

The Concept of 'Present Reality' in Luke's Gospel about the Kingdom of God

Enock Oluwadare AJIBADE, Ph.D

Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts,
Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti-State, Nigeria

ISSN: 1533 - 9211

**CORRESPONDING
AUTHOR:**

Enock Oluwadare AJIBADE
enock.ajibade@fuoye.edu.ng

KEYWORDS:

Kingdom of God, Luke's Gospel,
Jesus' teaching, inauguration,
Present reality.

Received: 28 March 2025
Accepted: 20 April 2025
Published : 05 May 2025

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Ajibade, E. O. (2025).
The concept of
'present reality' in
Luke's Gospel about
the Kingdom of God.
*Seybold Report
Journal*, 20(5), 18–38.
[DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.15336
148](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15336148)

Abstract

The concept of the Kingdom of God is central to Luke's Gospel, reflecting Jesus' mission and teachings about God's reign. Luke presents the Kingdom as both a present reality and a future hope, emphasizing its inclusivity in respect to 'preaching the good news', 'healing the sick', 'Exorcism', 'Kingdom within you' and Apocalyptic. This paper will focus on 'the present reality' of the Kingdom which has to do with the first four while the fifth one which is futuristic or 'Apocalyptic' may be considered in subsequent publications. Jesus mostly describes the Kingdom of God using parables, such as the Mustard Seed (Luke 13:18–19) and the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15–24), illustrating its growth and openness to all, particularly the marginalized. His miracles and exorcisms demonstrate the Kingdom's power over evil and suffering (Luke 11:20). The Kingdom is inaugurated through Jesus' ministry, particularly in his proclamation of good news to the poor (Luke 4:18–19), his table fellowship with sinners (Luke 5:29–32), and his call to repentance. Moreover, Luke highlights that the Kingdom is not a political entity but a divine reality embodied in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Through his teachings and actions, Jesus redefines power, authority and righteousness, calling for radical discipleship and dependence on God. The eschatological dimension of the Kingdom remains, as its full realization awaits Christ's return (Luke 21:27–31). Thus, Luke's Gospel presents the Kingdom of God as inaugurated by Jesus but awaiting ultimate consummation.

Background to the study

The concept of the Kingdom of God is central to the message of Jesus Christ in the Synoptic Gospels, and Luke's Gospel presents a unique theological perspective on this theme. In Luke, the Kingdom of God is portrayed as both a present reality and a future hope, but as stated in that above abstract, this paper focuses on the dimensions of its present realities as it was deeply intertwined with Jesus' ministry, ethical teachings while the eschatological aspect will be attended to in the future. Understanding the Kingdom of God in Luke's Gospel requires an exploration of its meaning, its implications for Jesus' mission, and its relevance for his followers. The phrase "Kingdom of God" *Βασιλεία του Θεου* appears frequently in Luke's Gospel, reflecting a dominant theme in Jesus' preaching. The term does not refer to a geographical realm but rather to God's sovereign rule and redemptive activity in the world. According to Ladd (1993), the Kingdom of God encompasses both an inaugurated aspect- where God's reign is evident in Jesus' works and a consummated aspect that awaits fulfillment at the end of time.

Luke's Gospel emphasizes the Kingdom as a divine initiative, where God's power breaks into human history through Jesus. This theme is introduced early in Luke's narrative, particularly in the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), where Mary proclaims the coming of a new divine order characterized by justice and mercy. Furthermore, Jesus' inaugural sermon in Luke 4:18-19, citing Isaiah 61, highlights his mission to bring good news to the poor, liberation to the oppressed, and healing to the brokenhearted. This declaration underscores the Kingdom as a transformative reality that challenges existing social structures (Green, 1995). One of Luke's distinctive contributions to the theology of the Kingdom is the balance between its present and future dimensions. Jesus proclaims that the Kingdom is already present in his ministry, as seen in Luke 11:20, where he states, "If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you." This suggests that Jesus' miracles and teachings are signs of the Kingdom's present reality (Ajibade, 2014).

However, Luke also presents the Kingdom as a future reality that will be fully realized at the *εσχάτων*. In Luke 22:16-18, Jesus speaks of a future fulfillment of the Kingdom, particularly in the context of the Last Supper. This forward-looking perspective aligns with the parables of the Kingdom, such as the Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-24), which illustrates both the inclusivity of God's Kingdom and the eschatological hope of its final consummation (Nolland,

1993).

The ethical implications of the Kingdom of God in Luke's Gospel are profound. Jesus' teachings emphasize humility, generosity and care for the marginalized. The Beatitudes in Luke 6:20-23 highlight a reversal of fortunes, where the poor, hungry, and persecuted are blessed, while the rich and self-satisfied face woes. This reflects Luke's broader theme of social justice, existentiality and God's preferential concern for the lowly (Bock, 1996).

Luke also presents the Kingdom as inclusive, extending beyond Israel to the Gentiles. The healing of the centurion's servant (Luke 7:1-10) and the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) illustrate that participation in the Kingdom is not limited by ethnicity or social status but is open to all who respond in faith and obedience (Witherington, 1998). In Luke, discipleship is closely linked to the Kingdom of God. Following Jesus entails radical commitment and a willingness to embrace a new way of life. In Luke 9:62, Jesus declares, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the Kingdom of God", this is simply emphasizing the cost of discipleship. The sending of the seventy-two out in Luke 10 further illustrates that proclaiming the Kingdom is an essential task for Jesus' followers (Stein, 1992).

The Kingdom of God in Luke's Gospel is a dynamic and multifaceted concept that encompasses both present realities and future expectations. It is characterized by God's rule, justice, and inclusivity, calling for a radical reorientation of life. Through his teachings, miracles and ultimate sacrifice, Jesus inaugurates the Kingdom, inviting all people to participate in its blessings. Luke's portrayal of the Kingdom not only highlights the transformative power of Jesus' ministry but also challenges believers to live in alignment with its values.

Literature Review

The concept of "present reality" in relation to the Kingdom of God is a key theme in the Gospel of Luke, with the evangelist highlighting not only the future fulfillment of God's reign but also its present manifestation in the ministry of Jesus and in the lives of those who follow Him. In this literature review, the researcher explores the scholarly perspectives on the present reality of the Kingdom of God in Luke's Gospel, focusing on its implications for both the theological understanding of the Kingdom and its ethical and social dimensions.

Theological background of the Kingdom of God in Luke's Gospel is a central theme that

serves as a framework for understanding the mission of Jesus. While the concept of the Kingdom is well-known throughout the Synoptic Gospels, Luke emphasizes its present reality more strongly than Matthew or Mark, especially in the parables and teachings of Jesus. As described by Albright and Mann (2010), the Kingdom of God is both a present and a future reality in Luke, where Jesus' arrival signifies the inauguration of God's reign on earth, yet its full realization will occur in the eschatological future. The concept of "present reality" in relation to the Kingdom of God can be seen in Luke's emphasis on the near arrival of the Kingdom (Luke 10:9, 11:20), suggesting that it is breaking into the world in the present through Jesus' actions and the proclamation of the gospel. This contrasts with a more distant or purely future conception of the Kingdom as found in some other Jewish traditions. According to Nolland (2005), Luke portrays the Kingdom of God as both already and not yet, challenging the audience to understand the tension between the initial appearance of God's reign through Jesus and its final fulfillment at the end of time. According to Albright and Mann, and Nolland's works are in tandem with the research as both expressed that Christ's Kingdom is both already and not yet but this paper emphasizes on the already.

The 'present reality' in Jesus' ministry in Luke's Gospel presents the Kingdom of God as being fundamentally tied to the person and work of Jesus. In Luke 4:18-19, Jesus quotes from Isaiah 61 to announce His mission, which directly links His actions in proclaiming the good news to the poor, healing the sick, and releasing the captives with the establishment of God's reign on earth. This passage is often seen as foundational for understanding Luke's presentation of the Kingdom of God, as it suggests that the Kingdom is not just a future hope in the work of (Ajibade 2014) but is already present in the actions of Jesus with the audience of his days. As several scholars have pointed out, the "present reality" of the Kingdom is closely associated with the presence of Jesus Himself. According to (Marshall, 1978), Jesus embodies the Kingdom, and His works are signs of its arrival. The miracles and healings that Jesus performs, such as in Luke 7:22, demonstrate that the Kingdom of God is being realized through Him. In this way, the Kingdom is present in a dynamic and active sense, transforming individuals and communities as they encounter the power of God through Jesus' ministry. As Ajibade and Marshall have rightly opined, Jesus' physical presence in his days is more than mere presence but of supernatural encounters that procured release, succor and emancipation for humanity.

The role of parables in understanding the Kingdom's present reality extensively explains the nature of the Kingdom of God. The parables of the mustard seed (Luke 13:18-19) and the leaven (Luke 13:20-21) are particularly significant in portraying the present reality of the Kingdom. These parables suggest that the Kingdom, while small and seemingly insignificant in the present moment, is growing and will eventually fill the whole earth. According to Green (1995), the mustard seed and leaven symbolize the hidden but unstoppable nature of the Kingdom's growth. The present reality of the Kingdom, therefore, is not about grand displays of power but about its quiet, pervasive influence in the world through the actions of Jesus and His followers. Other parables, such as the parable of the great banquet (Luke 14:15-24), also suggest the present reality of the Kingdom by showing that those who respond to God's invitation are already participants in the Kingdom. The banquet imagery underscores the notion that the Kingdom of God is both already open and awaiting fuller realization, with an invitation extended to all, including those who are marginalized and excluded from conventional social structures (Jeremias, 1963). All these great contributions to Jesus' kingdom of God reality demonstrations from Green and Jeremias are apposite to this research with more emphasis on its fuller realization. The ethical and social implications of the present Kingdom of God calls for radical social and ethical transformations. This includes the reversal of societal norms, where the poor and the marginalized are given special attention (Luke 6:20-21; 14:13-14). According to Bock (1994), the Kingdom's present reality is evident in the social and ethical transformation that Jesus calls for, particularly through His emphasis on humility, love for enemies, and the sharing of wealth. These teachings show that the present Kingdom is not merely a spiritual reality but also a social one, requiring a transformation in how individuals relate to one another and to God. Moreover, the Kingdom's present reality in Luke is marked by a call to repentance and moral renewal. In Luke 13:3, 5, Jesus emphasizes the necessity of repentance for entering the Kingdom, suggesting that the present reality of the Kingdom demands a personal and communal response. The ethical demands of the Kingdom are not simply future hopes but present imperatives that guide the behavior of those who are already in the Kingdom. With this, ethical sanity is very imperative for social health and quality life.

There are tensions among scholars between present and future realities about the concept of the Kingdom of God; however Luke acknowledges that it has a future dimension as well. The

Kingdom is not fully realized in the present but is instead in a state of partial fulfillment. The tension between the "already" and "not yet" of the Kingdom is evident in several places in Luke's Gospel, especially in passages that speak of a future coming of the Kingdom (e.g., Luke 19:11-27). According to Witherington (1990), this tension reflects the dual nature of the Kingdom as both present and future, and Luke's Gospel urges believers to live in the reality of God's reign while looking forward to its full realization. This conclusion of Witherington is germane to this work but the researcher only emphasizes on the present reality.

In summary, the concept of the "present reality" of the Kingdom of God in Luke's Gospel is multifaceted, encompassing theological, ethical, and social dimensions. Luke presents the Kingdom as both a present and future reality, highlighting its inauguration in the person and work of Jesus and its continuing presence in the lives of His followers. The Kingdom's present reality calls for a radical transformation of individuals and society, as seen in the ethical teachings and social implications of Jesus' message. While Luke acknowledges the future fulfillment of the Kingdom, he emphasizes that its transformative power is already at work in the world through the ministry of Jesus and the actions of His disciples.

Discussion

A. Exegetical Analysis of Luke 4:43 and the Present Realities of the Kingdom of God

Luke 4:43 states: "But he said to them, 'I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent'" (NIV). This verse is crucial in understanding the present realities of the Kingdom of God in Luke's Gospel, as it directly links Jesus' mission to the proclamation of God's reign. A deeper exegesis of this passage reveals key themes: the necessity of Jesus' mission, the urgency of the Kingdom's arrival, and the transformative impact of the Kingdom in the present world.

The Necessity and Scope of Jesus' Mission

The Greek phrase (δεῖ με εὐαγγελίσασθαι) signifies divine necessity (dei), indicating that Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom is not optional but central to His mission (Marshall, 1978). The verb (εὐαγγελίζομαι), meaning "to proclaim good news," highlights the present reality of the Kingdom as something that is actively being announced and realized through Jesus' ministry (Bock, 1994). By emphasizing that He "must" preach, Jesus aligns His work with divine purpose, reinforcing

that the Kingdom is not a distant event but is breaking into history through His actions. Furthermore, the phrase (καὶ ταῖς ἑτέραις πόλεσιν), meaning “to the other towns also,” underscores the expansive nature of the Kingdom (Green, 1995). The Kingdom is not confined to a single location but is actively being made present across different communities. This aligns with Luke’s broader emphasis on the inclusivity of the Kingdom, which is not limited to Israel but extends to the Gentiles (Luke 2:32; 24:47).

The Kingdom’s Present Reality in Jesus’ Proclamation

Luke’s Gospel presents the Kingdom of God as both an eschatological hope and a present reality. The proclamation in Luke 4:43 reflect the immediacy of the Kingdom’s arrival. This is evident in Jesus’ earlier declaration in Luke 4:18-21, where He reads from Isaiah 61 and states, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” The use of (σήμερον, "today") highlights the present fulfillment of the prophetic promise through Jesus' ministry (Nolland, 2005). Additionally, the Kingdom is not merely a theological concept but manifests in Jesus’ deeds, such as healings (Luke 5:12-16), exorcisms (Luke 4:31-37), and acts of compassion (Luke 7:22). These signs demonstrate that the Kingdom is already at work, challenging the notion that it is purely a future expectation (Witherington, 1990).

The Transformative Social and Ethical Reality of the Kingdom

The present reality of the Kingdom in Luke 4:43 also have ethical and social implications. Jesus’ proclamation calls for a radical reordering of relationships, favoring the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed (Luke 6:20-21). The Kingdom’s arrival demands a response, requiring repentance (Luke 13:3) and new ethical living, as seen in Jesus’ teachings on love, humility, and generosity (Luke 10:25-37). Therefore, Luke 4:43 encapsulates Jesus’ mission to proclaim the Kingdom as a present reality. The Kingdom is not just a future hope but is actively breaking into the world through Jesus’ words and deeds, transforming individuals and societies.

B. Present Realities of Jesus’ Kingdom of God in Luke 10:9

The phrase in Luke 10:9, “The kingdom of God has come near to you” (ἐγγίκεν ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ), presents a significant statement in Jesus’ teachings about the present reality of the

Kingdom of God. This passage occurs in the context of Jesus sending out the seventy-two disciples to proclaim the Kingdom and heal the sick. A deeper exegesis of this passage reveals that Jesus viewed the Kingdom as both imminent and actively breaking into the present world through His ministry and the mission of His disciples.

Linguistic and Contextual Analysis The Greek verb “ἐγγίκεν” (engiken), translated as “has come near,” is in the perfect tense, which suggests an action that has already taken place with ongoing effects (Marshall, 1978). This implies that the Kingdom is not merely an anticipated future reality but one that is actively at work in the present. The use of the phrase “upon you” (ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς) further suggests a tangible, experiential reality that directly affects the recipients of the disciples’ mission (Bock, 1994). In its immediate context, Luke 10:9 is tied to the healing of the sick, which serves as evidence of the Kingdom’s nearness. This aligns with Jesus’ broader ministry, where signs and wonders function as proof of God’s reign being inaugurated in the present (Green, 1995). The healings and exorcisms Jesus and His disciples perform are not just acts of compassion but are demonstrations that God’s reign is already breaking into the world, reversing the effects of sin and oppression that had hitherto reigned.

Present Realities of the Kingdom in Luke 10:9

Luke 10:9 suggests that the presence of Jesus and His disciples signifies the arrival of the Kingdom. Jesus functions as the bearer of God’s reign, and His disciples serve as extensions of His mission (Nolland, 2005). The sending of the seventy-two represents a wider mission beyond the twelve apostles, indicating that the Kingdom is not confined to Jesus alone but is already expanding through His followers.

Healing as a Sign of the Present Kingdom

The command to heal the sick in Luke 10:9 is not merely an act of mercy but a demonstration that the Kingdom of God is at work. Healing symbolizes the restoration and renewal that characterize the present realities of God’s reign (Witherington, 1990). The miracles point to the Kingdom’s presence as a power that restores creation and inaugurates a new order.

Judgment and Response to the Kingdom

Luke 10:10-12 follows with a warning that rejecting the message results in judgment. This highlights the urgency of responding to the Kingdom in the present. The nearness of the Kingdom demands immediate recognition and alignment with God’s will (Marshall, 1978). Luke 10:9

illustrates the present reality of the Kingdom of God through Jesus' ministry and the mission of His disciples. The Kingdom is not just a future event but an active and transformative presence, demonstrated through healings and the proclamation of God's reign.

C. Present Reality of Jesus' Kingdom of God in Luke 11:20.

The Kingdom of God is a central theme in the teachings of Jesus, particularly in the Gospel of Luke. Luke 11:20 states, "*But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you*". This verse serves as a critical point of departure for understanding the present reality of the Kingdom in Jesus' ministry. This study explores the exegetical significance of Luke 11:20 and its implications for the present nature of the Kingdom of God in Jesus' teachings.

Exegetical Analysis of Luke 11:20

Luke 11:20 is set in the context of Jesus' response to the accusation that He casts out demons by the power of Beelzebul. Jesus refutes this claim by stating that His exorcisms are evidence that the Kingdom of God has already arrived. The phrase "*the finger of God*" is significant, as it echoes Exodus 8:19, where Pharaoh's magicians recognize divine power at work. This suggests that Jesus' ministry is an expression of divine authority, indicating that the Kingdom is not merely a future hope but an active reality in His presence (Bock, 1994). The Greek phrase *ἔφθασεν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς*, translated as "*has come upon you*", carries the sense of an event that has already taken place. It is in the aorist tense, indicating that the Kingdom is not just approaching but has already arrived in a definitive manner (Nolland, 2005). This suggests that Jesus' exorcisms are concrete manifestations of God's rule breaking into human history.

The Present Realities of the Kingdom in Jesus' Ministry

1. The Defeat of Satan and the Inauguration of God's Rule

Jesus' declaration in Luke 11:20 signal the overthrow of Satan's dominion. The context of this verse involves Jesus' exorcisms, demonstrating His power over demonic forces. According to Ladd (1993), the exorcisms serve as evidence that the eschatological battle between God's Kingdom and the forces of darkness has begun. The Kingdom is not only a future reality but is actively at work in dismantling evil in the present age.

2. The Authority of Jesus as the Kingdom's Representative

Luke presents Jesus as the embodiment of the Kingdom. His power over demons and disease is not just miraculous but signifies the presence of divine rule. Green (1995) argues that Jesus' authority is the primary evidence that the Kingdom is already operative, and those who witness His works are confronted with the necessity of acknowledging God's reign. This means that the Kingdom is not only a theological concept but an experiential reality.

3. Healing and Restoration as Signs of the Kingdom

Another key aspect of the present reality of the Kingdom is its transformative impact. Jesus' miracles, including exorcisms, healings and acts of restoration, illustrate the restoration of God's created order. Luke's Gospel emphasizes that the Kingdom brings wholeness to individuals and communities (Marshall, 1978). In Luke 7:22, Jesus describes His works in terms of healing the blind, enabling the lame to walk, and proclaiming good news to the poor, all of which indicate that the Kingdom's arrival is tangible and not merely anticipated.

4. The Ethical and Social Implications of the Kingdom's Presence

The Kingdom's present reality also carries ethical and social demands. Jesus' teachings emphasize the reversal of social structures, where the last become first, and the marginalized are included (Luke 6:20-21; 14:13-14). According to Wright (1996), Jesus' announcement of the Kingdom challenges existing power structures and calls for a radical reorientation of life. Those who recognize the Kingdom's presence are expected to live according to its values, embodying justice, mercy, and love.

The Already-Not-Yet Tension in Luke, while Luke 11:20 emphasizes the present reality of the Kingdom, it does not negate its future consummation. The Gospel of Luke maintains a tension between the *already* and *not yet* dimensions of the Kingdom. Jesus' ministry marks its inauguration, but its final fulfillment awaits the eschaton (Witherington, 1990). This dynamic means that believers live in a period of realized but incomplete Kingdom rule, where they experience its power but await its full establishment.

Luke 11:20 provides a crucial insight into the present realities of Jesus' Kingdom teachings. The verse establishes that the Kingdom is not merely a future expectation but a present experience, evidenced by Jesus' authority over Satan, His miraculous works, and the ethical transformation it demands. The arrival of the Kingdom in Jesus' ministry signals God's reign breaking into history,

challenging people to recognize and respond to His rule. At the same time, the Kingdom's full realization remains a future hope, sustaining the tension between the already and the not yet.

D. Present Realities of Jesus' Kingdom of God in Luke 17:20-21

The concept of the Kingdom of God is central to Jesus' teachings in the New Testament. One of the most intriguing statements about its present reality is found in Luke 17:20–21. In this passage, Jesus responds to the Pharisees' question about when the Kingdom of God would come, stating that it does not come with observable signs, nor can people say, "Here it is" or "There it is," because the Kingdom of God is "in your midst" (Luke 17:21). This passage challenges traditional Jewish eschatological expectations and provides insights into Jesus' vision of the Kingdom's nature, presence, and implications for believers.

Contextual Background

To understand Jesus' statement, it is essential to examine the socio-religious background of first-century Judaism. The Pharisees, to whom Jesus was responding, anticipated a messianic Kingdom characterized by political deliverance and national restoration. This expectation was rooted in Old Testament prophecies (e.g., Daniel 2:44; Isaiah 9:6-7) that foretold a future reign of God. However, Jesus' response in Luke 17:20–21 subverts this notion, emphasizing the Kingdom's spiritual, internal, and already-present dimensions rather than a visible geopolitical manifestation.

Exegetical Analysis

The Pharisees' Inquiry and Jesus' Response

Luke 17:20 states: "Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, 'the coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed'". The Greek term (*παρατήρησις*) translated as "observed" refers to close, careful watching or scrutiny, often associated with astronomical or political signs. Jesus asserts that the Kingdom does not arrive through external observation, countering the prevailing Jewish expectations of a dramatic divine intervention.

In verse 21, Jesus continues: "Nor will people say, 'here it is,' or 'there it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst". The phrase, (*ἐντὸς ὑμῶν*) is a key point of scholarly debate. It can mean either "within you" (internal and personal) or "among you" (collective

and present in Jesus). Given the Pharisees' opposition to Jesus, the latter interpretation “among you” is more contextually plausible. Jesus, as the embodiment of God’s rule, was standing in their midst, signifying the Kingdom’s present reality.

Theological Implications

The Kingdom as a Present Reality

Jesus’ statement in Luke 17:20–21 affirms that the Kingdom of God is not merely a future event but a present reality inaugurated in His ministry. This aligns with other passages where Jesus declares the Kingdom’s arrival (e.g., Luke 11:20; Matthew 12:28). The Kingdom is not a distant hope but an active force transforming lives in the here and now.

The Kingdom as a Spiritual Reality

By stating that the Kingdom is “in your midst,” Jesus shifts the focus from external signs to spiritual transformation. Unlike earthly kingdoms, which are defined by physical territory, the Kingdom of God is marked by righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). It is a rule that begins in the hearts of believers, evidenced by their faith and obedience.

The Kingdom in Jesus’ Person and Work

Jesus Himself embodies the Kingdom. His miracles, teachings and authority over demons demonstrate the in-breaking of God’s reign (Luke 4:18-21; Luke 10:9). The presence of Jesus among the people signified that God’s rule had already begun, fulfilling prophecies such as Isaiah 61:1-2.

Practical Implications for Believers

Living in the Kingdom Now

Believers are called to recognize and participate in the present reality of the Kingdom. This means aligning their lives with Kingdom values such as love, humility, and justice. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12) exemplify the attitudes of those who belong to God’s reign.

Rejecting Misconceptions

Like the Pharisees, modern Christians can sometimes expect the Kingdom in the form of political powers or dramatic interventions. Jesus’ teaching in Luke 17:20–21 reminds

believers that the Kingdom is already at work in transformed lives, rather than in outward displays of dominance.

The ‘Already-Not-Yet’ Tension

While Jesus affirms the Kingdom’s present reality, He also teaches about its future consummation (Luke 21:27-31). This “already-not-yet” tension means that believers experience the foretaste of God’s reign now, but its fullness awaits Christ’s return. This perspective encourages Christians to live faithfully in anticipation of the Kingdom’s ultimate fulfillment. Therefore, Luke 17:20–21 presents a profound theological truth: the Kingdom of God is not a distant, observable phenomenon but a present, spiritual reality manifest in Jesus. His response to the Pharisees challenges traditional expectations and calls believers to recognize the Kingdom’s presence among them. By living under God’s rule now, Christians participate in the transformative power of the Kingdom, anticipating its final consummation in the eschaton.

CONCLUSION:

The Kingdom as Present and Active

The Gospel of Luke presents the Kingdom of God not merely as a future reality but as something active and present in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Luke emphasizes that the Kingdom has arrived in the person and work of Jesus, fulfilling the promises of God to Israel (Luke 4:16-21). The inaugural sermon of Jesus in Nazareth, where He declares the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy, sets the tone for Luke’s theological presentation of the Kingdom as a present reality (Green, 1997). Jesus’ miracles, exorcisms, and teachings reinforce the notion that the reign of God is actively breaking into human history.

The Kingdom in the Lives of the Marginalized

A central theme in Luke’s Gospel is the inclusion of the poor, outcasts, and marginalized in the Kingdom of God. The present reality of the Kingdom is seen in Jesus’ interactions with tax collectors (Luke 19:1-10), sinners (Luke 7:36-50), and the poor (Luke 6:20). Unlike a kingdom that benefits only the powerful, Jesus reveals a Kingdom that prioritizes social justice and inclusivity. The present nature of this Kingdom is demonstrated in the way He elevates the status of women (Luke 8:1-3), heals the sick, and brings restoration to those on

the fringes of society (Marshall, 1978).

The Kingdom as a Call to Discipleship

Luke's Gospel portrays the Kingdom of God as something that demands a response in the present. Jesus calls His followers to radical discipleship, urging them to abandon material possessions and trust in divine provision (Luke 9:57-62; 12:22-34). The cost of following Jesus is high, but it is also the means by which individuals participate in the present Kingdom (Bock, 1994). The parables of the Kingdom, such as the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), emphasize that God's reign is accessible now to those who exhibit faith, repentance, and love.

The Kingdom in Conflict with the World

Luke also highlights the tension between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of the world. Jesus' ministry challenges the religious and political authorities of His time, demonstrating that the Kingdom of God operates by different principles. The rejection of Jesus by the Pharisees and other leaders (Luke 11:14-54) illustrates the ongoing struggle between divine rule and human opposition. Despite this resistance, the Kingdom continues to advance, as seen in Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem and His ultimate victory over sin and death (Luke 19:28-40; 24:1-12) (Nolland, 1993).

The Eschatological Tension: Already but Not Yet

While Luke affirms the present reality of the Kingdom, he also maintains an eschatological tension. The Kingdom is already present in Jesus' ministry, yet its full realization awaits the culmination of history. This is evident in the teachings on the Second Coming (Luke 21:25-36) and in the Last Supper discourse, where Jesus anticipates the fulfillment of the Kingdom in the future (Luke 22:14-18). The resurrection of Jesus serves as a guarantee of the Kingdom's ultimate victory, even as believers live in the present age awaiting its final consummation (Stein, 1992).

The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Present Kingdom

Luke-Acts presents the Holy Spirit as the agent through whom the Kingdom of God continues to be manifested. The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2) is a continuation of the Kingdom's presence in the world, empowering believers to live out its values. The Spirit enables the church to carry forward the mission of Jesus, bringing the

reality of the Kingdom to new communities and cultures (Dunn, 1996). Thus, the Kingdom of God is not static; it grows and expands as the Spirit moves through the lives of believers.

Ethical Implications of the Present Kingdom

The present reality of the Kingdom in Luke's Gospel has profound ethical implications for believers. Jesus' teachings on love, mercy, and justice (Luke 6:27-36) call His followers to embody Kingdom values in their daily lives. This ethical demand extends to economic justice (Luke 16:19-31), forgiveness (Luke 17:3-4), and stewardship (Luke 19:11-27). Living in the present reality of the Kingdom requires a transformation of character that reflects God's reign on earth (Wright, 1996). In summary, Luke's Gospel presents the Kingdom of God as a present reality that is already breaking into the world through Jesus' ministry, the inclusion of the marginalized, and the work of the Holy Spirit. This Kingdom demands a response, calls for radical discipleship, and exists in tension with the present world. While its full consummation remains in the future, its transformative power is already at work in the lives of believers. The Gospel of Luke challenges contemporary readers to embrace the present reality of the Kingdom and live in anticipation of its ultimate fulfillment.

SUMMARY

The Kingdom as Present and Active

Luke's Gospel portrays the Kingdom of God as both a present and transformative reality in the ministry of Jesus Christ. The Kingdom is inaugurated through Jesus' teachings, miracles and actions, signifying the fulfillment of divine promises (Luke 4:16-21). Jesus' declaration in the synagogue at Nazareth affirms that God's reign has already begun, impacting individuals and communities (Green, 1997). This reality is further evidenced in His exorcisms and healings, which manifest divine authority.

Inclusion of the Marginalized

A key theme in Luke's Gospel is the Kingdom's accessibility to the poor, outcasts, and marginalized. Jesus invites tax collectors (Luke 19:1-10), sinners (Luke 7:36-50), and the economically disadvantaged (Luke 6:20) into God's reign, challenging societal norms. The Kingdom is characterized by radical inclusion, as Jesus uplifts women (Luke 8:1-3), restores

the sick, and embodies divine justice (Marshall, 1978).

The Call to Discipleship

Luke emphasizes that the Kingdom requires a response. Jesus calls for radical discipleship, urging followers to detach from materialism and embrace faith-driven living (Luke 9:57-62; 12:22-34). Through parables like the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), Jesus highlights themes of love, repentance, and inclusion. The Kingdom demands ongoing ethical transformation (Bock, 1994).

The Kingdom's Opposition and Advancement

Luke highlights the ongoing tension between the Kingdom and worldly powers. Jesus' teachings and actions challenge religious and political structures, leading to opposition from the Pharisees and other leaders (Luke 11:14-54). Despite resistance, the Kingdom continues to advance, evidenced by Jesus' triumphal entry and resurrection (Luke 19:28-40; 24:1-12) (Nolland, 1993).

The 'Already but Not Yet' Tension

Luke presents an eschatological tension—while the Kingdom is present in Jesus, its full realization is yet to come. This is seen in His teachings on the Second Coming (Luke 21:25-36) and the Last Supper, where He anticipates the Kingdom's future fulfillment (Luke 22:14-18). The resurrection serves as a guarantee of the Kingdom's final victory (Stein, 1992).

The Holy Spirit's Role in the Present Kingdom

Luke-Acts illustrates the Holy Spirit as the means through which the Kingdom continues. The Spirit's outpouring at Pentecost (Acts 2) empowers believers to extend God's reign beyond Israel, emphasizing the dynamic nature of the Kingdom (Dunn, 1996).

Ethical Implications

Jesus' teachings in Luke stress that the Kingdom has ethical dimensions. Love, mercy, justice (Luke 6:27-36), economic responsibility (Luke 16:19-31), and forgiveness (Luke 17:3-4) are integral to living in God's present rule (Wright, 1996). Luke's Gospel presents the Kingdom of God as a present and transformative reality, demanding a response through faith, discipleship, and ethical living. While its full consummation remains in the future, its impact is already visible through Jesus' ministry, the Spirit's work, and the inclusion of the

marginalized. The Gospel invites contemporary readers to embody Kingdom values in anticipation of its ultimate fulfillment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Gospel of Luke presents the Kingdom of God as a present reality that actively influences human lives and society. Rather than being solely a future expectation, Luke's Gospel portrays the Kingdom as dynamically at work through Jesus Christ's ministry. This recommendation discusses the implications of the Kingdom's present reality, highlighting its manifestations, ethical dimensions, and applications for contemporary believers.

Manifestation of the Kingdom in Jesus' Ministry

Luke consistently depicts the Kingdom of God as being inaugurated through Jesus' works and teachings. In Luke 4:18-21, Jesus proclaims the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, signifying the Kingdom's immediate presence. His miracles, exorcisms, and teachings affirm that God's reign is already unfolding. Luke 11:20 states, "But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." This highlights that the Kingdom is not merely anticipated but actively breaking into human history.

Ethical and Social Responsibilities

The present reality of the Kingdom in Luke's Gospel emphasizes ethical transformation and social justice. Jesus calls for a radical reordering of priorities, exemplified in His concern for the poor, outcasts, and marginalized. The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and the Beatitudes (Luke 6:20-23) reinforce that Kingdom participation requires compassion, mercy, and justice. Luke underscores that the Kingdom demands practical action, urging believers to reflect divine values in their daily lives.

The Tension of "Already" and "Not Yet"

Although the Kingdom is already present, Luke acknowledges its future culmination. Jesus' statements in Luke 17:20-21 declare that the Kingdom is "in your midst" (NIV), yet He also speaks of a future realization (Luke 22:16-18). This tension invites believers to live in anticipation, embracing the Kingdom's present power while awaiting its ultimate fulfillment.

Recommendations for Contemporary Application

1. Active Participation in God’s Mission – Christians should embody the Kingdom’s values by promoting justice, reconciliation, and compassion in their communities.
2. Commitment to Ethical Living – Personal integrity and moral responsibility are essential for Kingdom citizens, as seen in Jesus’ teachings.
3. Hopeful Engagement– While awaiting the full manifestation of God’s reign, believers should trust in His ongoing work and contribute to social transformation.

Luke’s Gospel affirms that the Kingdom of God is a present and active reality, calling for ethical transformation and social engagement. This understanding challenges Christians to integrate Kingdom principles into their daily lives, fostering justice, compassion, and anticipation for the Kingdom’s full realization.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors have disclosed no conflicts of interest.

Author's Affiliation

Enock Oluwadare AJIBADE, Ph.D

Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts,
Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti-State, Nigeria
enock.ajibade@fuoye.edu.ng
<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-3164-3887>

COPYRIGHT

© 2025 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>. Seybold Report is a peer-reviewed journal published by Seybold Publications.

HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Ajibade, E. O. (2025). The concept of 'present reality' in Luke's Gospel about the Kingdom of God. *Seybold Report Journal*, 20(5), 18–38. [DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.15336148](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15336148)

REFERENCES

- Albright, W.F., & Mann, C. S. (2010). *Matthew: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. Yale University Press.
- Ajibade, E.O. (2014). *Exegetical study of the Concept of the Kingdom of God in Luke's Gospel*, a dissertation for Master Degree, The University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.
- Bock, D. L. (1994). *Luke: A Commentary*. Baker Academic.
- Bock, D. L. (1994). *Luke: The NIV Application Commentary*. Zondervan.
- Bock, D. L. (1996). *Luke 9:51–24:53 (Vol. 2)*. Baker Academic.
- Bock, D. L. (1996). *Luke: The NIV Application Commentary*. Zondervan.
- Dunn, J. D. G. (1996). *The Acts of the Apostles*. Eerdmans.
- Evans, C. A. (2012). *Luke (Understanding the Bible Commentary Series)*. Baker Books.
- Green, J. B. (1995). *The Gospel of Luke*. Eerdmans.
- Green, J. B. (1995). *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*. Cambridge University Press.
- Green, J. B. (1997). *The Gospel of Luke*. Eerdmans.
- Horsley, R. A. (1994). *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in the Early Christian World*. Trinity Press International.
- Jeremias, J. (1963). *The Parables of Jesus*. Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Ladd, G. E. (1993). *A Theology of the New Testament*. Eerdmans.
- Ladd, G. E. (1993). *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism*. Eerdmans.
- Marshall, I. H. (1978). *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Eerdmans.
- New International Version Bible. (2011). *New International Version*. Biblica.
- Nolland, J. (1993). *Luke 1-9:20, Luke 9:21-18:34, Luke 18:35-24:53*. Word Books.
- Nolland, J. (1993). *Luke 1-9:20*, Word Biblical Commentary. Word Books.
- Nolland, J. (1993). *Luke 9:21–18:34 (Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 35B)*. Word Books.
- Nolland, J. (2005). *Luke 1-9:20: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Eerdmans.
- Nolland, J. (2005). *Luke 9:21-24:53: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Eerdmans.
- Stein, R. H. (1992). *Luke: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*. B&H Publishing Group.
- Stein, R. H. (1992). *Luke: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*. Broadman & Holman.

Witherington, B. (1990). *The Gospel of Luke: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*. Eerdmans.

Witherington, B. (1998). *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*. Eerdmans.

Wright, N. T. (1996). *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Fortress Press.