

THY KING COMETH

Michael Foster and Dominic Bnonn Tennant, in their book, *It's Good to Be a Man: A Handbook for Godly Masculinity*, state what they think godly dominion is, and what it is not. They write:

If Adam was made in God's image, and that image is worked out in terms of dominion,—as it unquestionably is in Genesis 1—then how God exercises dominion should tell us a lot about how He expects us to image Him. We have seen that this involves bringing order by forming and filling in Genesis. But we also learn a great deal about God's dominion *throughout* Scripture. This point is lost in modern Christianity, where the focus is almost exclusively on the model of Jesus in the gospels. But while that model is of course perfect, it is not *complete*. It is a model of God, as the second Adam, humbling Himself to correct the mistakes of the first. It is not yet a model of Him ruling over the world as Adam should have. Jesus did not take up the rule of Adam until after His resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven. (Eph. 1:20–22) To see how God exercises dominion, therefore, we need to look to the rest of Scripture... Scripture shows us that God glories in exercising His might and subduing His enemies by force.

In the view of Foster and Tennant, Jesus, in His earthly ministry, is not an example to follow for dominion. They are mistaken. People sometimes misunderstand the nature of Christ's kingdom. At first, even His own disciples misunderstood Him. Jesus is unlike any earthly king, and His kingdom is unlike any earthly kingdom. Jesus was quite clear about the nature of His kingdom, and quite clear that His subjects must follow His example.

After the Great Flood, God made a covenant with Abraham in which He promised to save the world. God said to Abraham, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 12:3) After the Exodus, God made a covenant with Israel in which He promised to be their God, and in which He obliged them to obey His commands. (Exodus 24:3–8)

When King David said that he wished to make a house in which God might dwell, God told David that He would make a house for him; that is to say, God would make for David a royal house, a dynasty. He made a covenant with David in which He said:

And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. (2 Samuel 7:12–16)

God promised David that one of his descendants would inherit his throne, and would forever reign on it. That descendent would be, not only the son of David, but the Son of God.

Hundreds of years passed after the death of David, and none of his descendents was the fulfillment of this promise. In fact, most of David's heirs were wicked men who rebelled against God, and led the people in rebellion. Because of the wickedness of the people, God sent the Assyrian army to conquer the northern part of

Israel and carry the people away into exile, and then He sent the Babylonian army to conquer the southern part of Israel, to destroy the city of Jerusalem and the temple there, and to carry the people away to Babylon.

When the Jews were in exile in Babylon, Cyrus, king of the Persians conquered that kingdom, and issued a decree that the Jews should return to their homeland and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, that great city of David, and the capital city of Israel. The Jews did return, and they did undertake to rebuild the temple. At that time, God raised up Zechariah to prophesy to the people. God told the people that they must not be rebellious like their forefathers who were taken into captivity in Babylon; rather they must hear the Lord and obey His commands. They must turn to the Lord if they would have Him turn to them. (Zechariah 1:1–4) The Lord promised His people that He would fully restore them. The rebuilding of the temple would be complete, and the Lord would dwell in Jerusalem, and from there He would rule. The prophet said:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare that I will render double unto thee; When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man. (Zechariah 9:9–13)

The Lord would come to Jerusalem and He would bring with Him salvation. He would not, however, come as a mighty warrior riding on a war horse, as Judas Maccabeus did when he entered Jerusalem after liberating the Jews from the Greeks. He would come humbly and gently, riding upon a donkey. He would establish His kingdom, not by violence, not by force, not by physical compulsion; but by gentleness, by irresistible grace, by spiritual influence. Indeed, He would banish warfare and ungodly violence from the earth, and so establish peace. He would bring peace among all nations. His dominion would cover not only Palestine, but the whole world. He would be faithful to His covenant promises, and He would deliver Israel and every nation. As a pledge of His promised future deliverance, He would first deliver Israel from the oppression of the Greeks, and so He did, with Judas Maccabeus leading.

When the rebuilding of the temple was complete, Ezra read out to the people the book of the law, and the people, when they heard it read, wept, for they had not kept it. Then Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites, told the people, not to weep, but to celebrate, for the temple was rebuilt, and the law recovered. They said, “This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep.” (Nehemiah 8:9) Next day, Ezra read out to the people the law concerning the Feast of Booths, and so they all observed the Feast. It seems that the One-hundred Eighteenth Psalm was written for this occasion. It is a liturgy of thanksgiving, written to praise the Lord for His faithfulness. The psalmist writes:

Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD: This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter. I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I

beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD. God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee. O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. (Psalm 118:19–29)

The speaker leads a procession to the temple to give thanks to God for His faithfulness. He calls to the priests to open the gates, so that they might enter. Together they praise the Lord for hearing their prayers, and for delivering them from their enemies. God was building a temple in the world, and he began with Israel. The nations rejected Israel, but God made them the cornerstone of His world temple. The Lord's preservation of Israel was a great work, and they celebrated Him for it. They prayed for Him to prosper them, just as Nehemiah prayed when he sought King Artaxerxes' permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. (Nehemiah 1:11) The temple priests said to the procession that those who came to His temple in the name of the Lord were blessed; they said that from the temple they blessed the people. They praised the Lord for being light in darkness, and called the people to offer sacrifices to Him for His great goodness and mercy.

When the Son of God finally came into the world, many were expecting Him, but they did not understand the nature of His kingdom. He is a king not like other kings, and His kingdom is not like other kingdoms. The kingdoms of men are carnal; Christ's kingdom is first of all spiritual. The kingdoms of men are founded on physical violence; Christ's kingdom is founded on spiritual influence. Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, tells the people what He requires of the subjects of His Kingdom, and He begins with the Beatitudes:

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3–10)

As Christ Himself had, so His subjects have trouble in this world. They suffer hardship and loss for being Christians. They are persecuted. Like Christ, however they do not despair, nor do they repay evil for evil. They are meek, they are merciful, and they seek peace. They love their enemies.

Many who believed in Jesus because of His great miracles wished to make Him king by force, but He would have none of it. Saint John records that, after Jesus fed the five-thousand, "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone." (John 5:15) Jesus would not be made king by violence, nor would He rule by violence.

People were slow to understand Jesus's teaching. On one occasion, His disciples had a debate about which of them should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus, knowing what was in their hearts, set a child before them, and said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3, 4) Jesus taught His disciples to be humble, and not proud.

Not long after, when the time came for Jesus to ascend to heaven to receive His dominion, He determined to go to Jerusalem to be crucified. As He would pass through Samaria, He sent messengers to make preparations for Him. The Samaritans rejected Jesus, however, and James and John, when they learned of their rejection, wished to destroy the Samaritans. They said to Jesus, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come

down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" (Luke 9:54) Jesus rebuked them for their lack of love and mercy, and said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." (Luke 9:55, 56) Jesus would not take people's lives; He would give up His own.

A few months later, when Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, the mother of James and John approached Jesus with her sons and she asked Jesus to give them positions of authority in His kingdom. Jesus told them they did not know what they were asking. Exaltation comes after humiliation. Jesus would one day ascend to heaven and be exalted by His Father, but first He would suffer the humiliation of crucifixion. Jesus asked them if they were able to follow His example, and they answered that they were able. Jesus told them that they had answered truly, but positions of authority in His kingdom were not His to give, but rather belonged to His Father in heaven. When the other disciples heard what James and John asked, they were indignant. So, once again Jesus explained to them the nature of His kingdom. He said:

Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:25–28)

Jesus said that, in earthly kingdoms, those who rule over others are considered to be great; in His kingdom, however, the servants are the greatest, and He gave Himself as an example. He, the Son of God, humbled Himself and became a man, so that He might serve men by giving His own life for them. People were slow to understand that Jesus was a different sort of king, and His kingdom a different sort of kingdom.

Shortly thereafter, Jesus and His disciples came near Jerusalem, and arrived at Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives. This was where Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus sent two disciples to a nearby village to find a donkey tied, and a colt, and to bring them to Him. If any man should say anything about it, then the disciples were to answer, "The Lord hath need of them," and the man would send the animals with them. The disciples did as Jesus commanded, and they brought to Jesus the donkey and the colt.

Saint Matthew comments:

All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. (Matthew 21:4, 5)

Jesus's riding on a donkey was the fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy. He is the King whom God promised would rule the world. Jesus's disciples lay their clothes upon the donkey for Jesus to sit on. As Jesus rode, the people laid their clothes on His path, and some laid palm leaves, and they did this to pay homage to Jesus as their Lord and Savior, just as an earlier generation had done for Judas Maccabeus. The people praised God, and said, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." (Luke 19:38) Citing the One-hundred Eighteenth Psalm, the people invoked God's blessing upon Jesus, whom they regarded as the King whom God promised to send as heir to the throne of David.

Not everyone believed in Jesus, however. The Pharisees hated Him, and had disdain for those who did believe in Him. When they heard the people praise Jesus, they told Him to rebuke His disciples, but He would not. He said to the Pharisees, "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry

out.” (Luke 19:40) It was impossible for the world not to praise Jesus, for He is the Savior of the world. If He silenced His disciples nature itself would cry His praise.

A few days later, Jesus, knowing that the religious rulers of Israel would kill him, said to them, “What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. (Luke 20:17, 18) Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of this Scripture. God is building a spiritual temple, and Jesus is the cornerstone, the stone that unites all the others. Yet, the religious leaders in Israel, along with the people of Jerusalem, rejected Him. The psalm which the people cited when they hailed Jesus as king is the same psalm Jesus cited as a prediction of Israel’s rejecting Him.

Soon after, the religious leaders of Jerusalem plotted to kill Jesus, and they roused the wicked men of Jerusalem to help them. They arrested Jesus, and sent Him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, for execution, because Jesus claimed to be the king of the Jews. When Pilate interrogated Jesus about the charge, Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.” (John 18:36) Jesus did claim to be a king, and He did claim to have a kingdom. His kingdom is not like the kingdoms of the world, however.. He is not like Pilate, and His kingdom is not like Judea. He is not like the Roman Emperor, and His kingdom is not like the Roman Empire. He is a king, but His kingdom is spiritual, and He rules in the hearts of men. Of course, when He rules in the hearts of men, He changes them, and they in turn change the world.

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, heir to the throne of David. He is the Lord and Savior of the world. Yet, he entered the capital city, not on a war horse, not armed with a sword, but humble and lowly, riding on a donkey, because He came, not to be served by men, but rather to serve them, and to set an example to follow.

Let us believe that Jesus is King. Let us understand the nature of His kingdom. Let us follow His perfect example.

Unto the Son who must reign, till he hath put all enemies under His feet, and unto Him that put all things under the Son, that God may be all in all, be honor and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.