

## The King Who Rules

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### If He acts like a king and speaks like a king, he must be...

The concept of The King with direct reference to the Monotheistic Hebrew people begins with the Abraham covenant in which we see God declare over Abraham in Genesis 17:6 *I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you and kings will come from you.*

What kings? Which nations? This seems like a huge pressure to put on Abraham at the outset. But we note the source of the promise. It is rooted in and powered by Yahweh. Nations and kings will be God's work. It is notable also that it is in partnership with Sarah that Abraham will see the fruition or fulfilment of God's promise.

V16 "... I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."

This points to God's authority over the nations and over the rulers of nations. He is The King of Kings.

In the story of the Hebrew enslavement by Egypt, we see the sovereign hand of God at work in the life of Pharaoh. Is Pharaoh a god-king? Yes. Is he sovereign over all? Absolutely not - as we see in the placing of Moses in the Royal household and his returning from the fields to bring the message of God's redemption. Through the obedience of Moses, God is remembered for destroying Pharaoh's cavalry and charioteers in the crossing of the Red Sea. This is after the 10 plagues which culminated in the Passover during which the firstborn sons of all were destroyed by the Angel of Death in an echo of Pharaoh's own diktat that all Hebrew baby boys were to be destroyed. Who is ruler? Who has absolute authority? Yahweh.

The Exodus from Egypt became the point of reference for God's sovereignty of every situation - the constant reminder of God's absolute authority over kings and rulers and regimes. This would point to the ultimate rescue through Jesus, Son of God who comes to ransom the world in its brokenness and sinfulness.

### We Want a King we can See!

However, there would be many generations who would be born between the Exodus and the Incarnation. During this time, the Hebrew people would become restless and start to let the memory of salvation fade with successive generations. How would the God and King - Yahweh demonstrate his continued Lordship to the covenant people in their fickleness as they bent away from him and leaned into idol worship and hankered after a King they could bow in front of and who would lead them with a sword and an army which they could see and easily follow.

This is expressed at the beginning of Judges chapters 18 (*In those days Israel had no king*) & 19. There was no unity and the tribes were taking up arms against each other instead of providing a single foe against the pagan tribes in the land. After a series of horrific acts, it is said again in Judges 21:25; *"In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit."*

The people had forgotten the power of God for salvation. They had turned inward rather than seeking Yahweh's authority and rule, they had descended into lawlessness.

We pick up the cry of the people in **1 Samuel, Chapter 8**;

**6** But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord. **7** 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. **8** 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. 9 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.”*

*10 Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking him for a king. 11 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.*

*12 Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. 13 He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. 14 He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. 15 He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. 16 Your male and female servants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. 17 He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. 18 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.”*

*19 But the people refused to listen to Samuel. “No!” they said. “We want a king over us.*

*20 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.”*

*21 When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the Lord. 22 The Lord answered, “Listen to them and give them a king.”*

God’s rightful place is on the throne of the lives of his people. But his people had refused to honour him as their King and so sought a visible and tangible earthly man to rule over them. This would, as God said, not provide the satisfaction they were looking for and would indeed lead to their further enslavement.

The question then comes. When we don’t acknowledge God as king, does this inevitably lead to our enslavement? It certainly detracts from the sole authority that God should have over our lives. Mike Abendroth reminds us that;

*Kings were part of everyday life for the people of the Bible (in both the Old and the New Testaments). To the original readers of the Bible, kings were so common that the concept of monarchy was akin to that of breathing air—regular and taken for granted. The people hoped for a good, righteous, strong and wise king, but they knew they would have a king reign over them. There were no alternative hierarchies. P14*

We know that the line of kings would descent into faithlessness and would stray far from the One who is the True King. The line of Kings would be empty by the time we get to the New Testament. Exile and self-interest would remove the last hopes of the Hebrew people to be ruled over by a faithful, Godly King. You can read through 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings to get a full picture of the poor reflections of kingship that the Kings went on to demonstrate in their personal and public lives.

King David remembers that his rule is under the Lordship of God the King of Kings. We see this in Psalm 5:2 “Hear my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray.”

Psalm 24:8 “Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle...”

Psalm 47:7 “For God is the King of all the earth...”

### **God is King: Jesus**

With our focus being on things of the earth - the things seen - it can be hard to conceive of a King who has real power whose Kingdom is both visible and tangible as well as being invisible and eternal. We can have sympathy with the Hebrew people who were crying out for someone to take authority and establish order in an unruly land where everyone did as they liked - without care for the other.

Jesus is the King who is God. He comes into the world as part of the line of earthly Kings - you can see his lineage in Matthew 1, which refers to Abraham in verse 2 and King David in verse 6. Jesus joins together the earthly line of Kings in his descent from both Abraham the one whom God promised kings would come from and from David, the King of Abrahamic descent and Jesus' ancestor also. In the annunciation to Mary, it becomes clear that God the King will be the Father of Jesus. See Luke 1:30-35.

This is a redemptive act such as we see in the Exodus. God is establishing his rule in heaven and on earth in the incarnate person of his Son. Tom Wright, in **How God Became King** states that;

*...all four canonical gospels suppose themselves to be telling the story that Paul, in some of his most central and characteristic passages, tells as well: **that the story of Jesus is the story of how Israel's God became king.** This is how, in the events concerning Jesus of Nazareth, the God of Israel has become king of the whole world. This is the forgotten story of the gospels. We have not even noticed that this was what they were trying to tell us. As a result, we have misread them. P 38*

It is in Jesus that a throne is established through the cross which will prove as powerful for redemption from slavery to sin as the acts of the Exodus proved powerful for redemption from slavery in Egypt. As Pilate fastened the sign reading King of the Jews to Jesus' cross it was a message of eschatological significance. No human person was making Jesus King. No earthly authority - not even Pilate had the right to give him that title: Jesus' title was his birthright and it was claimed in the moment of his death. The kingdom that he proclaimed and lived out was only accessible through his person. Jesus' death would "open up the kingdom of heaven to all believers."

### **King of all the World: All things happen at his command**

What then does it mean for Jesus to be king of all the world? Is it in the very precise and directive sovereignty through which God the King micro-manages the whole of the world's beings and doings? Abendroth would certainly err in favour of that viewpoint. The question comes as we look at a distillation of Abendroth's argument below: if everything is just as God decreed it - in its fallen and broken state - what does that teach us of God's holiness and goodness?

Take a look at the statement below:

*God does not merely know what will happen in the future—He planned every second of history. Since he knows every detail of history, and how the particulars fit together, God's absolute wisdom helps to ensure that His plan will be consummated and consummated to His liking.*

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In carrying out a plan to His liking, in the way that Abendroth suggests, God would be in control, micro-managing the wars and terror attacks, the sicknesses and sadnesses that do not have their origins in; "and God saw that it was good."

It seems not to fit with the character of God to ascribe atrocities to his sovereignty. Rather this demonstrates the fallenness of the world which is seeking a true king. A king such as Jesus who comes to redeem the world from its fallen state.

Looking back to Tom Wright, we see him tackling the big issues and acknowledging that the suffering and desperation of the world require a King who is large enough and who has sufficient authority to tackle them - to overcome them.

### **King of All the World: All things are subject to his Rule**

As Jesus dies on the cross, it is for all creation. To draw all creation to himself. The kingdom is now open through the person of the King. This is not the work of a puppet-master but of God who, in his self-giving comes among us. The work of the King is continued in the work of his people. When we enter the Kingdom of God and live the new life of his Salvation - we enter a new country and live under a new rule - much as the children of Israel did in crossing the Red Sea. Being subject to the rule of God, means that we accept our Salvation and all that means for us in receiving and accepting the Saving Love of God through Christ who died on the cross and rose again. He is the Lord of our lives and as such, we are privileged to long to live the life he calls us to and has predestined for us. We live in the Kingdom, under the reign and rule of God according to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who gives Kingdom Gifts and Kingdom signs as we work on behalf of the King.

### **King for Ever**

The rule and reign of Jesus our King has no end. The Gospels show how God draws near when the world is sending away. God's desire is to rule our hearts and so establish peace on earth. The kingdom that believers live in on earth is a pale glimpse of the one where God's rule is received by everyone. The eternal home of God. Until then, we do the work of evangelists and continue the work of bringing the Kingdom near to those who have not yet known what it is to live as Children of the King.

Can God intervene in history to change the way of the world? He is the Lord of history and King of the universe - so absolutely! Does he claim intricate authority to direct your every breath? Maybe - if you've allowed him room to receive his complete Lordship over your whole life...