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The Kingdom Of God Versus The Kingdoms Of The World And Men: How They Began, How They Ended, And The Everlasting Kingdom



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† The Bible presents a major contrast between God's kingdom and the kingdoms established by men. A kingdom involves a king, authority, subjects, laws, and a realm in which that authority is exercised.

† Israel was called to be a kingdom under God's direct rule. God had already identified Israel as His kingdom of priests

before Israel ever demanded a human king (Exodus 19:5-6).

† The problem wasn't that Israel eventually had kings. God had already anticipated kingship in Israel (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). The problem in 1 Samuel 8 was Israel's desire to be like the surrounding nations and its rejection of God's immediate kingship over them (1 Samuel 8:7, 19-20).

† The prophets then looked beyond Israel's failing earthly kings and the temporary kingdoms of men to the everlasting reign of the Messiah (Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 2:44).

† Jesus announced that God's kingdom had drawn near, demonstrated its presence through His works, and identified Himself as its King. The New Testament then describes believers as already transferred into Christ's kingdom (Matthew 12:28; John 18:36-37; Colossians 1:13).

† Daniel's prophecy reaches its great covenantal climax when the kingdom, dominion, and greatness are given to the saints of the Most High. Unlike the kingdoms of men, His kingdom doesn't rise only to be replaced by another. It's everlasting (Daniel 7:18, 22, 27).

Exodus 19:5-6

Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.

† God's kingdom didn't begin with Israel asking Samuel for a human king. Long before Saul, God had already declared Israel to be His kingdom of priests (Deuteronomy 33:5).

† God was Israel's true King. Israel's national identity, covenant, law, worship, and calling came from Him, not from human political authority (Judges 8:22-23).

† Notice that God's kingship wasn't limited by geography. He declared that all the earth belonged to Him. Israel had a special covenant role, but God's sovereignty extended over everything He had made (Psalm 24:1).

1 Samuel 8:4-7

Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; and they said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint us a king to judge us like all the nations." But the matter was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, Listen to the voice of the people regarding all that they say to you, because they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being King over them.

† This passage tells us exactly what was wrong with Israel's demand. They wanted a king like the nations around them, and God said their demand represented a rejection of Him as their King (1 Samuel 10:19).

† Israel wasn't creating the concept of kingship. Human kingdoms existed long before Saul. What changed was Israel's demand to imitate those nations rather than remain satisfied with God's covenant rule (Genesis 10:8-12).

† Human kingdoms depend upon rulers who age, die, fail, and are replaced. God's kingdom depends upon a King whose reign isn't ended by death, political revolution, or military conquest (Psalm 145:13).

1 Samuel 12:12-13

But when you saw that Nahash the king of the sons of Ammon was coming against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us!' Yet the Lord your God was your king. And now, behold, the king whom you have chosen, whom you have asked for, and behold, the Lord has put a king over you.

† Samuel again stated the central issue, the Lord their God was their King, but Israel demanded a visible human ruler like the nations (1 Samuel 8:19-20).

† Saul's appointment didn't mean God surrendered His sovereignty. Even Israel's kings remained accountable to the greater King who had authority to establish them and remove them (1 Samuel 13:13-14).

† This distinction is essential. Human governments exercise

temporary authority, but no earthly ruler becomes sovereign over God's kingdom simply because people give that ruler political power (Daniel 4:17).

Daniel 2:44

And in the days of those kings 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.

† Daniel saw successive human kingdoms rise and fall, but God's kingdom was fundamentally different. It would never be destroyed and would never be replaced by another kingdom (Daniel 2:31-43).

† The expression "in the days of those kings" places the establishment of this kingdom within the historical sequence Daniel was describing. God's kingdom wasn't presented as something postponed indefinitely into the distant future (Daniel 2:34-35).

† Jesus came during the days of the Roman Empire announcing that the appointed time had been fulfilled and the kingdom of God had drawn near (Mark 1:14-15).

Daniel 7:13-14

I kept looking in the night visions, And 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. And to Him was given dominion, Honor, and a kingdom, So that all the peoples, nations, and populations of all languages Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

† Daniel's Son of Man comes to the Ancient of Days and receives dominion, glory, and a kingdom. This is enthronement language, and Jesus repeatedly identified Himself with Daniel's Son of Man (Matthew 26:64).

† Christ's kingdom isn't another temporary political empire. His dominion is everlasting and His kingdom can't be destroyed

(Luke 1:32-33).

† After His resurrection Jesus declared that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to Him. His kingship rests upon divine authority, not human elections, armies, borders, or governments (Matthew 28:18).

Daniel 7:27

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 empires will serve and obey Him.

† Daniel didn't merely predict the reign of the Messiah. He also saw the saints participating in the kingdom given by God (Daniel 7:18, 22).

† The kingdom belongs ultimately to God and His Messiah, while His people share in the blessings and reign of that kingdom. This is why the New Testament can speak of believers receiving a kingdom that can't be shaken (Hebrews 12:28).

† Daniel's contrast couldn't be stronger. Beastly kingdoms rise, dominate, persecute, and disappear. God's kingdom survives them because its King and authority are everlasting (Daniel 7:3-12).

Matthew 3:1-2

Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

† John didn't announce that the kingdom was thousands of years away. He announced its nearness to his first-century audience (Matthew 3:1-2).

† The kingdom promised by the prophets had reached its appointed time. Jesus soon proclaimed the same message, saying that the time was fulfilled and God's kingdom was near (Mark 1:14-15).

† The arrival of Jesus was therefore central to the arrival of the kingdom. The promised King was present, and the promised

kingdom was breaking into history through Him (Luke 17:20-21).

Matthew 12:28

But if I cast out the demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

† Jesus went beyond saying that the kingdom was near. He said His works demonstrated that God's kingdom had come upon that generation (Luke 11:20).

† The kingdom wasn't defined by political borders, military conquest, or an earthly throne in Jerusalem. Its presence was demonstrated by the authority of Christ over the powers opposed to God's rule (Matthew 12:25-29).

† Jesus was showing that God's reign was actively invading the domain of darkness. The King was present, exercising the authority of His kingdom (Colossians 2:15).

Luke 22:29-30

and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

† Jesus explicitly connected the kingdom with what the Father had appointed to Him and what He was appointing to His disciples (Luke 12:32).

† The kingdom wasn't an accidental development in history. It belonged to God's redemptive purpose centered in Christ (Acts 2:30-36).

† The apostles were given a unique foundational role connected with Israel's transition and the establishment of the New Covenant people of God (Ephesians 2:19-22).

John 18:36

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."

† Jesus clearly distinguished His kingdom from earthly political

kingdoms. His kingdom doesn't originate from the world's systems of power.

† Earthly kingdoms maintain authority through armies, force, territory, and political institutions. Jesus specifically pointed to the absence of military resistance as evidence that His kingdom wasn't from that source (Matthew 26:52-54).

† This doesn't mean Christ has no authority over the world. It means His authority doesn't originate from the world. His authority comes from the Father (Daniel 7:13-14).

Colossians 1:12-13

giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,

† Paul didn't tell the Colossians they would someday be transferred into Christ's kingdom. He described their transfer as an accomplished spiritual reality.

† This gives us one of the clearest New Testament answers concerning whether Christ's kingdom exists now. Christians had already been delivered from the authority of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of God's Son (Ephesians 5:5).

† We don't wait for an earthly political kingdom to make Jesus King. Christ already reigns, and those who belong to Him are already citizens under His rule (Philippians 3:20).

Hebrews 12:28

Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let's show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;

† Human kingdoms can be shaken. Governments collapse, empires disappear, borders change, and rulers die. God's kingdom can't be shaken (Hebrews 12:26-27).

† Hebrews connects the unshakable kingdom with the heavenly Mount Zion and heavenly Jerusalem that its first-century believers had already approached (Hebrews 12:22-24).

† This is the kingdom Daniel said would stand forever. The

temporary covenant order was passing away, but the kingdom centered in Christ would remain (Hebrews 8:13).

Revelation 11:15

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."

† Revelation brings the contrast between the kingdoms of the world and Christ's everlasting reign into powerful prophetic focus (Revelation 11:15).

† The message isn't that Christ eventually becomes King because human governments permit Him to reign. His authority comes from God, and His reign surpasses every temporary dominion (Psalm 2:6-12).

† The kingdoms of men rise and fall within history. Christ's kingdom remains because His reign is forever (Daniel 7:14, 27).

Historical References

† Josephus describes the turmoil surrounding first-century Judea, including competing rulers, revolutionary factions, internal violence, and finally the destruction of Jerusalem under Rome. His account vividly demonstrates how quickly human political and religious power can collapse. Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Books 4-7.

† Tacitus records the Roman campaign against Jerusalem and the political setting surrounding the Jewish war. Rome appeared overwhelmingly powerful, yet even the Roman Empire itself would eventually decline. Tacitus, Histories, Book 5.

† Eusebius records the early Christian understanding that judgment came upon Jerusalem and also describes the spread of Christ's followers beyond Judea. The earthly city and temple fell, while Christianity continued to spread. Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Books 2-3.

How It Applies To Us Today

† We don't need to build Christ's kingdom through political

force. Jesus already possesses all authority, and His kingdom isn't dependent upon an earthly government recognizing Him (Matthew 28:18; John 18:36).

† Our primary citizenship and loyalty are centered in Christ. Governments change, rulers change, nations change, but our King doesn't change (Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 13:8).

† We shouldn't measure the success of God's kingdom by elections, political parties, national borders, or the rise and fall of governments. God's kingdom is greater than every political system created by men (Daniel 2:44).

† We live as citizens of the kingdom by serving Christ, loving others, proclaiming the gospel, practicing righteousness, and recognizing Jesus as Lord (Romans 14:17; Colossians 3:17).

† The kingdom isn't waiting for another age to begin. Believers have received the unshakable kingdom and have been transferred into the kingdom of God's Son (Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 12:28).

† The kingdoms of men have temporary rulers and temporary authority. God's kingdom has an everlasting King and everlasting dominion (Daniel 7:14, 27).

Q & A Appendix

Q: What makes a kingdom?

A: A kingdom has a king, authority, subjects, laws, and a realm where the king's authority is exercised. God's kingdom has Christ as King, His people as citizens, and divine authority as its foundation (Daniel 7:13-14; Colossians 1:13).

Q: Was God Israel's King before Saul?

A: Yes. God explicitly said that Israel's demand for a human king was a rejection of Him as their King (1 Samuel 8:7; 12:12).

Q: Was having a human king itself sinful?

A: No. God had already provided instructions concerning a future king (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). Israel's sin was demanding a king like the surrounding nations and rejecting

God's immediate rule over them (1 Samuel 8:5-7).

Q: When did God's kingdom begin?

A: God's sovereign rule has always existed, and Israel was explicitly called His kingdom of priests at Sinai. The promised Messianic kingdom foretold by Daniel arrived through Jesus Christ. John announced that it was near, Jesus demonstrated that it had come upon His generation, and the apostles taught that believers had already been transferred into Christ's kingdom (Exodus 19:6; Daniel 2:44; Matthew 12:28; Colossians 1:13).

Q: Is Christ's kingdom an earthly political government?

A: No. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world." His kingdom doesn't derive its authority from earthly political systems, armies, or governments (John 18:36; Daniel 7:13-14).

Q: Are Christians waiting to enter Christ's kingdom?

A: No. Paul said believers had already been transferred into the kingdom of God's beloved Son, and Hebrews says believers were receiving a kingdom that can't be shaken (Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 12:28).

Q: Will Christ's kingdom eventually end?

A: No. Daniel said His dominion is everlasting and His kingdom won't be destroyed. Revelation declares that He reigns forever and ever (Daniel 7:14, 27; Revelation 11:15).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Exodus 19:5-6; 1 Samuel 8:4-7; 1 Samuel 12:12-13; Daniel 2:44; Daniel 7:13-14; Daniel 7:27; Matthew 3:1-2; Matthew 12:28; Luke 22:29-30; John 18:36; Colossians 1:12-13; Hebrews 12:28; Revelation 11:15

† Historical writers: Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Books 4-7; Tacitus, Histories, Book 5; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Books 2-3

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