

We Believe in Jesus

LESSON
FIVE

The King
Discussion Forum



THIRD MILLENNIUM

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We Believe in Jesus

Lesson Five: The King

Discussion Forum

With

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Dr. Scott Redd
Dr. Thomas Schreiner
Dr. Glen Scorgie
Dr. Mark Strauss
Dr. K. Erik Thoennes
Dr. Gideon Umukoro
Dr. Simon Vibert
Dr. Stephen Wellum

Question 1:

What is the kingdom of God?

The New Testament tells us that when Jesus became a human being, he also became the king over God's kingdom on earth. But we have to admit that for unbelievers, it can be hard to identify Jesus as this world's king. In fact, for those who haven't embraced Christ as King, the whole idea of the kingdom of God can be confusing. After all, what kind of kingdom has a king we can't see, and no discernible borders? What is the kingdom of God?

Dr. Jonathan Pennington

The kingdom of God is one of the most important and largest concepts in the Bible. In fact, that translation, "kingdom of God," has some good things about it, but sometimes it can actually mislead us from the main idea, which is not so much a place, but instead the fact that God is the true King; that he reigns; it's the kingship where the rule and reign of God. I think the kingdom of God is one of the greatest concepts of the Bible because it encompasses all of his work from creation to new creation. And I like to think of the reign or kingdom of God as God establishing his rule, re-establishing his rule, from heaven to earth, from creation to new creation. I think the book of Revelation certainly shows this in a great way because it really is an unfolding of one of the central ideas of the New Testament, and that is the Lord's Prayer where Jesus teaches his people to pray that God's reign, his kingdom, would come from heaven to the earth. And that is the great Christian hope.

Dr. Dan Doriani

The kingdom of God is the rule or the reign of God. The kingdom of God is not a realm. God is not a king over certain borders. There's not a border guard keeping people out. It's not a geographical entity. It's a spiritual entity over which God reigns.

And it can be construed two ways. In one sense, God rules over all things, and then especially those who willingly submit to his reign. So we could say there's the voluntary submission to his reign and the involuntary, in the sense that God rules even over those who rebel against him. God's kingdom encompasses all things. Of course, we're used to the idea that Jesus announces the kingdom, and so he is talking about yielding to him, believing in him, following him ethically. Absolutely that's true, but God's kingdom also extends over all things. It extends over economics, politics, workplace, policies, the arts, the sciences, entertainment, sports, our homes, our gardens. Essentially anything you can name is a sphere over which God reigns, and he wants us to willingly yield ourselves consciously to his rule.

Dr. Steve Blakemore

We ask ourselves the question, what is the kingdom of God? I mean, God is the king. God is the rightful ruler. There has never been anything that was out of God's control in the sense that he was not sovereignly able to be over all things. So what would the kingdom of God introduce, or the concept introduce into our understanding of God's work in the world or the world's relationship with God? And I've come to think of it in these terms: The kingdom of God is the rightful, true reign of God in willing people who rightly recognize God's rightful claim on their lives, who lovingly, trustingly, fully and willingly surrender to the sovereign lordship of God. Now, that means that the church is in some way the visible manifestation of the kingdom of God. The church is the way that God's kingdom is made visible in creation, in history, right now. But that surrender that we experience now is only a precursor. Ultimately, God will renew all things. God will destroy every enemy. God will remove every impediment from our perfectly knowing him and our completely obeying him. He will remove those impediments. That's the ultimate promise of God. But right now, we participate in an anticipatory way willingly, lovingly, freely by acknowledging in Jesus Christ God's salvation and God's lordship over our lives. And through that, the church bears witness to the ultimate gift of the kingdom that is promised in the *eschaton*.

Dr. K. Erik Thoennes

The kingdom of God is fundamentally God's rule and reign. That is something that he has been working out throughout all of human history but was inaugurated in the ministry of Christ. Jesus brings with him this rule and reign of God that's inaugurated there. It's not consummated yet, but it is being worked out. It starts slowly, Jesus tells us. It often shows up in ways we don't expect, in humble ways. But it's God's rule and reign fundamentally brought through the King, Jesus.

Dr. William Edgar

The kingdom of God consists of two fundamental realities. The first is God's rule. He is Lord over all things. Now, as the book of Hebrews points out, we don't always see that rule manifested, but it is. He is governing all things. He is the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings. The second is the realm of his righteousness. As the kingdom extends, the righteousness of God, his will, is made known and applied on earth as it is in heaven. So by the time of the end, you will see the perfect expression, the perfect

completion of both God's rule and his righteousness here on earth. As of now, we believe it, but we're still waiting to see the final fruition of it.

Question 2:

What gives God the right to rule as king over all creation?

Throughout the entire Bible, God is referred to as the great King, the sovereign over all, who will reign forever and ever. But how did God come to be the ultimate ruler? What qualifies him to be in charge? What gives God the right to rule as king over all creation?

Dr. David Garner

Scripture presents God as Creator. We find in Genesis 1 that he made all things simply by declaring them. He, by fiat, said, "Let there be" and there was. The way in which that took place is really beyond the scope of our comprehension. How can words have such efficacy? How can they have such power? Well, they can only be true if God is completely other than we are. He is not dependent upon anything. He is the eternal, infinite, all-powerful, all-knowing God. And as the Creator, he is also the owner of all things, and he has chosen to create some things and not create others. He has caused some people to be born and not others to be born. That is fully within his right and power and authority to exercise. Many people struggle with the idea of God's absolute authority. I think Paul speaks of that struggle in Romans 1 when he describes how humanity in its sinfulness seeks to suppress the knowledge of God, seeks to suppress the clear revelation of God. Well, what is that clear revelation? That he is God and we're not. That he is fully in control, that he is fully authoritative. And I think an important component for us as humans to recognize about our existence is that we don't have a say in things in that ultimate sense. We are blessed to be alive. We are blessed to have the opportunity to give glory to the one who made us. And then, to think about the fact that not only did he make us, and not only did he not just immediately obliterate Adam and his progeny in view of Adam's first sin, but also, in his perseverance, determined to still call a people to himself, to still even give, as Jesus will describe in Matthew 5 in the Sermon on the Mount, to cause the rain to fall on the unjust and the just. You see, God is a merciful God. He is a kind God. He is a patient God. Every breath that I have, every breath that I breathe, is not only something that's given from him, but it is also something that I need to be aware of, points me ultimately to him. And so my entire existence is dependent upon the God who has made all things, and for that reason, we need to recognize that he is wholly sovereign and he has the right to act as he wills. One final comment I would add about God's sovereignty is it's not a capricious sovereignty. It's not a sovereignty that operates distinct from his character as a good God. And so not only is he sovereign, but he is also good. And it is on that basis that we are called then to delight in him.

Dr. William Edgar

One of the questions we often get in apologetics is, "I didn't ask to be born; how does God get to rule over me?" And I think the simple answer to that is, exactly because

you didn't ask to be born. That was a choice made by someone else, your Creator that vests the proper authority in God himself. God doesn't derive his authority from outside of himself. He is his own authority. His attributes, all of them, are authoritative. But of course, it's not the kind of authority we're used to as human beings, which can be tyrannical, or capricious, or arbitrary. It's authority that is good because God is good. We don't always see that. We question his providence at times, and even the most saintly people have gone through trials that don't make sense to them, and they rightly ask God in faith, "Why are you allowing this?" He sometimes gives the answer here and now, but most times he waits and maybe it will be only in the new heavens and new earth that we'll finally find out the answers to all these things. But we can trust his authority because he has an amazing track record. The greatest proof of his authority is, of course, sending his Son to die for our sins and to be raised up for our justification. No other philosophy, no other god remotely comes to this kind of answer. So God's authority is in itself, but it's proven over and over again in Jesus Christ.

Dr. John McKinley

The Bible displays God as king over all creation. His rule is absolute, and he does not accept any other contender. His right to be so is, whatever way you think about ownership and rights, God has it. He made it, he sustains it, and he rescued it at great personal cost through incarnation and crucifixion. So he has the right to do whatever he wants with everybody, and the fact that he is benevolent in doing so should make us praise him for everything that he does do.

Dr. Glen Scorgie

Some people ask what gives God the right to rule as king over all creation. Well, three reasons come to my mind. The first is that God as creator of all that exists has a kind of patent or ownership claim on his handiwork. So there is this sort of proprietary interest and entitlement on that basis to administer what he has brought into being. I think a second reason, and perhaps we sometimes overlook this, but every time there's an election you think about it, and it's this: only God is qualified to administer with wisdom and competence all that this universe, and particularly this little corner of it, our world, encompasses. This is an administrative task that exceeds the competence and pay grade of any human being. He's really the only qualified candidate. And then of course, in the third place, there's what the old Scots used to call "the crown rites of the Redeemer." God has the right to be king because he made it all and us, he's the one singularly qualified to do a good job of leadership, and then on top of that, he paid an incredible personal price to redeem us back a second time through the blood of his Son. We are bought with that price. And so indeed, the crown rights of the Creator Redeemer are compelling. But I should also add that the imagery of king, which in some ways seems antique to us today, is really a way of saying as king he does not rule for his own ego. He rules, as Calvin said, chiefly for our sake as our powerful protector, provider and advocate. The concept of king is upsetting to egalitarian-minded moderns with a strong sense of personal entitlement and autonomy, but indeed, king does not convey in this instance a tyrant or anyone

who is inclined toward narcissism. The king rules at personal sacrifice so that we are safe and can flourish

Question 3:

Why does the Old Testament sometimes present God as a warrior king?

In the history recorded in the Bible, one prominent function kings performed was waging war against other nations. In fact, the Old Testament often depicts God as a warrior king that fights and defeats his enemies. But how do we reconcile this idea with God's goodness and mercy? How can a benevolent God promote war and destroy nations? Why does the Old Testament sometimes present God as a warrior king?

Dr. Scott Redd

One of the most significant depictions of the Lord in the Old Testament is God's role as king, and as a king, he would have multiple duties just like any other ancient Near Eastern king, multiple duties and functions that give light to his office as king. One of those functions would have been a warrior function. You see, in the ancient Near East, the king was considered the leader of the hosts, the leader of the armies of his nation, and as such, he was also the greatest warrior. So God, or the Lord, being a warrior throughout the Old Testament depicts God as a king who is a warrior king. He goes out and defends, he fights for, he delivers, and he protects his own people. As a matter of fact, most of the great events of the Old Testament are defined and described in this warlike imagery. Genesis 1, for instance, the story of creation shows Yahweh going to war with the forces of chaos and void in the sea, pushing back the sea. Psalm 104 actually retells the creation story and highlights this warrior imagery of God, Yahweh as a warrior king going out and pressing back the forces of chaos and death. Likewise, when God delivers his people from Egypt, Yahweh goes to war with the gods of Egypt. So when we look at the story of Exodus, God going down and sending plagues against Pharaoh and his house and indeed the whole nation of Egypt, is not just God showing random or arbitrary power in Egypt, but rather, he's addressing through each individual plague what were perceived to be the strengths and the domains of the Egyptian gods. So Yahweh is fact, even in Exodus, a delivering warrior. He comes in and he delivers his people from the Egyptian household, from the Egyptian pantheon of gods, and delivers them unto himself.

Likewise, in the conquest, when God's people go in to drive out the Canaanites from the land, we see God going in as a warrior before them. God secures the victory. It's not through strength of their own arms or through their own power or might as a mighty people. Indeed they weren't. They were the least of the nations. And yet the Lord gives them great victory because he is the warrior, not his people. We see it in the story of Gideon — where it's perhaps the most obvious — where Gideon is told to build up an army to go out against the Midianites, and yet you would think that his goal was to build this largest army that he possibly could. And yet the Lord calls him to pare back his army, to show it to be a smaller army, to cut out certain

individuals from the army to have a lesser number. What a great way for God to show his power, because, in fact, his victory is not in Gideon's numbers or his military prowess, but it's in the Lord as a warrior. So God being a warrior king is a cause of great hope and great satisfaction to his people. They know that he is not a king who sits passively by, who requires them to have the victory. But rather, their victory is in him. God's role as a warrior king is a cause for consolation and comfort, but also a cause for confidence. As we go out into the world around us, God's people can be sure that their God is a warrior and that he goes out and fights for them, and he protects them, and he defends them, and the victory will be his.

Dr. William Edgar

I think contemporary people are a bit skittish about the idea of a God who goes to war or justifies war. There is plenty of war on our planet, but we generally don't like it, especially if we follow Christ who told us to turn the other cheek and to be peacemakers. But of course, war is very much a part of bringing justice to a world that's already in chaos, and so Christians reading the Bible have developed the idea that some wars are just. They're just because they're fighting off aggression and they're fighting off injustice. This is the kind of warrior that God is. He goes to battle for his people, he rescues them from their enemies. In the Old Testament, much of this was physically real. Think of the Exodus, think of the angel of the Lord battling for the people of Israel. But as the people were disobedient and sent into exile, a higher level of warfare was introduced, if I can call it that, and that is a spiritual warfare. So Jesus comes, and he still is the warrior, and there are times when he acts like one. He threw over the moneychangers' tables in the temple. But until the end of time, he will be mostly leading us in the battle against sin, and the flesh, and the Devil, telling us to put on the whole armor of God, and leading his people in what really is a war against all the forces of evil. The book of the Revelation tells us that Jesus is this warrior, and he wins. The victory is his, and now we're waiting for that victory to unfold.

Dr. Matt Friedeman

I think the Lord shows himself as a warrior king in the Old Testament because, I believe, at the end of the day everybody wants someone fighting for them. And it not only happens in the Old Testament. I think it extends into the New Testament where the Lord, the Holy Spirit, Jesus, is still fighting on behalf of the people. And if you go all the way to the book of Revelation, what do you find? You see a bit of the warrior king there as well. So I believe it's not just in the Old Testament. I believe it's an extension on into the New Testament, and at the end of the day, it's great knowing that someone wants to fight on your behalf.

Dr. Robert Chisholm

The Old Testament presents God as a warrior king who fights on behalf of his people. And for some people, that's a troubling image because they don't like war — none of us do — but at the same time, God has to fight because there are forces that are opposed to him in both the spiritual realm and sometimes in the earthly realm. And actually, if you study the Old Testament, you see that God has been at war from the

very beginning. We don't understand all of what was going on prior to creation, but we do know that at creation God had to fight and win a battle. You don't see that in Genesis 1, but you see it in other passages in the Old Testament that refer to creation. For example, in Psalm 74 beginning with verse 12, the psalmist affirms, "But God has been my king from ancient times, performing acts of deliverance on the earth." And then he goes back beyond the historical period and he says, "You destroyed," speaking to God, "You destroyed the sea by your strength; you shattered the heads of the sea monster in the water. You crushed the heads of Leviathan; you fed him to the people who live along the coast. You broke open the spring and the stream; you dried up perpetually flowing rivers. You established the cycle of day and night; you put the moon and sun in place. You set up all the boundaries of the earth; you created the cycle of summer and winter." It's clear that this is in a creation context. It may also be alluding to what God did at the Exodus when he defeated the Egyptians, some symbolism for that perhaps. But notice that God defeated the sea and the sea monster Leviathan. Those are symbols that come right out of the ancient Near Eastern world; they're symbols of chaos, of forces that are opposed to God. And this passage seems to indicate that God had to fight a war in conjunction with his creative work. Of course, we know that Satan is the ultimate reality behind this symbolism.

We also see this in Psalm 89:8: "O Lord, sovereign God! Who is strong like you? Your faithfulness surrounds you." So they're celebrating God's kingship. "You rule over the proud sea; when its waves surge, you calm them. You crushed the proud one and killed it; with your strong arm you scattered your enemies." And so once again we have this motif of God defeating these monsters at the beginning of the creation. And then notice verse 11: "The heavens belong to you as does the earth; you made the world and all it contains. You created the north and the south." And so once again, this victory by God over these forces seems to be associated with creation. So I would argue that God was opposed from the very beginning by the forces of Satan. He overcame them, he created this world, but throughout history, Satan has continued to oppose God, and so God has to be at war, and sometimes he calls his people to war. In the Old Testament they were physical wars against nations that were under the control of the evil one. Paul says, in the present era we are not fighting human enemies. We are battling against spiritual forces in high places, and it's through the power of the Holy Spirit that we win those victories. So God has always been at war. There's a very comforting passage, though, in Isaiah 27 verse 1. Isaiah is looking to the future, and we read there that the Lord once and for all in the future is going to defeat Leviathan, which is the symbol of these spiritual powers headed up by Satan.

Dr. John Oswalt

The Old Testament presents God in a great variety of ways because he's not just a force with a mask on like the pagan gods. He is a real person in all of the complexity of that. So on the one hand, he is the Father who has compassion on his children; but on the other hand, he is the warrior who fights for his children, and he will sometimes fight against them as well. Because we're representing that God is all-powerful, and anything that might be expressive of personality is appropriate to him. So then, if evil is the enemy army, as it is, God is presented as the warrior king who comes to defeat.

One of the most beautiful pictures of this is in the 52nd chapter of Isaiah where the people are captive to their sins and they're represented as being a besieged city, and the watchman is on the walls looking to see if a delivering army is coming over the mountains, and we have the famous words, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news." The watchman says, "Yes, I can see the herald coming; God the warrior is coming to defeat our enemies, both within and without."

Question 4:

Why were ancient kings, and even God in his divine kingship, sometimes referred to as fathers?

Many ancient Near Eastern peoples referred to their kings as "fathers." And the Bible frequently uses this same language for God. But what prompted this title? Was it appropriate to call kings "father"? Why were ancient kings, and even God in his divine kingship, sometimes referred to as fathers?

Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.

Kings in the ancient world called themselves fathers because they were portraying themselves as paternalistic. That is, they were caring for their people, taking care of their needs, protecting them and those kinds of things. Now in reality most of that was just propaganda because kings in the ancient world for the most part served themselves rather than serving their people. But at the same time, when God revealed himself to Israel, he used this common way of thinking about kings as fathers, and in the case of God being our Father, our royal Father, our imperial Father, it's not propaganda. It's true. God takes care of us. He provides for us. He protects us like a father would, so He's the father of his entire empire, the father of his kingdom.

Dr. Simon Vibert

Well, the language of fatherhood that we hear used with respects to ancient kings is a language of authority and therefore to call a king a father was a recognition that he did have authority over his subjects. And that language of course transposed to the one who has authority over all. So, God as the Father, is not just a title related to his intimacy and care, but it also relates to the fact that it acknowledges that he is the high King over all, the one with absolute authority.

Dr. Paul Chang (translation)

The Bible was written in human language. Our human relationship to God as Creator is often expressed in terms of the relationship between a father and his children. In this context, God's fatherhood represents our origin and his authority.

Dr. Mark Strauss

Ancient kings and God in his kingship were referred to as fathers primarily because, I think, of the patriarchal system of the day where a clan, or an extended family, would have a patriarch, a father, who would oversee them, who would have a authority in that context. And that patriarch had ultimately the authority to provide for the clan, to

provide for the family, and to protect the family. So I think those two things are key when we talk about God as Father; when we talk about ancient kings taking on the father figure — provision for their people and protection for their people.

Question 5: **Why is divine justice important?**

One of the things God does as King is administer divine justice to all people. Of course, many people today take offense at the idea that God holds them accountable, and that he plans to reward or punish them for their thoughts, words and actions. But that doesn't change the fact that upholding justice is the right thing to do. Why is divine justice important?

Dr. Steve Blakemore

Well, the Christian concept or understanding of the divine justice is incredibly important for these reasons: First of all, because God is holy and transcendent. But also, because of God's consistent character, we know that God's demands of us for righteous actions are not just some capricious choice on his part. He always acts out of his faithful, holy character. And so our concept of divine justice reminds us that God is not a capricious God. Secondly, our concept of divine justice reminds us that God wants us to participate and reflect his own righteousness. He wants us to enjoy lives that are filled with righteousness and, therefore, are evidenced in lives that seek after divine justice, that is, divine righteousness. Thirdly, the doctrine of divine justice reminds us how important we are in the grand scheme of things, that God has so exalted human beings that he takes our sins very seriously because of the glory to which we are called — not because he's disgusted with us or hates us — but the glory to which we are called by our being created in his image. And so the concept of divine justice reminds us of some very important things. And finally, the concept of divine justice lets us know this: In the end, in this world that's filled with sin and suffering in which sometimes wicked men and evil people seem to be carrying the day, it will not be so, for God's justice in the end will be done. His judgment will come. His mercy will be shown to those who have said, "yes" to his mercy, but his judgment and his justice will be unflagging and unfailing.

Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr.

I saw a news account just recently about courts going after the very last surviving Nazi war criminals. The prosecutor who was engaged in trying to hunt down these very last surviving war criminals said, "We have to do it because humanity and our sense of justice requires it." Well, you know, that's right. There would be something wrong about a society that says, "We know these horrible things were done, but, after all, the perpetrators are old, and it's going to be tough and expensive and difficult to track them down." We understand, even on our human scale of justice that justice just has to be achieved. But, you know, the other thing we learn from the human scale of justice is that we never actually achieve justice. We can put a drunk driver in jail, but we can't restore life to the one who was killed in the accident. We can do all kinds of

things in terms of sentences and punishments and sanctions, but we can't make things right. We can't give a paraplegic the ability to walk. We can't give the dead the ability to live. We can't give a mother back her child or a wife back her husband. Our human scale of justice reminds us that we're not good at punishing for what sin really is. You know, some of the most famous cases in American criminal history come, and there are people who have been given, individuals who have been given, like, 20 life sentences. Well, that's just to make us feel better because he only has one life to serve. We desperately need God's justice because all around us is a created order crying out that justice has to come. Inside our human hearts is the knowledge that justice has to come. We have, in our humble honesty, the recognition that we can't make this happen. There's only one who can bring that justice. There's only one who is infinitely just, infinitely wise, all-powerful, and able to bring this about. We yearn for the justice of God. And this much is clear: we're all going to see the justice of God.

Question 6:

How is the kingdom of God similar to ancient suzerain-vassal relationships?

Kingship in biblical times was largely administered through covenants or treaties. And in many places in the Bible, Israel's relationship to God is described in terms of the covenants that existed between great suzerains or emperors, and the vassal or servant kings that lived under the suzerains' authority. How is the kingdom of God similar to ancient suzerain-vassal relationships?

Mr. Bradley Johnson

Kingship in the ancient Near Eastern context of the time of Jesus and before was largely grounded in the concept of covenant. So we have evidence of treaties, ancient treaties, in which a king, or an overlord, or what's called "suzerain" would then enter into an agreement with some people who have become essentially his servants or his "vassals," and they define a relationship such that the overlord, the suzerain, defines a set of terms by which a relationship can be maintained, and he says something like this: "I will offer you protection, I will offer you prosperity, I will offer you identity in exchange for your participation with me by sharing a portion of your crops, by giving me your allegiance and by not forming allegiances with other kings or overlords." And so it tended to be a very mutual sort of a circumstance in one sense. And if we begin to think about kingship and the nature of covenant in the terms of this kind of an agreement, then what we find is that various portions of the Old Testament seem to conform very precisely with the exact elements of the suzerain treaties. And so we see things like preambles where we have these initial statements given by Moses to the people saying, "Here's the deal, folks..." And you see this element where memory is invoked to recall the good works of God the King, and the stipulations are laid out. Here's the Law. This is what you're going to have to do to stay in right relationship with this king, this overlord, and as a result, here are the

benefits, and we're going to provide an authorization of this covenant by means of witnesses. And that's another element of the suzerain treaties.

And so we've got to understand first and foremost that the nature of kingship is probably very well grounded in this idea of a suzerain-vassal relationship where there's mutual caregiving and exclusive devotion. If we start from that premise, then the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven as it's laid out in the New Testament, makes perfect sense, because God comes with very high expectations, but he also comes with a list of very desirable outcomes. So if we were to plot this, we would say this is high in risk, but high in reward. So the nature of the kingdom of God is one of an overlord who is superior, who demands exclusive allegiance, but in turn provides a lot of great stuff for our benefit and our wellbeing. I think in terms of the function of the kingdom, it's not something that has geographical boundaries. I mean, there aren't fences that are built to delineate where the kingdom ends and begins, but rather it's a matter of allegiance. It's what rules are people playing by? Are we playing by the rules of a secular authority as they're given to us? Are we following the rules of pop culture as it comes to us? Are we following the rules of our own reason doing what seems right in our own eyes? Or are we playing by the rules of God as he's given them to us? And I think that represents the scope or the domain of the kingdom. The kingdom is not something we build. We don't construct it. We participate in it. We join it. We find where it's happening and we accept the invitation to play by those rules, to satisfy the stipulations and the requirements of the covenant, and then we enjoy or reap the rewards of that kind of living.

Question 7:

In what sense is Jesus God's vassal king?

When Scripture talks about the kingship of Jesus, it sometimes indicates that Jesus' kingship isn't precisely the same as the Father's kingship. In general terms, we can say that the Father is presented as a great suzerain or emperor, and Jesus is presented as the Father's vassal or servant king. But if Jesus is God, how can he be a vassal? In what sense is Jesus God's vassal king?

Dr. Robert Chisholm

Jesus's kingship needs to be understood in light of the ancient Davidic kingship because Jesus is the ideal David. He is *HaMashiach*, the Messiah. And of course in the Old Testament, the Davidic kingship is patterned after something that we see in the ancient Near Eastern world, so-called suzerain-vassal relationship where the suzerain, the king, rules over his subjects, usually by treaty. And David is God's chosen ruler over the world. And so there's a sense in which God chose David to be his vice-regent to rule on his behalf. And, of course, Jesus is the one who ultimately fulfills that. In Revelation 1:5, Jesus is described as the faithful witness, the firstborn from among the dead, the ruler over the kings of the earth. Jesus has been granted kingship over the rulers of the earth by God. And of course this goes back to Psalm 2, which is a very famous Psalm that is cited quite often in the New Testament. And in

Psalm 2, the nations are raging and complaining and they want to get out from beneath the authority of God and his chosen king. But then the king says, “I will tell you what the Lord decreed. He said to me, ‘You are my Son; this very day I have become your Father.’” And the background for this language is this ancient Near Eastern relationship where a king would adopt one that he had chosen to rule on his behalf. The Lord himself says in verse 6 just before this, “I myself have installed my king on Zion, my holy hill” — Jerusalem. So the Davidic king was chosen by God to rule. And we read on in verse 8, “You have only to ask me and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the ends of the earth as your personal property. You will break them with an iron scepter; you will smash them as if they were a potter’s jar.” And then the kings of the earth are urged to do what is wise and submit to correction and serve the Lord in fear, and repent in terror, and give sincere homage; otherwise, God will be angry, and their destiny is not a pretty one if they have to deal with God’s anger. So we see that Jesus is this king in Revelation 1:5. And the background for that is Psalm 2 where God has chosen the Davidic King to rule on his behalf. And all of this is patterned after what we see in the ancient Near East.

Dr. Simon Vibert

The language of vassal king as opposed to suzerain king speaks about delegated authority, and Jesus is great David’s greatest son — was of that line of kingship. And even as David had his authority as king delegated from the Father, so too Jesus did as well — God being the one with all authority. In fact, he is the one of whom Jesus says, “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me,” and therefore, sends his disciples in the Father’s name to make disciples of all nations.

Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.

Normally when we think about the kingship of Christ, we think of that as something very exalted, high, up there, and because Jesus is now at the right hand of God the Father, and he is the King, but we must remember that Jesus was exalted in his kingship in his human nature. That’s to say in his divine nature Jesus was always the King. He was always ruling as the sovereign over all things, but Jesus was given authority in heaven and earth in his human nature, and Jesus is the son of David, and therefore the one who represents the nation of Israel and the people of God. And the son of David, like David himself, was a vassal king. He was a servant of the greater king, God the Father in heaven.

Question 8:

What makes Jesus the ideal ruler over the kingdom of God?

God established Jesus as the messianic King on earth. And he appointed him to rule over all creation. Jesus’ ancestors, like David, had also served God as kings. But Jesus was able to fill this role in ways that far surpassed every king that had gone before him. What makes Jesus the ideal ruler over the kingdom of God?

Dr. Greg Perry

The book of Revelation talks about Jesus as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, as the King — the Davidic king. And so that language reveals a couple of things. One of the things is it shows that Jesus not only reveals who God is, but he also reveals true humanness, the full nature of what it means to be a human being. And so in his role in the New Testament as the son of David, the Son of God language actually oftentimes, most often, refers to his role as the Davidic king, the Messiah. And in that sense, he represents a historic people. In the case of the book of Revelation, it's the people of God spread throughout all of the nations, and he is our king, our representative to the Father, or the suzerain. So he is our king in history, in time, a full human being who represents his people to the Father. Of course, also, he represents God to us, but that doesn't diminish the fact that he's fully human as well and represents us to God.

Dr. Stephen Wellum

One of the great titles of the New Testament that's applied to the Lord Jesus Christ is that he is Lord. The title "Lord" comes from the Greek "*kurios*". Some, who do not want to affirm the full deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and see this title as reflecting the fact that he is the Lord, try to say that, "Well, *kurios* can be used of kings and earthly rulers, and thus this doesn't at all prove that Christ is the Lord." Now, no doubt *kurios* has that range of meaning; every word has a range of meaning and it is then important to set those words in their context in the Scripture, and when we do that there are some instances where *kurios*, Christ, can be addressed as "lord" probably by the crowd, not in the full deity sense. Yet, when we have the affirmations repeatedly in the New Testament, where he takes on the very name of the Lord, *kurios*, from the Old Testament, which picks up the covenant name of God from the Old Testament Israel. Particularly, you think of, say, Philippians 2, where he goes to the cross, he humbles himself, even to death on the cross. The Father is the one who then exalts him by resurrection, then gives him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and tongue confess and that name that is given to him is Lord, *kurios*. That comes right out of Isaiah 45, where that name is applied to Jehovah or Yahweh from the Old Testament, and that now comes over into its application to Christ where you have a clear affirmation that the New Testament is saying that the Lord Jesus Christ is nothing less than the one who takes on the very identity, role, aims of the Lord of the Old Testament. In fact we can see this change of lordship, Lord, the name Lord from the Old Testament applied to Christ many, many different places. The book of Hebrews does it repeatedly. Paul's letters do it. In fact, God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ speaks of Christ as one who has the very identity of God of the Old Testament. So that it's not enough just to say, oh this is just a human title. No, in the New Testament it is referring to the unique fact that the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ is indeed the Lord. Speaking of his God equal-ness with the Father and with the Spirit, which then we understand in terms of Trinitarian relations.

Rev. Jim Maples

In Matthew's gospel we find a great emphasis on the kingdom of heaven. Matthew begins his gospel with the lineage of Jesus with the intent of showing that Jesus is the rightful heir, the Davidic king. This Davidic king is Jesus of Nazareth. The rightful

king, when Jesus is born, is working in a carpenter shop in Nazareth. And Matthew makes this case about the kingdom of heaven. His audience, his original audience, was primarily a Jewish audience, we believe, and this book is to say to the people, here's your rightful king. He places a lot of emphasis on that, but he goes beyond that. He goes beyond the great Davidic king who is to come. Matthew goes much farther, and he emphasizes the kingdom of heaven in its concrete manifestation as he demonstrates in this gospel that this term "kingdom of heaven" refers to Christ's rule over all people and all spheres. It is a question of authority. And we see this theme running along in the gospel of Matthew with the theme of the kingdom authority. The people were amazed, he said, because Jesus taught them as one who had authority. The Pharisees and Sadducees always asked Jesus, "By what authority do you do these things?" The gospel ends with the words: "Jesus said, 'All authority has been given to me in heaven and in earth.'" And this kingdom idea is much more than the nationalistic Davidic king that the people had come to expect and to look for. This is the statement that Matthew makes that Christ is king over every square inch of creation.

Question 9:

What do Christians mean when we say that Jesus is our king?

Christians that don't live in a monarchy don't always understand the office of king. Some of us struggle to understand the concepts associated with kings in the Bible, and even to appreciate the idea that Jesus is our king. So, what do Christians mean when we say that Jesus is our king?

Dr. Gideon Umukoro

The kingship of Jesus is an issue that the American church is not really too familiar with except the missionaries that have gone out overseas to countries where kings are still in power. The country I come from, Nigeria, is a democratic nation, but the kings also are there, playing vital roles alongside democracy. And it's not what it looks like. The kings have higher power than the governors who oversee the states, because if — take for example, if the governor of my state wants me in the government house, I can send his envoy back to him that I'm busy. When I have the time, I will come. But when the king sends for me, I don't have any say. I don't have any excuse. I must be there right away. And even if I am indisposed, I will have to be put in a wheelchair or a stretcher and be brought before him, because when he sends his envoy, the envoy comes with the scepter of the king and they put it in the front of your house, and that's to show to you that the king needs you immediately, and you have to move with the envoy back to the palace. So that is how the kings reign and wield power in my country Nigeria.

And when we see Christ as the king, as the sovereign, from the point of how I just described the African king, then the kingdom we are praying for will come very soon. You see, most of us don't really understand the power of a king. The king owns everything, including you, your wife, and your children. The king has the right to

accept you in his domain, he has the right to banish you out of his domain, and the governor has nothing to say about it, because the king's word is final. And I really am glad that Jesus is the King Jesus, and if he actually is the king, then he owns every one of us. He has the right to summons us, and we don't have any excuse to give to him. He has a right to everything that we have worked and labored for on earth here because he's the king. If we accept him as the king, then when he says, "go," you go. When he says, "come," you come. When he says, "stay," you stay. The issue of Jesus as the king needs to be elaborated to the Western church, most especially the American church, because we lift up our hands in worship and say that we give all to Jesus, but because of our little or myopic understanding of who a king is, even when Jesus is summoning us, or is sending us, is asking us to give, we don't really understand his sovereign authority and power. So it's an area that the church in America needs to really elaborate on. Jesus is king, and because of that, I own nothing on earth here, including myself, my wife, or my baby. We don't own anything. He is the owner of all.

So when we see Jesus from this point as a sovereign king, then it will enable us to do what he bids us with joy and not with struggle, because if we are on earth here, and we are subjected to unrighteous kings, unjust kings, how much more should we give ourselves freely to a just and honorable king who will not deceive us, who will not take from us unjustly what we have labored for just as the kings of the world do? So, when we see Jesus, one of his offices, as the office of the king, then we give what he wants from us with joy. Because he is the owner, and he will not allow us to suffer by taking from us what will give us happiness and joy, because he is a righteous God, he is a righteous king. So, I want us to see this office of Jesus, the sovereign kingship office of Jesus, as a great privilege for us. Some of us who are even under the tyranny of a wicked dynasty and kings, it gives us hope that we are under a king who cares for us even when our earthly kings fail us. So that is exactly the beauty of seeing Jesus as the righteous, holy and just king.

Question 10:

What did the Jews in Jesus' day expect the Messiah to do, and did their expectations reflect Old Testament teachings?

In the Old Testament, God appointed the kings of Israel and Judah to rule as his vassals over his people. But, ultimately, these kings failed to lead the people into God's greatest blessings. So, Israel and Judah looked forward to the day when the Messiah would fulfill all their hopes for kingship. But when Jesus arrived, the Jewish people rejected him, partly because they didn't believe he really was the Messiah. What did the Jews in Jesus' day expect the Messiah to do, and did their expectations reflect Old Testament teachings?

Dr. Mark Strauss

The evidence from the 1st century suggests that the Jews were looking for, especially, a political and military Messiah who would establish God's kingdom, who would

expel the Romans, defeat the Romans, and establish God's kingdom in Jerusalem as the center. So it was very nationalistic in that sense. Jesus didn't show signs that he was going to fulfill that nationalistic sense; instead he had a much larger vision, really. It wasn't about the Romans; it was really about creation itself. Creation was in a fallen state, and Jesus came to reverse the fall, to establish, once again to establish, God's kingdom on earth, and that kingdom meant the defeat of sin, the defeat of Satan, the defeat of death. So Jesus was looking at something much greater than merely a political victory, merely a military victory.

In fact, Jesus' miracles really demonstrate what the kingdom was all about because when Jesus healed the sick, what was he doing? Well, he was obviously demonstrating God's compassion, God's love for people. He cared for people, so he healed them, but really it's much more significant than that. In the Old Testament prophecies of Isaiah, Isaiah predicts that when the kingdom comes, that is when God restores his creation, the lame will walk and the blind will see; the deaf will hear. In other words, sickness is ultimately a result of human fallenness and the fallen state of creation. So what Jesus is doing, he's doing little snapshots of the kingdom. He's demonstrating what it would look like when God restores his creation. And so the healings are really a demonstration that this is much greater than just a physical defeat of the Romans or physical liberation in Israel. This is a restoration of the world as God had originally intended it to be. The exorcisms then, have the same significance because what does Jesus do? He casts out demons. Well, that's an act of compassion; freeing someone from Satan's power; but in another since it's got a larger purpose. And that larger purpose is to demonstrate that Satan himself is being defeated. This world has been in the grip of Satan since the fall of Adam and Eve. God is taking back his kingdom and so little snapshots by Jesus, to demonstrate that by casting out demons, showing his authority over Satan; that with his death on the cross he's going to defeat sin, Satan, and ultimately death as well.

Dr. John Oswalt

Clearly the concept of the Messiah is very important in the Old Testament. The Messiah is the Anointed One, the anointed King. It's interesting to wonder how would Christ have come, if in fact Israel had been obedient and had not demanded a human king. But they did. And so you had this succession of anointed ones, who were not caring for their people, who were not establishing God's justice in the world, who were self-centered. And so you have this longing emerging in the Old Testament; "Oh, couldn't we have a Messiah who would be what a Messiah is supposed to be?" And so you have this picture of the king who is coming, but especially in Isaiah there is a fascinating connection between this coming king and the Holy Spirit. The people of the Old Testament are not only longing for a Messiah, they're also longing for the Holy Spirit to come and enable them to obey their Torah. So, it's interesting to see the ways in which Isaiah, in particular, pictures the relationship between the Messiah and the Spirit. He'll be filled with the Spirit. He is anointed by the Spirit. He is the one who speaks through the Spirit. And therefore, the apostles don't seem to be surprised when the risen Jesus says to them, "Wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father." It's as though, ahhh, finally the Messiah has said something we expected the Messiah

to say — “I’m going to make the Holy Spirit available.” What they didn’t do was to understand what the Messiah’s cost would be to bring in this age of God’s justice and the age of the Spirit. They did not connect Isaiah 53 to Isaiah 11. They did not connect the fact that the Messiah would have to die in order to bring in this kingdom of justice and peace and the life of the Spirit.

Dr. Thomas Schreiner

It is very interesting to think of what the Jews of Jesus’ day thought in terms of the coming of the Messiah. Actually, there were many diverse beliefs out there. We have some documents from the Dead Sea Scrolls that show that some believed in two messiahs coming, a priestly messiah and a kingly messiah. But the mainstream expectation was that the Messiah would be a son of David and that he would bring in political peace; that he would drive out the Romans. You can read this today in a book called *The Psalms of Solomon*. That’s even available on the Internet. You could Google that and find that very easily. The *Psalms of Solomon* speak of the wicked who are in Israel, probably thinking of the Romans and some within Israel who compromised with the Romans, and it teaches very clearly that when the Messiah comes, he will come as a military ruler, he will expel the sinners, he will bring in righteousness, and then the people of God will dwell in peace. And it’s clear, I think, in reading the New Testament — we think of John 6 for example where the Jews came to make Jesus a king — that this is what the Jews of Jesus’ day expected of him as well. And, of course, as you know, Jesus crossed them up again and again. He seemed to have no interest in this political realm that they were expecting. He surprised the religious leaders again and again with his stance towards the Law, which I think was a right understanding. He focused, of course, on women and tax collectors and sinners. I think the religious establishment believed that the kingdom would come in if Israel would obey the Law, and they actually viewed Jesus as a threat in that regard, because Jesus didn’t seem to be advancing obedience to the Law but transgression of it, at least in their view. So he didn’t have the political machinery that they expected, and then in terms of the Law, he didn’t do what they expected as well, and so they were, I think, scandalized by him. Actually, I think at the end of the day, they viewed Jesus in terms of Deuteronomy 13, a person who did signs and wonders and miracles but was actually a false prophet and therefore that he should be put to death. So they had just a profoundly different understanding of Jesus.

Question 11:

Why do Christians believe that the kingdom of God has already come, but that it hasn’t come in all its fullness?

Some passages in the New Testament seem to suggest that God’s kingdom hasn’t come to earth yet. But others make it sound like his kingdom is already here. And most theologians solve this apparent tension by saying that both are true — the kingdom is here in some sense, but not here in another sense; it has been inaugurated, but not consummated. How is this possible? Why do Christians believe that the kingdom of God has already come, but that it hasn’t come in all its fullness?

Dr. David Bauer

The reason some theologians say that the kingdom of God has come, but hasn't come in its fullness is — short answer — because that is what Jesus himself said. You find this, for example, in Matthew 4:17 and parallels. Also, a parallel especially in Mark 1, close parallel there: “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” That is a very ambiguous statement. And I think it's deliberately ambiguous. The Greek word, which happens to be “*engiken*,” is itself, in its root, ambiguous. It can mean “near,” in the sense of actually being here, or “near” in the sense of being very close and about to dawn. And then, the tense that is used, it's the perfect tense in Greek, actually intensifies the ambiguity of it, heightening the ambiguity between its being “at hand” in the sense of already here, or “at hand” in the sense of not yet here. This is played out in the gospels where side by side in all the Synoptic Gospels you have statements by Jesus, which indicates that the kingdom of God has already come in his ministry — “If I, by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then you know the kingdom of God has come upon you,” Matthew 12. Luke has a very similar statement in his gospel. Luke says, “If I by the finger of God cast out demons, then you know the kingdom of God has come upon you.” Jesus, of course, has been casting out demons all along, so that's a very clear statement, among many others in the Gospels, that the kingdom of God has in some sense come in the ministry of Jesus.

But then, alongside those statements in the Gospels are other ones that indicate the kingdom isn't here yet at all. And so, the kingdom is described in those passages as yet to come. As a matter of fact, this is a point of the Lord's Prayer. Throughout this whole period, apparently, we are to pray “Thy kingdom come” — may thy kingdom come — “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” There is, then, this tension between the already and the not yet of the kingdom of God, which actually is a modification of Jewish expectations. In apocalyptic Judaism, all of reality was divided into two periods: the present evil age and the age to come. And the expectation there is that when God ushered in his end-time kingdom, the age to come, it would happen cataclysmically, suddenly, and absolutely. You move immediately from the period before the kingdom to the period of the kingdom, the age of the kingdom. But in the New Testament, you have what I've called “the elongation of New Testament eschatology,” so that the age of the kingdom, as was envisaged in apocalyptic Judaism, is subdivided now into two periods, the present, or the “already” of the kingdom of heaven and the “not yet” of kingdom of heaven. I might mention too, though, that the fact that the kingdom of heaven, as Matthew calls it, or the kingdom of God, has already come in a sense, a sure and certain indication, assurance really, that the kingdom will be consummated. Because once God has begun to usher in his kingdom there is no calling that back.

Dr. R. Leslie Holmes

That kingdom is here, but the kingdom is also at hand, the Bible says. What it's telling us is that this kingdom of God, which has come in Jesus Christ, is not yet fulfilled completely, because the reality is that it is in the process of being fulfilled. I like to think of it as saying this is a kingdom of hearts, and it is being fulfilled one

heart at a time. And when all the world recognizes Christ as he really is as Lord, then we will see the return of Christ, and the kingdom will have been consummated.

Dr. Dan Doriani

Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of God is robust and complex. First of all, he will say different things about the presence of the kingdom. He will say, "The kingdom ... is near." "The kingdom is ... at hand." Sometimes he says, "The kingdom ... has arrived." It's near because it's about to burst into this world. Those are the first sort of statements. In a sense, when he even says it's near, it's already come in part because the Messiah's here and the first proclamation has been made, but the miracles are going to come rolling out any day now and the crowds and the people repenting. So we're just in the cusp of the first manifestation of the kingdom. Later on he says the kingdom has arrived. He uses a word that means "the journey's over." They didn't have trains in those days, but the train has pulled into the station, the plane has landed, the boat has pulled into the port, etc. It's arrived. It says that especially about casting out demons. "If I, by the finger of God, cast out demons, then you know that the kingdom of heaven," — or the kingdom of God, it varies from gospel to gospel — "has come upon you," or "has arrived." It's here. The fact that I'm casting out demons is the proof that I have the power over Satan, and I'm spoiling his realm. Of course, it's also true that Jesus will also, will speak of the kingdom in the future tense as well. And so we're supposed to pray, "Thy kingdom come." That is to say, "may it come." Well, if it's here, why should we pray that it would come more? And of course the answer is many things that are here and yet not here. When, for example, a couple is first beginning to feel they love each other we might say they have, they have begun to love each other, their love has come in part and yet there is much more to come. It's going to grow deeper and richer. When you embark on a new job you say, "Well, I've arrived. I now am in this position that I was seeking." But you're just getting started, and you're going to grow so much deeper in wisdom and knowledge and training and experience and the fruit. So it's clearly possible that the Bible speaks both ways, that the kingdom is here, and yet it is to come. We are going to drink again in the kingdom. We're going to celebrate the Lord's Supper in the kingdom. So it's both here and not here.

Question 12:

What is the relationship between the kingdom of God and the church?

Scripture says many of the same things about the kingdom of God and the church. For example, both are God's people, and Christ is king over both. But the kingdom and the church aren't identical. So, do they just look alike? Do they overlap? What is the relationship between the kingdom of God and the church?

Dr. Steve Blakemore

This question about the relationship between the kingdom of God and the church is one that's haunted Christians for a long time, at least since the Reformation and probably before. But as I understand it, the relationship between the kingdom of God

in the earth now, that which Jesus has inaugurated and is already at work like leaven in the loaf, but is not yet complete, the presence of the kingdom of God in the earth and the church, is something like this: Jesus Christ has come, and in his incarnate life, in his ministry in overcoming the power of evil, in his self-sacrificial life to overcome the power of sin, in his resurrection from the dead to overcome the power of death, he has renewed creation, and there is now at work in creation the reign of God. The kingdom of God has now been launched so to speak into the world through Jesus Christ. The church is not that kingdom. The church is filled by its nature with some of those who, maybe at the end of all things, will be tares sown among the wheat. So the church is not the kingdom. However, as the body of Christ, the people of God, the temple in which God dwells by his Spirit, the church is meant to be, by God's design, the visible manifestation of the reality that the kingdom of God has come upon the earth in Jesus Christ. The church is not inconsequential to the kingdom then. The church is meant to be the visible evidence in our lives of worship, our lives of obedience to the gospel, our lives of self-giving love and reflecting the character of Christ in how we treat one another and how we relate to the world. Those lives are meant to reveal to an unbelieving world that the kingdom has come and that the promise of God is certain. So the relationship between the church and the kingdom of God is the relationship of the reality to a sign, much like the bread and the wine in Holy Communion are signs of the reality of the self-sacrificial, broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Rev. Mike Glodo

Jesus himself was the embodiment of the kingdom, but as he gathers us into him, he also gathers us into a fellowship with one another. It's not just an elective or voluntary organization where we can get things done better, but we reflect the unity of Jesus when we unite together in his church and come under his shepherds. Because he did leave us, first of all, apostles. He told Peter, "You are the Rock on which I'll build my church." Jesus is the Cornerstone; the apostles are the foundation stones, we're told in places like Ephesians 4. And we're all being built into a spiritual house or a temple for God as 1 Peter 2 reminds us. And so we're not just followers of Jesus individually, but we are the embodiment of this new creation that Jesus has brought in by his resurrection from the dead, and by his giving of the Spirit to us as his new temple, so that we are the presence of the kingdom of God in the church where people can find mercy and forgiveness, and they can find provision when they lack, and they can find companionship when they're lonely. So the church really is a foretaste of the new heavens and earth, which will one day be visible throughout the whole creation.

Question 13:

How should Jesus' office of king influence the way we live and work?

When Jesus came into the world, he established God's kingdom on earth. And when all God's purposes have been fulfilled, he'll rule as king over all creation. But what does this mean for us today? As we wait for the consummation of the kingdom, how should Jesus' office of king influence the way we live and work?

Dr. Dan Doriani

We submit to the King. We hear the good laws of the King; we follow Jesus' words; we imitate his deeds as he in various ways encourages us to do. We also live mindful of the fact that the King has put us — we are humble, we should be humble when we say this — has left us in charge of his kingdom. “What is man that you are mindful of him ... You have put all things under his feet.” And we are responsible to govern the world for God. That means, of course, that we must distinguish between, say, the kingdom and the church. The church is the focal point of the kingdom, it's the concentration point of the kingdom, it's the vanguard of the kingdom, it's the nursery of the kingdom, but it isn't the whole of the kingdom. The kingdom is manifest when we start Christian schools of any kind, that's an easy one. The kingdom is also manifest in ever increasing circles through our life. The kingdom is manifest when we husbands and wives love our spouses, when we care for our children, when we bring some savor of Christ to our neighborhood, when we help inculcate warmth and caring, and somebody's sick and I bring them a meal and they are touched, and then before long... This is the way my wife operates. Whatever neighborhood we live in, she starts bringing people food when they are sick, when they are needy, when they are down, and then you know what? Food, within two, three, four, five years, food is going back and forth, and people are caring for each other the way they should.

And maybe, most importantly, in our workplaces. You work in the music industry. Your job is to make money by writing hits. It's not as easy to write hits that build people up, that maybe don't preach, but somehow reflect biblical morality. When you make cars your job is to make a profit for your corporation. When you design anything, when you put up buildings, when you sell advertising, no matter what you do you can do it in a way that is strictly serving yourself or your company and exploiting or maybe indifferent to the people that you could be serving, or you could be mindful of your responsibility to bring the kingdom. We could ask this test question: When you get up in the morning, when you work throughout the day, are you answering the legitimate prayers of God's people? “Give us this day, our daily bread.” Are you giving anybody their daily bread, are you giving them food, clothing, shelter, love, protection? Are you treating others as you would be treated? Does the King smile at you? Does Lord Jesus smile at you? Oh, you didn't execute your plan perfectly. But are you striving to live in a manner that's faithful to the King? And when I say in our daily work I do not mean simply our employment, the work for which we get paid. You may be paid or unpaid; you may be a volunteer; you may work in the home. But we're responsible to serve the King, the Lord Jesus in every sphere of life, beginning in the heart, visibly first in the church, and then in every sphere of life.

Dr. Stephen Chan (translation)

We are to encourage Christians to pursue and long for the coming of God's kingdom. First in the personal dimension, the authority of the kingdom of heaven is our power in life. It motivates us to submit to God, and live a God-centered life, so that the authority of God manifested in our lives, would become the goal of our spiritual lives. Second, we need to learn the concept of the kingdom of heaven in view of redemptive

history. As we learn how it begins, uncovers, and completes his redemptive plan. Then we will see that the teachings of the kingdom of heaven unify the Old and New Testament. They help us to see the grand blueprint of our redeeming God, and easily grasp his comprehensive purpose. Third, the kingdom of heaven creates a right biblical worldview and helps us to see that all things belong to God. His kingdom will come to completion. And he will judge and wipe out all the evil powers on earth, because God himself is the absolute king. So we no longer live just for ourselves. We want to care for our neighbors, society, and the wellbeing of this world. We ought to pay attention to the things either near or far from us. We ought to enter into the society, and transform all aspects accordingly, as our duty.

Dr. Peter Kuzmič

I think the most crucial question that we have to ask is, how do the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world intersect? Where and why do they collide? Where do they partner? How does the gospel of the kingdom relate to the conditions of humanity in the world in which we live? You know, we evangelical Christians claim to be the “Great Commission” Christians. I hear the Great Commission called at all the time, and I tell my American friends, “Wait a moment, you are not really faithful to the Great Commission when you say, when you call the Great Commission Matthew 28 and you say, ‘Go and make disciples of all nations.’” — you know, nations again. I say, “That’s not where the Great Commission begins.” It doesn’t begin with our going. It begins with his being. And so it really begins a verse earlier with the risen Lord gathers his disciples and says, “All power,” depending on the translation; I think New International Version says, “All authority.” The Greek word “*exousia*” is not easy to translate. It could be translated dominion, you know, relating to the rule of the kingdom — kingdom of God. “All power” — all *exousia* — in heaven and on earth is given to me. Therefore” — I will translate — “as you go, make disciples of all nations.” This is a very important linkage. Now, when Jesus says, “All power in heaven and on earth is given to me,” for somebody out in the world who doesn’t understand biblical language that sounds scary. Whoever claims all power is dangerous. We’ve known here in Europe, West and East, Adolph Hitler, Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin. We’ve known in other parts of the world from Mao Tse Tung to Pol Pot, and so on. History’s full of tyrants and dictators who claim to accumulate all power and became very destructive, killing millions, if not hundreds of millions, of innocent people.

Now, Jesus is the only one who can claim all dominion, all power, with legitimacy. And by the way, his power is not destructive because it is power and love, power motivated by love, power moderated by love. See, if you have love alone, you have a nice sentiment, but maybe you are helpless because you don’t have power to change anything. If you have power alone without love you destroy, you kill, you hate. It’s the divine genius that brings love and power together. “God so loved the world that he sent his Son.” Now, Jesus, who is the incarnated love, and who claims all power — and remember it’s after his resurrection — that is central to his kingdom. Kingdom is Jesus’ master thought. In the first three gospels alone, 121 times you have the kingdom mentioned. We don’t understand who Jesus was, why he came, what he

taught, and what happened on the cross, and what happened on the third day. We don't understand what he means when he says, "The kingdom of God is at hand." He is the only one that can legitimately claim all power because he is the only one that walked on this planet earth and never sinned, never lied, never deceived. He's also the only one who, after he was killed, dead, buried, came back. So, he's the risen Lord. It is the inauguration of a new era of human history. He's bringing hope to the nations. And so the kingdom of God is at work in very powerful ways, and that's where world evangelization and discipling the nations then is based on this, what I call, "the great foundation." You don't have a great commission without the great foundation. And then he caps it with a great promise, "And I will be with you to the very end of the ages." So, Jesus the Lord, Jesus the King, is the ruler who has all power, and so we go, we disciple, we teach, we proclaim his rule in his power.

The kingdom of God is the preeminent thought throughout the Bible. And we know that God, the Creator, is King of the universe. In the Old Testament, he appointed human kings to administer justice and care for his people. But he also had a plan to rescue his people from sin and death. So, he sent his Son, Jesus Christ, as the perfect messianic King. And when Jesus returns, he'll consummate the kingdom and rule it forever. But until then, we anticipate his coming by living in ways that are worthy of the gospel, and that honor our King.

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