Jesus proclaimed that the kingdom of God or kingdom of heaven was at hand. In rabbinic literature, “kingdom of heaven” was equivalent to “God reigns” (cf. TDNT 1.571). Many studies on the kingdom of God have shown that the kingdom Jesus proclaimed is not a geographical sovereignty or an ethical advance caused by human submission to God; it is the rule or dynamic reign of God, the earthly exercise of his sovereignty.¹

In what way was the reign of God only then “at hand”? Those same studies also show that in the OT God is already king, not only of Israel (Judg 8:23; 1 Sam 8:6) but also of the whole earth (Ps 22:28: “for dominion belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations”; cf. Amos 9:7; Dan 4:17). His sovereign power is as much at work in the OT time as later: “The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all” (Ps 103:19; cf. also the so-called “enthronement” Psalms: 47, 93, 96, 97, 99).

On the other hand, there is also an OT expectation of a future manifestation of the sovereignty of God. Obad 21: “the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.” Dan 2:44: God shall set up “a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another.” So how can the OT say God’s sovereignty is already absolute, and yet still expect a future reign of God? How can Jesus proclaim that the kingdom of God is near or has arrived, implying that previously it was not near or present?

The answer usually given is that when the reign of God arrives, God exerts his sovereign rule to fulfill his promises by subduing oppressive and unjust evil powers in the world and establishing righteousness and peace on earth.² The cross and resurrection and the sending of the Spirit have brought OT promises to fulfillment. Nevertheless, there are still evil powers in the world, there are still oppression and injustice, and there is little