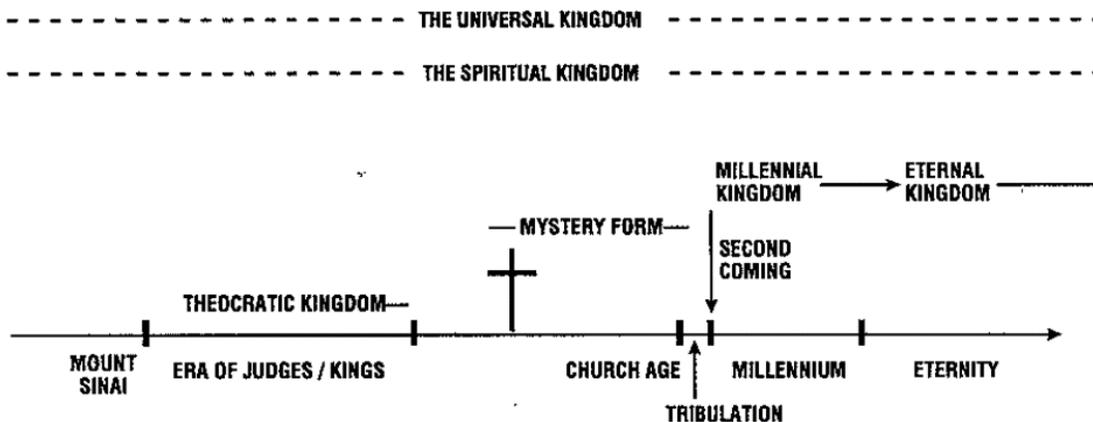


SUMMARY OF THE KINGDOM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

INTRO

- As the NT era arrives, a strong expectation of the coming kingdom is evident, particularly centered on the arrival of the Messiah
- “One issue to grapple with is whether the NT affirms the literal expectation of the OT prophets or whether it transcends and redefines it. Does the NT continue the kingdom storyline or does it change it? Does the coming of Jesus mean the literal fulfillment of the OT promises or the transcending of the promises? Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2 help answer these questions. As Messiah’s arrival is on the brink, expectations concerning Him are consistent with the picture presented by the OT prophets.”¹

VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD



THE KINGDOM IN THE GOSPELS

Jesus’ Birth Proves He is the One to Usher in the Kingdom

- From the beginning of his Gospel, Matthew introduces the kingdom plan by showing that Jesus is the promised seed, with the bloodline to be king, related to both Abraham and David

Matthew 1:1 ~ The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham:

- The angel declared to Mary that Jesus would fulfill the promises of a kingdom for Israel

Luke 1:31 ~ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

¹ Michael Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 255.

- The language of “throne,” “house,” and “kingdom” is consistent with what God promised in the DC
- Mary would have clearly understood these words as announcing the promised kingdom
- That Mary clearly understood that Jesus would reign over the nation Israel is evident from her statement in Luke 1:54-55 ~ He has given help to Israel His servant, In remembrance of His mercy, 55 As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his descendants forever.”
- Mary was under no understanding that the OT expectation is transcended or redefined

- Zacharias likewise had an understanding of the coming kingdom grounded in the OT prophets

Luke 1:68-79 ~ Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, 69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant—70 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old—71 Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES, And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US; 72 To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant, 73 The oath which He swore to Abraham our father, 74 To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, 75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. 76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS; 77 To give to His people the knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins, 78 Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us, 79 TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH, To guide our feet into the way of peace.”

- Zacharias tied the coming of Jesus with the fulfillment of the promises in the DC (vv. 68-69), the AC (vv. 70-75), and the NC (vv. 76-79)
- Zacharias also clearly understood that God’s plan involves national deliverance for Israel from her enemies (v. 71)
- Thus, Zacharias affirms that Messiah’s coming means salvation and political deliverance for Israel (i.e. there is no redefinition of the OT promises to Israel)

- The Magi likewise affirmed this expectation of a literal king over Israel

Matthew 2:2 ~ Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.

- Even the religious leaders and Herod understood that the Messiah would be a political ruler over Israel

Matthew 2:5-6 ~ They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: 6 ‘AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.’ ”

- Simeon and Anna also expressed their hope in the comfort (i.e. salvation and national deliverance) for Israel that would come from Messiah

Luke 2:25 ~ And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

Luke 2:38 ~ At that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

- Thus, “[w]hile some have claimed that the NT transcends the OT expectation from a physical/national kingdom to a spiritual/personal kingdom, the early chapters of Matthew and Luke show no such idea. At this point in the development of the kingdom program there is no indication the OT expectation has been transcended or spiritualized. Instead, the literal OT expectation is affirmed.”²

² Ibid., 266.

Jesus's Beginning Ministry Proves He is the One to Usher in the Kingdom

Matthew 3:2 ~ Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Matthew 4:17 ~ From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

- Both John the Baptist and Jesus announced that the kingdom was on the brink of arriving...but repentance would be necessary for Israel to inherit this kingdom
- 3 views on the nature of the kingdom which was offered by John the Baptist and Christ:
 1. The full kingdom (i.e. the prophesied kingdom of the OT in all its dimensions) – the best view
 2. A spiritual kingdom (i.e. salvation to individuals) – not the best view because it requires a major redefining of the OT expectation of material and national blessings alongside spiritual blessings
 3. An "already/not yet" kingdom (i.e. inaugurated at Christ's first coming but consummated at his second coming) – probably the dominant view today
- Neither John nor Jesus gave any explanation of the meaning of the kingdom because they assumed their audience would have clearly understood the meaning of this term (i.e. there was no reinterpreting the kingdom)
- The kingdom was "at hand" in the sense that it was on the brink of arriving but had not actually arrived although its presence is very close; it was on the verge of arrival
- Thus, "[i]f the kingdom was the prophesied kingdom of the OT. And if this kingdom was presented as imminent. And if the kingdom was presented to Israel at this point with the condition of repentance, what are the implications of all these factors? There seems to be a presentation of the kingdom to Israel that is linked with Israel meeting the spiritual requirements of the Messiah. The entire kingdom package was presented to Israel with the spiritual qualification of repentance."³

Jesus's Miracles Prove He is the One to Usher in the Kingdom

Matthew 4:23-24 ~ Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people. 24 The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them.

- The miracles of Christ drew attention to the legitimacy of Jesus and his ministry
- Likely, Christ must have almost eliminated death and disease in the region of Israel for the time of his public ministry
- Furthermore, these miracles also gave Israel glimpses and previews of Messiah's coming kingdom
- The OT prophets predicted a time when Messiah would reverse the conditions of a fallen world (Isaiah 25:6-8; 35:5-7)
- Jesus showed he was the Messiah by giving demonstrations of the kingdom
- The miracles were glimpses of what the world would be like when Christ's kingdom is established

Matthew 9:35 ~ Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

³ Ibid., 277. (emphasis original)

- Miracles were not needed before the fall because there were no effects of the fall yet
- And miracles will not be necessary in the eternal kingdom because sin and its effects will be entirely removed
- Thus, miracles are acts of restoration...they are related to the kingdom of God and have kingdom implications

Miracles	Kingdom Implications ⁴
Plagues against Egypt/miracles of Moses	Exodus from Egypt/establishment of Israel as a kingdom
Jesus' healing/exorcisms/resurrections/miracles	Nearness of the kingdom to Israel
Apostles' miracles in Acts	Presentation of kingdom to Israel
Miracles by 2 witnesses in Revelation 11	Nearness of the Second Coming and kingdom

Jesus's Sermon on the Mount Describes Kingdom Conduct

- The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) contains descriptions of those who belong to the kingdom
- The "kingdom" is mentioned 8 times in these 3 chapters (5:3, 10, 19 [2x], 20; 6:10, 33; 7:21)
- Views on the sermon's relationship to the kingdom:
 1. Spiritual kingdom view – the kingdom is a current reality
 2. Future kingdom view – that which is taught in this sermon is only applicable to those living in the future earthly kingdom
 3. Inaugurated kingdom view – Jesus inaugurated his kingdom rule with his first coming but the fullness of the kingdom of God and its blessings will be culminated with Jesus' return (the majority view today)
 4. Future kingdom with present implications view – the kingdom is future although Jesus' followers belong to it and should live like it (probably the best view)

Matthew 5:3-10 ~ Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. 5 Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. 7 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. 10 Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

- Notice that vv. 3 and 10 describe present implications of the kingdom while vv. 4-9 describe future blessings of the kingdom
- Notice also that v. 5 affirms that the kingdom is both future and earthly
- The futurity of the kingdom is also seen in the Lord's prayer

Matthew 6:10 ~ Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.

- "God's will is not always done on earth as it is in heaven, but it will be. God's will on earth and heaven will be accomplished. That Jesus told His disciples to pray for the coming of the kingdom reveals the kingdom had not yet arrived at the time of the sermon. If it had Jesus would not tell them to pray for its coming."⁵
- The futurity of the kingdom is also seen in Jesus' description of judgment

⁴ Ibid., 298.

⁵ Ibid., 304.

Matthew 7:21 ~ Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.

- The mention of “will” puts the kingdom in the future
- Thus, the kingdom will be established in connection with coming judgment

The Kingdom Jesus Presented was Rejected

- The kingdom was presented in Matthew 8-10 but rejected in Matthew 11-12

Matthew 8:11-12 ~ I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; 12 but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- This passage reveals that kingdom conditions will be joyous and include banquets and feasting
- This passage also reveals that these kingdom conditions are future – reaffirms that the kingdom Jesus presented as “at hand” had not yet arrived
- This passage also reveals that Gentiles from all parts of the earth will participate in the kingdom

- The kingdom message initially was only for Israel

Matthew 10:5-8 ~ These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; 6 but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.”

- The kingdom message at this point was not for “Gentiles” or “Samaritans”
- This shows a strong connection between the kingdom and Israel and that a presentation of the kingdom to Israel was occurring at this time
- There was a presentation of the kingdom that if positively received would bring kingdom blessings

- But the King and the kingdom were rejected by most of those Jesus ministered to
- Rejection of the king and his kingdom dominate Matthew 11-12

Matthew 11:11-13 ~ Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force. 13 For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John.

- Nefarious men were doing violence or harm to the kingdom...evil people were damaging the kingdom...they were hindering its coming
- In this case, the violent rejection of Jesus by the leaders of Israel means an attack on the kingdom
- Thus, Jesus announces that the religious leaders of Israel are harming the kingdom program
- There was a real presentation of the kingdom to Israel at this point, but wicked men were doing violence to it
- This is clear from the unrepentant cities mentioned in Matthew 11:20-24

- The rejection of Christ’s kingdom is further described in Matthew 12, a chapter which highlights the intense hostility of the Jewish religious leaders against Jesus
- The Pharisees challenged Jesus when they saw his disciples eating on the Sabbath (Matt 12:1-7)
- They also confronted him for healing a man on the Sabbath (Matt 12:8-21)
- Jesus then healed a man who had been possessed by a demon (Matt 12:22)
- The crowds wondered out loud of Jesus was the long-awaited king of Israel

Matthew 12:23 ~ All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, “This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?”

- At this point, the religious leaders accused Jesus of performing his works by the power of Satan

Matthew 12:24 ~ But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons.”

- “The gravity of this response must be grasped. The Messiah of Israel was in their midst performing great miracles. But instead of believing in Him, the religious leaders, who represented Israel, accuse Him of teaming with Satan.”⁶
- Jesus responded to their rejection

Matthew 12:28 ~ But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

- Jesus’ miracles were not evidence that he works for Satan; rather, they show that the kingdom has come upon Israel
 - The leader’s hardened unbelief was blasphemy against the Holy Spirit
 - This is the unforgivable sin (Matt 12:32)
- “The leaders of Israel crossed a line of no return. This tragic event has devastating consequences not only for them but for the nation Israel. What was occurring was both an individual and national sin. And the consequences will be both individual and national. After this encounter with the Jewish religious leaders the die is cast. The cities and leaders of Israel will not believe. From this point onward the kingdom will not be presented as ‘at hand’ or ‘near.’ In fact, shortly before His final entrance into Jerusalem Jesus would give a parable to show that the kingdom of God was *not* ‘going to appear immediately’ (Luke 19:11). The kingdom would become ‘near’ in the future with the events associated with the coming tribulation period (see Luke 21:31). As events unfold, it becomes evident the ministry of Jesus the Messiah will include two phases – a first and second coming. The first coming will emphasize the atoning work of the Messiah for sin, while the second will bring His kingdom (see Acts 3:18-21). The promised kingdom of the OT prophets would not be established soon because of the negative reception of it by Israel. But it would come in the future.”⁷

The Kingdom Parables Give Additional Insight into the Kingdom

- The rejection of Christ by the Jewish leaders prompted Jesus to present 8 parables regarding the kingdom of heaven
- *“The purpose of Matthew 13 is to offer new truths about the kingdom program in light of Israel’s rejection of Jesus. The kingdom will not be established with Jesus’ first coming. Instead, an inter-advent age will occur where the kingdom program proceeds as the message of the kingdom and the growth of the kingdom citizens occurs alongside the work of the devil. But when Jesus returns a second time in judgment, He will separate the sons of the kingdom from the sons of the evil one and then the sons of the kingdom will partake in Jesus’ kingdom. With Matthew 13 we see clearly for the first time that the kingdom program involves two comings of Jesus and what this means for the period between these two comings.”*⁸
- In light of the Jewish leaders’ rejection, Jesus now begins to speak in parables, the reason for which Jesus clearly stated in Matt 13:11-15

⁶ Ibid., 323

⁷ Ibid., 323-324.

⁸ Ibid., 325. (emphasis original)

- The purpose of these “mysteries” was to reveal new information to those who believe and to hide truth from those who have hardened their hearts
- The parable of the sower (Matt 13:3-9, 18-23) explains that there are various responses to the kingdom message
- The parable of the wheat and tares (Matt 13:24-30, 34-43) reveals that the sons of kingdom and unbelievers will coexist until Jesus comes again
- The parable of the mustard seed and leaven (Matt 13:31-33) reveals that, while the kingdom itself awaits establishment at the 2nd coming, the kingdom grows as the message of the kingdom and the sons of the kingdom increase
- The parable of the hidden treasure and costly pearl (Matt 13:44-46) demonstrates the value of the kingdom and the intense desire that must accompany those who seek to enter it
- The parable of the dragnet (Matt 13:47-50) reveals that both the righteous and wicked will co-exist in this age until a coming day when the wicked are removed
- These parables show that the kingdom will not be established with Christ’s first coming
- There must be an intervening age between His first and second comings and then the kingdom will be established
- Yet this period between the two comings is related to the kingdom program

A Kingdom Preview

- Jesus predicts His suffering and death in Matthew 16
- After the somber news of His coming suffering, Jesus makes statements about His return and kingdom

Matthew 16:27-28 ~ For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS. 28 Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

- One natural question would have arisen in light of Jesus’ statement about his death: What about the kingdom?
- Jesus’ words here were an affirmation that in spite of coming suffering, God’s kingdom program was still on track
- Even though He must die, a time was coming when Jesus would come in glory
- Jesus’ words in Matt 16:28 were fulfilled with the events of the Transfiguration 6 days later as described in Matt 17:1-13
- The disciples received a “kingdom preview” – not the full and final establishment of the kingdom, but a taste or glimpse of the kingdom as they see the glorified Messiah

Greatness and Rewards in the Kingdom

- The path to true greatness in God’s kingdom is by service

Matthew 18:1-4 ~ At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” 2 And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, 3 and said, “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

- Jesus promised that the 12 apostles will have ruling positions over a united and restored nation Israel in the kingdom and that great material rewards await those who sacrifice for Jesus now

Matthew 19:27-30 ~ Then Peter said to Him, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?”
28 And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name’s sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. 30 But many who are first will be last; and the last, first.”

- Jesus reveals the path to true greatness in the kingdom is by humble service

Matthew 20:20-21, 25-28 ~ Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. 21 And He said to her, “What do you wish?” She said to Him, “Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left.”...25 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. 26 “It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, 27 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

- Jesus did not rebuke the mother of James and John for looking ahead to an earthly kingdom in which there are position of authority
- Rather, he rebuked her for her selfish desires
- They erred by thinking they could have exalted positions of authority in the kingdom by pursuing greatness like the world
- Greatness in the kingdom comes through humble service now

The Triumphal Entry and the Kingdom

- Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem is full of kingdom implications

Matthew 21:4-5 ~ This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: 5 “SAY TO THE DAUGHTER OF ZION, ‘BEHOLD YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU, GENTLE, AND MOUNTED ON A DONKEY, EVEN ON A COLT, THE FOAL OF A BEAST OF BURDEN.’ ”

- This event took place in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9...it is a presentation of a King to His people in fulfillment of prophecy
- The crowds recognized the Messianic significance of this event

Luke 19:38 ~ shouting: “BLESSED IS THE KING WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

Jesus Wept at Israel’s Temporary Loss of the Kingdom

Luke 19:41 ~ When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, 42 saying, “If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. 43 For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, 44 and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.”

- Jesus wept at the fact that salvation and restoration were before Israel, but she turned her head and refused

THE KINGDOM IN ACTS

- That Jesus talked with the believers after his resurrection about the kingdom demonstrates it was not in operation at that point

Acts 1:3 ~ To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.

- The question the apostles asked provides several implications about how the apostles viewed the kingdom

Acts 1:6-7 ~ So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority.’

- The disciples’ question in Acts 1:6 contains three presuppositions and one question:

Four Key Elements	Presupposition	Inquiry
➤ The <i>Reality</i> of the Kingdom	X	
➤ The <i>Restoration</i> of the Kingdom	X	
➤ The <i>Recipients</i> of the Kingdom	X	
➤ The <i>Timing</i> of the Restoration		X

- The implication: The apostles were fully expecting the Messianic Kingdom prophesied in the OT to be restored to the ethnic nation of Israel some time in the near future
- The word “restore” shows that the apostles expected continuity with Israel’s prior kingdom
- Shows that the apostles did not view the kingdom as being in operation or inaugurated at this point
- The answer to the question of v. 6 comes in v. 7
- If the disciples were so radically misinformed about the nature and recipients of the promised kingdom, one would expect Jesus to have set the record straight and provided the needed correction at this crucial moment in redemptive history.
- But Jesus provides no correction whatsoever. Instead, he simply says: “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority” (Acts 1:7)

- Peter reiterated the offer of the kingdom through repentance

Acts 3:19-21 ~ Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; 20 and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, 21 whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.

- The repentance of Israel is what will usher in the kingdom (v. 19a)
- The results of Israel’s repentance: forgiveness (v. 19)...times of refreshing (v. 20a)...the coming of Messiah (v. 20b)...the restoration of all things (v. 21)

SUMMARY: Repentance → Return → Restoration

Chronology in Acts 3:19-21

1. The Repentance of Israel
2. The Return of Messiah
3. The Restoration of the Kingdom (to Israel)