



Living the Kingdom of God: A Theological Study and Contextual Implementation in the GMIM Zaitun Taas Congregation

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Abstract

Abstract The Kingdom of God is a central theme in the New Testament, encompassing theological, ethical, and eschatological dimensions. Despite being the core of Jesus' proclamation and the foundation of biblical theology, this concept is often marginalized in contemporary church practice. This article aims to examine the theological understanding of the Kingdom of God in the New Testament and evaluate its implementation within the local context of GMIM Zaitun Taas Congregation (JGZT) through the "Adventuring in the Kingdom of God" (BDKA) program and the Compassion Team ministry. Employing a qualitative-descriptive approach and a literature study method, this research finds that a profound understanding of the Kingdom of God can be translated into transformative community praxis. The BDKA program successfully shaped congregational spirituality through daily Bible reading, small groups, and collective liturgy, while the practical actions of the Compassion Team manifested God's values of love and justice across religious and social boundaries. This study concludes that the Kingdom of God is not merely an abstract doctrine but an ethical calling to concretely embody God's presence in the world. Implicitly, the church is called to be an agent of the Kingdom through an integrative approach combining theological understanding and contextual ministry.

INTRODUCTION

The Kingdom of God is a central theme in Jesus' proclamation and serves as the theological thread throughout the New Testament. From the Gospels to Revelation, the narrative of the presence, growth, and fulfillment of the Kingdom of God forms the foundation for understanding

salvation and the renewal of creation. However, in the life of the church, this theme is often understood merely symbolically or spiritually, receiving little attention in contextual and transformative expressions of faith. In this light, the study of the Kingdom of God's implementation in congregational life becomes crucial for linking theological doctrine with Christian community praxis.

Theologians have articulated the concept of the Kingdom of God from various perspectives. Hoekema (in Dirsness & Kärkkäinen, 2008) emphasizes that the Kingdom of God is God's dynamic, active reign through Jesus Christ in history to liberate humanity from sin and establish a new heaven and earth. Nicholas Perrin describes it as a divine narrative in history involving an eschatological community that includes the church, Jesus, and heavenly beings (The Gospel Coalition, 2024). Schreiner (2022) simplifies it into three inseparable elements: the King's power, the King's people, and the King's realm. These varied interpretations affirm the depth and breadth of the Kingdom's biblical meaning.

This research proceeds from the assumption that the Kingdom of God is not merely an abstract concept, but a reality to be lived out concretely by believers in local contexts. In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus proclaimed that the Kingdom of God is "near" and "in your midst" (Luke 17:20–21), yet also taught that the Kingdom is "not yet fully come" (Luke 19; Matt. 6:10), indicating a dynamic "already/not yet" tension. Paul's letters also reflect this, linking the Kingdom of God to ethical living, faith communities, and suffering in ministry (Vicker, 2008; Theopedia, 2024), and Revelation describes the Kingdom's climax in the new heaven and earth (Rev. 21–22).

As an effort to translate the vision of the Kingdom of God into community praxis, the GMIM Zaitun Taas congregation (JGZT) developed the "Adventuring in the Kingdom of God" (BDKA) program. This initiative is not merely a spiritual routine, but a strategy for forming congregational spirituality emphasizing engagement with Scripture, deepening fellowship, and building a Kingdom-centered collective identity. Furthermore, through the Compassion Team ministry, JGZT tangibly reflects the Kingdom of God through acts of mercy across religious, social, and economic boundaries. These initiatives embody theological principles of love, justice, and active participation in God's mission in the world.

Based on this background, this study aims to (1) examine the theological understanding of the Kingdom of God in the New Testament, and (2) evaluate its contextual implementation in the life of the GMIM Zaitun Taas congregation through the BDKA program and the Compassion Team ministry. Using a qualitative-descriptive method and literature study approach, this article contributes to integrating theological dimensions with church praxis in a harmonious manner,

realizing the church as an agent of God's Kingdom in the world.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive research type. The descriptive method is chosen to explore a system of thought concerning the understanding of the Kingdom of God in the New Testament, in accordance with Mohamad Nazir's (1988) definition, which states that this method investigates the status, object, condition, system of thought, or class of events in the present time.

Data collection was conducted through a literature study. This process involved two main stages:

1. Collecting relevant literature on the concept of the Kingdom of God from various theological and biblical sources.
2. Identifying and analyzing the theme of the Kingdom of God in the New Testament, followed by formulating its implications specifically for the GMIM Zaitun Taas congregation (JGZT).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I. Literature Review: Understanding and Aspects of the Kingdom of God

Based on the literature review, the Kingdom of God is defined in various but complementary ways. Anthony Hoekema describes the Kingdom of God as "God's dynamically active rule in human history through Jesus Christ, aimed at redeeming His people from sin and the power of the devil, and establishing the new heaven and new earth." (Diersness & Kärkkäinen, 2008).

Nicholas Perrin views the Kingdom of God as a divine narrative revealed in history, not merely a fable or metaphor. In addition, the Kingdom is an eschatological society that partially overlaps with the church but also includes Jesus Christ and heavenly beings (Perrin, in The Gospel Coalition, accessed December 27, 2024).

Patrick Schreiner defines it simply as "the reign of the King, over the people of the King, in the place of the King." These three aspects (authority, community, and territory) are interconnected and inseparable (Schreiner, in The Gospel Coalition, accessed December 27, 2024).

1.1. The Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Gospels

The term “Kingdom of God” appears frequently in the Synoptic Gospels, with Matthew using “Kingdom of Heaven” more than 20 times, Mark (14 times), and Luke (32 times). Mark 1:15 proclaims the nearness of the Kingdom and calls for repentance and faith. The “already/not yet” concept is especially relevant here (Schreiner, in *The Gospel Coalition*, accessed December 27, 2024).

The Presence of the Kingdom (Already Present): Jesus declares the Kingdom of God is near (Mark 1:15) and “in your midst” (Luke 17:20–21). Jesus’ exorcisms demonstrate the Kingdom’s arrival (Matthew 12:28). Jesus Himself is the embodiment of the Kingdom ((αὐτοβασιλεία).

The Coming of the Kingdom (Not Yet Fully Realized): Parables in Luke 19 and the Lord’s Prayer show that the Kingdom is also still to come in fullness. These two realities must be understood side by side.

1.2. The Kingdom of God in Paul’s Letters

For Paul, the Kingdom of God is closely related to the theme of redemption through the cross. Paul’s soteriology and the concept of the Kingdom are inseparable (Theopedia, accessed December 27, 2024). For example:

- Colossians 1:13: Believers are transferred into the Kingdom of the beloved Son through redemption.
- Ephesians 1:13–14 & 5:5: Believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of inheritance in the Kingdom.
- Galatians 5: Living according to the Spirit (fruit of the Spirit) is a mark of inheriting the Kingdom, contrasted with the works of the flesh which will not inherit it.
- Romans 14 & 1 Corinthians 4:20–21: Emphasize a new life under the reign of Christ as King.

For Paul, salvation is grounded in the crucified and risen Christ as the returning King. Citizenship in this Kingdom must be lived out in the present, often through suffering for ministry and the Gospel, reflecting Jesus’ teaching that the cross is the path to glory (Vicker, 2008).

1.3. The Gospel of John and the Johannine Epistles

The Gospel of John highlights the importance of believing that Jesus is the Christ, the King, and the Son of God (Schreiner, 2022). The focus on the Kingdom in John is sharper because it brings joy, as believers enjoy the presence of God and behold the King in His beauty (1 John 3:2;

John 1:14).

1.4. The General Epistles (James, 1–2 Peter, Jude)

The central theme of these epistles is the lordship of Jesus in daily life. Though brief, they emphasize Jesus' authority as Lord and Christ, reigning at the right hand of God (Schreiner, 2022).

1.5. The Book of Revelation

The Book of Revelation serves as the climax of the biblical canon, where the Kingdom of God is established through Jesus Christ's victory over evil. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus (the Lion and the Lamb) opens the seals and brings history to its climax, affirming the sovereignty of God and Christ over all (Schreiner, 2022). The prayer for God's Kingdom to come is fulfilled in the arrival of the new heaven and new earth, where the entire cosmos becomes God's holy dwelling. The goal of redemptive history is achieved: to behold the King in His beauty (Rev. 22:4).

II. BDKA as the Implementation of the Kingdom of God in JGZT

The implementation of the Kingdom of God in Christian life today involves imitating Jesus in using divine authority for human well-being and proclaiming the Kingdom message (Schreiner, in The Gospel Coalition, accessed December 27, 2024). This aligns with the views of Mawikere, Hura, and Mewengkang (2024), who emphasize participation in the work of reconciliation, healing, and renewal initiated by Christ for the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth.

2.1. Application of BDKA at JGZT

The GMIM Zaitun Taas congregation (JGZT) has implemented the "Adventuring in the Kingdom of God" (BDKA) program as a concrete means of internalizing the Kingdom theme. Its implementation includes:

- Morning Devotion via Loudspeaker: At 5:00 a.m. WITA, a church member reads the BDKA devotion and Scripture aloud through the church's speaker system.
- Evening Scripture Reading: At 4:00 p.m., the full daily BDKA Bible passage is read.
- Digital Distribution of BDKA Materials: The church chairperson shares the daily BDKA content via WhatsApp groups for adults, youth, teens, and children with phones, using thumbs-up emojis as encouragement.
- Signature Greeting "BDKA": Members greet one another with "BDKA," to which others

reply “Adventuring in the Kingdom of God,” fostering identity and collective enthusiasm.

- Weekly Bulletin Reminders: Every Sunday, the church bulletin updates the congregation on BDKA Bible reading progress (which book and chapter).
- BDKA-Based Preaching: Aside from sermons tied to the MTPJ schedule, other sermons (anniversaries, small groups, youth/women’s/funeral/hospital services, etc.) use and contextualize BDKA devotionals.
- Small Group BDKA Meetings: Regular sessions are held on Tuesdays and Saturdays for discussion and deeper study of BDKA.
- Annual Recognition: Every January 1, certificates are awarded to JGZT members and sympathizers who complete the full Bible reading from Genesis to Revelation, faithfully read and reflect on BDKA, accompanied by a chocolate bar (SilverQueen Chunky Bar 95g).

2.2. Grounding Jesus’ Kingdom Teachings through the Compassion Team’s Concrete Actions

The church, as a community of Christians, embodies the Kingdom of God when the teachings of Christ are applied to every aspect of life (Kristemaker, 2003), contributing to the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth (Mawikere et al., 2024). The Compassion Team of JGZT demonstrates tangible manifestations of the Kingdom of God through various actions:

- Patient Support: Providing transportation and meal allowances for caregivers of sick JGZT members.
- Distribution of Basic Necessities: Regularly visiting underprivileged JGZT families to distribute rice (5 kg per family).
- Infrastructure Development: Constructing concrete roads in hazardous areas through voluntary community work (“Love Work”).
- Special Community Ministry: Facilitating inclusive worship for children/adults with special needs, including outreach to the Manado LGBT community and the Attackerz youth group under the team’s care.
- Disaster Response: Rapid renovation of homes damaged by natural disasters (e.g., fallen trees).
- Home Renovation: Renovating uninhabitable homes for families in extreme poverty.
- Interfaith Activities: Distributing iftar meals to Muslim neighbors during Ramadan and providing food packages on the eve of Eid.
- Free Social Services: Offering free haircuts before Eid in the mosque courtyard.
- Grocery Aid for Needy Muslim Families: On the eve of Eid, JGZT youth deliver food

packages to poor Muslim households, based on referrals from mosque leaders.

- Well Construction for Muslim Families Lacking Clean Water: The Compassion Team mobilizes men and youth to locate water sources near a family's home and dig a well collaboratively. Once sufficient water is found, the well is cleaned, fenced, and made available for the Muslim family and their neighbors.
- Church Grounds Used as Posyandu (Integrated Health Post): "PRIMA Posyandu" serves pregnant women, infants, toddlers, youth, adults, and the elderly every Friday at 10:00 a.m. WITA.
- Church Courtyard Used as Public Parking: Whenever there is a funeral or celebration in the surrounding neighborhoods, cars and motorbikes may freely park in the church courtyard, which is monitored and facilitated by the JGZT Panji Yosua team.
- Health Assistance: Helping Ms. Malinda (a Muslim, illiterate) register for BPJS (national health insurance) and obtain prescription eyeglasses from the Manado Eye Hospital, with all costs covered by the team.

The fruits of the Compassion Team's ministry are evident in transformed lives:

- Several individuals (Ewis, Noldi, Gunawan, Yesi, Titin, Ilham, Nana, Aldi) decided to believe in Jesus and were baptized on January 2, 2024. Notably, Noldi, Gunawan, and Yesi had previously converted to Islam from Christianity and have now returned to faith in Jesus.
- Nurul, a Muslim young woman, received assistance from the Compassion Team and JGZT youth for a critical head surgery after a motorcycle accident. Her family could not afford the procedure. The team raised funds and helped find AB-type blood donors. After a major operation, Nurul fully recovered. Her parents were overjoyed and thankful for the help provided regardless of religious difference.
- Agus, a Muslim youth struggling with mental illness who once stole a donation box from a mosque and was rejected by the community, was treated with compassion by JGZT youth. They provided him with temporary shelter, food, clothing, and friendship. He now actively helps the Compassion Team.

Discussion

This study confirms that the theme of the Kingdom of God is central to the teachings of the New Testament and the overarching biblical narrative. Although it is often neglected, the GMIM Zaitun Taas Congregation (JGZT) has successfully implemented this theme through the BDKA program and the tangible actions of the Compassion Team. The "already/not yet" concept of the

Kingdom of God is highly relevant in the context of JGZT, where the Kingdom is “already” present through biblical understanding and devotional practices (BDKA), yet “not fully” realized without concrete and transformative actions.

BDKA is not merely a spiritual routine, but a tool for internalizing the values of the Kingdom of God. Daily Bible readings, the use of the "BDKA" greeting, and small group meetings have fostered a collective identity and commitment to the Kingdom's teachings. The consistency of this program—even including an annual reward—demonstrates JGZT's serious efforts to promote deep and applicable biblical understanding.

Furthermore, the Compassion Team's concrete actions represent a living embodiment of the Kingdom of God within the community. The church's ministries of kerygma (proclamation), martyria (witness), koinonia (fellowship), and diakonia (service) are not limited to Christians alone but extend to all individuals and social groups (Mawikere, 2022). Acts of compassion that cross religious boundaries—such as helping Muslims access national health insurance (BPJS), building wells, sharing iftar meals, renovating homes, and more—reflect God's love and justice beyond denominational borders. This demonstrates that the Kingdom of God is not exclusive to the church but has a broader impact on the well-being of the wider community. The transformation of individual lives, such as those who chose to believe in Jesus as a result of experiencing holistic and selfless ministry, illustrates the incarnational grounding of Kingdom teachings. This aligns with Kristemaker's view that the church must introduce the Kingdom of God through the practical application of Christ's teachings in every aspect of life (Kristemaker, 2003).

Findings from the literature affirm that within Reformed theology, the Kingdom of God is fundamentally theocentric, encompassing both spiritual and temporal dimensions of God's sovereign reign over all creation. Calvin (1559) laid the groundwork through his doctrine of the “duplex regimen,” asserting that God governs humanity through two distinct spheres: a spiritual kingdom relating to the inner freedom of the conscience before God, and a political kingdom concerning external human conduct within society (Institutes, III.xix.15). This foundational view is reaffirmed by Kennedy (2024), who articulates that “Reformed political theology continues to affirm Christ's lordship over all of creation, while also acknowledging that His kingdom is not of this world (cf. John 18:36),” thus upholding both the two kingdoms doctrine and the concept of sphere sovereignty. Hart and Horton (2023) further argue that the Church serves as the “beachhead” of the coming Kingdom—a redemptive outpost within fallen creation—highlighting the Church's cultural and missional engagement beyond its internal life. Lumintang and Sproul (2019) expand this vision by emphasizing that the Reformed view of the Kingdom, grounded in God's sovereignty

and redemption, compels believers to engage public life faithfully as part of the creation and redemption mandate. Finally, DeVore, Fox, and Generations United (2016) demonstrate that intergenerational faith communities function as tangible expressions of the Kingdom of God, wherein mutuality, continuity, and spiritual vitality are cultivated across ages. Collectively, these perspectives underscore that the Kingdom of God, as understood in Reformed theology, is not confined to ecclesiastical boundaries but instead permeates all areas of life—ecclesial, social, cultural, and political—with Christ’s sovereign rule at the center.

The implication of these findings is that the Kingdom of God is not just a theological concept but a call to action. Through a systematic approach such as BDKA, and through its practical expression in community service, a congregation can effectively serve as an agent of the Kingdom of God in the world, bringing positive transformation that transcends church membership boundaries.

CONCLUSION

This study affirms that the Kingdom of God is a central theme in the New Testament, encompassing interconnected theological, ethical, and eschatological dimensions. Theologically rich perspectives from scholars such as Hoekema, Perrin, and Schreiner demonstrate that the Kingdom is not merely a spiritual metaphor but a divine reality that is present in and through the lives of believers, especially within the context of the church.

The findings of this research show that the GMIM Zaitun Taas Congregation (JGZT) has effectively implemented the values of the Kingdom of God in a contextual and holistic manner through the “Adventuring in the Kingdom of God” (BDKA) program and the ministry of the Compassion Team. The BDKA program has proven to be an effective tool for structured faith formation, strengthening congregational spirituality through daily Bible reading, small group fellowship, and daily liturgical practices that build a collective identity as a people of the Kingdom. On the other hand, the tangible actions of the Compassion Team demonstrate how the principles of love, justice, and solidarity can be translated into interreligious, social, and economic ministries—making the church a real agent of transformation in society.

This comprehensive implementation reflects the “already but not yet” dynamic of the Kingdom of God: its real presence through faith and ministry, yet also the anticipation of its eschatological fulfillment. Thus, the Kingdom of God is not only an object of theological study but also an ethical and practical calling for the church to incarnate God’s presence in the world.

This study recommends that other churches adopt a similar approach that integrates deep

theological understanding with contextual pastoral practice, so that the mission of the church as a representative of the Kingdom of God on earth can be realized in relevant and transformative ways.

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