity in Paul's theological outlook is assumed, caution should be exercised in making 1 Corinthians, or any other epistle, the sole reference-point for Paul's theology of the kingdom. Paul's approach to the subject may change depending on his context.

Second, this study has suggested that the concept of the kingdom is present in Paul's writings even when the term βασιλεία is not, with the reign of Christ and the reign of believers serving as clear examples. However, no attempt has been made to explain *why* Paul does not use the term βασιλεία more frequently, neither have suggestions been given as to why Christ's reign and lordship are the features of the kingdom that receive the most attention.³ As was noted in the history of modern research, scholars have suggested a number of reasons as to why Paul rarely refers to the kingdom, though none of these was fully satisfactory. Given the frequency of the term βασιλεία in the Synoptic Gospels, one potential response is to point to the difference in perspective that Paul had as the apostle who was "untimely born" (1 Cor 15:8). While both Paul and the Synoptics are concerned with the implications of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, they accomplish this in different ways. The Synoptic authors expound on these truths—including Christ's earthly ministry and teaching—by narrating the actual events. Paul, on the other hand, instructs churches based on the fact of the Christ-event and its implications. In the end, regardless of how the differences between Paul and the Synoptics are explained, any attempt to account for why Paul did *not* use certain phrases or explicitly appeal to certain concepts must remain somewhat speculative. Nevertheless,

³Paul's frequent use of terms like Χριστός and Κύριος, terms that carry royal associations, are relevant to this question as well.

it may be illuminating to compare the various contexts in which Paul uses the term βασιλεία, or in which he refers explicitly to the reign of Christ, in order to determine whether there are common contextual factors that may be prompting his references to the kingdom.

An obvious way to build on this study would be to explore the theme of God's kingdom in the context of another epistle. Evidence has already been shown that Romans and Colossians may prove to be especially fertile ground for future studies.⁴ Eventually, an updated work that synthesizes such findings across the Pauline corpus would be extremely useful, both for Pauline studies and for more ambitious attempts to draw together major theological emphases of the New Testament. The older Jesus-Paul question may need yet more adjusting. Further studies may also be useful in terms of examining the relationship between the kingdom and other related Pauline themes. The present work has noted how the kingdom is related to resurrection, the Spirit, and new creation, but it has only scratched the surface.⁵

Finally, Vickers's observation that the "cruciform" shape of Paul's ministry—a reference to the suffering and weakness involved in his proclamation of the gospel—is consistent with Jesus' teaching on the "mustard seed kingdom" may shed further light on

⁴Paul's letter to the Romans contains a number of kingdom-related references, as noted in previous chapters. These include Christ's royal descent (1:3-4), the reign of Christ and his people vis-à-vis the reign of sin and death (chapters 5-6), the Spirit-produced virtues of righteousness, peace, and joy that are characteristic of the kingdom (14:17), and the promised reign of Christ, the messiah-king (15:8-13). Alternately, Yarbrough has noted the programmatic function of Paul's reference to the kingdom of the Son in Col 1:13, which may be another fruitful area of study. Robert Yarbrough, "The Kingdom of God in the New Testament: Mark through the Epistles," in *The Kingdom of God*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 146-47.

⁵Vlach suggests that the Spirit's work links the kingdom closely with the New Covenant. Michael J. Vlach, "The Kingdom of God in Paul's Epistles," *Masters Seminary Journal* (Spring 2015): 60n5.

this topic.⁶ The goal of this work has not to compare Paul's teaching on the kingdom with that of Jesus, but such comparisons are important for understanding Paul's theology of the kingdom in its canonical context. It is worth considering how Paul's life and ministry, as mediated through his epistles, *embodies* various aspects of the kingdom. This is the kingdom, notes Vickers, that only comes "through suffering and the cross,"⁷ which is consistent with what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4:20. The power of the kingdom is unleashed, not through worldly wisdom or self-aggrandizing rhetoric, but rather through the message of a crucified king. It may be that there are a number of other characteristics of the kingdom that can be identified in the shape of Paul's ministry and in his conception of the Christian life. This would not be too surprising, though, for the apostle who called himself a bond-slave was surely committed to teaching about and living in accordance with the kingdom of his Master.

⁶By "mustard seed kingdom," Vickers is referring to a kingdom with "unremarkable beginnings but unimaginable endings." Brian J. Vickers, "The Kingdom of God in Paul's Gospel," *SBJT* 12 (2008): 65.

⁷*Ibid.*

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ABSTRACT

THE KINGDOM IN FIRST CORINTHIANS: REEVALUATING AN UNDERESTIMATED PAULINE THEME

Samuel Davidson Burnette, Ph.D.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015
Chairperson: Dr. Thomas R. Schreiner

Despite the fact that scholars regularly overlook the theme of the kingdom in Paul's letters, the thesis of this work is that the kingdom is a foundational component of God's saving work in Christ in 1 Corinthians. This thesis can be demonstrated by observing three primary lines of evidence: (1) the relationship of the kingdom to the effects of Christ's death, resurrection, and saving reign, (2) the consistency of Paul's kingdom references with respect to his inaugurated eschatological schema, and (3) the connection between the kingdom and Paul's ethical teaching, or what might also be referred to as the transforming work of the Spirit.

Chapter 1 provides a history of research concerning the different approaches to Paul's theology of the kingdom in modern scholarship. Relatively few scholars have addressed the topic in a comprehensive way, and where the kingdom has been addressed, it has commonly been suggested that Paul has replaced it with another theme.

Chapters 2 through 4 examine Paul's references to the kingdom in the following texts: 1 Corinthians 4:8, 20; 6:2-3, 9-11; 15:20-28, 50. In addition to examining Paul's use of words in the βασιλ- word group, these chapters also focus on Paul's use of kingdom-related concepts, such as the reign of Christ, the reign of believers, and the future judgment of the saints. A number of connections are also drawn between the kingdom and related eschatological themes.

Chapter 5 compares Paul's kingdom theology in 1 Corinthians with the rest of his epistles. It is argued that there is a consistency to the apostle's theology of the kingdom, even as different contexts require different aspects of the kingdom to be emphasized. The conclusion in chapter 6 provides a summary of the findings in the previous chapters, including a recap of how the thesis has been demonstrated. Also included are some limitations and implications of this work, along with suggestions for further study on this topic.

VITA

Samuel Davidson Burnette

EDUCATION

Diploma, Farragut High School, Knoxville, Tennessee, 1996

B.A., University of Tennessee, 2000

M.Div., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009

ORGANIZATIONS

Evangelical Theological Society

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Assistant to Dr. Brian Vickers, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary,
2009

Editor for Christ-Centered Exposition commentaries and other biblical
resources by International Mission Board President, Dr. David Platt, 2012-