

The Establishment of the Kingdom

Introduction

Realized eschatology is one of the most difficult subjects I have ever studied. The terminology used by its proponents is difficult. The applications of scripture are hard to understand. It also affects numerous areas of our belief: prophecy, the kingdom, the resurrection, etc. But despite its overwhelming obstacles, it is important for us to understand the error that it promotes. I am thankful we have this opportunity to discuss these things together. Please understand, I am by no means an expert in this area.

My assignment is to discuss the view of the kingdom as seen by the realized eschatologist. In our first section we will understand the realized eschatologist's view of the kingdom in two main areas: its nature and its establishment. I will attempt to answer the arguments presented by their view and I am sure you may have more answers in our question and answer session following our time together. We will also take some time to consider the concept of the kingdom as we think of it. We will focus on the word "kingdom" in the context of numerous passages. And then we will close with a few profitable lessons for us as preachers.

BODY

I. THE REALIZED ESCHATOLOGIST'S VIEW OF THE KINGDOM.

A. The Nature of the Kingdom: literal or spiritual?

1. One of the difficulties of the Realized Eschatology position is grasping their terms.
 - a. They do not often match up.
 - i. Example: The opposite of literal would often be figurative. And the opposite of spiritual would be physical.
 - ii. Realized eschatologists like Max King use contrasting terms of literal and spiritual.
 - b. When the nature of the kingdom is considered, the question based on their terms is whether or not this new kingdom is literal or spiritual.

- c. The realized eschatologist view is that the kingdom is spiritual.
2. Don K. Preston, the head of the Preterist Research Institute, has debated, written, and lectured a great amount on the nature of the kingdom and Realized Eschatology.
- a. Preston wrote in regards to this subject: “Are you aware that America is hated for her support of Israel? Of course, America says she must support Israel because she is supposed to be God’s chosen people. Do you see how *theology is impacting our world?* Do you see how one’s view of the end of the age becomes so critical and important?” (Preston, *Last Days Identified*, 107).
- b. Preston spoke in Daleville, AL on “The Nature of the Kingdom” in two lectures during a Realized eschatologist Conference.
- i. Preston’s introductory remarks deal with a motive for his teaching and work as a Realized eschatologist. This is in large part to Preston’s response to the Zionist movement that is so common in our day. Notice some of Preston’s opening statements:
- “The religious Zionists are the ones we are concerned with. Why is that? Because at heart and core of this issue is the question of the nature of the kingdom. If you ask people today about Israel and the kingdom, they have one concept in mind. And that is the restoration of Israel as a theocracy. That is God ruling Israel through a visible form of a temple, a priesthood, a sacrifice, etc. etc. Israel is... in that theology Zionists’ perspective, that is Israel restored—the nation of Israel. They believe that has to be done in our day and in our time...

“Muslims are on record as saying that if the Jews attempt to take over that Mount again it will be WWII. You think prophecy is not relevant? Why do the Jews believe they want that Temple Mount again? To rebuild the temple. All of this has to do with the nature of the kingdom. **We need to change the landscape of evangelical Christianity in regard to the concept of the nature of the kingdom.** [emphasis mine, TF]” (Preston, *The Nature of the Kingdom 1*).
- c. Preston’s statement concerning a change “to the concept of the nature of the kingdom” is in reference to whether the kingdom of the New Testament is a reference to a physical kingdom—namely the re-establishment and resurgence of Israel as a dominant power—or to a spiritual kingdom.
3. The realized eschatologist view of the Kingdom could be accurately described as anti-Zionist.

- a. Much of the teaching and writing concerning the nature of the Kingdom by Preston, Dawson, and other realized eschatologists concerns itself with a direct response to the Zionist movement and particularly those who would hold the position of premillennialism.
 - b. Samuel Dawson devotes two chapter exclusively to the Zionist movement and the false teachers of premillennialism in his book, *Essays on Eschatology*.
 - i. Samuel Dawson wrote in one of those chapters, “Premillennialism rests squarely on the false beliefs that God can fail to accomplish his will, that he doesn’t nullify the counsel of nations arrayed against him, and asserts that Jesus and most of the New Testament authors were mistaken on the final coming” (Dawson, 345).
 - c. Great focus is given to the Middle Eastern conflict. The events of September 11, 2001 certainly only fueled this controversy from both sides.
 - d. Many realized eschatologists reference the popular *Left Behind* series concerning the premillennialist doctrine as a sign for the need to teach more about the nature of the kingdom.
4. The nature of the kingdom according to the realized eschatologist was strictly a spiritual kingdom.
- a. In fact, heavy emphasis for the fulfillment of all prophecy in A.D. 70 is given due to the nature of the kingdom being spiritual.
 - b. The timing of such passages as Mark 9:1 and Luke 21:31–32 is used as evidence to prove that the kingdom must be spiritual and not literal.
 - c. The immediacy of the promise of the kingdom demands it to be spiritual kingdom. The generation Jesus addressed in these passages would never see a re-established physical kingdom of Israel. Therefore, the kingdom must be literal or the church occupied a false position.
 - i. “If revelation taught [the church] to look for an earthly kingdom, then they did occupy a false position, for revelation also taught that the kingdom was coming in their generation... The difference between the literal and spiritual views of the kingdom is this: if spiritual, revelation revealed the truth about its nature and coming, which in time would correct any misconceptions that might have prevailed in the hearts of the people. But if the literal view is correct, then revelation *taught* the misconceptions of the disciples, by instructing them to look for a kingdom in their generation, a kingdom that never came in any earthly sense... The truth, then, is that a literal interpretation of kingdom prophecies would force the church into a false position by virtue of

positive revelation, whereas a spiritual application would attribute the misconceptions to the people—and not to inspiration” (King, 5–6).

5. King explains the great difference between the kingdom of Israel and the spiritual kingdom of God in his chapter titled “The Law and the Truth.”
 - a. The Hebrew writer speaks of the law having “a shadow of good things to come instead of the true form of these realities” (Heb. 10:1).
 - b. King applies this to a variety of areas of the two kingdoms including the tabernacle, priesthood, sacrifices, temple, throne, seed, Israel, mountain, Jerusalem, and land.
6. It is my understanding that the prophecies of the coming kingdom were fulfilled with a spiritual kingdom.
 - a. Isaiah 2:1–3 tells us that “the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted above the hill; and all nations shall flow to it... For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”
 - b. Zechariah says:
 - i. "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn” (Zechariah 12:10).
 - ii. "On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness” (Zechariah 13:1).
 - c. We know these passages (and others like them) speak of the establishment of the kingdom in Acts 2—a spiritual kingdom.
 - i. Jesus applied such prophecies to his kingdom that would soon come.
 - ii. “Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” (Luke 24:45–4)
 - d. The prophecy of Daniel 2 was fulfilled with a spiritual kingdom.
 - i. As Daniel explains this great vision notice the prophecy of the kingdom of God: “And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a

kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure" (Daniel 2:44–45).

- ii. During the days of the fourth kingdom (the Roman Empire), we see the establishment of a kingdom that will never fail but will last forever.
 - iii. A kingdom that is more powerful than any other kingdom that will ever exist. Paul says that the rulers, authorities and those in power have been disarmed by Christ (Col. 2:15).
7. Concerning the question of the nature of the kingdom being literal or spiritual, I would agree with the view of the realized eschatologist in most areas.
 8. I believe (as I assume many in attendance do) that the kingdom is spiritual. I do not hold a millennialist view of the kingdom of God.
 9. And while we would not necessarily draw the shadow/image relationships as far as the realized eschatologist does or go as far in some applications, we do find ourselves in agreement on whether or not the kingdom is literal or spiritual.
 - a. But we soon will find ourselves in disagreement with the common realized eschatologist concerning other aspects of the kingdom.

B. The Establishment of the Kingdom.

1. Where our agreement begins to separate is not in the nature of the kingdom but rather in the establishment of the kingdom.
 - a. While the realized eschatologist believes that the kingdom was established at Pentecost, they do not recognize the kingdom as having fully been established with power and glory until the time when Jerusalem is destroyed.
 - b. Some might inaccurately describe the realized eschatologist in believing the kingdom was not established until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.
 - c. Wayne Jackson adequately summarized the realized eschatologist view of the kingdom in this area: "We must be careful here, for the realized eschatologists do not contend that the kingdom did not come in any sense

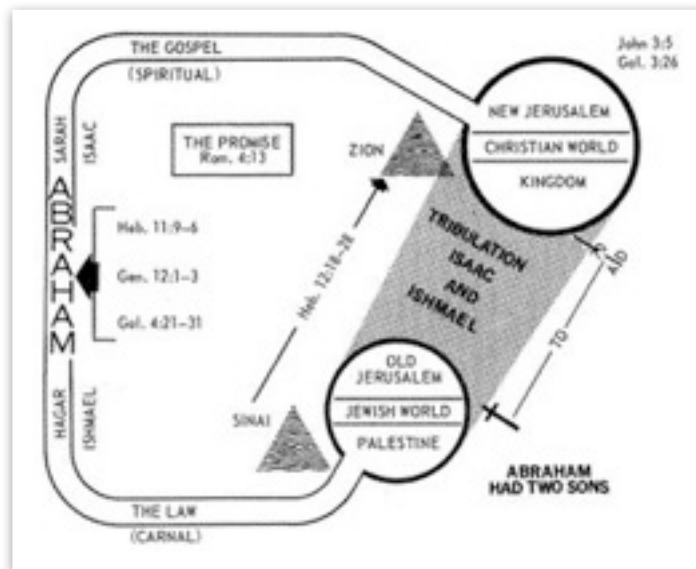
until A.D. 70. They concede that the kingdom came on Pentecost, but it was not **in its glory**; it was not **in its power**. It was not complete. It only received its glorious status, it only came with power, it only came in its completeness **when God destroyed the Jewish Nation in A.D. 70**" (Jackson, 10).

- d. The proper explanation of the A.D. 70 doctrine on the kingdom's establishment between Pentecost and A.D. 70 would be that it was already established but not yet fully matured.
 - i. King described this as "the already but not yet."
2. A great deal of emphasis in realized eschatology is placed on the understanding of time.
 - a. Samuel Dawson shows the comparison of phrases dealing with time in his chapter, "Does Time Mean Anything To God?"
 - i. Concerning the vision of Daniel 2:44 Dawson says, "God didn't say this kingdom was at hand, near, right at the door, or very soon. Of course, to a timeless God, it could have seemed but an instant. However, in man's time it would've been several hundred years before God fulfilled the prophecy" (Dawson, 23).
 - b. In contrast, the kingdom is described in those terms in the New Testament:
 - i. John the Baptist said the kingdom was "at hand" (Matthew 3:1-2).
 - ii. Jesus said, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15).
 - c. Based on the comparison of these statements in the New Testament as compared with the statements from the Old Testament the realized eschatologist argues the kingdom was near in the time of Christ and fulfilled soon after.
 - i. Perhaps it would be good for us to recognize the immediacy of certain passages in the New Testament.
 - ii. In some cases, we lean heavily on that immediacy.
 - Example: How many of us have used "the time is near" from Revelation 1:3 to contradict a premillennialist view of the book in the past?
 - iii. But other times we overlook the immediacy of passages according to the realized eschatologist.

3. The New Testament clearly teaches that the kingdom is near.
 - a. But, other passages after Pentecost appear to be saying the kingdom is still not fully established according to the realized eschatologist—meaning it is still “near.” And their argumentation is based on the language of these texts.
 - b. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely **into** his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (2 Timothy 4:18).
 - i. KJV: “preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom”.
 - ii. The realized eschatologist would ask, “If the kingdom was fully established in Acts 2, then why isn’t Paul in it in 2 Timothy 4?”
 - c. Peter said, “Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:10–11).
 - i. Again, notice Peter is encouraging them to make their election sure for “an entrance **into** the eternal kingdom.”
 - d. The Hebrew writer seems to say that they are still receiving the kingdom.
 - i. “Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:28–29).
 - ii. Again, if the kingdom was established on Pentecost why are they still receiving it?
4. The realized eschatologist argues that while the kingdom was established on Pentecost it did not come in its full power and glory until the return of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem.
 - a. A great deal of emphasis is placed on the allegory of Paul in Galatians 4:21–31. This text serves as the explanation of the kingdom not being fully in power until A.D. 70.
 - b. Hagar and Sarah are interpreted as representations of the Law of Moses and the Truth of Christ.
 - c. Paul’s use of Ishmael is interpreted as representative of the physical kingdom of Israel. Isaac is the representative of the kingdom today—spiritual Israel.

- i. The promise of a new world was made to Abraham’s seed (Genesis 12:1–3; Romans 4:13).
 - ii. And this fulfillment is believed to be fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem. Again, this inheritance comes as Ishmael is removed from the house and Isaac is then allowed to receive the inheritance.
 - iii. Therefore, the “last days” passages in the bible are referring to the end of the world and there would be a “new earth” or “new world” brought in with the full establishment of the kingdom of God and the destruction of Jerusalem.
- b. Dawson defines the “last days” in his own words: “My opinion is that the last days began after the four hundred years of biblical silence after the close of Malachi, and the coming of John the Baptist, whose work began six months before Jesus, and who introduced Jesus as the Messiah. Obviously, the last days of the Mosaic Age concluded with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70” (Dawson, 456).
- c. Max King refers to the prophecies of Isaiah 65–66 as evidence for this new world fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem.

- i. “These prophetic passages (Isaiah 65:17–19; 66:22) advanced the hope of a new world in some future time. Involved in this new creation would be a new Jerusalem, where joy prevails and weeping is heard no more. To what time and creation do these prophecies refer? Is this a creation destined to follow the end of this material universe? The author believes not! A careful study of the context, chapters 65 and 66, will reveal that the prophet was looking to the end of the Jewish age, with a vision of the Messianic blessings that would fall heir to spiritual Israel. The new Jerusalem of Gal. 4:26 corresponds to the new Jerusalem of Gal. 4:26 and Heb. 12:22. The new heaven and earth correspond to the heavenly country of Heb. 11:16. This was the world promised to Abraham (Rom. 4:13), which his seed looked for” (King, 37).



King, p. 28

- d. Don K. Preston said, “The term ‘the last days’ has nothing to do with the end of time or the end of the Christian age, or even as a definition of the entire Christian age. In my book, *The Last Days Identified*, I examine every major text that mentions the last days, and I show that not one of them refers to the Christian age” (Preston, *What are we waiting for?*).
 - e. Preston even asserts that understanding the “last days” is the key to understanding the concept of eschatology.
 - i. “In truth, all futurist eschatologies are reliant on this identification of the last days. In one sense, the proper identification of the last days is the foundation for a proper understanding of eschatology. If you improperly identify the last days, then you have the entire framework and time for the coming of the Lord, judgment and resurrection all wrong” (Preston, *The Last Days Identified*).
6. Perhaps the cornerstone argument consider the “last days” is based on Joel’s prophecy in Joel 2:28–32.
- a. In Peter’s sermon in Acts 2, we see that he declares that the “last days” have begun (vv. 16–21).
 - b. The characteristics of those last days are what? Prophecy, visions, dreams, signs, wonders, etc.
 - c. The realized eschatologist boldly asks, “Where are those signs today?”
 - d. Note: for a good refutation of this point, see Kevin Kay’s outline.
7. Ultimately the “last days” served as a time of transition and growth for God’s kingdom.
- a. A transition from Ishmael to Isaac in accordance with Paul’s allegory.
 - b. And a time of growth from that which is immature to that which is mature and perfect.
 - i. The realized eschatologist view of 1 Corinthians 13:11 is applied to the church being that which is perfect.
 - ii. “This ‘perfect’ thing is to be the goal, maturity, and fulfillment of something that is described as developing into manhood—1 Corinthians 13:11. The ‘perfect’ and ‘stature of the man’ is the bringing to maturity the body of Christ – the Church...”

“In AD 70 Christ returned within the first century “this generation” and placed His glory within His Church—thus forming and consummating God’s New Creation... The boy/child has reached manhood/maturity

and is actively laboring in the work of evangelizing the nations of the world” (Sullivan).

8. The argument is made that at the end of the eschaton, or “last days”, the kingdom came in its power and glory.

a. “What reward did Jesus give to *every man* on Pentecost day? Is the day of beginning the day of judgment? Would it not be more reasonable to put this judgment at the ‘end’ rather than the ‘beginning?’ Jesus came in the end of the Jewish age in judgment upon all who opposed his rule and authority... That was his coming in glory (Matt. 16:27) to reward every man according to his work...

“Therefore, Mark 9:1; Matthew 16:27–28; Matthew 24:30; and Revelation 22:12 are concurrent passages and relate to the coming of Christ in his kingdom with power and in glory and judgment at the end of Judaism. Pentecost was the beginning of his kingdom, but the fall of Jerusalem was the climactic state of its development and manifestation in power, glory, and judgment” (King, 139).

9. A vital part not discussed to this point is the question of when Jesus received his kingly authority.

a. The realized eschatologist argues that Jesus received it with the destruction of Jerusalem. It was not until the complete removal of the Jewish economy, or kingdom, that Jesus could have full and complete reign over his kingdom.

b. While there are many arguments made to show that Jesus received his full authority in a.d. 70, perhaps King's approach to the parable of the minas in Luke 19 shows the simplest interpretation for us to grasp (King, 139–140).

i. In the parable, the nobleman goes to a far country to receive his kingdom.

ii. To the realized eschatologist, this obviously refers to the time period between Jesus' ascension and his second coming at A.D. 70.

iii. This along with the citizens who hate the nobleman being applied to the Jews and the stewards who are managing the affairs of the kingdom being applied to the disciples provides a seemingly air-tight interpretation of this parable for King and others.

iv. Jesus closes that parable by stating, “But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me” (v. 27).

- King says, “The destruction of the citizens (Jews) cannot apply to Pentecost, but rather the fall of Jerusalem, which was the time that the king *returned* in judgment. (See verses 41–44)” (King, 140).
- c. Our common response might be to point out that Jesus says in Matthew 28:18 that “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”
- i. Russell states: “It is true that the Theocratic King was seated on the throne, ‘on the right hand of the Majesty on high,’ but He had not yet ‘taken his great power.’ His enemies not yet put down, and the full development and consummation of His kingdom could not be said to have arrived until by a solemn and public judicial act the Messiah had vindicated the laws of His kingdom and crushed beneath His feet His apostate and rebellious subjects” (Russell, 343).
 - ii. “It is perfectly clear, then, according to the New Testament, that the consummation, or winding up, of the Theocratic kingdom took place at the period of the destruction of Jerusalem and the judgment of Israel” (Russell, 344).
 - iii. Understand the point. Jesus could not fully reign as King in the Kingdom until the old kingdom, Israel represented by Ishmael in the allegory, had been fully crushed and removed. Israel itself serves as the final enemy to be destroyed and placed under the feet of Jesus the King.
10. To fully summarize the position, the realized eschatologist view of the establishment of the kingdom is that it was established on Pentecost but that it did not come with its fully power and glory until the destruction of Jerusalem. This also coincides with the second coming and judgment of Christ and the establishment of his rule and reign over this fully grown kingdom.
- a. To be clear, the realized eschatologist sees no future to the kingdom of God. We are already in the eternal phase of the kingdom. There is nothing else to look forward to.
 - b. We are already living in the new heaven and new earth.

II. ANSWERING THE ARGUMENTS:

A. First, understand that in one point we generally agree.

1. While I do not agree with the interpretation of all of the passages by the realized eschatologist, I do agree with their ultimate understanding of the Kingdom’s nature.

2. It is not a physical kingdom that many are still looking for today. It is spiritual in its nature.
 3. We do share common ground on this point—but perhaps only on this point.
- B. Let's begin by looking at Paul's allegory in Galatians 4.
1. King, Preston, and others suppose that the sons Ishmael and Isaac are shadows of the two kingdoms.
 - a. Ishmael representing the Theocratic Kingdom of Israel.
 - b. Israel representing the Kingdom of Christ, or the church. They are the "children of promise" (v. 28).
 - c. And that since both Ishmael and Isaac lived in the same house for a period there must be a period of transition for both kingdoms to remain. Therefore, proving to them that this transition occurred between Pentecost and A.D. 70.
 2. The greatest problem with this interpretation is that the text itself does not support it.
 - a. This section must be considered in the context of the first part of Galatians 4 which emphasizes that we are no longer slaves but sons (vv. 1–7).
 - b. The question being discussed by Paul appears to be how to be sons rather than slaves. And specifically in vv. 21–31 how this is achieved concerning the covenants of God.
 - c. Paul introduces what the text is about in v. 21: "Tell me, you who desire to be under **the law**, do you not listen **to the law**?" [emphasis mine].
 - d. Paul's allegory is in relation to the Law. Paul says in v. 24 that the subject being discussed are the two covenants.
 - e. The question is whether or not the Galatian brethren were going to hold themselves to the slavery of the Old Covenant or live under the liberty of the New Covenant.
 - f. Of this section Hendriksen says, "When the Judaizers pride themselves in the fact that they are "sons of Abraham," and the Galatians are influenced by this boast, let it be remembered that Abraham had two sons: one by the slave-woman, the other by the free-woman. Slavish law-observance, as if this were the pathway to salvation, makes one similar to Ishmael, slave-son of a slave-woman (Hagar). On the contrary, the exercise of one's freedom in Christ, basing one's trust in him alone, make one a true son of

Abraham, similar to the free-born son Isaac, born to the free-woman, Sarah” (*Galatians* 189).

- g. Concerning the “children of promise” in v. 28 Willis says, “Paul makes the Christians who are seeking to be justified through faith in Christ the children of promise, the ones compared to Isaac” (221).
 - i. They are not “children of promise” because they are a part of the new kingdom as the realized eschatologist supposes is.
 - ii. They are in the kingdom and “children of promise” because of the law they subject themselves to—the law of Christ.
 3. Being able to properly explain the allegory of *Galatians* 4 severely damages the arguments used to prove that the two kingdoms co-existed during the “last days” (Pentecost until A.D. 70).
- C. What about the power and authority of Christ? When did he receive it?
1. The realized eschatologist says he did not receive it until A.D. 70.
 - a. Russell states this could not have happened until the Jewish Theocracy was destroyed.
 - b. King says this is made clear by the parable of the minas.
 2. But what about the passages that claim Jesus already has all power and authority?
 - a. Jesus himself said, “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me’” (*Matthew* 28:18).
 - b. Paul said, “...that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all (*Ephesians* 1:20–23).
 3. It is interesting that Paul’s words in *Ephesians* 1 have no indication of some future expectation of fulfillment. They appear to be written in light of what has already occurred: “he put all things under his feet and gave him as head...”
 4. The New Testament writers teach that Jesus in fact did have all authority prior to A.D. 70.

- a. The important question to be asked is when did Jesus receive this authority?
 - b. Paul answers that question: “he worked in Christ **when he raised him from the dead...**” (Ephesians 1:20).
5. Jesus received this power and authority upon his resurrection—not at his second coming.

D. So when was the kingdom established?

1. Did the kingdom come with power and glory on Pentecost or was that fulfilled in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem?
2. Again, the realized eschatologist would argue that the kingdom was established on Pentecost but did have its full glory and power until A.D. 70.
3. This assumption directly contradicts New Testament teaching.
 - a. “Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Ephesians 3:20-21).
 - b. Paul’s statement has two important components:
 - i. There is a definite present “power” working (v. 20).
 - ii. There is also present “glory” in the church (v. 21).
 - c. There is no such thing as a limited power and glory phase of the church.
 - d. Wayne Jackson accurately labels this idea a “doctrinal invention” (11).
4. The presence of the power and glory of a reigning king would also suggest that the kingdom has power and glory.
 - a. As we have already noticed, upon his resurrection Jesus was given power and glory as the King.
 - b. Can we suppose that the king (Jesus) had power prior to A.D. 70 but the kingdom itself lacks that same power until A.D. 70? Certainly not.
5. What about those passages written in the New Testament which appear to be saying the kingdom hasn’t been fully established? If the realized eschatologist can prove the kingdom isn’t fully established until A.D. 70, then certainly it can’t full power and glory.

- a. Specifically, what about the kingdom passages in 2 Timothy 4 and 2 Peter 1?
 - b. In 2 Timothy 4:18 Paul speaks of being brought “safely into his heavenly kingdom.”
 - i. The realized eschatologist equates all uses of the word “kingdom” in scripture regardless of the qualifying descriptions.
 - ii. Wayne Jackson writes of this passage: “There is a phase of the kingdom that we enter after we leave this life. There is an earthly kingdom of which we are citizens now, but there is a heavenly phase of it, into which we enter at death” (23).
 - iii. William Hendriksen commented, “The expression “the Lord ... will save me to (or *for*) his heavenly kingdom” implies that Paul expected to go to heaven immediately upon death” (*Timothy* 327).
 - iv. The qualifying term “heavenly” is taken by most to mean entering into heaven. A position I would agree with.
 - c. I would also suggest that the phrase “eternal kingdom” in 2 Peter 1:10–11 is referring to the same idea.
 - d. But the realized eschatologist fails to recognize the descriptive terms associated with “kingdom” in these passages.
 - e. The following commentary on their treatment of terms in this sense is not only humorous but accurate: “But one quickly learns, if he studies the Kingdom dogma, that these folks have concocted a whole scheme of teaching that attempts to be consistent with the way they think things **ought to be**. A theory is constructed, and then every passage must be forced to fit into it. That is a woefully erroneous way to approach the interpretation of the Bible” (Jackson, 24).
6. We must also consider the argument made from passages like Hebrews 12.
 - a. If the kingdom is established on Pentecost, why are Christians still “receiving” the kingdom in Hebrews 12:28–29?
 - b. Paul wrote in Colossians 1:13, “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.”
 - i. Here the disciples aren’t receiving a kingdom but rather are transferred to, or into, the kingdom.
 - c. There are passages showing the disciples were in the kingdom in other contexts.

- i. Paul preached the kingdom in Acts 28:23. There is nothing in the language or wording that shows a kingdom that is coming or in the process of being made mature. It is a kingdom that appears to fully exist.
 - d. Philip preaches to the Samaritans about the “kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12). Most would agree that the kingdom was just as fully established as Jesus’ name. Both appear to be presented by Philip as present realities—not a future fulfillment.
- 7. We can accurately state then:
 - a. The King had power prior to A.D. 70.
 - b. The kingdom had been established prior to A.D. 70.
 - c. The kingdom had power and glory prior to A.D. 70.
- 8. Perhaps this controversy has occurred in the area of the kingdom because bible students often fail to understand what the word “kingdom” refers to.
 - a. Certainly the realized eschatologist does.
 - b. And many times we do as well.

III. WHAT IS THE “KINGDOM”?

- A. The realized eschatologist views every use of the word kingdom as being the church.
 - 1. As seen earlier there is no consideration given to any qualifiers on the term kingdom such as “heavenly” or “eternal.”
 - 2. It is assumed that every instance of the word “kingdom” ultimately has the same definition.
 - 3. This view should sound familiar to many.
 - a. It is the traditional interpretation of the word kingdom in the New Testament. Many times the word “kingdom” is used synonymous with the church.
 - b. The “Kingdom Parables” are all about the church.
 - c. When we interpret kingdom prophecy, we see the church as the fulfillment of those prophecies.

4. And in many passages, the word kingdom does refer to the Lord's church.
 - a. Jesus tells Peter that he will build his church and then in the following verse uses the term kingdom to refer to that church (Matthew 16:18–19).
 - b. Paul uses the word kingdom to refer to the church in 1 Thessalonians 2:11–12.
 - c. We also see this term used by Paul in Colossians 1:13 and the context bears out this is the church in vv. 18, 24.
 5. But I am afraid we have made a mistake in the past by interpreting every “kingdom” passage as the church.
 - a. It appears this trend became popular as a form of response to premillennialism.
 - b. The premillennialist sees the kingdom as something that is still to come—the re-establishment of the earthly kingdom of Israel.
 - c. And in a response to that, many taught the truth concerning the kingdom and the church but perhaps to an extent that has kept the focus on the word “kingdom” too narrow.
- B. But the word kingdom cannot always be interpreted as the church.
1. We must be careful that we do not make the same mistake the realized eschatologist does.
 2. One example of a different use of the word “kingdom” is in reference to the heavenly kingdom.
 - a. Earlier noted concerning 2 Timothy 4:18 and 2 Peter 1:10–11.
 - b. Also consider Paul's encouragement to those in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch.
 - i. “... strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).
 - ii. If the kingdom has come with power and glory on Pentecost, then this use of the word “kingdom” must refer to something other than the church.
 - iii. According to Paul, Christians already enjoy the citizenship of the kingdom through the church on earth having been transferred “to the kingdom of his beloved Son” (Colossians 1:13).

- iv. The use of “kingdom” in Acts 14 must refer then to the eternal kingdom, or heavenly kingdom.
- 3. The word “kingdom” can be defined in several ways according to Thayer:
 - a. Royal power, kingship, dominion, rule.
 - b. A kingdom, the territory subject to the rule of a king.
 - c. Used in the N.T. to refer to the reign of the Messiah.
- 4. Robert Turner said of the kingdom: “We miss the point re. kingdom when we think of people— the ‘party’—instead of ‘rule.’ ... Think ‘rule,’ not ‘people,’ when you speak of Christ's kingdom” (Turner, *Queries and Answers*).
- 5. Perhaps the best understanding of the word “kingdom” in scripture can simply be the “rule and/or reign of.”
 - a. Specifically in regards to the kingdom of the Lord being the rule and reign of Christ.
 - b. Most would be in agreement that the church itself serves as the manifestation of the reign of Christ today.
 - i. He is head over the church (Ephesians 1:22)
 - ii. But the previous verse ties his headship to what? His rule, authority, power, and dominion (Ephesians 1:21). His Kingship.
- 6. Jesus uses the word “kingdom” to refer to the rule or reign of God.
 - a. In Matthew 6:33 Jesus says, “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.”
 - i. Few consider this kingdom to be the church.
 - ii. Hendriksen says, “The listeners are exhorted, therefore, to acknowledge God as King in their own hearts and lives, and to do all in their power to have him recognized as King also in the hearts and lives of others...” (*Matthew* 354).
 - iii. Isn't Jesus saying, “Seek the rule and righteousness of God before anything else”?
 - b. Jesus speaks of the kingdom in Matthew 12.
 - i. In v. 28 he says, “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

- Note the tense “has come” rather than “will come.”
 - Whatever Jesus is saying means that it would occur prior to the day of Pentecost or A.D. 70.
- ii. This “kingdom” in v. 28 cannot mean the church.
 - iii. But, it can mean the reign of Christ.
 - iv. Wayne Jackson comments, “‘The reign of God is upon you, or perhaps in an expanded sense, the exercise of ‘kingly authority.’ What the Lord actually suggested in this context was this. ‘When I, by the Spirit of God, cast out demons, you are seeing a preview—a preliminary demonstration of my power—the kind of power that I will exercise fully when I sit down at the right hand of God and become King over my kingdom’” (Jackson, 20).
- c. In Matthew 21, Jesus tells the story of the wicked husbandmen.
 - i. The owner sends servants to receive his payment from the tenants. But the wicked men keep killing the servants.
 - ii. So the owner sends his son and says they will respect him. But they kill him as well.
 - iii. Jesus applies this obviously to the Jews rejection of himself.
 - iv. Notice what is said in v. 43: “Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.”
 - What does the kingdom refer to in this passage? The church?
 - Is Jesus saying he will take the church away from the Jews and give it to others?
 - v. No. Jesus is saying that while the reign of God had been with Israel that it was going to be removed and given to another nation, or kingdom—the church is that new people.
 - vi. The word “kingdom” in this text means the reign of God.
7. When the book of Acts records Paul preaching the kingdom of God, what is it that Paul was preaching?
 - a. “And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God” (Acts 19:8).

- b. “When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.

He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance” (Acts 28:23, 30–31).

- c. Traditionally those passages are interpreted as Paul teaching about the church.
 - d. But if we interpret them as the reign of Christ, have we lost any value to those passages?
 - i. No.
 - ii. In fact, the context of Acts 28:23, 30–31 would seem to show that interpreting “kingdom” as the reign of Christ would be more fitting to the text.
 - iii. He is speaking to the Israelites concerning their unwillingness to accept the truth. And even says that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles (v. 28).
 - iv. Does that not seem parallel in some ways to Jesus’ teaching concerning the husbandmen? That the kingdom, or reign of God, was taken from Israel and given to those who will listen?
8. Let’s consider this idea in relation to a familiar prophecy from the Old Testament.
- a. In Daniel 2:31–45 we read the vision of the statue representing the four earthly kingdoms.
 - b. Let’s look closely at the final part of the vision:
 - i. “Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth” (Daniel 2:35).
 - ii. “And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an

end, and it shall stand forever, just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure" (Daniel 2:44–45).

- c. This vision is often interpreted to refer to the establishment of the church, seen here as the kingdom that will never be destroyed or left to another people.
 - d. But this “great mountain” fills the whole earth.
 - i. We certainly can say that the church did not cover the entire earth by A.D. 70 or even by the third or fourth centuries.
 - ii. Kevin Kay makes this argument concerning this vision in his outline on page 19.
 - e. But could there be another understanding of this kingdom?
 - i. There is no doubt that the rule of Christ has covered the earth since his resurrection and ascension to heaven when he sat on the right hand of God and received all power and authority over all the earth.
 - ii. Could the “reign of Christ” more appropriately fit the prophecy of Daniel 2 than limiting the interpretation of “kingdom” to the church itself?
 - f. Paul T. Butler says, “The kingdom of God, the church, conquers and supplants all human government and eventually destroys all other sovereignty and becomes the only government in the new earth” (Butler 87).
 - i. But is it the church that conquered all human government or the rule of Christ?
 - g. And, on the day of judgment who is going to be held accountable to the laws and rules of the “kingdom”? Only the church? Or the entire earth?
 - i. If the entire earth will be held accountable to Christ’s rule as King and subsequently his Gospel serving as the new law, then the “reign of Christ” appears to be the more appropriate interpretation of kingdom in this vision.
9. Consider Hebrews 12 with this understanding of the kingdom.

- a. The realized eschatologist uses Hebrews 12:28–29 to show that the disciples were still “receiving” the kingdom and therefore it couldn’t be fully established until A.D. 70.
- b. But consider the meaning of this text with “the rule of Christ” as the interpretation rather than the church.
 - i. “Therefore let us be grateful for receiving [the rule of Christ] that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:28–29).
 - ii. Of this text Jackson says, “Rather, the word ‘kingdom’ here is used again in the sense of reign, or in the sense of receiving the authoritative teaching of Christ into our hearts, into our minds, into our lives. Is not that a continuous process?” (Jackson 26).

10. Consider 2 Timothy 4:1–2 with this understanding of the kingdom.

- a. “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Timothy 4:1–2).
- b. The A.D. 70 argument states that the second coming of Christ and the establishment of the kingdom were simultaneous.
- c. But consider replacing the word with the concept of the rule or authority of Christ.
 - i. “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his [rule]: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Timothy 4:1–2).
- d. Jesus would exercise his authority as King at the time of judgment.

11. Does this lessen the importance of the church?

- a. No.
- b. Certainly we cannot separate the church from the reign of Christ. He is the head of the church. He is ruling over the church.
- c. In my opinion, understanding some of these passages correctly actually gives a proper understanding to what the church should be: the body of Christ.

- i. It is the collection of those who have willingly submitted themselves to the rule and reign of Christ.
- ii. It also serves as the manifestation of Christ's rule here on earth.

12. The careful student will consider carefully the word "kingdom" in its context before automatically defining it as the Lord's church.

IV. Is there a future aspect to the kingdom?

A. Realized eschatology teaches that all prophecies of the bible have been fulfilled.

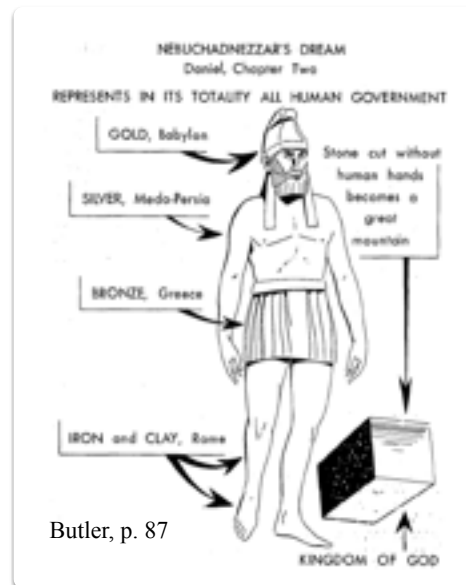
1. But I believe two of the Kingdom Parables are still in the process of being fulfilled today.
2. The Parable of the Mustard Seed.
 - a. "He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches"" (Matthew 13:31-32).

b. Are we to assume that the kingdom had reached its full growth and potential by A.D. 70?

3. The Parable of the Leaven.

a. "He told them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened"" (Matthew 13:33).

b. Again, should we assume that the kingdom had influenced the earth completely by A.D. 70?



4. I think the kingdom still has a future aspect on earth that has not been fulfilled. Can we not agree that the mustard plant is still growing and the leaven is still leavening?

B. But in addition to that, there is another future aspect to the kingdom.

1. Earlier we noted the passages of 2 Timothy 4:18; 2 Peter 1:10–11; and Acts 14:22.
 - a. I asserted at that time that these passages are referring to the entrance into heavenly kingdom.
 - b. An entrance into what would be the final aspect of the kingdom of God—its final fulfillment.
2. One commentator wrote concerning Acts 14:22, “Entrance into the kingdom in its final, heavenly phase is yet future, when our bodies are no longer composed of flesh and blood (1 Corinthians 15:50); it is conditioned on continued steadfastness (2 Peter 1:10–11), which includes suffering tribulation” (Stringer 293).
3. It is at this time—the day of Judgment—that Jesus will return the second time to deliver up the kingdom to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24–26).
 - a. “The idea of presenting the kingdom to God is that of presenting the resurrected saints to God. At the *parousia* (his coming), which is immediately followed by the *telos*, Jesus will give dominion of his kingdom back to God. He will not ‘set up’ the kingdom; he will ‘give up’ the kingdom! The kingdom which is presently known as the church over which Jesus is presently reigning will become an eternal heavenly kingdom at the second coming (cr. 2 Peter 1:11; Hebrews 12:28)” (Willis *1 Corinthians* 450).
 - b. T.R. Applebury points out that this kingdom to be delivered up is the people who under the “rule of Christ”: “Those who have accepted the rule of Christ by faith and obedience to His gospel and have remained faithful to Him until death are all to be presented to the Father in the ‘eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ’ (2 Peter 1:11)” (Applebury 278).
 - c. The final aspect of the kingdom of Christ—or rule of Christ—will be when Jesus returns to hand over the resurrected saints to the Father for entrance into the eternal, or heavenly kingdom.
4. Perhaps one of the greatest concerns I have personally of the hyper-preterist view of scripture is the damage it does to our hope that is based on the resurrection.
 - a. If there is no more second coming and the resurrection has already occurred, then what exactly are we “hoping” for?

5. While the realized eschatologist denies any future aspect of the kingdom, scripture shows us that there is a day where the kingdom will still be handed over to God.

V. CONCLUSION: SOME LESSONS FOR US AS PREACHERS:

A. Our preaching needs to focus on teaching the truth on these matters.

1. We need to be preaching about the establishment and nature of the church as well as the rule and reign of Christ in our lives and over all men.
2. We need to incorporate the concept of eschatology into our preaching and teaching as well.
 - a. Talk about the reality of the coming judgment.
 - b. Help the audience to understand that Jesus is indeed coming soon and there is a great need to be prepared today.
 - c. I am fearful too much of our preaching deals with the comforts of this life rather than the preparation for its end and the entrance into the life to come.
3. At the same time I was preparing this presentation, I was teaching the book of Isaiah in one of our classes.
 - a. It was amazing to me how section after section emphasized the coming King on his throne ruling in peace.
 - b. As we teach those great sections in the prophets that speak of the Messiah and his kingdom, we must give careful thought to emphasizing the fulfillment of those texts for our students.
 - c. When were they fulfilled? How were they fulfilled?
 - d. And we cannot assume that anyone understands them properly. We must show them the truth on these matters.
4. Brethren, we can accomplish much more on this issue by preaching the truth concerning these things to our audiences than by focusing our time on exposing the error of men like King, Preston, Russell, and others.

B. Our teaching needs to recognize the importance of the destruction of Jerusalem.

1. There is going to be a temptation to lessen the value of the destruction of Jerusalem in our study and interpretation of the scriptures if we aren't careful.
2. I already hold the late date view of Revelation. But one thought kept coming to mind as I continued studying and reading the material on realized eschatology: I don't want anything to do with A.D. 70 at all!
3. But I am afraid we often overlook the significance of the destruction of Jerusalem because it did serve as a judgment to the people who rejected Christ.
4. And I do think that the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple was in some ways the removal of a final stumbling block to many in the first century.

C. We must handle the word of truth correctly.

1. The realized eschatologist, like all others who promote error, provide their own interpretation of truth to support their doctrine.
 - a. There is no doubt if you read Max King or spend a few hours on Don K. Preston's website that they have spent countless hours preparing their position.
 - b. They have been diligent in their study and preparation as workmen—even if they are misled by their work.
2. The only way we can be prepared to correct their error and defend truth is to be more committed to our own preparation.
 - a. "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).
 - b. We cannot give in to the temptation to be lazy in our study and preparation.
 - c. And we cannot give in to the temptation to ignore matters that on the surface overwhelm us. Doing so will only guarantee that we are unprepared when we are needed to stand for truth.

D. We need to know what we believe.

1. While this certainly should go without saying, I am afraid sometimes we take the convenient road of ignorance.
2. I realize it is difficult to have a position on every single issue.

- a. But the point is that we know what we believe on the issues.
 - b. The point is that we are convicted of truth.
3. And then whenever issues (like this one) arise, we must test the spirits all over again (1 John 4:1).

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