

Session 5: Defining the Kingdom of God

I. REVIEW

II. GOVERNMENTAL INTRODUCTION TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- A. The Kingdom of God has been one of the most disputed subjects in church history. Due to the centrality of the Kingdom in the Scripture, the essential questions about the Kingdom (*i.e.* ‘*what is it?*’, ‘*what does it involve*’, ‘*how does it function?*’, *etc...*) inform everything about how we interpret our existence and mission.
- B. While there are several issues of contention regarding the Kingdom, two or three of them stand out as being foundational in regards to our understanding of the Kingdom. Historically, the Kingdom of God has been explained as **the Church** (*cf Augustine*), **moral ethic, divine reign** (*cf Ladd*), **dispensational schema** (*the ‘salvation’ of Israel juxtaposed against the ‘salvation’ of Gentiles – the kingdom of heaven*), and a few others.
- C. Most of the above mentioned explanations either disregard or discount altogether the simplest understanding of any kingdom. In this class we are going to be focusing on **the Kingdom as an actual government**. *I.e.* that the Kingdom of God is an actual government with dominion stretching over an actual region.
- D. Thus, the Kingdom of God is essentially to be understood as the domain over which God both possesses and exercises dominion and authority. In the context of God – both the creator and sustainer of the heavens and the earth – the region over which He rules is **the heavens and the earth**.
- ¹⁴ "Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. (Deu 10:14 NASB)**
- E. Every government essentially functions in the same way, and so we will simply explore the Kingdom of God in this way.¹ Government serves the same end as every other institution of human organization (*i.e. marriage, family, community, etc...*). We organize because we desire intimacy and well-being. **Ideal government is simply a means of achieving intimacy and well being.**
- F. The mechanics of ideal government:
1. **A Governor:** *someone who posses both **love for the subjects** (*i.e. desire for their well-being*) as well as **power** (*i.e. the ability and endurance to achieve well-being for the ‘whole’*).*
 2. **Law:** *that which the Governor (one possessing love and power) decides leads to the well-being of the whole.*

¹ While it is acknowledged that all human institutions of government are fallen and corrupt, government even within it's present fallen

3. ***Punishment:*** enforcement of the Law is simply the expression of the governor's love (i.e. desire for well-being) of the whole.
4. ***Atonement and Amnesty:*** the governor's love inevitably comes into conflict when His love for the whole demands the punishment of the offender, but his love for the offender demands his pardon. Atonement ² is the suitable substitution for punishment offered to the humble and repentant, while amnesty describes a period of time extended by the governor within which offenders are exempt from punishment.

- G. Within this fundamental framework, God (i.e. the governor) reigns over His Kingdom (i.e. the heavens and the earth) in love (desiring the well-being of the whole) by clearly establishing what leads to well being (i.e. the law or righteousness).

¹⁴ "Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. (Deu 10:14 NASB)

- H. The Gospel also fits within this framework since the fundamental invitation of the Gospel is to repent and believe in light of the period of amnesty before the Day of the Lord when punishment will be executed and well-being ensured to the rest of the governed.

⁴⁶ and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. (Luk 24:46-47 NASB)

⁹ The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (2Pe 3:9 NASB)

¹⁵ Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever." ... ¹⁸ "And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth." (Rev 11:15, 18 NASB)

III. THE UNIVERSAL KINGDOM OF GOD

- A. Another source of confusion regarding the Kingdom of God lies in the many references through the Old and New Testament regarding the Kingdom of the God presently ruling (cf. 1 Chron. 29:11; Ps. 103:19; 145:11ff; Jer. 10:7ff; Dan. 4:3, 34; Jn. 19:11; Acts 17:24; Rev. 4:2ff) over all of creation (including the earth) and the future 'coming' of the Kingdom of God upon the earth. (cf. Rev. 11:15ff, Dan. 7:14ff, Rev. 1:7)

² Atonement cannot be haphazardly applied universally or the well-being of the whole is ALWAYS compromised. Atonement is applied only upon the repentance and acknowledgment of the authority of the 'governor'. Cf. Mark 1:15 "...the Kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the Gospel. (ESV)

- B. Explaining the distinction between these two 'Kingdoms' has been the source of a great deal of controversy. This is primarily due to the application of a 'kingdom' within a Platonic worldview. The heavens and the earth constitute the sum total of reality. Both are substantial, both are material.
- C. At creation, the Lord decided to create a throne in the heavens from which He alone would govern over the heavens and the earth. We will call this the 'Universal'³ Kingdom of God.

¹ A Psalm of David. The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it. (Psa 24:1 NASB)

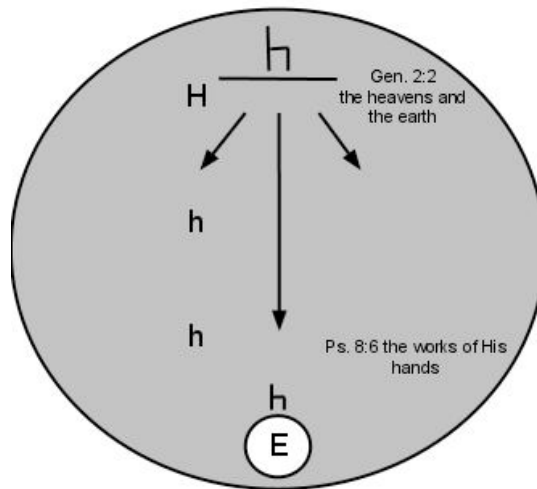
¹⁴ "Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. " (Deuteronomy 10:14, NASB)

¹¹ "Who has given to Me that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is Mine. " (Job 41:11, NASB)

- **³² and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.' ... ³⁴ "But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom endures from generation to generation. ³⁵ "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?' (Dan 4:32, 34-35 NASB)**
- **²¹ On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum and began delivering an address to them. ²² The people kept crying out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" ²³ And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died. (Act 12:21-23 NASB)**

³ While the phrase 'Universal Kingdom of God' does not appear in the Scripture, the Scripture is clear that the throne of God governs with absolute authority over the sum total of reality (i.e. the heavens and the earth) and is thus universal.

In the beginning



- D. Secondly, He decided – as an expression of His own absolutely sovereignty over the heavens and the earth – that a son of Adam should reign over the earth. Thus, in the beginning, God established His good pleasure to have a son of Adam ruling over the earth in perfect intimacy with Himself. This will be referred to as the Messianic Kingdom.

⁹ **"Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other (i.e. who makes the decisions in the equation); I am God, and there is no one like Me, ¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; (Isa 46:9-10 NASB)**

- ²⁶ **Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (Gen 1:26 NASB)**
- ³ **But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases. ... ¹⁶ The heavens are the heavens of the LORD, But the earth He has given to the sons of men. ¹⁷ The dead do not praise the LORD, Nor do any who go down into silence; ¹⁸ But as for us, we will bless the LORD From this time forth (i.e. the day of the Lord and the resurrection) and forever. Praise the LORD! (Psa 115:3, 16-18 NASB)**

In a preliminary survey of the very extensive array of Biblical references to the Kingdom of God, especially in the Old Testament, the investigator will be impressed by a series of differences which at first sight may seem to be almost contradictory. Some of the more important of these differences may be stated as follows: First, certain passages present the Kingdom as something which has always existed; yet other places it seems to have a definite historical beginning among men. (Compare Ps. 10:16 with Dan. 2:44.) Second, the Kingdom is set forth in Scripture as universal in its scope, outside of which there is no created thing; yet again the Kingdom is revealed as a local rule established on earth. (Compare Ps. 103:19 with Is. 24:23.) Third, the Kingdom sometimes appears as the rule of God directly, with no intermediary standing between God and man; yet it is also pictured as the rule of God through a mediator who serves as channel between God and man. (Compare Ps. 59:13 with 2:4-6.) ... Some of the above distinctions, if not all, have been noticed by Biblical scholars and attempts have been made to explain them; sometimes by asserting the existence of one kingdom with two aspects or phases; or by the assumption of two kingdoms. For example... These citations, deliberately selected from authors of widely different viewpoints, will be sufficient to show that the distinctions mentioned above are not imaginary. The question is how to explain them... In one sense it would not be wholly wrong to speak of two kingdoms revealed in the Bible. But we must at the same time guard carefully against the notion that these two kingdoms are absolutely distinct, one from the other. There is value and instruction in thinking of them as two aspects or phases of the one rule of our sovereign God. In seeking for terms which might best designate these two things, I can find nothing better than the adjectives "universal" and "mediatorial." These are not exactly commensurate terms, of course, but describe different qualities; the first referring to the extent of rule, the latter to the method of rule. Nevertheless, in each case the designated quality seems to be the most important for purposes of identification.⁴

- E. The harmony of the two thrones (*i.e.* governments) will be fully restored at the end of the thousand year reign of the Messiah on the earth when the heavens and the earth are completely restored to their original glory and union.

³ There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; (Rev 22:3 NASB)

²⁴ then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom (Messianic) to the God and Father (Universal), when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵ For He (*i.e.* the Messiah) must reign until He (*i.e.* the Father) has put all His enemies under His (*i.e.* the Messiah's) feet. ²⁶ The last enemy that will be abolished is death. ²⁷ For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He (the Father) is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him (the Messiah). ²⁸ When all things are subjected (by the Father) to Him (the Messiah), then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One (the Father) who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all (Governmentally). (1Cr 15:24-28 NASB)

IV. AMNESTIC SOVEREIGNTY OF THE UNIVERSAL KINGDOM

⁴ Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God* (BMH Books, 1959), 19-21.

- A. Central to understanding the present universal kingdom of God is understanding the way that it presently functions. God presently offers forgiveness of sin to all who repent and believe in the atonement which He provided.

²¹ But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, (between Jew and Gentile) ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (i.e. the glory of the Kingdom and the resurrection) ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished-- - (Rom 3:21-25 NIV)

- B. Governmentally, this is referred to as amnesty. Often applied at the inception of a new government, amnesty is the period of time in which punishment is suspended and pardon offered. The condition upon which it is offered is repentance from allegiance to another government or governor.

¹⁹ Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, ²⁰ and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you--even Jesus. ²¹ He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. ... ²⁶ When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways." (Act 3:19-21, 26 NIV)

- C. God, functioning within this context as the Governor has offered ultimate pardon during this present time to all who repent and believe. Moreover, salvation is simply pardon – applied after the period of amnesty is over. Thus, we are saved from the second death at the end of the age by accepting the offer for pardon now.

⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection (); over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. (Rev 20:6 NASB)

²² "You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved. (Mat 10:22 NASB)

⁵ I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. (1Cr 5:5 NASB)

- D. The day of the Lord is the day in which the wicked are punished, ending the period of amnesty. It is not only the hour of punishment for the wicked, but of reward for the righteous also. The reward of the righteous comes with Jesus on the day of the Lord. Thus, Jesus always commanded the righteous to store up treasures in heaven, waiting until the day of the Lord to claim their reward.

⁵ Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, And all flesh will see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken." ... ⁹ Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news (LXX 'euongellizo'), Lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news (LXX 'euongellizo'); Lift it up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" ¹⁰ Behold, the Lord GOD will come with might, With His arm ruling for Him. Behold, His reward (for the righteous) is with Him And His recompense (for the wicked) before Him. (Isa 40:5, 9-10 NASB)

- ***¹² "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. (Rev 22:12 NASB)***
- ***¹ Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. (Mat 6:1 NASB)***
- ***²³ Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets. (Luk 6:23 NASB)***
- ***¹⁸ "And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth." (Rev 11:18 NASB)***

- E. Historically, there have been countless attempts to explain the presence of evil (*i.e. bad things happen to good people, and good things happen to bad people*) on the earth. John Calvin proposed that God causatively orchestrates evil for His own purposes. Jacob Arminius argued that God is too kind to orchestrate evil without consent for humans, and that it only exists because God honors the free will of humans. Thus, most of the Protestant movement spends most of it's time arguing if God is sovereign or if God is loving.⁵
- F. The Scripture explains this apparent dichotomy with the term **patience**. God has absolute sovereignty over the heavens and the earth, AND He loves the inhabitants of the earth – both the righteous and the wicked. He is exercising His sovereignty in accordance with His love for the wicked.

⁹ The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (2Pe 3:9 NASB)

- G. The truth is that He has established a real day in which He will reward the righteous and punish the wicked. In light of this day, the wicked are called to repent, and the righteous are called to persevere until that day.

⁵ The early split and current divide within Protestantism (Calvinism/reformed and Lutheran or later Armenian) is due largely to Platonic assumptions about the Kingdom. Within this context the word 'sovereign' or 'sovereignty' in the Scripture is interpreted as referencing God's causation of all events. The words in both Hebrew and Greek simply mean 'king' or 'kingdom', and are simply a reference to the fact that He rules on a throne over the heavens and the earth. Thus, the argument is actually like saying, "Do you believe that God is the King ruling over the heavens and the earth, or do you believe that you have free will?"

¹² For the LORD of hosts will have a day of reckoning Against everyone who is proud and lofty And against everyone who is lifted up, That he may be abased. (Isa 2:12 NASB)

³⁰ "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, ³¹ because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." (Act 17:30-31 NASB)

³³ The LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book. (cf. Rev. 20:15) ³⁴ "But go now, lead the people where I told you. Behold, My angel shall go before you; nevertheless in the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin." (Exd 32:33-34 NASB)

V. THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM

- A. The subject of even more controversy in the Body of Christ is the subject of what is called the Messianic Kingdom. Regardless of the view held of the universal, everlasting Kingdom of God, scholars are nearly unanimous in what they affirm regarding the expectation of the Messianic Kingdom in the time of Jesus.

⁶ So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Act 1:6 NASB)

- B. The primary source of controversy regarding the Messianic Kingdom is over **if it was redefined, when it was redefined, and how it was redefined.** In other words, if the Jews were expecting a literal Kingdom upon the earth centered in Jerusalem and that clearly didn't happen, how are we to interpret the events that did happen in their lifetime? While many definitions have been proposed (*both inside and outside of the church*) since the Constantinian Shift⁶, the earliest writings of the church fathers present us with virtual unanimity regarding the Kingdom expectation.
- C. In developing a theology of Kingdom expectation we must first fit the Messianic Kingdom in the context of the Universal Kingdom. The Universal Kingdom has always ruled over the heavens and the earth. It is the coming Messianic Kingdom which we know as being 'given' and 'coming'. The one ruling over the Messianic Kingdom will sit on an earthly throne of David.

⁶ For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders... ⁷ There will be no end to the increase (lit. 'abundance') of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this. (Isa 9:6-7 NASB)

⁶ A term popularized by John H. Yoder, a Mennonite theologian from the 20th century, used to describe the fundamental shift in identity and mission during the process of Constantine's legalization of Christianity in the 4th century.

- D. The Messianic Kingdom is given by the ruler of the Universal Kingdom (*i.e. God*) because to have a human reigning over the earth was God's original plan. Thus, the Messianic Kingdom is given to the Messiah by the Father.

⁸ ***'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession. (Psa 2:8 NASB)***

¹³ ***...behold, with the clouds of heaven (cf. Rev. 1:7) One like a Son of Man (Heb. adam) was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. ¹⁴ "And to Him (i.e. the Messiah) was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed. (Dan 7:13-14 NASB)***

- ⁶ ***You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, (Psa 8:6 NASB)***
- ⁸ ***YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET (cf. Ps. 8:6)." For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him. (Hbr 2:8 NASB)***

VI. THE ORIGINS OF KINGDOM EXPECTATION

- A. While there are many alternate views concerning the Kingdom now, it is acknowledged – almost universally – what the expectation was in the first century. Although the various traditions go on to explain its reinterpretation, the references in the Gospels make it clear what was expected.
- B. The origins of Kingdom expectation are closely related to those of Messianic expectation. As the various Messianic prophesies took shape, it became clear that He would not simply restore creation, but rule over it in a complete restoration of the original created order with a human ruling over the earth.

¹⁰ ***"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh (lit. 'to whom it belongs') comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. (Gen 49:10 NASB)***

- C. **The Kingdom of God was 1st century Jewish terminology for the Messianic Kingdom.** This phrase was adopted during the inter-testamental period as a reference to a theme developed primarily from the Psalms and the Prophets. These passages still help give us the most clarity regarding the Kingdom and how we are to define it now. The book of Daniel has several key passages to help determine both what was promised and what was expected.

³¹ "You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. ³² "The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. ³⁴ "You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. ³⁵ "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time ... ⁴⁴ "In the days of those kings (the ten kings, cf. Dan. 7:24) the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. ⁴⁵ "Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy." (Dan 2:31-35, 37, 39-40, 42, 44-45 NASB)

- D. Daniel, interpreting the king Nebuchadnezzar's dream, mentions a final corrupt world empire which will be crushed by the inauguration of a Kingdom set up by God Himself. This final empire (*represented by 10 toes of the statue*) before the inauguration of God's Kingdom is developed later in the book of Daniel. It is described as a beast with ten kings, three of which are ousted by a less significant king. This king will then grow in influence until his empire covers the earth. Most of the Scripture refers to him as the anti-Messiah, or the man of lawlessness.

²⁴ 'As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings. ²⁵ 'He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. (Dan 7:24-25 NASB)

- E. During this time the Messiah will come in the clouds and be given a Kingdom by the Father, and all nations will serve Him. The Kingdom is an actual earthly government, established by the Messiah to restore God's order of a human reigning over the earth in perfect fellowship with God's heart. The inauguration of this Kingdom is called the Day of the Lord. It is the day when He crushes all of the wicked kings of the earth.

¹³ "...behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. ¹⁴ "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed. (Dan 7:13-14 NASB)

- ²⁷ **'Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.'** (Dan 7:27 NASB)⁷
- ⁷ **BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS** (cf. Dan. 7:13), **and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.** (Rev 1:7 NASB)
- ⁶ **"But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain."** ... ⁸ **'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession.'** ⁹ **'You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.'** ¹⁰ **Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth.** (Psa 2:6, 8-10 NASB)⁸
- ¹ **A Psalm of David. The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."** ² **The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, saying, "Rule in the midst of Your enemies."** ... ⁵ **The Lord is at Your right hand; He will shatter kings in the day of His wrath.** ⁶ **He will judge among the nations, He will fill them with corpses, He will shatter the chief men over a broad country.** (Psa 110:1-2, 5-6 NASB)

VII. CONTINUITY OF KINGDOM EXPECTATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- A. The New Testament is a reiteration of the expectation of the Kingdom promised to Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, and the prophets.

⁷ This passage also highlights another very important expectation in the ministry of Jesus. Part of the plan of God for the earth is to have righteous saints ruling the earth under the leadership of the Messiah. Although most of the Scriptures in the New Testament referencing this have been allegorized to mean something else as we read them, there are dozens of clear references to Jesus' presentation of discipleship as a means of qualifying for a place of authority in His Kingdom. (cf. Luke 19:11-27, Matt. 5:3-11, Rev. 5:9-10, I Cor. 6:2, Jer. 3:15, Luke 22:25-26,)

⁸ This passage uses what scholars refer to as the 'prophetic perfect tense', which is when the author, speaking prophetically, uses the past or perfect tense to express assurance of it's accomplishment. This 'tense' is used extensively in both the New and Old Testaments. (e.g. Rom. 4:17)

'(The past tense is used instead of the future tense) when the speaker views the action as being as good as done. This is very common in the Divine prophetic utterances where, though the sense is literally future, it is regarded and spoken of as though it were already accomplished in the Divine purpose and determination. The figure is to show the absolute certainty of the things spoken of.' E.W. Bullinger - Figures of Speech in the Bible (pg. 518)

'To express future actions, when the speaker intends by an express assurance to represent them as finished, or as equivalent to accomplished facts:

(b) To express facts which are undoubtedly immanent, and, therefore, in the imagination of the speaker, already accomplished. This use of the perfect occurs most frequently in prophetic language (perfectum propheticum [Latin for "prophetic perfect"]).

The prophet so transports himself in imagination into the future that he describes the future event as if it had been already seen or heard by him, e.g., Isa. 5:13, therefore my people are gone into captivity; 9:1; 10:23; 11:9; 19:7; Job 5:20; 2 Chronicles 20:37. Not infrequently the imperfect [i.e., the actual future tense] interchanges with such perfects either in the parallel member or further on in the narrative.' Gesenius Hebrew Grammar (Edited and reviewed by E Kautzsch, pg. 312, 313)

It should not appear foreign to us since we speak this way commonly in oral English. Phrases such as 'He lost the game on that one!', 'I can taste it already', etc... are used to express the certainty of the event though before it actually happens. Prophetic language simply works the same way.

¹ **The record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ** ("the Messiah" NLT), **the son of David** (promised ruler over the Kingdom of Israel), **the son of Abraham** (promised agent of 'blessing' to the nations)... (Matt. 1:1 NIV)

²¹ **"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.** (Mat 7:21 NASB)

- ²¹ **After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."** (Act 14:21-22 NASB)

⁴⁰ **"So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ "The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness,** (Mat 13:40-41 NASB)

²³ **Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. ... ²⁸ Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹ And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.** (Mat 19:23, 28-29 NIV)

- ³⁴ **"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.** (Mat 25:34 NASB)

¹³ **"But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." ¹⁵ When one of those who were reclining at the table with Him heard this, he said to Him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!"** (Luk 14:13-15 NASB)

- ¹ **And Jesus was saying to them, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power." ² Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; ³ and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them. ⁴ Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus.** (Mar 9:1-4 NASB)
- ³ **To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. ... ⁶ So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"** (Act 1:3, 6 NASB)

VIII. THE IMMATERIAL KINGDOM

*The identification of the Kingdom with the Church has led historically to ecclesiastical policies and programs which, even when not positively evil, have been far removed from the original simplicity of the New Testament *ekklēsia*. It is easy to claim that in the “present kingdom of grace” the rule of the saints is wholly “spiritual,” exerted only through moral principles and influence. But practically, once the Church becomes the Kingdom in any realistic theological sense, it is impossible to draw any clear line between principles and their implementation through political and social devices. For the logical implications of a present ecclesiastical kingdom are unmistakable, and historically have always led in only one direction, i.e., political control of the state by the Church. The distances down this road traveled by various religious movements, and the forms of control which were developed, have been widely different. The difference is very great between the Roman Catholic system and modern Protestant efforts to control the state; also between the ecclesiastical rule of Calvin in Geneva and the fanaticism of Münster and the English “fifth-monarchy.” But the basic assumption is always the same: The Church in some sense is the Kingdom, and therefore has a divine right to rule; or it is the business of the Church to “establish” fully the Kingdom of God among men. Thus the Church loses its “pilgrim” character and the sharp edge of its divinely commissioned “witness” is blunted.⁹*

- A. **The spiritualized Kingdom has been the normative interpretation since the 4th century.** Some view the Kingdom as being already ‘realized’ in the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This view presents Jesus as reigning in heaven during the ‘Church Age’, and spiritualizes the Kingdom to mean anything from the ‘people of God’ to signs and wonders. It developed from the assumption that – having shed His body (*and thus materiality*) at the ascension – Jesus’ return to the physical earth was impossible. Thus, His reign is a spiritual one in heaven while the church is the militant hands, arms, and feet who is ‘taking ground’ for the Kingdom, fully ‘establishing’ His Kingdom on the earth.
- B. Historically, this view has always lead men – both individually and corporately – to accumulate wealth and power ‘for the glory of God’, but at the expense of others. While everyone acknowledges that Church history is filled with whole movements fueled by perversion, lust, greed, and ambition, it is very rare to find a Christian historian honest enough to state what is plane to everyone else. We have lived and organized ourselves this way, historically, because we believe that we are entitled to these things.
- C. The most common view today in the Church is that the Kingdom is a future government that is being ‘manifest’ in some spiritual way right now. This view – often referred to as ‘already, but not yet’ – has been strengthened significantly in the last century by theologians like George Eldon Ladd;

⁹ Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God* (BMH Books, 1959), 438-439

“the Kingdom of God means God’s rule or sovereignty... The coming of the Kingdom for which we pray in the Lord’s Prayer means that God’s will be done on earth, i.e. that his rule be perfectly realized (Mt. 6:10). The ‘kingdom’ that Jesus appointed for his disciples (Lk. 22:29) is ‘royal rule.’”¹⁰

- D. The strength of this view is that it gives present tense implications of the future Kingdom. However, since the Scripture does not present this dualism, it simply leads men to claim as much of their inheritance now as possible. **Simply put, if I have to choose between now and then, I choose now.** The problem is that you have the sum of the Scriptures (*especially the NT*) encouraging us to live for the coming Kingdom and the day of the Lord, and to wait for our inheritance. Thus, leading to the necessary step of further allegorizing these passages.
- E. Theologically, the primary problem with both of these views is that they both allegorize the promises made to the Patriarchs in some way. For these to be true, God had to promise one thing to Abraham and David – through the covenants – and then at the first coming redefine what was promised and agreed upon in the covenants. In not only betrays Scripture, but the nature of God.
- F. Practically, the primary problem is that the Church loses its sojourning identity – as pilgrims in this age – and begins to live like the nations of the earth to accumulate wealth and power. Historically, whether the Church is corporately claiming their role of ‘reigning with Christ’ now or individually giving themselves to a life of pursuing their ‘inheritance’ of the wealth and influence of the nations, it always leads to sin and perversion filling the Church.

IX. EXEGESIS OF TWO ‘KINGDOM NOW’ PASSAGES

- A. The Kingdom of God is ‘at hand’: **Common prophetic language**

¹ ***Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying,***

² ***“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”*** (Gk. eggizo VRAI3S, “at hand” KJV/NKJV/NASB/ESV, “near” NRSV/NIV/NLT.) (***Mat 3:1-2 NASB***)

- B. Context: A bad thing, not a good thing

⁵ ***Then Jerusalem was going out to him...⁶ and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ...⁹ and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father’; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.***

¹⁰ ***“The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.¹¹ ... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.¹² “His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”*** (***Mat 3:5-12 NASB***)

¹⁰ G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament, Revised ed., D. A. Hagner ed. (William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1993), 60- 61*

- C. Old Testament use of terminology 'at hand' (cf. Deut. 32:35; Is. 13:6; Jer. 48:16; Ez. 7:7; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1; 3:14; Oba. 1:15; Mic. 7:4; Zeph. 1:7, 14)

⁶ Wail, for the day of the LORD [is] at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. ... ⁹ Behold, the day of the LORD comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, To lay the land desolate; And He will destroy its sinners from it. (Isa 13:6, 9 NKJV)

¹⁵ Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD [is] at hand; It shall come as destruction from the Almighty. (Joe 1:15 NKJV)

⁷ Be silent in the presence of the Lord GOD; For the day of the LORD [is] at hand ... ¹⁴ The great day of the LORD [is] near; [It is] near and hastens quickly... ¹⁵ That day [is] a day of wrath, A day of trouble and distress, A day of devastation and desolation, A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness, ... ¹⁸ Neither their silver nor their gold Shall be able to deliver them In the day of the LORD's wrath; But the whole land shall be devoured By the fire of His jealousy... (Zep 1:7, 14-15, 18 NKJV)

¹² In that day the LORD will start His threshing from the flowing stream of the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt, and you will be gathered up one by one, O sons of Israel. (Isa 27:12 NASB)

- D. New Testament use of terminology

⁹ and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near (Gk. eggizo VRAI3S) to you.' ¹⁰ "But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, ¹¹ 'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' ¹² "I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city. (Luk 10:9-12 NASB)

²⁷ "Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory. ²⁸ "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." ²⁹ Then He told them a parable: "Behold the fig tree and all the trees; ³⁰ as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. ³¹ "So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. (Luk 21:27-31 NASB)

- **¹¹ Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. ¹² The night is almost gone, and the day is near ... (Rom 13:11-12 NASB)**
- **⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand ("near" NASB/NIV/NRSV). (Philippians 4:4-5 ESV)**
- **⁷ Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸ You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near ("at hand" ESV/NKJV). (James 5:7-8 NIV)**

- E. The Kingdom of God 'has come upon you' – Common prophetic language

²⁸ But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. (Matt 12:28 NIV)

- F. Context: a bad thing, not a good thing

²² Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw. ²³ All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?" ²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons." ²⁵ And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand. ... ²⁸ "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you ... ³⁰ "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters. ³¹ "Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. ³² "Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, (i.e. that I'm not the 'Son of David') it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come... ³⁴ "You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart ... ³⁶ "But I tell you that every careless word (i.e. that I am doing this by the power of Beelzebul) that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. ³⁷ "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." (Mat 12:22-25, 28, 30-32, 34, 36-37 NASB)

- G. Old Testament use of terminology 'come upon you' (Deut. 28:15, 45; 30:1; 31:17, 21; Jos. 22:20; Jdg. 20:41; 1 Sam. 16:16; 2 Sam. 19:7; 24:13; 2 Chr. 20:9; 32:26; Neh. 9:32; Job 2:11; 3:25; 5:14; 20:22; 21:17; 27:9; Ps. 69:24; 119:143; Prov. 1:26; 3:25; 6:15; 10:14; Eccl. 11:2; Isa. 26:9; 47:9, 11; 51:19; Jer. 6:26; 22:23; 44:23; 51:60; Lam. 1:14; Ezek. 7:2, 7; 30:4; Dan. 9:13; Hos. 13:7; Amos 9:10; Jon. 1:12; Mic. 2:6; 3:11; Zeph. 1:6; 2:2; 3:7)¹¹

¹⁵ "But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: (Deu 28:15 NASB)

¹⁷ Awake, awake! Rise up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the LORD the cup of his wrath, you who have drained to its dregs the goblet that makes men stagger. ... ¹⁹ These double calamities have come upon you--who can comfort you?--ruin and destruction, famine and sword--who can console you? (Isa 51:17, 19 NIV)

²³ Because you have burned incense and have sinned against the LORD and have not obeyed him or followed his law or his decrees or his stipulations, this disaster has come upon you, as you now see." (Jer 44:23 NIV)

¹¹ Cross references taken from John Harrigan (The Gospel of Christ Crucified series)

⁵ ***"Thus says the Lord GOD: 'A disaster, a singular disaster; Behold, it has come! ⁶ An end has come, The end has come; It has dawned for you; Behold, it has come! ⁷ Doom has come to you, you who dwell in the land; The time has come, A day of trouble [is] near, And not of rejoicing in the mountains. ⁸ Now upon you I will soon pour out My fury, And spend My anger upon you; I will judge you according to your ways, And I will repay you for all your abominations. (Eze 7:5-8 NKJV)***

- H. New Testament use of terminology 'come upon you'

¹⁶ ***...they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost. (1Th 2:16 NASB)***

⁵ ***For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. (Eph 5:5-6 NASB)***

³³ ***"You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell? ³⁴ "Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, ³⁵ so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. ³⁶ "Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. (Mat 23:33-36 NASB)***

- X. PAULINE 'KINGDOM NOW' PASSAGE

- A. 'righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Spirit'

¹⁷ ***For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 14:17 ESV)***

- B. The context: love like you will in the age to come

¹⁰ Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. ¹¹ And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴ Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. ^{14:1} Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters... ⁴ Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls... ¹⁰ You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. ¹¹ It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'" (cf. Is. 45:23) ¹² So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God... ¹⁵ Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. ¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, (i.e. in the age to come, cf. 13:13) ¹⁸ because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men... ²² So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. ²³ But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin. (Romans 13:10-14:23 NIV)