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KEYS

Keys as actual physical objects appear only rarely in Scripture, yet metaphorically they form an important connecting motif that runs between the OT and NT. As a motif, keys have long been recognized as symbols of power and authority, yet the image has more subtle overtones as well. Keys symbolize power because they are given to those who are judged trustworthy, and a key (even in ancient times) is a relatively small thing compared to that which it opens. Thus it suggests something of power, mystery and exclusivity.

In the OT keys belong to the steward of the house, the trusted servant, the one that the master has chosen to care for the household affairs. In Isaiah the prophet foresees a day when the false steward will be removed and a true steward will be entrusted with the care of Jerusalem. The image used by Isaiah is striking, for he says, "I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David" (Is 22:22 NIV). Evidence suggests that the long and heavy keys of those days were customarily carried on one's shoulder. In addition to the obvious suggestion of authority given to the new steward, the passage also suggests that the keys are images of trust and responsibility. For the one who gives the keys, they are symbols of trust and belief in the character of the steward. For the one who receives the keys, they are symbols of responsibility.

The Gospel records include two significant uses of the key image that build on the OT suggestions. In Luke 11:52 the lawyers are accused of not fulfilling their offices of trust and responsibility. Jesus says that they took away "the key of knowledge" (NRSV), so that they not only refused to enter into knowledge themselves, but they actually prevented others from entering as well. The key controls access. The lawyers should have used their offices to gain knowledge and to unlock that knowledge for others; they were stewards of the truth. Because they did not fulfill their duties, however, it is implied that the key has been taken away.

The most famous of the key images in the Scriptures is the account of Jesus' empowering of Peter with the keys to the *kingdom (Mt 16:13-20). This passage once again builds on the twin themes of trust and authority. Peter's confession of Christ's identity forms the immediate circumstance for Jesus' grant-

ing of the keys to him. Because Peter understands who Jesus is, at least in part, he is to be trusted. Like the key of knowledge, Peter is to use the keys to *bind and to *loose. Peter, however, is responsible not only for the earthly actions of the kingdom but for the heavenly as well, since the keys in this passage seem to connect the earthly and the heavenly in one operation.

In the Revelation the image of the keys reappears. Here again the emphasis is on power and authority but also on trust and responsibility. The words of Isaiah concerning the true steward are quoted by the vision of Christ in Revelation 3:7: "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens" (NRSV). The passage from Isaiah has been transformed from a future possibility to a present reality; Christ has become the steward that can be trusted. Yet the author of the Revelation carefully identifies the keys to which the Christ is referring. These are apparently not the same metaphorical keys given to Peter in the Gospels. Whereas Peter's keys were identified as the keys of the kingdom, the glorified Christ carries "the keys of Death and of Hades" (Rev 1:18 NRSV). Later in the Revelation, keys are used to open the bottomless pit to release the judgment of God.

If keys are read as part of an image pattern extending through both Testaments, it might be suggested that the responsibility of opening the kingdom of heaven has been given to the church. Human beings have been entrusted with the authority to set people free with the knowledge of the gospel. The final power of judgment, however, still rests in the hands of the glorified Christ, who will come with final power and authority.

See also AUTHORITY; DOOR; GATE; KINGDOM OF GOD.

KING, KINGSHIP

There is scarcely a grander or more widespread image used in the Bible than king. Impressive in physical appearance, honored and respected by his people, the king was the dispenser of protection, justice and mercy and a symbol of power and authority. In the Bible two royal images are found—God as king and humans as kings. It is important in the Bible's theol-

ogy that the latter reflects the former and that ultimately, the two merge into one.

The Hebrew-Aramaic word for king (*melek*) is one of the most commonly used words in the OT, occurring almost 2,700 times. The same is true in the NT; the Greek word for king (*basileus*) occurs more than 125 times. When the verbal and other noun forms of these and related words are added (i.e., to reign, kingdom, etc.), we find an important biblical motif woven throughout the entire fabric of the Bible's message.

Human Kingship. By far the most common reference in the Bible is to human kings and kingdoms. The first citation is found in Genesis 14:1, referring to four Mesopotamian kings who did battle against kings near the Dead Sea, and the final citation is in Revelation 21:24, referring to the kings of the earth who will honor the heavenly Jerusalem by bringing their splendor into it. Between these we see human kings of all varieties: *Solomon in all his glory (and yet self-destructing in the end); *David, Hezekiah and Josiah as models of faith and righteousness; Jeroboam, Ahab, Manasseh and dozens of others as embodiments of wickedness in Israel and Judah; even foreign kings and emperors, most of whom are symbols of evil.

The trappings surrounding kings were the most rich and ostentatious of any group in society. Solomon's palace took almost twice as long to build as did the temple, and his wealth and fame were astonishing. His court consumed astounding amounts of foodstuffs each day; he had thousands of *horses (1 Kings 4:22-28 [MT 5:2-8]); he maintained a vast fleet of trading ships (1 Kings 9:26-28); and his wisdom, wealth and fame spread far and wide (1 Kings 10).

The king was anointed into his office. We are told specifically about the anointing of Saul, David, Solomon and Jehu (see especially the account of Jehu's anointing [2 Kings 9:1-13]). His personal symbols of royalty included royal robes (1 Kings 22:10, 30; 1 Chron 15:27), a *scepter (Gen 49:10), an ornate *throne (1 Kings 10:18-20), a *crown (2 Sam 1:10; 2 Kings 11:12), unparalleled wealth (1 Kings 10:14-29; 2 Chron 32:27-30), a personal army of troops (2 Sam 23:8-39) and burial in the royal tombs in Samaria (2 Kings 13:13) or Jerusalem (2 Kings 9:28; 2 Chron 32:33).

As rich as the pictures are of the Israelite and Judahite kings in the Bible, however, larger empires such as the Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Hellenistic and Roman empires exceeded those of Solomon and other kings in their wealth and luxury. Throughout the ancient Near East the king's power, wealth and stature were a symbol of the nation's.

The monarchy in Israel was supposed to contrast with that of the surrounding nations. Although it arrived relatively late on the scene in Israel's history in comparison with the offices of priest, judge or prophet, kingship nevertheless had early roots in God's promises to Abraham. Among the many bless-

ings he was promised was that kings were to come from his line (Gen 17:6, 16; 35:11). This promise is placed into sharper focus in Jacob's blessing on his twelve sons, where royal authority is promised to Judah (Gen 49:8-12). Here Judah is to receive the obeisance of his brothers (not Joseph, as earlier is the case [Gen 37:5-11]), and the scepter, the ruling staff, belongs exclusively to Judah.

This promise comes to fruition in the establishment of the Davidic monarchy (since David was from the tribe of Judah) and in God's promise to David that his will be an everlasting dynasty (2 Sam 7:11-16). In Chronicles the eternal aspect of this kingdom is repeatedly found (e.g., 1 Chron 17:12, 14, 17, 23-24, 27; 2 Chron 9:8; 13:5, 8; 21:7), as well as the important assertion that the earthly kingdom represented by the Davidic line is to be identified with God's kingdom: 2 Chronicles 13:8 mentions "the kingdom of the LORD in the hand of the sons of David" (RSV) and 1 Chronicles 28:5 and 29:23 mention Solomon sitting on "the throne the kingdom of the LORD" (cf. 2 Chron 9:8). Israel itself was to be a "kingdom of priests" (Ex 19:6), an idea applied in the NT by Peter and John to the entire body of believers (1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:6; 5:10).

The Israelite king was to meet several strict criteria, according to Deuteronomy 17:14-20: (1) he was to be chosen by God; (2) he was not to be a foreigner; (3) he must not accumulate horses (i.e., build up and trust in military might); (4) he must not accumulate many *wives, lest his heart be turned aside; (5) he must not accumulate *wealth for himself; (6) he must write a copy of the law for himself; and (7) he must read it and obey it.

The king, then, was not a law unto himself but rather was subject to God's law. His major function was to be an example of a humble servant of Yahweh leading the people in keeping the law. Concerning national security (a major concern in Israel and in all surrounding nations), it was Yahweh himself who was to be Israel's *Divine Warrior. Thus when Israel asked for a king like the nations to lead them in fighting their battles (1 Sam 8:5, 20), this represented a deposing of Yahweh as Israel's warrior. The same issue is at stake in the Israelites' request of Gideon to rule over them because he—and not Yahweh—had supposedly defeated the Midianites, at least in the Israelites' minds (Judg 8:22-23).

Kings were accountable to Yahweh, and the prophets were his representatives to confront them when they sinned. Over and over again prophets such as Nathan, Gad, Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos and others confronted the kings. This contrasts dramatically with ancient Near Eastern conceptions of kingship where, for example in Egypt, the kings (pharaohs) were considered to be gods themselves. The norm in the ancient Near East—and often in Israel and Judah—was that prophets were beholden to the kings and told them what they wanted to hear (see Ahab and the 450 prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18 and later his 400 advisory prophets in 1 Kings 22).

The special relationship of the Davidic king to Yahweh in the OT is represented well in the royal psalms (e.g., Ps 2; 18; 20; 21; 45; 72; 89; 101; 110; 132; 144). In Psalm 2, for example, the king is God's anointed one (Ps 2:2) and his own adopted son (Ps 2:7; cf. 2 Sam 7:14). The king is to be loyal to Yahweh, to establish justice and righteousness and to help the needy (Ps 72; 101). His abode is at *Zion, Yahweh's holy hill (Ps 2; 132). Yahweh gives him victory over his enemies (Ps 2; 20; 21; 110; 144).

Non-Israelite kings in the OT are almost uniformly presented in a negative light as adversaries to God's people and obstructions to God's plan. Whether they were the great Egyptian pharaohs, petty Canaanite "kinglets" (i.e., kings of small city-states) or Assyrian or Babylonian warrior-kings, they were consumed with their own power and importance and thus were opposed to Yahweh. Among the notable exceptions are several Persian kings. For example, Cyrus was Yahweh's instrument to redeem his people from exile (Ezra 1:1-4), and God called him "my shepherd" and "anointed one" (Is 44:28; 45:1). Darius was kind to Daniel (Dan 6) and Ahasuerus (Xerxes I) dealt well with Esther and Mordecai.

In the NT also, human kings are usually seen as setting themselves against Yahweh and his anointed one: Pharaoh, the Herods, Aretas and the Roman emperors are all presented thus. Such kings are known as "kings of the earth" (e.g., Mt 17:25; Rev 1:5; 6:15), "the kings of the Gentiles" (Lk 22:25) or "kings of the whole world" (Rev 16:14). Only David and Melchizedek receive a positive treatment in the NT: David, because of the promises to him about his perpetual dynasty, which Jesus Christ fulfilled completely (cf. Mt 1:1); and Melchizedek, the king of Salem (Gen 14), because of his priestly position (cf. Heb 7).

Divine Kingship. *God as King.* One of the most important ways in which the Bible speaks of God in both OT and NT is that he rules as king. We first encounter this in the song of Moses and Miriam, which affirms that "The LORD will reign for ever and ever" (Ex 15:18 RSV). This idea of God's eternal reign as king in the future is repeated numerous times (e.g., Ps 10:16; 29:10; 66:7; 146:10; Jer 10:10; Mic 4:7; 1 Tim 1:17). It is also affirmed as extending into time immemorial in the past (e.g., Ps 74:12; 93:2).

Yahweh's kingship is over his own people, including the Israelite king (e.g., Num 23:21; 1 Sam 12:12; Ps 44:4 [MT 5]; 74:12; 145:1; 44:6; Is 33:22; Ezek 20:33). However the biblical vision of Yahweh's kingship extends to the nations as well. He is sovereign over them, and they will worship him in the end (e.g., Ex 15:18; Ps 22:28; 47:2 [3], 7 [8], 8 [9]; 93:1; 96:10; Mic 4:7; par. 1 Chron 16:31; 2 Chron 20:6; Ps 97:1; 99:1; 146:10; Jer 10:7, 10; 46:18; 48:15; 51:57; Zech 14:16, 17; Mal 1:14). Beyond this, God's sovereignty extends to the elements of nature and to the gods worshiped among the nations (see esp. the kingship of Yahweh psalms: 47; 93; 96—99;

145). It is here that Yahweh as Creator-King is prominent as well.

God's rule is in the heavens, but his throne in OT times was depicted as being the ark of the covenant (1 Sam 4:4; Ps 99:1). Isaiah saw a glorious vision of the Lord sitting on his throne, high and exalted, surrounded by worshipping seraphs (Is 6:1-5). To him is due the worship of the nations (Zech 14:16, 17).

Jesus as King. The NT speaks often of Jesus as king as well. This has its roots in the OT Davidic kingship (Jesus was the son of David [Mt 1:1; Rom 1:3]) and in the OT messianic idea. The English word *messiah* comes from the Hebrew *māšîah*, which means "anointed one." These terms were taken into Greek as *messias* or translated as *christos*. Jesus the *Christ is thus the anointed king par excellence from the line of David, and numerous messianic prophecies in the OT look ahead to him. Jesus was the Son of God ontologically, as the second person of the Trinity (see Jn 1:1-18) and also as the son of David, since any Davidic king was God's "son" (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7). It is in the person of Jesus Christ, then, that the images of human and divine kingship are finally and uniquely merged.

In the Gospels Jesus is called "Son of David," "King of the Jews" or "King of Israel" primarily by his opponents during his trial before Pilate (Mt 27; Mk 15; Lk 23; Jn 18—19). He did acknowledge his kingship openly in response to the high priest, however, in glorious language: "I am [the Christ], and you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Mk 14:62 NIV).

The culmination of Jesus Christ's kingship is found in Revelation. Here he is the "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev 19:16; cf. also 17:14); that is, occupying the same place that Yahweh occupies in the OT passages that speak about his kingship. The Lord God himself is the "King of the nations" (Rev 15:3 NRSV) or the "ages" (NIV). Indeed, most of the book of Revelation is devoted to declaring God's victory over the powers of evil.

The OT offices of prophet, priest, judge and king all coalesce in the NT in the person of Jesus Christ, who is the exalted king over all and to whom every knee will bow (Phil 2:9-11).

See also AUTHORITY, HUMAN; CHRIST; CHRONICLES, BOOKS OF; COURT, ROYAL; CROWN; DAVID; JERUSALEM; KINGDOM OF GOD; KINGS, BOOKS OF; SCEPTER; SOLOMON; THRONE; ZION.

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KINGDOM OF GOD/KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

The kingdom of God is a governing motif of the NT,

with the term itself appearing well over a hundred times. It is particularly prominent in the Synoptic Gospels, where it serves as a leading image of Jesus' mission. Although the phrase "kingdom of God" does not appear in the OT, the theme of the *kingship, or kingly rule, of God runs in the same vein and is a favored motif of poets and prophets.

Kingship of God in the Old Testament. The psalmist declares, "The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all" (Ps 103:19 NRSV). And the faithful in Israel "shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and tell of your power . . . your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations" (Ps 145:11-13 NRSV; cf. Ps 22:28; Dan 2:44; 4:3; 4:34; 7:27). The so-called enthronement psalms (Ps 45; 93; 96; 97; 98; 99) provide a fertile and verdant field of imagery for understanding Jesus' message of the kingdom of God. The repeated declaration that "the Lord is king" is imaginatively greeted with a joy and singing that envelops the entire created order, with human praise and music making joined with the roar of the *sea, the clapping of the *floods, and the singing of the hills and the *trees of the forest. The *earth and all within it rejoices, for God's kingdom extends over the entire created order. These psalms celebrate the fact that God is king but also anticipate that he will "become king" in the sense of manifesting his transcendent kingship in the concrete world of people, nations and nature.

God is praised for having manifested his kingship in epochal events of Israel's history, the archetype being the *exodus and the crossing of the sea. The Song of Moses (Ex 15:1-18) recalls the mighty act of God's deliverance of his people. Israel's Lord demonstrates that he is "a warrior" (and by implication greater than the gods of Egypt, the superpower of that day; see Divine Warrior) and "will reign forever and ever" (Ex 15:3, 18). God is king over all the *creation (1 Chron 29:11), but a particular expression of his kingship is found in his relationship to his chosen people Israel (Ex 19:6; 1 Chron 28:5). *Zion and *temple are important symbols of this kingship of God, for they speak of his dwelling in the center of Israel's *sacred space and are conceived as the point where *heaven and *earth meet.

God's kingship or kingdom is the prevailing pattern in the fabric of Israel's identity. When Israel goes into *exile and Ezekiel sees the *glory of God departing from the temple (Ezek 10:18-19), it symbolizes the withdrawal of God's kingship from Israel. Israel under the judgment of exile longs for God to "be king" again, to renew his people and bring to full expression the visions of renewal unfurled in the prophets. Isaiah's visions of renewal are intimately tied to the reassertion of God's kingship in Israel and on Zion. Israel's future will include a day in which "the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to

it (Is 2:2 NRSV). Like many similar visions, this one speaks, without even uttering the term *kingdom* *God*, of the reign of God coming to full flower in Israel. In Isaiah 52:7-10 the return from exile is imaged as a day in which a fleet-footed messenger will carry good news across the mountains of Judah announcing *salvation to Zion: "Your God reigns. The victorious Lord, who has 'bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations' returns to Zion" (Is 59:15-21; 60:1-3; Ezek 43:1-7; Zech 2:4-18:2-3). The establishment of God's kingship in Israel is a near synonym for salvation. It is the good news that Israel longs to hear.

Jesus and the Kingdom of God. When *Jesus proclaims the kingdom of God, he evokes this complex backdrop of Israel's story and symbols. In Luke we find pious Israelites longing for the kingdom under the parallel images of the "consolation to Israel" (Lk 2:25) and the "redemption of Jerusalem" (Lk 2:38). The coming climax of Israel's hope signaled and the expectation aroused that Israel's judgment will be ended, her sins will be forgiven, her enemies will be subdued, and a renewed people will be gathered with the divine and kingly presence returned to the sacred center of Zion. Kingdom of God is an emblem intricately interwoven with Israel's story and future hope.

Matthew's favored term, "kingdom of heaven" (literally, "heavens"), is synonymous with "kingdom of God." It is a characteristic Jewish substitution of "heaven" for the sake of avoiding the divine name. It is the kingdom of the One who is in heaven; it is not a "heavenly" and "spiritual" kingdom in contrast with an "earthly" and "physical" kingdom.

Although the kingdom of God is not a political term in the usual sense, from the Jewish perspective—where religion and politics are not neatly divided—it bears political implications. If God is king then Caesar is not (cf. Acts 17:7), nor is his client king Herod. Jesus points out that the kingdom "does not come with things that can be observed; neither will they say, 'Look here it is!' or 'There it is!'" (Lk 17:20 NRSV). Instead, he says, "the kingdom of God is *entos hymin*" (Lk 17:21), that is, "in you" or "within your grasp" (*not* "within you," as if to say "in your heart"). The kingdom is mysteriously and even quietly present in the ministry of Jesus, that is, in comparison with a revolutionary uprising or the arrival of the heavenly army. Again when Jesus says that his kingdom is "not of this world" the contrast is with a militant, revolutionary uprising in which Jesus' followers "would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews" (Jn 18:36). When Paul writes that the kingdom "is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17 NRSV), he is reminding the "strong" and the "weak" at Rome that the life of a community under the kingdom of God is not constituted on exclusionary *food laws or ascetic practices but on the formative values of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.