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The Two Kingdoms of God

Review

In the last chapter, I described my method of interpreting and organizing the Scriptures when developing a theology of the future. I described the two orders of being that Christians experience. The Adamic order of being represents humanity with natural bodies designed for marriage and procreation. The new order of being as children of God represents a new creation who, after being raptured, will have immortal bodies that will not experience marriage. To understand the kingdom of God on earth and then in heaven, it is very important to maintain the two distinct orders of being, their defining characteristics, and their corresponding kingdoms. There are two aspects to God's kingdom: one on the restored earth for a restored humanity, and another in heaven for the eternal sons of God.

Trinitarian Eschatology

The Scriptures teach that within the Trinity, this Genesis age and the corresponding Adamic order of being uniquely belong to God the Son. Whereas, in the eternal age to come and the corresponding eternal sons of God uniquely belong to God the Father. Paul taught:

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits [the first to be raised into an immortal body], then at his coming those who belong to Christ [the raptured sons of God]. Then comes the end [of the world], *when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father* after destroying every rule and every authority and power [during his millennial reign]. (1 Cor. 15:23–24)

Throughout the New Testament, Christ and the apostles refer to the kingdom of heaven as the Father's imperishable kingdom and home.

The Son's Kingdom

Jesus Christ was the Jewish Messiah, but as John discovered, he was no ordinary human being. John taught:

In the beginning [of the Genesis creation] was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1:1–14)

In a stunning revelation, John informs us that Jesus Christ is God the Son incarnate and the Creator who spoke this Genesis creation into existence. Hebrews also proclaims this truth:

In these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, *through whom also he created the world*. . . . he upholds the universe by the word of his power. . . . You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and *the heavens are the work of your hands*. (Heb. 1:2–10)

This simple Jew from Nazareth is the Son of God who created the world, laid the foundation of the earth and crafted the heavens, and even sustains the universe today. Colossians repeats this remarkable truth about the Son of God:

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. (Col. 1:16)

Therefore, in the beginning before the fall, this Genesis creation was the Son of God's dominion. The world was the Son's kingdom on earth, and God's will was done on earth as it was in heaven. As the Son ruled over Adam and Eve, they were to rule over and manage his wonderful creation.

This is not to say that the Father is not involved with his Son's Genesis creation or that the Son will not be involved in the Father's kingdom of heaven. The triune God may be three persons, but they are one being and they have one will. When the Son's will is imposed on earth, it will primarily be his kingdom, but it will be the Father's kingdom as well. Likewise, Paul taught that on the very last day, the Son will hand over his kingdom to the Father, but the Son's reign will also continue. Once the Son's reign over this world begins, it is an everlasting kingdom even though the sons of God will transition to the Father's eternal kingdom on the last day.

But the Scriptures do reveal some important distinctions within the Trinity. The Son of God is described as the Creator of this Genesis creation, and he is described as the Omega of this creation when he brings it to an end on Judgment Day. Revelation also reveals that he is the unique person of the Trinity who will create the new heavens and new earth:

Behold, I [Christ] am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done [on Judgment Day]. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning [of this Genesis creation] and the end [of this Genesis creation]. (Rev. 22:12–13)

Then I [John] saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, . . . And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new [Christ creates the new earth]." (Rev. 21:1–5)

The Son of God created this Genesis creation, and it is the Son of God who will bring it to an end. Equally important, he is the specific person of the Trinity who creates the eternal new heavens and new earth. This is the eternal dwelling place for the bride of Christ and the Father's eternal sons.

The Holy Spirit

As a coequal member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit also plays a central role throughout this age and the next. The Holy Spirit was essential to the creation of this world: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. . . . And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:1–2). The Holy Spirit is also essential to our rebirth and regeneration as children of God:

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3:4–5)

Jesus used the metaphor of the rivers of living water to describe the abundant life that flows into believers from the life of the Holy Spirit:

Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" Now this he said about the Spirit. (John 7:37–39)

The same metaphor is used in Revelation to describe the flow of life from the Holy Spirit in the New Jerusalem in the Father's eternal kingdom:

"To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment." . . . Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life [from the Holy Spirit], bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God [the Father] and of the Lamb [the Son]. (Rev. 21:6; 22:1)

Notice that the flow of eternal life on the eternal earth will emanate from all three persons of the Trinity.

It may seem that the Holy Spirit is not mentioned very often in this book. But that is because the Holy Spirit's work is to help us focus on God the Son and God the Father. Moreover, with every verse of Scripture that is quoted, I am creating a footnote that references the work of the Holy Spirit. So, in effect, the Holy Spirit is being referenced throughout this book. Yet, maintaining these important distinctions within the Trinity is critically important in developing a proper theology of the future.

Christ Is the God-Man

Theologians spend a great deal of time discussing Christ's dual nature as a both a human being and the Son of God. Christ is the God-man:

- As the son of David, Jesus is the promised human Messiah who according to the prophets would usher in the messianic kingdom of Israel.
- He is also God incarnate, or the eternal Son of God through whom this Genesis creation was made.

Thus, when the prophets describe the messianic kingdom on a restored Edenic earth, they are also describing the Son of God's reclaimed Genesis creation. In other words, because Jesus is the God-man, the millennium can be described as either the son of David's messianic kingdom on this earth or the Son of God's restored dominion over his Genesis creation. These are two ways of describing the same kingdom.

The prophet Isaiah even described the Messiah's kingdom on earth as synonymous with the Son of God's kingdom:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given [the human son of David]; and the government shall be upon his shoulder [he will rule Israel and the whole world], and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God [God the Son], Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with

righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. (Isa. 9:6–7)

Paul referenced this prophecy in Isaiah that describes the Messiah as both the son of David *and* the Son of God:

. . . the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh [human Messiah] and was declared to be the Son of God [“Mighty God”]. (Rom. 1:1–4)

Christ is both the son of David as a man and the Son of God. And as the Messiah-God, he will rule the world in an age of righteous humanity during his messianic kingdom. This understanding of the messianic kingdom has tremendous ramifications when evaluating the various views of God's endgame.

A Divine Covenant

For example, some amillennialists have argued that God's covenant with Israel to establish a messianic kingdom through their nation was conditional upon receiving their Messiah. That is debatable. But what is undeniable is that the Son of God has a divine right to remove Satan and reclaim his Genesis creation. And there is an unconditional covenant between the Father and the Son that one day the Father will indeed restore this Genesis creation to his Son. King David describes this covenant in one of his famous psalms: “The LORD [the Father] says to my Lord [the Son]: ‘Sit at my right hand [in heaven], until I make your enemies [on this earth] your footstool’” (Ps. 110:1). God the Father is in heaven, and if his Son is seated at his right hand in heaven, then the Son would rule over his enemies on this earth from his throne in heaven when the Father determines it is time for his reign to begin.

Christ revealed this divine covenant between the Father and his Son when quoting from Psalm 110:

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David.” He said to them,

“How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, ‘The Lord [God the Father] said to my Lord [God the Son], ‘Sit at my right hand [on his divine throne in heaven], until I [the Father] put your enemies under your feet’?” (Matt. 22:41–44)

The Pharisees were stumped and could not answer the question. The correct answer to Christ’s question “Whose son is he?” is twofold: the Messiah will be the son of David as a man; but he will also be the almighty Son of God who created the heavens and earth.

Most important, notice that the Father has promised his Son that one day he will remove all his Son’s enemies on this earth (including Satan and his tyrannical human rulers) and restore this Genesis creation to him. The Father’s promise is not only to the son of David, but to his Son as well.

Christ’s reference to his throne in heaven next to the Father is not an inferior position to the Father. Rather, it is a throne synonymous with the Father’s own throne and deity. The ascended Christ has all the divine authority and power necessary to rule this world. He is just waiting on the Father to say when it’s time to rule the world.

Amillennialists can argue as to whether the covenant with Israel was conditional or unconditional. But this is an intra-Trinitarian covenant within the Godhead itself between the Father and his Son. And this covenant is unconditional because Christ was always faithful to the Father, both as a man and certainly as the Son of God.

As the second Adam, Jesus withstood every temptation Satan could throw at him, and he lived a sinless life totally submissive to the Father. He was even obedient to the Father when he died on the cross for our sins, though he was not guilty of any sin. Therefore, Christ is the perfect Adam *and* the Son of God. And as promised by his Father, he will unquestionably rule this world when Satan is removed in the future millennium. As the Creator of this world, it was his creation before Satan invaded and took over his kingdom. This regime change is certain to occur because of his deity and his divine right to rule this world.

As the disciples wrestled with the fact that Christ ascended to heaven without establishing his messianic kingdom, they looked to Psalm 110 for an explanation. This psalm is either quoted or alluded to by Jesus and the New Testament writers more than twenty times, and it is the most quoted Old Testament text in the New Testament.

The disciples began to realize that the Jewish Messiah was also God incarnate, and one day, as the true God of this world, he would indeed rule over his creation from his throne in heaven at the Father's right hand.

They also learned from Psalm 110 that after Christ ascended to heaven, they must wait for some unknown period until the Father decides it is time for his Son to use his divine power to rule the world:

But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, *waiting* from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. (Heb. 10:12–13)

Right before Christ ascended to heaven, the disciples asked if he would then restore Israel in the messianic kingdom. Jesus answered that the Father decides the times and seasons when his messianic kingdom will be established on this earth (Acts 1:6–7). In the meantime, as they followed Christ, preaching the gospel to all nations, they should expect hardship and persecution in this world. The disciples were keenly aware of the fact that although Christ was sovereign, Satan had not yet been removed and the Son's dominion had not yet been restored: "At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him" (Heb. 2:8). This explains why Christ's enemies continued to persecute them.

Using This Method

Below is a recap of this method of interpreting and organizing the Scriptures into a logical biblical theology of the future.

Discern the two orders of being:

- The Adamic order of being
- The new order of being as sons of God

Discern the two kingdoms of the triune God:

- The Son's earthly kingdom in this Genesis age for a restored humanity
- The Father's heavenly kingdom in the eternal age to come for the eternal sons of God

Let's put this method to a test. Consider Isaiah's famous description of the messianic kingdom, introduced as follows: "For behold, I

create *new heavens and a new earth*, and the former things shall not be remembered” (65:17). In Revelation 20 and 21, John uses the same phrase to describe the eternal kingdom of heaven: “From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. . . . Then I saw a *new heaven and a new earth*” (20:11—21:1). Reconciling these two similar references has been a notorious problem for theologians. That is because they assume that since Isaiah and Revelation use the same terminology, they are describing the same kingdom. Isaiah, however, is describing the restored Genesis creation; whereas, Revelation is describing the eternal new earth after this creation perishes.

The use of the same figure of speech in Isaiah and Revelation is analogous to the way we use the word *transformed* as having two different meanings in different contexts. For example, whenever an especially sinful man becomes a Christian and dramatically changes his behavior, we might say, “He has been transformed into a new person.” One day, however, when Christ returns in the clouds and he is raptured, he will be truly transformed when his natural body is changed into a new kind of immortal body adapted for heaven. The word *transformed* has two different meanings, depending on its context.

Likewise, Isaiah and Revelation are describing two different kingdoms of God. Isaiah is describing the Son’s renewed or restored Genesis earth for a restored humanity. Humans marry, have children, and get old. Some sin exists and death can still be experienced. Revelation, however, is describing the Father’s eternal paradise for the transformed sons of God that occurs after this earth perishes. It is described as a sinless kingdom for the immortal sons of God. Let’s first examine Isaiah’s prophecy:

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind [the hardships in this fallen world]. . . . No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old [mortality], and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed [some sin still exists]. They shall build houses and inhabit them [human habitats]; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit [agricultural fields]. . . . They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity [marriage and reproduction], for they shall

be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD, and their descendants with them [extended human families]. . . . The wolf and the lamb shall graze together [nature restored]; . . . They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain," says the LORD [peace and security]. (Isa. 65:17–25)

Isaiah describes the restoration of the Genesis creation in this Adamic age. This restoration involves mortal human beings. The people of God will marry, have children, build houses, and plant vineyards for their families. They will live extremely long lives of peace and prosperity. And they will live in an Edenic paradise, where "the wolf and the lamb shall graze together." According to the prophets, the messianic kingdom is by definition a restoration of the Adamic order of being, during an age of righteous humanity, when the world will experience peace and security on this restored earth. This restoration is not perfect, however, for there will still be some sinners who will continue to experience mortal death.

Revelation also uses the expression "new heaven and a new earth," which is created after the 1,000-year restoration of this Genesis earth. But John was not describing the restored earth with a restored Jerusalem as Isaiah described. Instead, he was referring to the eternal new earth and the New Jerusalem as the Father's eternal kingdom that replaces the Genesis heavens and earth after they perish. He described the children of God as being immortal and living in a sinless kingdom. As Jesus taught, it will be a place for the sons of God who, after being resurrected, "neither marry nor are given in marriage":

From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them [the end of this Genesis creation]. . . . Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, . . . And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, . . . He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more [immortality], . . . And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new [the new eternal kingdom]. . . . The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son [the children of God]." . . . And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. . . . But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false

[sinless existence], but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life [only believers]. (Rev. 20:11—21:27)

Isaiah envisioned the new heavens and new earth as a restored Genesis earth with a restored earthly Jerusalem in the restored land of Israel for a restored humanity—with some sinners. In contrast, John envisioned the new heavens and new earth as the eternal home of the sons of God who will live an immortal and sinless existence in the very presence of the triune God in all their glory.

Theologians have spent too much time trying to reconcile these two expressions of the new heavens and new earth. Isaiah and the apostle John were clearly describing two different kingdoms of the triune God:

1. The Son's restored earth—with marriage, reproduction, and an abundance of food from fruit-bearing trees, where some level of sin and mortality exists
2. The Father's eternal new heavens and new earth—a sinless kingdom for the immortal children of God

These are two very different kingdoms—one on earth and one in heaven—because they are adapted for two different orders of being.

The Reign of Christ

But where is Christ when he finally rules the world? Premillennialists claim that he must physically return to this earth to rule the world during his millennial kingdom. But amillennialists correctly note that the Scriptures teach that Christ destroys this world when he comes again to rapture the saints and take them to the eternal new earth. Logically, Christ cannot reign on the earth with his saints for a thousand years if the earth is destroyed when he comes again.

Isaiah gives us a clue as to where Christ is when he establishes his messianic kingdom on this earth. Immediately after describing “a new heaven and a new earth” as the restored Edenic earth, Isaiah reminds us that the Lord—who created this earth—continues to rule over his creation from his throne in heaven:

Thus says the LORD: “*Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made [the Genesis creation], and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD.*” (Isa. 66:1–2)

The “LORD” is a reference to the Son of God, who is the person of the Trinity who created this Genesis earth. Isaiah teaches that from his throne in heaven, the Lord “made” this earth when he just said the word, and it “came to be.” And the earth continues to be his “footstool” (not his actual dwelling place). Isaiah teaches that the same Lord will also rule over his future renewed and restored Edenic earth from his throne in heaven, when he makes all his enemies a footstool.

Discerning where Christ will be when he finally rules the world during the millennium is rather simple. As the human son of David, one would expect the Messiah to rule over the world from a human throne on this earth. That is what the disciples initially expected. But as the Son of God and our Creator, one would expect our Lord to rule over his creation from his divine throne in heaven. The millennium is simply the Son’s dominion over his Genesis creation restored.

Some theologians believe that when God spoke to Adam, God appeared physically on this earth. Others believe Adam and Eve only heard his voice in the garden. Either way, God primarily ruled over his creation from his throne in heaven. And he will do so once again when he rules the world during the millennium.

And what better person to properly manage the affairs of mankind than Jesus Christ? Not only does he know what it means to be a human on this earth, but from his exalted throne in heaven he also has the omniscience of God, with infinite awareness, infinite understanding, and infinite insight into the affairs of the world. As God, Christ certainly has the divine knowledge and ability to rule this world from heaven.

Throughout this book, I will make the biblical case that during the millennium, instead of Christ returning to this earth as the son of David to rule the world as claimed by premillennialists, the Son of God will remain on his throne in heaven at the right hand of God the Father after he removes Satan to rule over his restored Genesis creation. As God, he can surely rule over his creation from heaven—just as he would have ruled over Adam and Eve had they not rebelled against

him. In fact, this is the only way Christ can rule the world and establish his messianic kingdom because the Scriptures teach that when Christ does return, it will be on Judgment Day, at the end of this Genesis age when he creates the new heavens and new earth and ushers in the eternal age to come.

The First and Final Resurrections

How are the saints going to physically inherit and inhabit the Son's restored earth, as described by Isaiah, if they have already died and their spirits have risen to heaven? And how are the saints going to then inherit the Father's eternal new earth, as described by John? The answers to these two questions are quite simple if we consider God's divine power of resurrection.

John identifies two resurrections:

- The *first resurrection* in order for the departed saints to inherit the Son's millennial kingdom
- The *second resurrection* in order for the saints to inherit the Father's eternal new heavens and new earth

Since the millennium is for the restored Adamic order of being, then we would expect the first resurrection to be of the natural bodies of the departed saints, as described in Ezekiel 37 (the valley of dry bones). The resurrected saints would marry and reproduce godly offspring in a restored Edenic paradise. This resurrection would be like the resurrection of Lazarus into his natural body. But instead of Lazarus and the saints coming back to life on a cursed earth under Satan's dominion, they would live again on a restored Edenic earth under Christ's dominion.

And since the subsequent new heavens and new earth are the eternal home for the Father's children, then we would expect the final resurrection to be of the raptured saints, when their natural bodies are transformed into eternal bodies like Christ's glorified body in order to inhabit the Father's eternal kingdom.

The Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer begins to make more sense when one understands these two kingdoms of the triune God. We seek first God the Father's kingdom of heaven. But we also anticipate God the Son's kingdom on earth, when God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven. Note that Christ teaches us to address this prayer to God the Father.

Pray then like this:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name [we start our prayers with worship of the Father].

Your kingdom come [the Father's heavenly kingdom],

your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven [during the Son's earthly kingdom when he establishes his righteous reign over this earth].

Give us this day our daily bread [today, while waiting for these two kingdoms, we should live a life of dependence on God],

and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors [and live a life of love and mercy],

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil [deliver us from Satan now and during the Great Tribulation]. (Matt. 6:9–13)

Christ revealed a new perspective on God's plan of redemption. First, we seek the Father's kingdom of heaven and look forward to Christ's return to take us there. Next, we pray for the Son's kingdom, when Satan is removed and Christ sits on his throne in heaven and rules the world, establishing God's will on earth as it is in heaven.

Critiquing the Current Views on God's Endgame

This method of understanding the two kingdoms of the triune God is a simple but effective way to understand God's plan of redemption. It is also an effective way to analyze and critique the current views on God's endgame. For example, premillennialists believe the raptured saints will return to the restored Edenic earth with Christ during the millennium. But how are the glorified saints going to enjoy an Edenic paradise as restored human beings if they are immortal creatures and a new creation that no longer experiences marriage? The raptured saints

clearly belong in the Father's kingdom of heaven, not on the Son's restored Edenic earth.

Amillennialists and postmillennialists assert that Satan is never totally removed from this evil world. We never experience a restoration of our humanity on a restored Edenic earth. The raptured saints only inherit the Father's kingdom. But doesn't Christ, as the Son of God, have a divine right to reclaim, restore, and rule over his own creation—before he returns and turns his kingdom over to the Father? It was the Son's kingdom to begin with, before Adam and Eve fell for Satan's temptation and Satan usurped his kingdom. Wouldn't a restoration of the Son's creation bring him great glory as he delights in his good creation once again? Isn't there an unconditional covenant between the Father and the Son that one day the Father will restore this Genesis creation to his Son?

God's plan of redemption includes an almost complete reversal of the curse and a restoration of the Adamic order of being on the Son's restored earth—before he returns and we are taken to the Father's home in heaven as his children.

Summary

Theologians use a variety of methods to evaluate the Scriptures to understand God's plan of redemption. I have found that the best method of interpreting the Scriptures to discern God's endgame is to understand the two different orders of being and the two kingdoms of the triune God. Postrestorationism maintains the distinction between the two orders of being and their corresponding kingdoms:

- The Son's millennial kingdom is a restoration of the Adamic order of being on an Edenic earth—accessed through the first resurrection of the natural bodies of the departed saints.
- The Father's new heavens and new earth is a new creation and is the eternal home for the transformed sons of God—accessed through the final resurrection of their eternal bodies.

To establish his millennial kingdom, Christ simply removes Satan and rules over the restored Edenic earth during the millennium from his throne in heaven. He returns *after* (post-) this 1,000-year restoration of this Genesis creation on the last day to rapture the saints and usher in the Father's eternal kingdom of heaven.