

PREFACE

The study of eschatology, the Last Things, is ultimately a study of the fulfillment of Christ's kingdom. If the Messiah is the recurring motif throughout God's word from Genesis to Revelation, then the gravitational flow of the Bible runs inexorably toward Christ the King assuming His place of ultimate judgment and Lordship upon His throne.

To appreciate the kingdom's importance and centrality to all of God's plan for man, as well as its overwhelming importance in the Eschaton, before we can move forward we need to look backward, to trace the development of the timeless kingdom of God—which, in the end, will be handed over to His Christ by the Father. The earliest reference I could find to this kingdom is in the second book of the Pentateuch, in the words of God given to Moses to speak to Israel.

KINGDOM BEGINNINGS

Read Exodus 19:5-6.

Regarding this Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. writes,

Israel was to be kings and priests to God on behalf of the nations; they were to be mediators of the gospel as missionaries to the nations (“in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed,” Genesis 12:3b), and they were to be partakers in *the present aspects and coming reality of the “kingdom of God”* (emphasis added).

We get our most important reference to the “everlasting kingdom” in the narrative about the first king of Israel, Saul, and his successor, David. [Please turn with me to the first book of Samuel.](#) From the beginning, the Lord God's plan was that He would establish an *eternal* kingdom, which would be ultimately handed over to the second member of the Godhead: Christ Jesus. If he had been faithful to the Lord, Saul and his house would have inaugurated that kingdom. But Saul was *not* faithful; in disobedience to Yahweh, instead of waiting for Samuel to arrive, he impatiently assumed the role of priest and made the offerings before the Lord. Immediately thereafter, Samuel shows up.

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

Read 1 Samuel 13:13-14.

Don't miss that important word in v13: “forever.” Samuel is referring to the eternal Messianic kingdom that would ultimately be assumed by Christ Jesus.

That man “after [God’s] own heart,” mentioned in v14, was David, son of Jesse. Before anyone outside his immediate family knew anything about him, God had already appointed David to be king over Israel. But David was far more important than just that.

[Now turn to Second Samuel, chapter seven, and follow along with me.](#)

The Lord God is giving to the prophet Nathan instructions that he is to declare to King David. In v17 we have the confirmation that Nathan did just that, telling the king every word from Yahweh. In one of the most beautiful passages of Scripture—another “now-not yet” prophecy—King David expresses his desire to build a permanent “house”—not a temporary, portable tabernacle (or tent), but a “fixed residential structure” for the Lord. This was no fickle daydream, but an earnest, reverent act of devotion to build for Yahweh a permanent temple. King David had all the right reasons to build the temple, but God had something else in mind. He *would* have His house built—not by David, but by his son, Solomon—but God wanted to talk about another kind of “house.”

“... and I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you. ‘When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.’”
(2 Samuel 7:11b-16)

With a working knowledge of human nature we might wonder if this turned David’s head. Would his sons, grandsons, et al, continue on, ruling forever in perpetuity? We don’t need to wonder; [please turn to Psalm 145, a psalm of David.](#)

Read Psalm 145:10-13.

Whatever King David’s mental response to this declaration from the Lord, He understood that God was not referring to a mortal succession. It would indeed be a king from David’s line, but the throne would not be filled by an endless succession of men, but the *eternal* king would be just One: the Messiah.

And we need no more proof that David understood the pecking order than what he penned in Psalm 110, which begins,

For clarity's sake, I'm going to read this twice.

The LORD [Yahweh] says to my Lord [Adonai]: "Sit at My [Father God] right hand Until I make Your [Messiah's] enemies a footstool for Your feet." (v1)

We cannot know what was in David's mind, how much of what he wrote he understood when he wrote this prophecy, but he knew that he had a Lord between himself and Yahweh, and that at the end of all things that Lord would reign with unquestioned and unlimited authority.

The Lord is at Your right hand; He will shatter kings in the day of His wrath. He will judge among the nations, He will fill them with corpses, He will shatter the chief men over a broad country. (vv5-6)

LATER PROPHECIES

Three later OT prophets spoke of this eternal kingdom: Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel. All three speak of an everlasting kingdom ruled over by, as Daniel puts it, "the Most High," but the other two explicitly tie this to the Davidic covenant and the Davidic line of kingship—and all three make it clear that this ruler will be, essentially, synonymous with the Lord God.

Read Isaiah 9:6-7.

Read Jeremiah 23:5-6.

Read Daniel 7:13-14.

Later in the same chapter Daniel sees in the vision the fall of the "beast's" rule when Christ returns at the end of the Tribulation (vv26-27):

But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. 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.

IN THE NT

[Please turn to 1 Corinthians 15.](#)

I have made the point before that in the Eschaton—throughout God's word, but especially during the Last Things—the line between God the Father and God the Son is blurred. For example, in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians Paul writes in v24,

then comes the end, when He [Christ] hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He [Christ] has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

Yet, in v27, the apostle writes,

For HE [Father God] HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS [Christ's] FEET. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He [Father God] is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him [Christ].

Paul clarifies the relationship of the two, as regards the Lord's rule over the kingdom, in v28:

When all things are subjected to Him [Christ], then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One [God the Father] who subjected all things to Him [Christ], so that God may be all in all.

So is it Christ's kingdom or the Father's kingdom? Answer: Yes. The Son is the "exact representation" of the Father (Hebrews 1:3); what the Father does, the Son does. Christ hands the kingdom over to the Father, but the Father gives it back, having the Son be sovereign over all.

The picture I have in my mind is a blending of v24 and the Daniel prophecy from Chapter Seven. Christ, the Son of Man, approaches the Father's throne carrying in His arms "the kingdom." He ceremonially places it into the Father's hands, declaring, *It is done. It is finished.* The Father then hands the kingdom back to the Son (paraphrasing Daniel 7:14), *To You I have given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language would serve You. Your dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and Your kingdom is one which will not be destroyed. Now go down and rule! Be King over all.*

A similar blurring is going on in the gospels in most places where we see the word "kingdom."

Read Matthew 3:1-2.

A Jew hearing "the kingdom of heaven" would rightly conclude, *Ah, he's referring to Yahweh's kingdom.* Yet by saying "at hand" John is referring to the imminent arrival of the Messiah—His kingdom. And after His temptation in the wilderness, when He learns of John's arrest, Jesus says exactly the same thing: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17).

In a sense, Christ's kingdom—the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant—was realized in Bethlehem, because Christ the king was *now* present on earth. In another sense, Christ's kingdom is here now because His church is here. He has always been a king, and we are part of His kingdom.

Yet in the *truest* sense, the kingdom is not yet here because Christ Jesus does not yet reign as He will one day. God's word defines the moment when Christ will at last assume His role as true Davidic king of His kingdom as the moment He comes to earth—publicly, visibly—for the second time. In this moment the entire world will suddenly know that there is one King over this earth, and His name is the Son of Man, The Word of God, Christ Jesus, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. This will occur at the end of the Tribulation, before the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth.

In a strict, *dispensational* sense, any mention of “the kingdom” refers specifically to the reign of Christ on earth during the Millennium, and has Israel as the focus. We will delve deeper into this when we study the Millennium.

The writers in God's word have described this moment in a number of ways; the late great Bible teacher, M. R. De Haan, succinctly writes that this return of Christ will be “Public, Paralyzing, and Punitive.” We close with this scene as painted by John in the Revelation; [please turn to Revelation 19](#).

Read Revelation 19:11-16, 19-21.