

Two Kingdoms Biblical Texts

Christ is the central and cohesive theme for the Bible: "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that bear witness to me" (Jn. 5:39). The two kingdoms doctrine, then, is one but not the only lens through which Scripture can be viewed. It is, however, a powerful distinction by which God's Law and the Gospel of Christ can be understood and practically applied to our instruction, practice, policy, decisions, and community.

God's two kingdoms are in evidence throughout the Scriptures. We easily think of Mt. 22:21, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" and Mk 1:15, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." This document presents a variety of two kingdom texts—some obvious, others more nuanced—for evaluating issues and actions both in the church and in the world around us. The list is selective, not exhaustive, but it does represent the complex intersections of the two kingdoms. The citations are best applied by examining multiple texts and considering the tension between the two kingdoms. Then the texts can inform an application which may advance the Gospel in a way that factors in sin and the Law but through which the Gospel can prevail for sinners. (For further discussion of the two kingdoms, see the About page at <https://twokingdoms.cune.edu/about>.)

Creation

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.... God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Gen. 1:1, 31

The heavens are telling of the glory of God, and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Ps. 19:1

The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein. Ps 24:1

The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." Ps 2:2-3

Israel

Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." Ex. 19:3-6

But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord. And the Lord told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought

them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights.” Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking him for a king. He said, “This is what the king who will reign over you will claim as his rights: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. Some he will assign make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. Your male and female servants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, but the Lord will not answer you in that day.” But the people refused to listen to Samuel. “No!” they said. “We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles.” 1 Sam. 8:6-20

Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Hephzibah. He did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD dispossessed before the sons of Israel. I Kings 21:1-2

Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. He did right in the sight of the LORD and walked in all the way of his father David, nor did he turn aside to the right or to the left. 2 Kings 22:102

Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent a message to Jeroboam king of Israel: “Amos is raising a conspiracy against you in the very heart of Israel. The land cannot bear all his words. For this is what Amos is saying: “ ‘Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land.’ ” Then Amaziah said to Amos, “Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there. Don't prophesy anymore at Bethel, because this is the king's sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom.” Amos answered Amaziah, “I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. But the Lord took me from tending the flock and said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’ Now then, hear the word of the Lord. You say,“ ‘Do not prophesy against Israel, and stop preaching against the descendants of Isaac.’ “Therefore this is what the Lord says: “ ‘Your wife will become a prostitute in the city, and your sons and daughters will fall by the sword. Your land will be measured and divided up, and you yourself will die in a pagan country. And Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land.’ ” Amos 7:10-17

The Gospels

Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” Mk 1:14-15

“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Mt. 6:28-34

When they came to Capernaum, those who collected the two-drachma tax came to Peter and said, “Does your teacher not pay the two-drachma tax? “He said, “Yes.” And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers?” When Peter said, “From strangers,” Jesus said to him, “Then the sons are exempt. “However, so that we do not offend them, go to the sea and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for you and me.” Mt. 17:24-27

Then the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap Him in what He said.**16**And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any. “Tell us then, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?” But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, “Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites? “Show Me the coin *used* for the poll-tax.” And they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” They said to Him, “Caesar’s.” Then He said to them, “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God the things that are God’s.” And hearing *this*, they were amazed, and leaving Him, they went away. Mt 22:15-22

Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” “Is that your own idea,” Jesus asked, “or did others talk to you about me?” “Am I a Jew?” Pilate replied. “Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?” Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.” “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” Jn. 18:33-37

The Epistles and Writings

The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,” he said. “Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood.” Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than human beings! Acts 5:27-29

Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me on these charges?” But Paul said, “I am standing before Caesar’s tribunal, where I ought to be tried. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you also very well know. “If, then, I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if none of those things is *true* of which these men accuse me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar.” Then when Festus had conferred with his council, he answered, “You have appealed to Caesar, to Caesar you shall go.” Acts 25:9-12

Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God’s servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, who give their full time to governing. Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. Rom. 13:1-7

What I mean, brothers and sisters, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they do not; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away. 1 Cor. 7:29-31

Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God’s slaves. Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor. 1 Peter 2:11-17

John, to the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power forever and ever! Amen. Rev. 1:4-6