

# Entering into the Kingly Power of God

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## Introduction

Most of the sayings about the kingdom of God attributed to Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels can be divided into five categories, which will here be outlined for the sake of the subsequent argument:<sup>1</sup> (1) those which directly imply the kingdom's movement;<sup>2</sup> (2) those about entering the kingdom;<sup>3</sup> (3) those about being in the kingdom;<sup>4</sup> (4) those which speak of the kingdom as a possession;<sup>5</sup> and (5) parables which use the formula "the kingdom is like."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The categories of "future kingdom" and "present kingdom" do not appear in the following list. I agree with N. Perrin that modern discussion has been unfortunately dominated by the question of the temporal referent of the kingdom to the exclusion of the question of the kingdom's nature (*Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom: Symbol and Metaphor in New Testament Interpretation* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976] 197-99). The study that follows does, however, have implications for the debate about the kingdom's presence or futurity; see, for example, pp. 674-75 and n. 57.

<sup>2</sup> Mark 1:15 || Matt 4:17; Mark 9:1 || Matt 16:28; Mark 15:43 || Luke 23:51; Matt 3:2; Matt 6:10 || Luke 11:2; Matt 10:7; Matt 12:28 || Luke 11:20; Luke 10:9,11; 17:20-21; 19:11; 21:31; 22:18.

<sup>3</sup> Mark 9:47; Mark 10:15 || Matt 18:3 || Luke 18:17 (cf. John 3:5); Mark 10:23-25 || Matt 19:23-24 || Luke 18:24-25; Matt 5:20; 7:21; 21:31; 23:13; Luke 16:16?

<sup>4</sup> Mark 14:25 || Matt 26:29; Matt 5:19; Matt 8:11 || Luke 13:28-29; Matt 11:11 || Luke 7:28; Matt 13:43; Matt 18:1, 4; Luke 14:15; 22:16.

<sup>5</sup> This includes statements that speak of the kingdom as something possessed, received, sought, given, or inherited: Mark 10:14-15 || Matt 19:14 || Luke 18:16-17; Matt 5:3 || Luke 6:20; Matt 5:10; Matt 6:33 || Luke 12:31; Matt 21:43; 25:34; Luke 12:32; 22:29. Should Mark 4:11 || Matt 13:11 || Luke 8:10 also be included here?

<sup>6</sup> Mark 4:26; Mark 4:30 || Matt 13:31 || Luke 13:18; Matt 13:24; Matt 13:33 || Luke 13:20; Matt 13:44, 45, 47; 18:23; 20:1; 22:2; 25:1.

There are also five passages attributed to Jesus in which the kingdom is said to be "proclaimed" (all however probably secondary expan-

664 Relying especially upon exegesis of Jewish parallels and of the first category of Jesus' sayings, many twentieth-century interpreters have claimed

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that the predominant meaning of *malkûtā/basileia* in Jesus' teaching is "reign," "rule," "sovereignty," "dominion," "kingly power" rather than "realm."<sup>7</sup> In particular G. Dalman, the pioneer of this interpretation, asserted that in the OT, Jewish literature, and in Jesus' teaching, "*malkut*, when applied to God, means always the 'kingly rule,' never the 'kingdom,' as if it were meant to suggest the territory governed by him."<sup>8</sup>

But how is this dynamic interpretation<sup>9</sup> to be reconciled with the other categories, especially with the statements

sions of Mark: Matt 13:19; 24:14; Luke 4:43; 9:60; 16:16), and several smaller categories that contain one or two sayings each, many of which are also redactional: "sons of the kingdom" (Matt 8:12; 13:38); "on account of or for the sake of the kingdom" (Matt 19:12; Luke 18:29); "trained for or prepared for the kingdom" (Matt 13:52; Luke 9:62); "seeing the kingdom" (Luke 9:27; cf. John 3:3); "not far from the kingdom" (Mark 12:34); "the kingdom is violated" (Matt U:12); "the keys of the kingdom" (Matt 16:19; cf. 23:13); "rooting evil out of the kingdom" (Matt 13:41).

<sup>7</sup> E.g., G. Dalman, *The Words of Jesus, Considered in the Light of Post-Biblical Writings and the Aramaic Language* (Edinburgh, 1902) 91-147; J. Schlosser, *Le regne de Dieu dans les dits de Jesus* (2 vols.; Paris: Gabalda, 1980) 1.136; O. Camponovo, *Königtum, Königsherrschaft und Reich Gottes in den frühjüdischen Schriften* (OBO 58; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984) 443.

<sup>8</sup> Dalman, *Words*, 94 (italics added).

<sup>9</sup> In speaking of a "dynamic" interpretation of *basileia*, I depart somewhat from Dalman, whose favorite translations of *malkut/basileia* are "sovereignty," "kingly rule," and even "theocracy." These translations are not explosive enough; they portray God's *basileia* as the abstract fact that he rules, rather than the force of his personal self-assertion that manifests his kingship by overpowering the resistance to it in the earthly sphere. See J. Gray (*The Biblical Doctrine of the Reign of God*

about entering the *basileia*? These statements seem at first glance to suggest a realm, and they confront the interpreter with a fundamental question: As concerns the kingdom of God, *who does the moving*? The statements in group (1) above suggest that the kingdom does the moving; those in group (2), as usually interpreted, imply that human beings do the moving.<sup>10</sup> This tension has often led interpreters to assign two separate meanings to the phrase *basileia tou theou*, depending on whether the dynamic or the local aspect prevails. N. Perrin, for example, divides Jesus' use of the term "kingdom of God" into two main senses: (1) God's decisive intervention in history and human experience; (2) the final state of the redeemed, to which this intervention is designed to lead; in this category Perrin includes statements about entering the kingdom and receiving the kingdom.<sup>11</sup>

Dalman for one, however, opposed such a bifurcation, arguing consistently for the translation "sovereignty," even in statements about entering the *basileia*;<sup>12</sup> S. Aalen, on the other hand, attempts to maintain the unity of the concept by asserting that it always has a local sense in the Gospels.<sup>13</sup>

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In what follows, Dalman's position will be supported through an examination of the OT/Jewish background and NT instances of sayings about entering the *basileia* (group 2), which are admittedly the most difficult sayings for this position. If the "entering" statements can be shown to imply a dynamic interpretation of the kingdom,

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[Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979] 27) on OT texts, and O. Camponovo (*Königsherrschaft*, 428-32) on *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*; Camponovo points out that in the targum *malkûta'* is never used to translate stative references to God's kingship ("God is king"), but rather is always used dynamically ("God has displayed his kingly power").

<sup>10</sup> This contradiction is so stark that it is not alleviated by the explanation that the ancient Semite did not distinguish sharply between a realm and the powers operative within it (Camponovo, *Königsherrschaft*, 443).

<sup>11</sup> N. Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963) 168-85.

<sup>12</sup> *Words*, 116-118; Dalman argues on the basis of the presumed Aramaic original that "to attain to" is a better translation of *eiserchesthai eis* than "to enter into."

<sup>13</sup> S. Aalen, "'Reign' and 'House' in the Kingdom of God in the Gospels," *NTS* 8 (1961-62) 215-40. Since Aalen recognizes that the Jewish parallels overwhelmingly attest a dynamic interpretation, he can maintain his position only by arguing that Jesus deliberately rejected the nuance given to *basileia* in Judaism. Aalen develops his exegetical argument from the correct observation that in Mark 3:24 || Matt 12:25-26 || Luke 11:17-18 *basileia* is parallel to "house" and means "kingdom" (*ibid.*, 229-31). Our investigation, however, concerns not the word *basileia* alone but the technical term *basileia tou theou*. When the latter occurs later in the same passage (Matt 12:28 || Luke 11:20), the meaning obviously switches to "kingly power," in spite of Aalen's tortuous denials.

the other groups of sayings will fall easily into line, although detailed demonstration of the way in which they do so lies beyond the scope of this study.<sup>14</sup>

Already in 1911 Dalman's contemporary C. Blumhardt voiced the basic insight that will be developed here, when he described the Christian calling to "set ourselves into the return of Jesus Christ, into the history of his coming to the world."<sup>15</sup> In a similar vein, D.O. Via has spoken suggestively of entering the kingdom as being "placed in a new story which moves toward a redemptive future."<sup>16</sup> It will be the task of this study to elaborate these insights systematically.

## I. OT/Jewish Background

In attempting to arrive at a comprehensive interpretation of the statements about entering the *basileia*, it may be helpful initially to look at some of the OT background adduced by H. Windisch in his classic article on the

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subject.<sup>17</sup> Windisch, acknowledging that there is no exact parallel in the OT to the phrase "to enter the *basileia* of God,"<sup>18</sup> suggests that the closest analogies are of two kinds: instructions about the necessity of obedience to God's commandments by the Israelites who are about to enter Canaan (e.g., Deut 4:1; 6:17-18; 16:20), and passages from the Psalms which list the preconditions for entrance into the Temple gates (*tôrot* of entry, e.g., Psalms 15; 24). These two *Sitze im Leben* probably overlap more

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<sup>14</sup> The sayings about entering the *basileia* are closely related to those about being in the *basileia* (group 3), and there is in the QL a close parallel to the dynamic interpretation of the latter (*bmmst*: IQS 1:23; 3:22-23; 1QM 13:10). The sayings which speak of the kingdom as a possession (group 4) are as amenable to a dynamic interpretation of *basileia* as to a local interpretation, and some of them seem positively to require the dynamic nuance; see for example the discussion of Mark 10:15a below (p. 672), and cf. my interpretation of *basileia tōn ouranōn* in Matt 16:19 ("The Gates of Hades and the Keys of the Kingdom [Matt 16:18-19]," *CBQ* 50 [1988] 443-55). Most of the parables of the kingdom of God (group 5) clearly depict divine action; the remaining three (Matt 13:44, 45, 47) we may call parables of human entry into the *basileia*, in the sense that this article interprets that phrase.

<sup>15</sup> Blumhardt, "In the Return of Jesus Christ," in *Thy Kingdom Come: A Blumhardt Reader* (ed. V. Eller; Rifton, NY: Plough, 1980) 116-17. In this passage Blumhardt does not speak specifically of the kingdom of God, but the kingdom was a central concept in his theology and that of his father Johann; see G. Sauter, *Die Theologie des Reiches Gottes beim älteren und jüngeren Blumhardt* (Studien zur Dogmengeschichte und systematischen Theologie 14; Zurich: Zwingli, 1962).

<sup>16</sup> D.O. Via, *The Ethics of Mark's Gospel in the Middle of Time* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 131.

<sup>17</sup> H. Windisch, "Die Sprüche vom Eingehen in das Reich Gottes," *ZNW* 27 (1928) 163-92.

<sup>18</sup> Nor is there indeed in ancient Judaism generally; the best parallel is in rabbinic sources that speak of "entering the age (or world) to come" (Dalman, *Words*, 116).

than Windisch realized. As F.M. Cross has shown, the autumn festival of the enthronement of Yahweh, in which the *tôrôt* of entry probably had their life setting, celebrated not only Yahweh's defeat of cosmic forces of chaos but also, as the historical manifestation of that defeat, the routing of Israel's enemies when the divine warrior-king led them in holy war into the promised land.<sup>19</sup>

Psalm 24, which claims the attention of both Windisch and Cross, deserves careful scrutiny here. The psalm pictures two different stages of the kingship festival: (1) The people, gathered at the foot of Mt. Zion around the ark of the covenant, inquire about the cultic requirements for ascension into the hill of Yahweh (vv. 3-6). (2) At the Temple gates, they demand entrance for the "king of glory," whom they identify as Yahweh, the warrior and leader of armies (vv. 7-10).<sup>20</sup>

For our study, the most intriguing aspect of this reconstructed liturgy is that it describes two inseparable entrances: that of Yahweh, and that of the

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people. Yahweh the divine warrior, invisibly present above the ark, manifests his kingly power by invading the city and the Temple (vv. 7-10). In his triumphal entry,

however, the people, following him in festal procession, also enter (vv. 3-6).<sup>21</sup> Cf. Ps 68:24-25.<sup>22</sup>

Your solemn processions are seen, O God,  
the processions of my God, my king, into  
the sanctuary—  
the singers in front, the minstrels last,  
between them maidens playing timbrels.

"The processions of God" (*hālîkôt 'ēlōhîm*) are probably to be understood in a double sense: they include the worshipers' entrance into the sanctuary, but also that of Yahweh himself, riding in state above the ark.<sup>23</sup> The human entry does not represent an autonomous action, but rather an incorporation into the divine entry. It is only because Yahweh goes before the people in kingly might as conqueror, and because the Temple gates open to *him*, that the people can enter into the city and into the Temple; in *his* entry, *they* enter.

Is it possible that Jesus' sayings about entrance into God's *basileia* should be understood in a similar light? Might they signify a human entering into (= participation in) God's manifestation of his kingly power (*basileia*)? This interpretation would enable us to maintain the dynamic sense of *basileia tou theou* while still taking seriously the statements about entering it.

This hypothesis gains credence when we look at some of the developments of the idea of God's kingly power in the postexilic period. In that period, it is true, the enthronement of Yahweh was no longer ritually enacted in the way we have described above, if only because of the loss of the ark.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the complex of holidays that emerged from the old autumn festival (New Year, Day of Atonement, Tabernacles) was still associated with the revelation of God's kingship.<sup>25</sup> M. Roš Haš. 4:5, for example, mentions that an important feature of the New Year festival is recitation of ten *malkuyyôt*, biblical passages having to do with God's kingly power.<sup>26</sup> Further-

<sup>19</sup> F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973) 91-111. Debate as to the existence of a festival celebrating Yahweh's enthronement is ongoing, a good recent defense being that of J. Gray (*Biblical Doctrine*, 7-38). The most important critic of the theory is H.-J. Kraus (*Die Königsherrschaft Gottes im Alten Testament: Untersuchungen zu den Liedern von Jahwes Thronbesteigung* [BHT 13; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1951]; cf. *Psalmen* [3 vols.; BKAT 15; Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1960-79] 1.201-5). The greatest weakness in Kraus's treatment is his inability to explain away the enthronement motif in Psalm 47.

<sup>20</sup> On the sequence of events that lie behind Psalm 24, see S. Mowinkel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (2 vols. in 1; Nashville: Abingdon, 1962) 1.177-80; W.O.E. Oesterley, *The Psalms* (London: SPCK, 1959; orig. 1939) 184-88; R. E. Murphy, "Psalms," *JBC* 580; Kraus, *Psalmen*, 1. 193-97, 205-6.

Recently S.O. Steingrimsson, while recognizing that vv. 7-10 are preexilic, has argued that vv. 3-5 are postexilic (*Tor der Gerechtigkeit: Eine literaturwissenschaftliche Untersuchung der sogenannten Einzugsriturgien im AT: Ps 15; 24, 3-5 und Jes 33, 14-16* [Münchener Universitätschriften: Katholisch-Theologische Fakultät. Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament 22; St. Ottilien: EOS, 1984] 83, 92-93; cf. 90). Steingrimsson's arguments, however, are not convincing. His assertion that the singular "mountain of the Lord" would have been impossible before Josiah's reform fails to recognize the mythological nature of the language being employed, and his claim that word usages found in these verses are paralleled only in postexilic texts is overdrawn. Most of the parallels Steingrimsson mentions are not exact, and the few that remain can easily be explained as postexilic appropriation of preexilic cultic language.

<sup>21</sup> Kraus, *Psalmen*, 1. 205: "With the ark also the 'righteous community' (cf. w. 3-6) wishes to enter through the doors into the Temple."

<sup>22</sup> Mentioned by Kraus in his discussion of Psalm 24 (*Psalmen*, 1. 203).

<sup>23</sup> See BDB 237: "Ref. either to solemn processions of worshippers... or, perh. better, to the theophanic progress of God himself." I suggest that both nuances are present.

<sup>24</sup> See R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (2 vols.; New York and Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1961) 2.299.

<sup>25</sup> Gray, *Biblical Doctrine*, 10.

<sup>26</sup> For the place of the *malkuyyôt* in the present-day Rosh Hashannah service, see *Service of the Synagogue: New Year* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1926) 135-36, 266-67. According to A.Z. Idelsohn, the recitation of the *malkuyyôt* at Rosh Hashannah probably goes back to Second Temple times (*Jewish Liturgy and its Development* [New York: Holt, 1932] 213-14).

more, Zech 14:9,16 connects God's kingship with an eschatological celebration of Tabernacles.

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Moreover, in postexilic times *tôrôt* of entry probably still formed an important part of the autumn festivities. We know, for example, that recitation of the Hallel Psalms (113-118) had a central place in the feast of Tabernacles (*m. Sukk.* 3:9-11; 4:1,8), and one of these psalms includes *tôrôt* of entry (Psalm 118:19-20; cf. v. 26). A festal procession, culminating in the circling of the altar of sacrifice, also took place (*m. Sukk.* 4:5). Such ceremonies would have kept alive the idea of human entry into God's demonstration of his kingship.

This idea is visible in Isa 52:1-12, a section of Deutero-Isaiah which includes 52:7, "a passage with which the teaching of Jesus is directly linked and which is made the starting point of his gospel."<sup>27</sup> In this passage we find, transposed into an eschatological context, a version of the old formula from the autumn festival *yhwh mālak* ("Yahweh has become king").<sup>28</sup> Significantly, the translation in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* uses the word *malkûtā*; "The kingly power (*malkûtā*) of your God has been revealed."<sup>29</sup> The larger context of the OT passage contains reminiscences of *tôrôt* of entry (Isa 52:1,11), as well as a beautiful description of the return of Yahweh to Zion, accompanying, indeed *encompassing*, the return of his people (52:8-12):

For you shall not go out in haste,  
and you shall not go in flight,  
for Yahweh will go before you,  
and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

In a mighty display of redemptive power, Yahweh returns to Zion, not alone, but drawing a people in his wake; to use the language of Jesus, this people "enters into" his demonstration of kingly power (*malkûtā/basileia*).<sup>30</sup>

## II. "Entering into an Action" as a Biblical Idiom

The plausibility of this interpretation of "entering the *basileia*" is increased when we observe that "to enter into

<sup>27</sup> R. Schnackenburg (*God's Rule and Kingdom* [Freiburg: Herder; Montreal: Palm, 1963] 37), citing Mark 1:14-15; Matt 11:5; Luke 4:18.

<sup>28</sup> On the link between Isa 52:7 and the autumn festival, see Gray, *Biblical Doctrine*, 11.

<sup>29</sup> On this paraphrase, see B. Chilton, "Regnum Dei Deus Est," *SJT* 31 (1978) 267; K. Koch, "Offenbaren wird sich das Reich Gottes," *NTS* 25 (1978-79) 163; Camponovo, *Königsherrschaft*, 420-21.

<sup>30</sup> There is a reminiscence here of Yahweh's earlier display of kingly power in leading his people out of Egypt and into Canaan (cf. Exod 13:21-22).

an action" corresponds not only to modern English idiom but also to ancient Semitic and NT usage.<sup>31</sup>

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One of the best examples of this idiom occurs in John 4:38b; Jesus remarks to the disciples, "Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor" (*hymeis eis ton kopon autōn eiselēlythate*). R. Schnackenburg interprets this, "You have come in to enjoy the fruits of their labor,"<sup>32</sup> but this ellipsis is unnecessary, and imports a foreign idea into the text. The disciples have entered *into the labor itself*, not into its fruits; although they have not previously labored (4:38a), now they reap (cf. 4:36-37). They are taken into this work, it should be noted, not as equal partners, but as people who are graciously enabled to enter into the redemptive labor of others at the last minute (cf. Matt 20:1-16). Similarly, in the sayings that are the focus of this study, those who enter into God's manifestation of kingly power (*basileia*) do so not as equal partners with God but as holy warriors caught up in "the tidal wave of the divine victory" over Satan and his minions.<sup>33</sup>

Another NT example of the idea of entering into an action occurs in the Matthean parable of the talents, a parable which, significantly, concerns the kingdom of heaven.<sup>34</sup> The faithful servants are invited to "enter into the joy of your master" (*eiselthe eis tēn charan tou kyriou sou*; Matt 25:21,23). This invitation suggests not only that the

<sup>31</sup> BAG (233 [2a]) lists as one of the meanings of *eiselthein* "come into someth. = share in something, come to enjoy something," citing, along with passages about entering the kingdom, Matt 25:21,23, on which see below; also Josephus, *Contra Apion* 2.123 ("into our laws"), as well as NT statements about entering into rest (Heb 3:11, 18; 4:1, 3, 5-6, 10-11 [Psalm 94:11]), into glory (Luke 24:26), and into temptation (Matt 26:41; Luke 22:40, 46). *Contra* J. Schneider ("*Erchomai*," *TDNT* 2.677 [1964; orig. 1935]), who claims that in the NT *eiserchesthai* is always used in a local sense.

<sup>32</sup> Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John* (3 vols.; New York: Crossroad, 1982; orig. 1965-75) 1.452 (italics added), following BAG 233; Similarly R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (2 vols.; AB 29, 29A; New York: Doubleday, 1966-70) 1.168.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. R. Otto (*The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man: A Study in the History of Religion* [Boston: Starr King, 1943] 103), who speaks of Jesus' own activity being carried forward by "the tidal wave of the divine victory." On the importance of holy war in Jesus' theology, see O. Betz, "Jesu heiliger Krieg," *NovT* 2 (1957) 116-37.

<sup>34</sup> *Hōsper* ("it is as") in 25:14 probably recalls the reference to the kingdom of heaven in 25:1 (A. H. McNeile, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indices* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980; orig. 1915] 364). Cf. the Lucan parallel, which is introduced by an editorial comment about the kingdom of God (Luke 19:11) and contains several other significant usages of the noun *basileia* and the verb *basileuein* (19:12, 14, 15, 27).

master will rejoice over the servants, but also that they will share in his joy.<sup>35</sup>

The NT idiom of entering into an action has Semitic roots, as is shown by OT passages that speak of entering into judgment (Ps 143:2; Job 14:3),<sup>36</sup>

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entering into the might of God (Ps 71[70]:16)<sup>37</sup> and entering into the righteousness of God (Ps 69[68]:27). The latter is a particularly important passage for our study because of the closeness of the meanings of *basileia* and *dikaïosynē* in the NT.<sup>38</sup> Praying against his persecutors, the psalmist asks God to “add iniquity to their iniquity; and let them not come into your righteousness.”<sup>39</sup> H.-J. Kraus asserts that *ḡedāqā* here indicates a “sphere of salvation,”<sup>40</sup> but this cannot be the whole story; the prayer to add iniquity to iniquity in v. 27a, and its contin-

<sup>35</sup> On the latter nuance, see the parallel in *y. Sukk.* 55a: Jonah “entered into the joy” (*nkns lsmht*) of the feast of Tabernacles; cited by A. Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Matthäus: Seine Sprache, sein Ziel, seine Selbständigkeit: Ein Kommentar zum ersten Evangelium* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1929) 722.

<sup>36</sup> Ps 143:2: *wē’al tābō’ bēmišpāt ‘et ‘abdekā*, “Do not enter into judgment with your servant”; the Peshitta shows that this idiom is also possible in Aramaic. The LXX rendering, *kai mē eiselthēis eis krisin*, when compared to that for Job 14:3, *eiselthein en krimati enōpion sou*, “to enter into judgment before you,” illustrates the obscuring of the distinction between *eis* and *en* that is especially characteristic of the LXX, since both words translate *bē*; see F.C. Conybeare and St.G. Stock, *A Grammar of Septuagint Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980; orig. 1905) §90-91; BDF §218; N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek: Vol. 3, Syntax* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963) 254-57.

Interestingly, the Targum on Ps 143:2 transforms it into, “Do not enter into *the house of judgment* with your servant,” while that on Job 14:3 retains the OT idiom.

<sup>37</sup> LXX: *Eiseleusomai en dynasteiāi kyriou*; MT has *ābō’ bigburōt ‘ādōnāy*, “I will enter into the mighty deeds of my Lord; but the apparatus of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* notes that many manuscripts read the singular *gēburat*, “might”; the singular is also found in the LXX, the Peshitta, and the Vulgate. The translation “I will enter *into* the might of the Lord,” as opposed to “in the might of the Lord,” is supported by the Vulgate (*introibo in potentiam Domini*), as well as by the context, since no entry into a place is suggested by the rest of the psalm.

<sup>38</sup> See A. J. M. Wedderburn (“Paul and Jesus: The Problem of Continuity,” *SJT* 38 [1985] 189-203), who traces the continuity between Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom and Paul’s proclamation of God’s righteousness, citing R. Bultmann and esp. E. Jünger as precursors; we might also mention E. Käsemann (*Perspectives on Paul* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971] 75) and J.D. Crossan (*In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* [New York: Harper & Row, 1973] 81). Another Käsemann essay (“The Righteousness of God’ in Paul; in *New Testament Questions of Today* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969; orig. 1961] 168-82) provided much of the inspiration for the present study.

<sup>39</sup> *wē’al yābō’ū bēsīdqātekā*; LXX *mē eiselthetōsan en dikaïosynēi sou*; see above, n. 36, on the frequent interchangeability of *en* and *eis* in the LXX. The RSV translates *bē* here as “into.”

<sup>40</sup> Kraus (*Psalmen*, 1.484), citing K. Koch’s dissertation on righteousness in the Old Testament.

uation in v. 28 (“let them not be enrolled among the righteous”), suggests that the psalmist also hopes that his enemies will not enter into (= participate in) human activity that arises out of God’s rectification of the world.

### III. Entering into the Kingly Power of God

Enough has been written to show that “to enter into an action” is a good biblical idiom and that ideas drawn originally from the Israelite cultus provide a plausible background for the concept of entering into the kingly power of God. It remains to be shown that this is in fact what the statements in the Synoptics about entering the *basileia* mean.

I begin with a Lucan passage that speaks of Jesus entering his own *basileia*. “Remember me when you come into your *basileia*,” the good thief requests of the crucified Jesus (Luke 23:42). Jesus’ reply, “Today you will be with me in Paradise,” is a correction of the thief’s futuristic eschatology,<sup>41</sup> already, *from the cross*, Jesus is exercising kingly power. His kingship has already been proclaimed at the crucifixion, albeit unwittingly, by his enemies

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(23:2, 3, 37, 38); now he demonstrates it. He implicitly forgives the thief’s sins and explicitly grants him a place in paradise; his reply, then, is not merely a prediction, but rather a sovereign promise that he makes as king of Israel and therefore “judge of the living and the dead” (Acts 10:42). He does not have to wait to “enter into his kingly power”; he is already entering it.<sup>42</sup> Admittedly, there is some distance between Jesus entering into his own kingly power and the disciples entering into the kingly power of God, but Luke 23:42 at least demonstrates that the phrase *erchesthai eis* can be used in conjunction with a *basileia* that is dynamically conceived.

We now move on to consideration of the Matthean scene in 19:23-28, which does indeed seem to suggest human entry into the kingly power of God. Here the disciples are promised that in the new world (Luke 22:30: in the *basileia* of God) they will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. “To judge” is probably used here

<sup>41</sup> Correctly seen by G. Schneider (*Das Evangelium nach Lukas* [2 vols.; Okumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar zum Neuen Testament 3; Güntersloh: Mohn; Würzburg: Echter, 1984] 2.485), who, however, wrongly asserts that Jesus replaces the thief’s temporal conception of the kingdom with a spatial one.

<sup>42</sup> See the excellent discussion in J. Neyrey, *The Passion According to Luke: A Redaction Study of Luke’s Soteriology* (New York: Paulist, 1985) 133-40.

in the OT sense of “to rule”;<sup>43</sup> the disciples’ enthronement as “judges” over the tribes of Israel can therefore be understood as their entry into a share of God’s royal power. This suggestion gains force from the observation that in the Matthean arrangement the disciples are contrasted with the rich young man who has just shown himself unable to enter the *basileia*. The scene pictured in Matt 19:28 is reminiscent of Daniel 7, where God grants kingly power (*malkûtā*) to his people (Dan 7:14, 27), as well as of Obad 21:

Saviors shall go up to Mount Zion to rule  
(*lišpōt*, lit., “to judge”) Mount Esau;<sup>44</sup>  
and kingly power shall belong to Yahweh (*lyhwh*  
*hammēlûkâ*).

Here, too, human beings enter into God’s kingly power by themselves becoming rulers.

It is probable, however, that Matthew himself is responsible for the arrangement of sayings in Matt 19:22-28,<sup>45</sup> and that Luke has either created or substantially reworked the dialogue between Jesus and the good thief in Luke 23:42-43.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, although the previous discussion suggests that

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*Matthew and Luke* interpreted entering the *basileia* as participating in kingly rule, we must still ask whether or not the evangelists here reflect Jesus’ own understanding.

Mark 10:15, which is arguably an authentic saying of Jesus,<sup>47</sup> suggests a dominical origin for the concept. The

first part of the verse, with its reference to “receiving the *basileia*,” requires a dynamic exegesis of the term; kingly power or sovereignty over a realm can be received, but not a realm itself. Is it probable, then, that *basileia* changes its meaning, becoming a realm, in the transition from 10:15a to 10:15b? Although this is not impossible, it would be better to begin with the hypothesis that *basileia* in both parts of 10:15 retains a dynamic meaning and to depart from this hypothesis only if compelling reasons for doing so can be shown.

Such reasons, however, are not forthcoming; commentators take *basileia* as a realm in Mark 10:15b mainly because they cannot conceive of entry into a *basileia* in any other way. The whole emphasis of the logion, however, militates against the stress on human activism that such an interpretation would require. In the Jewish conceptions taken up by Jesus in this saying, the child is one who must submit to the wisdom, will, and rule of his parent.<sup>48</sup> He is not one who does anything on his own, much less anything as momentous as “entering the kingdom,” but rather one who lives his life under the dominion, and relies on the activity, of another.

In its original *Sitz im Leben*, I would suggest, Mark 10:15 was part of Jesus’ controversy with the Pharisees,<sup>49</sup> who themselves spoke frequently of “taking upon oneself the [yoke of the] kingdom of heaven.”<sup>50</sup> For the

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kingdom” than to the NT passages he cites. The authenticity of Mark 10:15 is further supported by its closeness to Matt 11:25-30, where the disciples are compared to babies and the image of the yoke appears; cf. D. Hill’s convincing arguments for the authenticity of Matt 11:25-26, 28-30 (*The Gospel of Matthew* [NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972] 204-7).

<sup>43</sup> See J.A. Fitzmyer (*The Gospel According to Luke* [2 vols.; AB 28, 28A; New York: Doubleday, 1981-85] 2.1418-19, who translates *basileia* in Luke 22:29 as “kingship,” comparing 1 Kgs 1:46 and adding that the thrones in 22:30 are kingly thrones, and that “judging” therefore has to be taken in the or sense of “ruling.” Even S. Aalen (“Reign and House,” 240; see above, n.13) is forced to admit that *basileia* in Luke 22:29 means kingship.

<sup>48</sup> See A. Oepke, “Pais,” *TDNT* 5. 636-54 (1967; orig. 1954); J. Dupont, *Les Beatitudes: Le problème littéraire. Le message doctrinal* (Bruges: Saint-Andre, 1954) 148-58; Ambrozic, *Hidden Kingdom*, 148-54; Schlosser, *Regne*, 2. 484-92.

<sup>44</sup> RSV translates *lišpōt* “to rule.” Note the contrast between Obad 21, in which the “saviors” judge/rule Gentiles (Esau), and Jesus’ saying, in which his disciples judge/rule Israel; cf. Jesus’ emphasis elsewhere on an eschatological judgment *within* Israel (Matt 8:11-12; 11:20-24; Mark 12:1-9 etc.).

<sup>49</sup> Schlosser (*Regne*, 2. 492) sees Mark 10:13-14,16 as a polemic against the views of naissant rabbinism on the relationship between human religious activity and God’s *basileia*; I would apply this characterization also to 10:15.

<sup>45</sup> Matthew has introduced the saying in 19:28 into the Marcan narrative; Luke places it in another context.

<sup>50</sup> Dalman, *Words*, 96-97; that this terminology was current in the first century is suggested by Matt 11:29-30, which is best explained as a play upon the Pharisaic conceit. *Contra* Ambrozic, who denies any connection between Mark 10:15 and the rabbinic phrase “to take upon oneself the yoke of the kingdom” (*Hidden Kingdom*, 143-44); the Marcan and rabbinic phrases are simply too similar to be unrelated.

<sup>46</sup> Neyrey, *Passion*, 133-40; *contra* Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2.1507-1508.

<sup>47</sup> A. Ambrozic, *The Hidden Kingdom: A Redaction-Critical Study of the References to the Kingdom of God in Mark’s Gospel* (CBQMS 2; Washington: Catholic Biblical Association, 1972) 138-39; *contra* Schlosser, *Regne*, 2. 494-95. One of Schlosser’s main arguments is that *dechomai* is a technical term in early Christian communities (Luke 8:13; Acts 8:14; 11:1; 17:11; 1Thess 1:6; 2:13; 2Cor 11:4; James 1:21; cf. Mark 4:20; Acts 2:41). All but one of these examples, however (2 Cor 11:4), speak of receiving the *word*, and it is the reference to the word that makes the locutions peculiarly Christian. *Contra* Schlosser, the saying in Mark 10:15 is closer to the rabbinic idiom “to receive [the yoke of] the

Proselytes to Judaism were said to take upon themselves the yoke of the kingdom (Resh Lakish [ca. 250], *Tanḥuma lech lecha* section 6, cited in Str-B 1. 176), and there is also a rabbinic tradition that compares the new proselyte to a newly born child (R. Jose [ca. 150], *b. Yebam. 48b*; cited by G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* [2 vols.; New York: Schocken, 1971; orig. 1927-30] 1.335). He becomes childlike, however, *after* his conversion, whereas Mark 10:15 presents childlikeness as a *condition* for conversion. Therefore, while there is probably an echo of the vocabulary of Jewish proselyte bap-

Pharisees, however, acceptance of the kingdom's yoke would have meant especially observance of the law,<sup>51</sup> and this could not be performed in its fullness until a person had crossed the threshold from childhood into adulthood.<sup>52</sup> The movement in Jesus' saying, however, is in precisely the opposite direction, from adulthood to childhood,<sup>53</sup> from the mature status of one who in the Pharisaic view is capable of many things, including fulfillment of the law, to the dependent status of one who is capable of nothing on his own but must rely on the activity of another.<sup>54</sup>

To paraphrase Mark 10:15, then: "Unless you receive God's kingly power with an acknowledgment of total dependence, in the manner that a little child receives everything from its parent's hand, you will never have a share in it."<sup>55</sup> The logion's radical stress on the dependence of the disciple is borne

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tism in Mark 10:15, there is a stronger echo of the institution of the *bar mišwā*, on which see below.

<sup>51</sup> Str-B 1.176 (1).

<sup>52</sup> *M. Nid.* 6:11: "If a (boy) child has grown two (pubic) hairs he is subject to all the commands prescribed in the Law"; cf. *m. 'Abot* 5:21: "At thirteen years [one is fit for the fulfilling of] the commandments." On the antiquity of this idea, see K. Kohler ("Bar Mizwah," *The Jewish Encyclopedia* [New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1902] 2.509-10), who cites Luke 2:42-49; cf. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1.440. G.W. Buchanan mentions the *bar mišwā* in a discussion of the Matthean parallel to Mark 10:15 (*The Consequences of the Covenant* [NovTSup 20; Leiden: Brill, 1970] 88-89).

<sup>53</sup> There are some perceptive comments on the psychological import of this reversal in *Via*, *Ethics*, 128-33.

If my reconstruction of the original *Sitz* of Mark 10:15 is correct, then the saying reflects knowledge of Pharisaic piety yet contains a *reversal* of that piety that is characteristic of Jesus (cf., e.g., Luke 9:59-62; Matt 19:12), thus providing additional evidence for its authenticity.

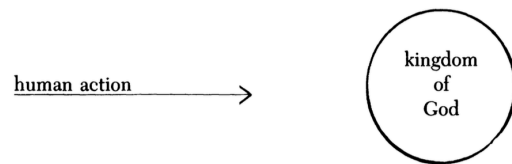
<sup>54</sup> The father's merit confers benefits upon the son until he has reached the age of maturity (*t. 'Ed.* 1:14); likewise, the son may die for his father's sins until that time (*Midr. Zuṭ*, Ruth; ed. Buber, p. 47; *Yal. Ruth* 600; cited by K. Kohler, "Bar Mizwah"). No wonder R. Eleazar (ca. 270) praises God when, upon his son's majority, he is released from this responsibility (cited in *Gen. Rab.* 63 [40a; Str-B 2. 147])!

Cf. P. Brown's contrast of the attitude toward babies of Augustine and the Pelagians: whereas Augustine was fascinated by their very helplessness, seeing in it an image of human dependence on God, the Pelagians were contemptuous of them: "There is no more pressing admonition than this, that we should be called *sons of God*" [Pelagius *Ad Dem.* 17]. To be a 'son' was to become an entirely separate person, no longer dependent on one's father, but capable of following out by one's own power, the good deeds that he had commanded" (*Augustine of Hippo* [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967] 351-52). This corresponds closely to the Pharisaic view, while Augustine's attitude resembles Jesus' reversal of Pharisaic piety.

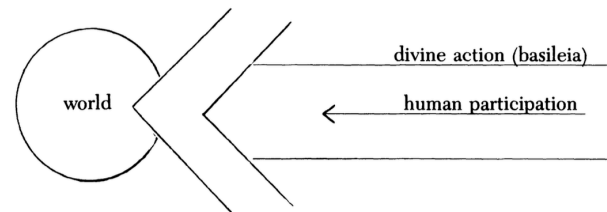
<sup>55</sup> See *Via* (*Ethics*, 131), who sees the present nuance in Mark 10:15.

out by the Johannine version (John 3:3, 5),<sup>56</sup> which moves even further in the direction of human passivity by speaking of "being born from above" rather than "receiving the kingdom like a child" in its protasis. It is also noteworthy that the apodosis of John 3:3,5 alternates "to enter the *basileia*" with "to see the *basileia*"; the *basileia*, therefore, is not a realm to be entered but an event to be experienced.

In Mark 10:15, then, entering the *basileia* is not an autonomous human action that transfers the disciple into another world, but rather an incorporation of him into God's powerful invasion of *this* world. To put the difference in schematic form, entering the *basileia* should be thought of not like this:



but like this:



Similar interpretations could be presented of other "entering" statements. Almost all speak not of physical movement into a realm but of participation in the already-inaugurated explosion of God's power into the world; they are not so much declarations of the conditions for future salvation as summonses to join now in God's apocalyptic battle.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> On John 3:3,5 as a version of the tradition in Mark 10:15, see R. E. Brown, *John*, 1. 143-44.

<sup>57</sup> In Matt 21:31-32 the *present* entry of the tax collectors and prostitutes into God's demonstration of his kingly power is seen in their belief in the message of John the Baptist. Although Matt 5:20 is a future more vivid condition in *form*, the future in the apodosis may be logical rather than literal and refer to an entry into God's eschatological *basileia* = his righteousness which is already manifesting itself on earth (cf. 6:33). In Matt 23:13 it is at least debatable whether the scribes' locking up of the kingdom prevents human beings from entering another realm or whether, as I would be inclined to say, it prevents them from joining in the explosion of the *basileia* into *this* world. Mark 10:23-25, in its Matthean version, has already been discussed; I believe that Matthew by his arrangement has brought out the original sense of the logion.

Indirect evidence for this interpretation comes in 1 Cor 4:8, where Paul accuses the Corinthians, "Without us you have become kings (*ebasileusate*)!" J.M. Wedderburn rightly says that this passage probably reflects Corinthian knowledge of Jesus traditions about the *basileia tou theou*, a *basileia* that the Corinthians understood as a present reign in which they were already participating.<sup>58</sup> I would only add that the traditions upon which the Corinthians drew most heavily were probably those about *entering* the *basileia*.

It is true that at least two of the "entering" sayings recorded in the Synoptics (Mark 9:47; Matt 7:21)<sup>59</sup> have in view not human engagement in the apocalyptic battle but enjoyment of the end result of that battle. Even here, however, the *basileia* does not become a realm;<sup>60</sup> it is into God's dominion, rather than into his domain, that the elect enter at the eschaton. In the majority of the sayings, however, the human being is not only a partaker in the benefits of God's *šālôm* but also an instrument of its extension.

Mark 10:15 leaves us in no doubt about the absolute priority of gift over call to faithful service. Jesus does not say, "Unless you strive to enter God's *basileia*, you will never receive it," but exactly the opposite. Neither, however, does he portray God's grace as an abstraction or a *deus ex machina*; it takes concrete form through its holy warriors, whose power lies in their frailty, through which God acts to reassert his dominion over the cosmos. These warriors enter into God's *basileia*, into his kingly power, by acknowledging their childlike dependence on him; and they stand awestruck before the mighty works of redemption that he performs through them in spite of—indeed, because of— their weakness.

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<sup>58</sup> Wedderburn, "Paul and Jesus," 201. Although Paul may here be using a conventional figure for arrogance employed by the Stoics and others, the key word "already" goes beyond these parallels in pointing to eschatological fulfillment and thus to the influence of Jewish and Christian conceptions of the *basileia*; see C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (HNTC; New York: Harper & Row, 1968) 109.

<sup>59</sup> The reference to the kingdom of heaven in Matt 7:21, however, is probably redactional; see Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1.643-44.

<sup>60</sup> There is a closer approach to the idea of entering a realm in the imagery of entering through a gate in Matt 7:13-14 || Luke 13:24; but here the *basileia* is not mentioned.