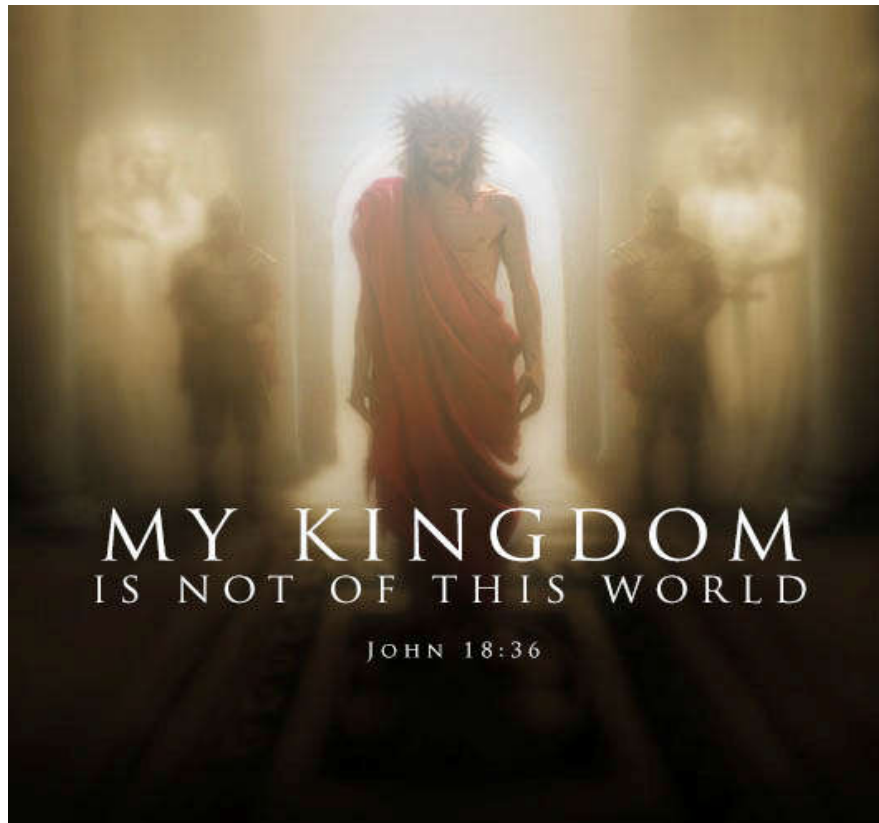


[My Kingdom is not of this world Jn 18:38](#)

How this statement has been misused and the tragedies and chaos that has resulted! Why? Because it has been misunderstood! Whence the misunderstanding? From the Greek mindset, as I hope to show.

These things do not happen in a vacuum. They have outcomes. Two kinds of Wisdom in James 3:13-18



Four questions:

1. What is a Kingdom? What does a kingdom consist of? Features?

A monarch	Form
Crown	Form
Throne	Form
Realm or territory	Form
Citizens	Form
Power/authority	Form – helps it to function, but primarily structure
Laws	Form/function
Destiny	Function
Shared culture and customs	Function
More?	Define form or function

2. What do we understand by the term “The Kingdom of God”? Are the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven the same thing?

I’m taking the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven as equivalent phrases, as most of the sayings of Jesus in Matthew’s gospel (the only place where the phrase ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ occurs in the Bible) are repeated in the other Gospels as Kingdom of God, and Matthew himself shows the equivalence in 19:23 and 24 where he uses both phrases in parallel expressions. He may well be using Kingdom of Heaven out of deference to his Jewish readers (although he does use the phrase ‘Kingdom of God 6 times in his gospel). For Jesus’ first century hearers, heaven is of equal significance, as confirmed by Yeshua:

Matt. 5:34-35 But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.

We might understand the two expressions as **‘The Kingdom of the God of Heaven’**, showing both the Ruler and the expanse of His rule – universal, as we’ve hopefully seen from the Old Testament scriptures.

3. So what are you praying for when you pray – “Your Kingdom come”?

God’s Kingdom is as eternal and extensive as He is eternal and omnipresent. But there is a rebellion in progress and a usurper who is the pretender to the throne! Satan is nowhere described as King of this world – that is a title reserved for One Person only Psa. 2. He is described as the god of this world, the prince of this world, the prince of the power of the air, and only once is his domain described as a kingdom – and that is only in reference to a kingdom being divided. His is the dominion of darkness, out of which we are translated into the Kingdom of the Son of God’s love!

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

In the early church – before Greek philosophers! – Jesus announced the Kingdom, they preached Jesus and the Kingdom came! Then came theological disputes about the Kingdom and this world, and the mis-applications, mostly relate to form – Aristotelean logic and Platonic dualism reign supreme in this area!

Function became secondary and attempts were made to squeeze it into a single form – uniformity!

These are just some of the battlegrounds:

- Is Jesus reigning from a throne now?
- If so, whose throne?
- Is the Kingdom still future or does it exist in a manifest form now?
- If so, is that in the church or in the world?

Platonic dualism (everything material is evil) seizes our verse and uses it to confirm its view that an earthly kingdom based in an earthly Jerusalem with an earthly people at the centre – the Jews – must be evil, so cannot be of God. So no millennium, no future reign of Jesus on the earth. But He is reigning now, so that

must be in the church, and therefore, using Aristotlean login and allegory (Augustine “The City of God”) the church has to bring in the Kingdom now – on the earth!

That’s not necessarily the thought process that happened, but it was certainly the result! The author, Rupert Heinlein has commented, “Almost any sect, cult or religion will legislate its creed into law if it acquires the political power to do so”. And that is the sad history of the church. The result – **James 3:14-18**

- By the 5th century, the church had become the prominent power in the world. Inspired by the vision of a secular theocracy after the decline and fall of the Roman empire, the church took supremacy over secular kings, economics, seats of learning, the arts, etc.

Implemented Plato’s “ideal community” – everybody had their place – worker, soldier, clergy.

(Note: Also in “The Republic”, Plato developed the idea of a **noble lie** – a myth or untruth, often, but not invariably, of a religious nature, knowingly propagated by an elite to maintain social harmony or to advance an agenda – Hypernormalisation!¹)

- Resulted in the Dark Ages, the Crusades, the Inquisition.
- In the Reformation, Luther articulated the doctrine of the two kingdoms
 - Separation of church and state
 - Passive role of church in secular matters
- Calvin followed those ideas too, but was much less passive – he got involved in social and political activism, saying that Christians have an important role in the public square and magistrates (i.e. all types of political leaders) are obligated to further Christian virtues.

Seen in Geneva when Calvin and associates became leading members of the city’s legislature, which imposed his Reformed values on all society. All members of the community became Christians by infant baptism, and therefore under the church’s dominion, whether or not they professed any faith later in life. This would lead to problems in the American colonies as we will see.

In Geneva, this led to, amongst other things, like the persecution of those who believed in believer’s baptism, and a so-called heretic, Michael Servetus, being burnt at the stake at Calvin’s instigation, (although he wanted the sentence commuted to beheading ‘as an act of christian mercy’²)

- In ‘Christian’ England in the 17th Century, you’d go to the Tower of London (and not come out!) for suggesting that Jesus would reign as King from Jerusalem, and that Gentile Kings would bow to Him, even though that what is says in Rev. 21 (James 1st had a deep insecurity complex!)

The CofE Prayer Book initially followed the Catholics by pronouncing an anathema on anyone ‘peddling Jewish myths’. The wording might have gone (article 41 of the original 42 then 39 articles) but the ‘no millennium’ doctrine is still the official position of the CofE.

- In New England, in the 16th and 17th century, these same principles were adopted. The Founding Fathers had protested against state intrusion in church affairs (background of the established church in England, legislated church attendance at the established church only, doctrine and practice set in secular law), and their ideas for the separation of church and state was based on this. So far, so good! But they were all for church intrusion in state affairs!

All members of a community were christened and automatically became members of the church. The church Presbytery were also the town council. Church attendance was compulsory (much of the famed New England revival was the ‘conversion’ of these people; Jonathan Edwards needs to be understood against this background).

Needless to say, there was reaction against this, and the separation of church and state enshrined in the American constitution has long been used by secularists to force Christians, and anything Christian, out of the public square (e.g. starting with the 10 commandments in schools– banned in the 1960’s)

¹ **HyperNormalisation** is a 2016 [BBC](#) documentary by British filmmaker [Adam Curtis](#). It argues that governments, financiers, and [technological utopians](#) have, since the 1970s, given up on the complex "real world" and built a simpler "fake world" run by corporations and kept stable by politicians. (Wikipedia)

² See www.radicalresurgence.com/calvinsgeneva

If it was just a matter of history, we might not worry so much, but it's still alive and kicking in the church today, especially the Western church, and particularly in the USA, and some of the theologies being exported from there (especially by 'Christian' TV!).

Dominion Theology³ is a group of Christian political ideologies that seek to institute a nation governed by Christians based on their understandings of biblical law. Extents of rule and ways of achieving governing authority are varied.

But essentially, they are based on Christians "taking back dominion" – satan is in control of this world and we are told that God is looking for people who will help Him take back dominion. Those who submit to His apostles and prophets will take control of the kingdoms of this world – they will occupy the kingdoms of education, science, the arts, finance, politics, etc.

Prominent adherents of these ideologies are theologically diverse – Calvinist Christian Reconstructionism, Roman Catholic Integralism, Charismatic/Pentecostal Kingdom Now theology, New Apostolic Reformation and others. Note that these ideologies underlie the Republican/Democrat divide.

"Already but not yet" is another way of looking at the Kingdom, but in George Eldon Ladd's influential writings about 'realized eschatology' (oxymoron?), he has conflated the two aspects and this has resulted in the church trying to bring in the form of the future kingdom now.

Note focus on form over function! Has led to all manner of evils, and to opposition to Christianity today. It has been well said that those who refuse to learn from history are condemned to repeating its mistakes.

Remember the comment earlier, "Almost any sect, cult or religion will legislate its creed into law if it acquires the political power to do so". The church is ever in danger of accepting the offer that satan made to Jesus, and He refused it!

We have no reason to expect secular governments to create a 'Christian' society, and no mandate to take control if they don't. We should pray that they will so order society that we can lead peaceable and godly lives (1 Tim. 2), but the church grows fastest where it's not dominant – e.g. the first 3 centuries of its existence!

As someone said, "When the church takes secular power, the wheels fall off!" When the church got on with the job of being the Kingdom, with the Hebraic mindset focusing on function over form, it turned the world upside down within a few decades! The rot set in with the secular mindset of Greek philosophy, paving the way for the church to fall at satan's feet with the sparkling offer of the kingdom of this world in the 4th century, and not much has changed since – the true church always being on the margins (Pilgrim Church).

Modern 'dominion oriented' ministries might fill churches, stadia and showgrounds, but are they making disciples? We are not to judge, but Jesus said "By their fruits you shall know them". Back to James 3!

4. So how does the Bible describe the Kingdom of God? What is its function?

The Hebrew and Greek words translated kingdom, actually mean kingly reign – emphasis is on the function rather than the form of the kingdom. So we recast the phrase 'Kingdom of God/Heaven' as The Kingly Reign of God. And this is the kingdom which is not 'of this world' – owes nothing to human conceptions of kingdom, and doesn't derive its authority or power structures from any earthly source.

From the New Testament, we see that the Kingly Reign of God:

In the Gospels

- Belongs to the poor in spirit and the persecuted (Matt.5:3,10)
- Requires an impossibly high standard of righteousness to enter (Matt. 5:20)

³ Taken from Wikipedia entry on this topic

- Is not a matter of outward profession but of doing God's will (Matt. 7:21)
- Is a matter of outward observation, but internal (Luke 17:20-21 where "in the midst" = "inside", as inside the cup in Matt. 23:26)
- Is entered through becoming like a child and being born again (Matt. 18:3-4 and parallel passages; John 3:3,5,7)
- Was 'at hand' or 'drawing near' in the time of John the Baptist and Jesus (Matt. 3,2; 4:17;10:7 and parallel passages)
- Came upon those who heard Jesus (Matt. 12:38)

Later in the Gospels, then Acts and Epistles

- Was taken from those who thought they were already in it (Matt. 21:31, 43; 8:11-12)
- Was given to others (Luke 12:32; 22_29-30)
- Was preached by the Apostles and the early church (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23,31; Col.4:11)
- Is not open to those who live 'in the flesh' (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:21)
- Is entered now through much tribulation (Acts 14:22)
- Is not a matter of talk, or eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, joy and power in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 4:20)

Yeshua's Kingdom is 'not of this world' just as He was not of this world – and neither are we! John 17:14 – see Steve's book "Livin' the Life" ch.18 'Kingdom'

John MacArthur notes: "My Kingdom is not of this world". By this phrase, Jesus meant that His Kingdom is not connected to earthly political and national entities, nor does it have its origin in the evil world system that is in rebellion against God. ... Messiah's Kingdom does not originate in the efforts of man, but with the Son of Man forcefully and decisively conquering sin in the lives of His people, and, some day, conquering the evil world system at His Second Coming when He establishes the earthly form of the Kingdom.

Eschatological

- Was postponed (Luke 19:11; Acts 1:6)
- Still has future aspects (2 Tim. 1:4,18; 2 Pet. 1:11; Rev. 11:15)
- Cannot be inherited by flesh and blood (1 Cor. 15:50)
- Will come in manifest power following cataclysmic events on the earth (Luke 21:31)
- Will conquer all enemies and be delivered by Yeshua to the Father at the conclusion of history (1 Cor. 15:24)

In John 18 and 19, the Kingdom of God is on full display. We see the Ruler of the Universe standing before the representative of the kingdoms of the earth, being tried! Actually, it's Pilate, and the whole system behind and above him, which is on trial!!



Yeshua stands, in the full dignity of His Servant Manhood, silent in the face of false accusations, striding magnificently through 4 mock trials, and leaves behind Him men to whom God has nothing to say – Herod, the Jewish authorities, Pilate and Rome. The world last saw the King hanging on a Cross and will next see Him when He comes to bring judgment on all men and nations – and every eye will see Him! (Rev. 1:7)

After His death on the Cross, His Resurrection and Ascension, Yeshua establishes the kingly rule of God in hearts that are open to Him (those who are 'of the truth' who hear His voice John 18:37) but, for now (end of v.36), His Kingly rule is not a matter of dominion over the earth. It will be, and one day the kingdom of this world will become the Kingdom of our God and of His Messiah and there will be no mistaking it!

In the meantime, our mandate is to do what the Apostles and early church did. Yeshua came announcing that the Kingdom of God was coming near. After Pentecost, the Apostles preached Yeshua and the Kingdom came!

NB Yeshua is never described as King of the church. The word King is entirely absent from the Epistles with the exception of 1 Timothy, which are eschatological. If the Kingdom is coming in us, then it's because the King is in us!

But that's not our primary relationship, e.g. Queen and Prince Phillip. In relation to the church, Jesus is described as our Bridegroom, High Priest, Advocate, Apostle of our confession, Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, Head of the church which is His body, Author and Finisher of our faith, our Prophet, Redeemer, Anchor, Bright Morning Star, our Rock, our Mediator, our Saviour and our Lord. He is Lord of lords and King of **kings**, i.e. King of **those that exercise dominion** – which is not us (whoever would be greatest, let him be servant of all). And let us note – He is NOT a constitutional monarch – Pantokrator – ruler of everything!

For now, the Kingdom of God is operating where:

- Our allegiance is to the King Matt. 6:10
- Our values reflect the King's values Matt 25; Heb 1:8
- Our lifestyle is shaped by those values 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5; 1 Thess. 2:12
- Our priorities are the King's priorities Matt. 6:24-34
- Our mission is the King's business 2 Cor. 5:20
- Our strategy is defined by heaven (the HQ) – Jesus and the Apostles
- Our expectations are shaped by it Luke 12:33; 17:21; 19:11-15; 21:31; 22:29-30; Acts 1:3-6
- Our destiny is sure 2 Tim. 4:18, Col. 1:3; 2 Pet.1:11; Heb.12:18
- God's glory is assured 1 Cor. 15:24; Rev. 12:10; 19:16

Any human attempt to bring it into existence is doomed to failure – those who refuse to learn from history are condemned to repeating its mistakes! Yeshua said **He** will build His church, and **God** says that **He** will put all things under His (Yeshua's) feet – Eph. 1:12-23:

[by] the mighty strength **He (i.e. the Father)** exerted when **He** raised Messiah from the dead and **seated Him** at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is named, **not only in the present age but also in the one to come**. And **God** placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be Head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.

Can anyone do any better than that?!? Keep Yeshua at the centre – 'I determined to know nothing among you save Messiah and Him crucified' and the Kingdom will come!