

QUANTOCK MINISTRIES

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*A Bible teaching and preaching ministry
for the Christian community*

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ALL HAIL, KING JESUS!

As Christians, a very real part of our vision, vocabulary and praise is the conviction that Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords. Often our great hymns express that thought: “Jesus shall reign where’er the sun...”, “Thy kingdom come, O God...”, “Let all the world in every corner sing, ‘my God and King’”, and many others, both older hymns and newer songs. At Christmas we will no doubt hear the refrain once again: “The baby born to be King”. The messianic hope of a world under the control of King Jesus is a firm part of the theology of those who accept that Jesus is indeed the Christ.

Yet at the same time we live in a world where Christianity is in a state of crisis. In the mainly Protestant countries, the Church appears to be losing influence as it succumbs to relative morality, humanistic philosophy, and rising levels of atheism. Nominal Christianity in Catholic and Orthodox countries is often seen as a tool of political and populist ideas of the left and right. In lands dominated by other faiths Christians are facing enormous pressures of retreat, displacement, and martyrdom.

So, in the face of these two opposing situations, how are we to understand the kingship of Jesus? Are we sadly engaged in a false and dying religious vision of utopia, totally divorced from reality? Is the idea of the baby of Bethlehem becoming a world-wide king merely a romantic relic of past fantasies? Are we to reduce our expectation of the kingship of Jesus merely to a spiritual dimension as Saviour of individual lives in this world, with His kingship limited to our existence in Heaven?

Christians, living in a very real and challenging world, cannot and must not live in a realm of pretence and fantasy, engaging in glorious spiritual ideas that are far removed from our everyday experience. If we do this, people around us will see us as out-of-touch and irrelevant, dismissing our faith and hope as meaningless. Post-millennial Christians tend to answer all this by believing that through revival and the outpourings of the Holy Spirit, Christianity will indeed conquer the world, and when we have achieved this, Jesus will return to accept the throne on Earth which we have prepared for Him. On the other hand, Amillennialists generally dismiss any idea of Jesus being a king over the world in a physical and political way, believing that His kingship in history comes through Christian influence in various spheres of human society and activity. Rather, they argue, He will reign over all His true believers in the future eternal spiritual realms. My concern is that both these views seriously ignore so much of scriptural truth and principle regarding the kingship of Jesus, and that if we are eagerly awaiting His appearance, we all need an urgent appraisal of exactly what God has to say on the subject through His Word. We cannot allegorise away such scriptures, many of which have yet to be fulfilled. As this is a short and simple study, I can only briefly list the main biblical principles which I believe should be the basis of our understanding.

1. In this era, the Church Age, the Kingdom of God is a spiritual reign, within the lives of all true Christians (Luke 17 v 20 – 21). It is true that God is still sovereign and ultimately reigns over all the circumstances in creation, but clearly not every person accepts His authority or even acknowledges His existence. The Church Age is the time of preparation of the Bride of Christ - a people who having each placed their faith in Him, will be collectively His eternal companion, joint heirs with Him. The work of the Holy Spirit is to seal and guarantee each Christian’s salvation, preparing us for union with Jesus (spiritual fruitfulness, or sanctification), and enabling us to serve Him and each other with spiritual gifting and love.

2. There have been other eras in God's dealings with humanity, the immediately previous era being the Age of Law. That era gave way to the Church Age on the Day of Pentecost. The abundance of scriptural evidence strongly indicates there is another era still to come on Earth, the Age of the Kingdom. This is the messianic hope of which the prophets spoke, that the disciples were keenly expecting, and that Jesus Himself promised would occur (e.g., Luke 24 v 25 – 27, Acts 1 v 6 – 7).
3. God's eternal covenant with Israel is the key to Christ's future reign on Earth (Isaiah 9 v 6 – 7). It is most important to realise that if we see the Church as a "new" Israel, a replacement, we deny God's faithfulness to His eternal covenant promises to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, for their nation and for their promised land. Any theology which ascribes unfaithfulness to God is heretical. Many scriptures refer to the restoration of Israel (e.g., Jeremiah 33 v 23 – 26, Ezekiel 37 v 12 – 14, Luke 21 v 24, Romans chapter 11, etc), and the eventual reign of David's descendant on the throne of Israel. Over the past seventy years there has been an amazing, if partial, restoration of the nation, the return of the capital city, and a desire to see their King. In a time of "peace and safety" Jesus will suddenly come in the air to take away His Bride for the celestial marriage (1 Thessalonians 4 v 16 to 5 v 3, Revelation 19 v 6 - 10), which will take place while the judgement due at the end of the Church Age engulfs the Earth (Isaiah 24, Revelation chapters 6 to 18). He will then return with His Bride to take up His reign on David's throne (Revelation 19 v 11 – 16, Zechariah 14 v 3 – 21).
4. The features of the Lord's Kingdom reign take up much of the prophetic scriptures.
 - a) His arrival will be clearly visible to everyone (Matthew 24 v 30, Philippians 2 v 10 – 11).
 - b) There will be a time of cleansing of the Earth (Daniel 12 v 11 – 12*, Zechariah 14 v 6 – 7, Revelation 19 v 17 – 21).
 - c) Israel will have her King at last (e.g., Psalm 72).
 - d) There will be universal political harmony (e.g., Isaiah 2 v 1 – 4).
 - e) There will be universal economic harmony (e.g., Isaiah 11 v 1 – 5).
 - f) There will be universal environmental harmony (e.g., Isaiah 11 v 6 – 9; see also Romans 8 v 19 - 22).
 - g) There will be a return to long lifespans for humans born in that era (Isaiah 65 v 17 – 25).
 - h) There will be universal spiritual harmony (Zechariah 14 v 9; see also Philippians 2 v 9 – 11).
 - i) There will be an end to all imperialism, which originated in Babylon and is amazingly reflected by the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2 v 36 – 45, especially v 44 and 45; see Revelation chapter 18, where the whole "Babylonian" system comes to an end).
 - j) There will be a much better and happier society worldwide, without satanic deception, lasting for 1000 years until the end of time and the return of the cosmos to eternal conditions (Revelation 20 v 1 – 3, and also 21 v 1 & 5, where "new" means "renewed", not "brand new").

This, surely, is a kingdom worth looking forward to. As for ourselves, as the Bride of Jesus, we will be in our eternal, resurrected and glorified bodies, but I'm sure the blessedness of that age, utterly transforming the planet we all love, will be a joy to experience (1 Corinthians 2 v 9). "Even so, come, Lord Jesus"!

*This is a very interesting couple of verses, which may well refer to the period of cleansing that these other references clearly suggest. The reference to "the abomination that causes desolation", also referred to by Jesus (Matthew 24 v 15) and Paul (2 Thessalonians 2 v 4), is an event halfway through the seven-year Tribulation period of judgement which occurs at the end of the Church Age. So, a period of 3½ years, or 1260 days, will then pass until Jesus returns as King. Here there is reference to a further 30 days (1290), plus another 45 days (1335), a possible 75 days for the removal of all ungodly enemies and moral pollution, the cleansing of the atmosphere and the environment, the reinstatement of species, the release from the "bondage to decay", etc, etc. No wonder Isaiah 65 v 17b says that the former age will not even be remembered!