

# Thy Kingdom Come

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## The Keys of The Kingdom: Christian *Halakhah* for the Realised Eschaton

Anthony Royle

### KEYWORDS:

| Kingdom of Heaven | Eschatology | Ethics | Law |  
| Halakhah | Jewish Hermeneutics |

### ABSTRACT:

This paper seeks to look at how eschatology impacts Christian moral behaviour. Previously, scholars have noted how eschatology has been used as a motivating force in provoking moral behaviour. I propose that a realised eschatology, the inaugurated Kingdom of God, impacts Christian ethics in a more theologically informed and practically equipped way. The Kingdom that Jesus established, based on the Kingdom given to the Son of Man in Daniel 7, provides numerous theological points that form a hermeneutic for the interpretation of Biblical Law (*Halakhah*). This becomes apparent when surveying the many case studies in the NT that help us understand how the Kingdom impacted the approach to the application of the Jewish Scriptures by Jesus and His apostles.

### INTRODUCTION

Eschatology has often been described as a motivating force used by Christians to provoke moral living. Scott Hafemann writes, “for Paul, the ultimate foundation for ethics is eschatology”.<sup>1</sup> The same could be said of Jesus as His declaration of the coming Kingdom was followed with a call to repentance. The coming judgement of God and redemption of His people are usually concepts that are associated with motivating moral behaviour. One is based out of fear of standing before a just and holy God, the other is based on the “hope for the consummation of redemptive history”, which “is the engine that drives obedience of faith in the present”.<sup>2</sup>

So we may ask, can eschatology impact Christian ethical living beyond acting out of fear and hope?

When we consider the ethics of Jesus and His followers we must take into account their *Sitz im Leben*. Jesus was a Jew living in Israel during the first century. He held the Holy Scriptures as divine authority. He would have been Torah observant. We read that Jesus was obedient to the law and that He upheld the law. So any discussion concerning the moral teaching of Jesus and His followers cannot be done apart from the Jewish Scriptures as the source and authority of moral conduct. We must also take into account that Jesus was a teacher during the first century in Israel, therefore His teachings of Scripture must be placed within the setting of the diverse sects of Judaism of this period. Markus Bockmuehl highlights that the ethics of

1 Hafemann, Scott. ‘Eschatology and Ethics: The Future of Israel and the Nations in Romans 15:1-13’ in *Tyndale Bulletin* 51:2 (2000) p. 163

2 Ibid p. 192

Jesus and His followers “are deeply conversant with Jewish moral presuppositions”.<sup>3</sup>

In the gospels, we read about Jesus discussing Scripture with the Scribes and Pharisees (amongst others) and scholars have noted that Jesus engages with Jewish Halakhah.

Halakhah comes from the Hebrew verb meaning “to walk”, and is a term generally referring to the interpretation of Biblical Law.<sup>4</sup> Halakhah in the technical sense, is a term that was not used until a much later period and is usually restricted to the corpus of Rabbinic legal teachings that have developed over two millennia,<sup>5</sup> however, scholars have noted the general halakhic treatments in the teachings of Jesus and others during the first century.<sup>6</sup> Various groups within Second Temple Judaism used the same Jewish Scriptures but developed distinct and sometimes opposing rules. Therefore, Rabbinic Halakhah is distinct from Pharisee Halakhah, Qumran Halakhah and the Halakhah of Jesus. The term Christian Halakhah has been used to describe the continuation of the

apostolic interpretation of Biblical law.<sup>7</sup> There is evidence that a set of halakhic teachings were passed down from Jesus to the apostles and that these apostles also made halakhic instruction.

So what impact does eschatology have on the halakhic teachings of Jesus and His followers? Some have suggested that eschatology brings a form of antinomianism.<sup>8</sup> They presuppose the coming of Christ and His Kingdom means a complete cessation of the Law.<sup>9</sup> Some have suggested a division of moral and ceremonial law and that only the ceremonial law has ceased.<sup>10</sup>

I propose that the inaugurated Kingdom of God<sup>11</sup> provides the theological framework in which a realised eschatology is the basis for interpreting the Jewish Scriptures to receive instruction for righteous living. The now/not yet aspect of The Kingdom highlights that we are living in the eschatological age but also in anticipation of its consummation. Therefore, the realisation of The Kingdom and the many

3 Bockmuehl, Markus. 2000. *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics*. T&T Clark: Edinburgh p. 3.

4 Harrington, Hannah K. ‘The Halakhah and Religion of Qumran’ in *Religion in Dead Sea Scrolls*, Collins, John J. and Robert A. Kugler, eds. 2000. Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing: Grand Rapids, Michigan p. 74.

5 Rayner, John D. and Edward Kessler. ‘Halakhah’ in *The Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations*, Kessler, Edward and Neil Wenborn, eds. 2005. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge p. 175.

6 John Meier investigates whether the term Halakhah was used as a noun pre-70 AD. Meier argues against the popular view that the term *hālāqōt* found in IQH 2 was a term that was only associated with the Pharisees and was viewed negatively by the Qumran Community. In fact, the Dead Sea Scrolls did indicate the use of Halakhah as a noun twice in the Rule of the Community (IQS 1:25, 3:9). On both occasions the use of the term Halakhah appears to be in a positive sense concerning the of the community’s own members. However, Halakhah is used generally in matters of conduct rather than the later rabbinic technical sense. (Meier, John P. ‘Is there Halaka (The Noun) at Qumran?’ in *Journal of Biblical Literature*. Vol. 122, No. 1 (Spring 2003) pp. 150-155).

7 Rayner, John D. and Edward Kessler. ‘Halakhah’ in *The Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations*, Kessler, Edward and Neil Wenborn, eds. 2005. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge p. 175

8 See Bockmuehl, Markus. 2000. *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics*. T&T Clark: Edinburgh p. 12

9 Christopher Wright notes that dispensationalists argue that we are now under the age of grace and that the Law has no continuing authority. (Wright, Christopher J.H. ‘The Ethical Authority of the Old Testament: Survey of Approaches. Part II’ in *Tyndale Bulletin* 43.2 (1992) p. 210).

10 Wright looks at both Walter Kaiser and John Goldingay’s similar approaches to the division of moral, civil and ceremonial laws that have their roots in the writings of Origen. (Wright, Christopher J.H. ‘The Ethical Authority of the Old Testament: Survey of Approaches. Part II’ in *Tyndale Bulletin* 43.2 (1992) pp. 205-209).

11 In this paper I use the phrases Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Heaven interchangeably. They are one and the same. This is based on the use of both terms in parallel synoptic gospel passages (compare Mat 19:23 with Lk 18:24). Jacob Neusner also shows there is no distinction between the two in Rabbinic literature (See Neusner, Jacob. ‘The Kingdom of Heaven in Kindred Systems, Judaic and Christian’ in *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 15.2 (2005) pp. 284-286).

aspects that make up The Kingdom, impact interpretation of Scripture for instruction in righteousness.

In his paper *The Kingdom of Heaven in Kindred Systems, Judaic and Christian*, Jacob Neusner notes that The Kingdom of Heaven is not a system that has its own category-formation in Halakhah; however, it does form the background to halakhic category-formation.<sup>12</sup> Neusner's Kingdom of Heaven in principle has similarities and differences to The Kingdom of Heaven that Jesus inaugurated but the influence of each defined Kingdom on halakhic rulings are just the same.

In the case of The Kingdom preached by Jesus, this Kingdom is centred on Jesus' claim as the Danielic Son of Man. The many aspects of The Kingdom of Heaven in the teachings of Jesus are rooted in Daniel 7 and these aspects form the background to the halakhic rulings made by Jesus.

#### MATTHEW 16:13-28 AND DANIEL 7

Matthew 16:13-28 provides an interesting pericope that highlights the authority of Jesus as claimed in Scripture. The pericope begins with Jesus asking His disciples, "who do you say the Son of Man is?" Daniel Boyarin<sup>13</sup> notes that Jesus' claim to authority is based on His self-identification as the Son of Man in Daniel 7.<sup>14</sup> In Daniel's vision, the Ancient of

12 Neusner, Jacob. 'The Kingdom of Heaven in Kindred Systems, Judaic and Christian' in *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 15.2 (2005) p. 292.

13 It is interesting to note that Boyarin is not a Christian. He is a Jewish Talmudic Scholar at the University of California, Berkeley. In his book *The Jewish Gospels* Boyarin argues that Jesus' claims to divinity as Son of Man as co-equal with God are thoroughly Jewish in thought and was similar to other views held during the Second Temple Period. The issue for Boyarin is not Jesus' theological claims but whether Jesus was who he claimed to be.

14 Boyarin, Daniel. 2012. *The Jewish Gospels: The Story*

Days presents The Kingdom to the Son of Man with sovereignty and dominion so that all may serve and obey Him. Jesus claimed to have this sovereignty in order to judge, forgive sins and rule over matters of the law.

In Matthew 16:19 Jesus promises the Keys (a symbol of sovereignty) to The Kingdom of Heaven upon the confession of Peter that Jesus was the Messiah.<sup>15</sup> These keys would give the disciple authority to bind and loose on earth what was bound and loosed in heaven. Donald Hagner notes that 'binding' and 'loosing' are terms associated with Halakhah.<sup>16</sup> To 'bind' and 'loose' is to 'permit' or 'forbid' a person from one action or another through interpretation of Scripture. Daniel's vision of the Son of Man receiving The Kingdom expresses the authority of God given to the Son of Man. We also read in Daniel 7:27 that The Kingdom is also given to the saints. This perhaps formed the background to Jesus giving the keys to the apostles.<sup>17</sup>

Whatever was then bound on earth was bound in heaven and whatever was loosed on earth was loosed in heaven. This is not to say that the apostles were now dictating heaven but that the apostles were merely ruling on whatever had been decreed in heaven. The relationship between heaven and earth in Matthew 16 is an important point. There is a similar process in Rabbinic Judaism as Neusner explains that

*of the Jewish Christ*. The New York Press: New York p. 38.

15 In Is 22:22 the prophet declares the Word of the Lord that God would bestow upon an individual the keys of the house of David (The Kingdom) and whatever he opens no one can shut and what he shuts no one can open. If this verse in being alluded to by Jesus then it confirms a Christological reading of Daniel 7 because of the association Jesus is making.

16 Hagner, Donald A. 1995. *Matthew 14-28: Word Biblical Commentary*. Word Books: Dallas, Texas p. 473.

17 Jesus warned the Pharisees that *He* would take The Kingdom from them and give it to a people who bore the fruits of The Kingdom (Mat 21:43). Jesus accused the Pharisees of binding heavy burdens to shut out people from The Kingdom of Heaven (Mat 23:13). Jesus said that his yoke was easy and burden was light (Mat 11:30).

the “sages govern concrete cases on earth, but only within the larger system in which the Heavenly court exercises jurisdiction over cases of another order.”<sup>18</sup> Neusner notes that in the case of the Judaic system, Israel forms the “this-worldly extension of God’s heavenly Kingdom”. In the case of Matthew 16 it would appear that the church forms the “*this-worldly*” extension of The Kingdom of Heaven.<sup>19</sup>

Ultimately, it is Jesus as the Son of Man who has authority and His incarnation inaugurated a new phase in the programme for The Kingdom. This made eschatology a present reality and Jesus made this known in His preaching, through His miracles and through His authority over the law.

On a number of occasions, Jesus claimed to have the authority of the Son of Man in making halakhic arguments. Boyarin uses the example of the words of Jesus in Mark 2:28 that “the Son of Man is Lord over the Sabbath.”<sup>20</sup> Jesus’ disciples had been walking through a field and gathered some of the corn on the Sabbath. The Pharisees asked why they picked the corn on the Sabbath and Jesus tells the story of David eating the showbread that was only reserved for the Priests (1 Sam 21:1-6).<sup>21</sup> It is interesting to note that latter Rabbinic tradition uses the same

story; however, the Rabbinic interpretation argues that sabbatical laws can only be broken in matters of life and death (*Palestinian Talmud Yoma* 8:6, 45:b). There is nothing in Mark 2 that indicates that the disciples were starving to death; Jesus’ reason was based on authority over the Sabbath. The rhetorical question, “was Sabbath made for man or man made for Sabbath?” provided the justification for the disciples’ actions. Although this halakhic argument is less urgent than the Rabbinic one, Jesus’ words have the theological weight of the presence of The Kingdom of God because of His own authority as Son of Man. Boyarin points out that Jesus’ words did not abrogate the Sabbath but rather fulfilled it and even expanded the law as He uses the inclusive term ‘man’ thus expanding the law to the gentiles.<sup>22</sup> Jesus was not “attacking the law or an alleged Pharisaic legalism”, as Boyarin points out, but rather Jesus is making “an apocalyptic declaration of a new moment in history in which a new Lord, the Son of Man, has been appointed over the Law”.<sup>23</sup>

Because Jesus is the Son of Man, eschatology is ‘here and now’ and this new phase of the presence of The Kingdom has produced principles to guide a way of reading Biblical

18 Neusner, Jacob. ‘The Kingdom of Heaven in Kindred Systems, Judaic and Christian’ in *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 15.2 (2005) p. 291.

19 This is not to say that the church replaced Israel. I am merely pointing out the differences between the similar system that Neusner articulates and the authority that was given to the apostles in Matthew 16.

20 Neusner, Jacob. ‘The Kingdom of Heaven in Kindred Systems, Judaic and Christian’ in *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 15.2 (2005) p. 59.

21 The use of David as an example by Jesus could have been for Christological reasons. David as anointed King typified the Davidic Messiah and the authority He would have over the Law. (See Boyarin, Daniel. 2012. *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ*. The New York Press: New York p67) This may indicate that Jesus provided an interpretation of the Son of Man as being the Messiah, which Peter later confessed (Mat 16:16).

22 Boyarin ‘gingerly’ proposes that the rule of the Son of Man over the nations in Daniel 7 is background to the extension of the Law. (Boyarin, Daniel. 2012. *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ*. The New York Press: New York p. 65)

23 Jesus’ claim to such authority provoked an accusation of blasphemy by the Sanhedrin. In his book *Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism*, Darrell Bock notes that Jesus claim to be the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven placed Jesus on par with God and that His authority would be over the Sanhedrin. The irony being that the roles would be reversed and that Jesus would judge the Sanhedrin on judgement day. It was not because that such a claim was foreign to them as there are many exalted figures within early Jewish writings. The issue isn’t theological as the Sanhedrin tries to make out, but rather about power and position. (Boyarin, Daniel. 2012. *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ*. The New York Press: New York p. 67.)

Law for application. I propose four aspects of the realised Kingdom that have influenced the Halakhah of Jesus and His followers.<sup>24</sup>

### RESTORATION OF CREATION ETHICS

The first aspect of The Kingdom is that it brings a restoration of Creation ethics. I. Howard Marshall argues that biblical teaching rests upon the natural order imposed by God as part of creation and the ethics of The Kingdom of Heaven.<sup>25</sup> There are a few examples in which Jesus had referred to the creation account in ruling over Mosaic Law. Firstly, the example of Jesus' words in Mark 2, "was the Sabbath made for man, or man made for Sabbath?" provides an argument from the creation account in Genesis 1-2 for Sabbatical laws.

Jesus also appealed to creation in a discussion concerning divorce. When asked about the commandment of giving a certificate of divorce in the Law of Moses, Jesus responds that Moses permitted divorce because of the hardening of men's hearts. Jesus' position on divorce is that, "from the beginning it was not so." (Mat 19:3-9, Mar 10:2-9) Jesus does not completely disregard divorce as divorce is permissible in cases where one party has committed adultery; however, when one provides a certificate of divorce in order to marry someone else then

their act is considered as adulterous as they have strayed from the created order.

Lutz Doering proposes that Jesus' answer concerning marriage and the resurrection that, "we will be as the angels" (Mat 22:30, Mar 12:25) indicates that the eternal order becomes the plumb line for the Halakhah of Jesus.<sup>26</sup> Doering compares Jesus' answer with the Dead Sea Scrolls and that "being as the angels" would lead one to celibacy; however, the concession to be married within the confounds of the created order is part of the now/not yet eschatology.<sup>27</sup>

Creation also plays an important part in Paul's arguments for sexual ethics. Paul writes that homosexual behaviour has gone against the created order (Rom 1:27) and that homosexuals will not enter The Kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9). The created order of male and female from the Genesis narrative also provided Paul with instruction for gender roles within the family and church (1 Cor 11:1-15, 1 Ti 2:9-15).

### NO MORE JEW AND GENTILE DIVIDE

The second aspect of The Kingdom that I can see is the eradication of the Jew-Gentile divide. The Kingdom of Heaven is now extended to the gentiles. As Paul writes that the middle wall of partition has been separated (Eph 2:14), Jew and Gentile have been reconciled into one new man (Eph 2:15).

The inclusion of gentiles into The Kingdom provided a basis for 'loosing' dietary laws. In Peter's vision in Acts 10 the Lord showed Peter four footed beasts, every creeping thing and every fowl of the air and told him to kill and

<sup>24</sup> Markus Bockmuehl proposes four halakhic principles that arise from prominent cases in the 'Palestinian Jewish Christian circles' - 1. The Precedence of Written Torah 2. The weightier things of Torah 3. Active and Motive 4. Purity and Integrity (Bockmuehl, Markus. 2000. *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics*. T&T Clark: Edinburgh p3-16). My approach is different as I wish to look at how the various aspects Kingdom of Heaven impact Halakhah as a background to category-formation.

<sup>25</sup> Marshall, I. Howard. 'Eschatology and Ethics' in *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, eds. Atkinson, David J and David H. Field. 1995. IVP: Leicester p. 355.

<sup>26</sup> Doering, Lutz. 'Marriage and Creation in Mark 10 and CD 4-5' in *Echoes From the Caves: Qumran and the New Testament*, ed. Martinez, Florentino Garcia. 2009. BRILL: Leiden p. 163.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid* p. 163.

eat. Peter objects and replies, “No Lord, I have never eaten anything common or unclean”. So the Lord responds by saying, “What God has cleansed, you call common?” Now, one may argue that Peter’s vision had nothing to do with eating Kosher but rather the vision was regarding Peter meeting a gentile named Cornelius<sup>28</sup>; however the vision could be argued to be dealing with the larger issue of fellowship with gentiles - which evidently eating and drinking are part of.

Table fellowship was an important part of the early Christian church. The inclusion of gentiles became problematic concerning food that was consumed. At the Council of Jerusalem, gentiles were loosed from circumcision and obeying the Law of Moses but were bound abstaining from the consummation of blood and food sacrificed to idols. Scholars have noted that these restrictions on gentiles reflect commandments that were given as part of the Noahide covenant and Peter’s vision in Acts 10 also fits this category.

Paul appears to present another clause into the Halakhic discussion. In discussing whether eating meat sacrificed to idols is permissible, Paul writes that for the sake of conscience, if we bless the food and do not ask where the meat came from in the marketplace, then eating meat sacrificed to idols is permissible (1 Cor 10:27). This indicates that eating meat sacrifice is permissible according to one’s conscience (1 Cor 8:7-8). However, if a person present has a problem with eating meat sacrificed to idols because of their conscience then one should forgo their liberty (1 Cor 8:12, 10:29).

28 Chris Miller argues that Peter’s vision had nothing to do with the abrogation of ‘*kosher laws*’ but rather fellowship with gentiles. Miller disagrees that Peter eating with the uncircumcised meant that Peter ‘ate pork’. I believe Miller makes too much of a distinction between the two issues that can hardly be separated. (Miller, Chris A. ‘Did Peter’s Vision in Acts 10 Pertain to Men or the Menu?’ in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159:635 (July 2002).

Paul highlights the need not to offend a brother however reclining at the tables of idols in pagan temples is strictly forbidden (1 Cor 10:21).

Scott Hafemann notes the tension between the strong and the weak conscience in Paul’s epistle to the Romans and that a Roman principle of obligation is at hand.<sup>29</sup> This is within the context of dietary laws and the divide of Jew and Gentile. One must be willing to lay down his liberty and at the same time another must not bind upon his brother that which is impossible to keep. Hafemann writes that eschatology of a now/not yet Kingdom enable the strong in faith to bear the proclivities of the weak and vice versa (Rom 15:1-2, 14:4, 10 and 12).<sup>30</sup> Paul writes that the Kingdom of God is more than food or drink (Romans 14:17). Ultimately, The Kingdom is about righteousness and the glory of God. This is reflected in relationships between Jew and Gentile, preferring one another, serving one another.

#### LOVE GOD AND LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR

This leads to my third observation concerning The Kingdom of God influencing halakhic interpretation: loving God and loving your neighbour. Jesus taught that the greatest commandment was the Shema; to love God with all your heart, soul and strength (Mat 22:37, Mar 12:29, Deut 6:5). He also taught that the second greatest command was like the first; to love your neighbour (Mat 22:38, Mar 12:30, Lev 19:18). In the first epistle of John the apostle explains that the two commandments work hand in hand. “If you say you love God but hate your brother then you are a liar.” (1 John

29 Hafemann, Scott. ‘Eschatology and Ethics: The Future of Israel and the Nations in Romans 15:1-13’ in *Tyndale Bulletin* 51:2 (2000) p. 163.

30 Ibid p. 192.

4:20). Therefore, your love for your neighbour says a lot about how you love God and Jesus said in these two commandments that the whole law is fulfilled. (Mat 22:40) This claim is not far from the words of Rabbi Hillel who also saw Lev 19:18 commandments as fulfilling Torah (Shab 31a).

Jacob Neusner writes that when one recites the Shema, one accepts the yoke of The Kingdom of Heaven.<sup>31</sup> To confess allegiance to God as King and to love Him is acceptance of His rule, which is His Kingdom. However, Neusner continues by arguing that accepting The Kingdom is not just reciting the Shema but a variety of actions and rites.<sup>32</sup> Accepting the yoke expresses one's attitude as God's servant and acting in His service. The Kingdom of Heaven is not just credal but is manifested in actions.

Similarly in the epistle of James, the apostle writes of the relationship between faith and works in relation to the Shema saying, "Even the demons believe God is One." (James 2:19). James uses the example of father Abraham in the narrative of the *Aqedah* (Binding of Issac) that faith manifests itself in action.

Philip Sigal notes the supremacy of love in the actions and teachings of Jesus. He proposes that Jesus set love as the criterion by which to make a choice when options were available.<sup>33</sup> This provides Jesus with a principle in which He can make a *Qal Vahomer*<sup>34</sup> argument (*Qal*

*Vahomer* is an argument that presupposes that what applies in a less important case will certainly apply in a more important case). Jesus uses this principle in Matthew 12 in response to the people in the synagogue who asked whether it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath. Jesus answers by using the illustration of saving one's sheep from a ditch on the Sabbath. Rescuing an animal from a ditch was compulsory by law (Ex 23:4-5, Deu 22:4)<sup>35</sup> So Jesus asks, using a typical *Qal Vahomer* term, how much more is man better than a sheep?

Loving your neighbour also transcends the issue of ceremonial uncleanness. In Luke 10 Jesus is put to the test by a Scribe who asks, "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answers, "what does it say in Moses?" The man replies, "Love God and your neighbour." Jesus concurs the man was right. "This do and you shall live." Luke writes that the man was seeking to justify himself by asking, "who is my neighbour?" which would suggest that '*neighbour*' was a restrictive clause. Therefore, one may not act in love when dealing with gentiles. Jesus answers the question by telling a *mashal* (parable) of a man who was robbed on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Supposing the man was dead, a Priest and a Levite pass the man by because of fear that they would be ceremonially unclean as they were to enter the Holy city of Jerusalem. It was a Samaritan (who were considered unclean) who saved the man's life and it was the Samaritan who proved himself to be a neighbour.

This is not saying to only love those who

31 Neusner, Jacob. 'The Kingdom of Heaven in Kindred Systems, Judaic and Christian' in *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 15.2 (2005) p. 286.

32 Ibid p. 287.

33 Sigal, Philip. 2007. *The Halakhah of Jesus of Nazareth According to the Gospel of Matthew*. Society of Biblical Literature: Atlanta, GA p. 22.

34 *Qal Vahomer* is one of seven Jewish exegetical *middoth* (rules) that are attributed to Rabbi Hillel. These rules are analogical in reasoning and therefore help the interpreter to exegete the scripture intertextually. There are many examples of Jesus and the apostles using these

methods in interpreting the Jewish Scriptures. (See Longenecker, Richard N. 1995. *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*. Paternoster Press: Carlisle.)

35 Neither Ex 23:4-5 or Deu 22:4 take into account the Sabbath. However, later Rabbinic writings (Shab 117b) and the argument of Jesus suggest that there was an oral Law amongst the Scribes and Pharisees that such an action was permissible.

love you, but rather, upon the command of Jesus to go and do likewise, love everyone and be a neighbour to everyone regardless of race and social status.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

My fourth observation of The Kingdom of Heaven's influence of Christian Halakhah is the eschatological outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Thomas Schreiner writes that, "where the Spirit is working in transforming people, there The Kingdom of God is."<sup>36</sup> Saucy also writes that, "in the tension between the now and not yet aspects of eschatology, it is biblical pneumatology that will hold us from the poles of an over-realised and under-realised eschatology."<sup>37</sup> In other words, Saucy writes that the Spirit's presence is the presence of The Kingdom.

Paul often contrasts the spirit with the letter of the law. This is not a hermeneutic that spiritualises legal passages, but rather is an expression of covenants based on Jeremiah 31:31-33 that God would make a new covenant written on the hearts of men rather than tablets of stone.<sup>38</sup> This analogy is similar to the circumcision of hearts in Deuteronomy 30:6. Outward circumcision was a way of showing outward allegiance to the Lord, yet many of the circumcised failed to be fully aligned to God. The promise of the circumcised heart through the Spirit of God would cause men to love God, thus keeping the Shema rather than just reciting it.

The apostles make use of both imageries

<sup>36</sup> Schreiner, Thomas R. 2013. *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*. Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, MI p. 560.

<sup>37</sup> Saucy, Mark R. 'Regnum Spiriti: The Role of the Spirit in the Social Ethics of The Kingdom' in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 54:1 (March 2011) p. 91

<sup>38</sup> See Jackson, Bernard S. 2008. *Essays on Halakhah in the New Testament*. BRILL: Leiden p. 8.

in reference to the pre-eminence of the Spirit (Rom 2:29, 2 Cor 3:3, Col 2:11-12 Heb 8:10, 10:16). The arrival of the Holy Spirit impacted their approach to the law. A major conflict within the early church was the need for gentiles to be circumcised and obey the Law of Moses. It is not until Acts 15, the Council of Jerusalem that there was an official decision on the matter. Peter stood up before the brethren and declared that God made no distinction between Jew and Gentile, no distinction between circumcised and uncircumcised in saving them. Both had received the Holy Spirit therefore it appears there is no need for gentiles who were already saved to be circumcised in order to become Christian. Secondly, Peter notes that they should not put a yoke on the gentiles that the patriarchs and the Jews of the day were able to bear.<sup>39</sup> Instead the circumcision of the heart by receiving the Holy Spirit, is what is necessary for salvation. The Holy Spirit transforms lives in order to make a person righteous.

## CONCLUSION

After reviewing these four aspects of the realised Kingdom of Heaven we can see that Eschatology impacts ethical living that transcends being motivated by fear or hope. The nearness of The Kingdom means that we are not just obscurely motivated because of future events but theologically informed and practically equipped because we live in an eschatological age. The inauguration of The Kingdom of God under a now/not yet

<sup>39</sup> This does not mean that circumcision is forbidden, especially in the case of cultural identity. Paul wrote there were benefits of being a circumcised Jew (Rom 3:1-2). Paul circumcised Timothy on one of his missionary journeys (Acts 16:3) because of a particular group of Jews in a quarter of the Derbe and Lystra area. Yet circumcision is not the means of salvation or inheriting the promises of God.

paradigm provides a theological framework in which Christians can approach the legal verses of the Jewish Scriptures for instruction in righteousness which continue to be authoritative today.

The apostles were able to bind and loose using the Jewish Scriptures as guidance, providing a Christian Halakhah for the realised eschaton. Now we have received their instruction in the book of the New Covenant we must not view the teachings of Jesus or the apostles as abrogating the law. Rather, they are upholding the law in championing the weightier matters of The Kingdom such as love, peace and mercy, expanding and loosing commandments for the inclusion of gentiles and making concessions for the weak. The apostolic instruction in the Christian Scriptures should lead us to one of the fundamental aspects of The Kingdom i.e. righteousness - and then we will see The Kingdom of Heaven realised in our midst.

**Anthony Royle**

*Anthony Royle received his B.Th from King's Evangelical Divinity School and is currently a M.A student with The Centre for Jewish-Christian Studies.*