The Genius of the Kingdom: Toward an Answer as to Whether the Kingdom Is “Already”/“Not Yet”

Dr. Samuel A. Dawson  
Professor of Theology  
Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary

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INTRODUCTION

I. THE GENIUS OF THE HISTORICAL KINGDOM

THESIS: Understanding the genius (defining characteristics) of the historical Kingdom God established with Israel is key to understanding the DNA of the coming Kingdom and key to answering the question: “Are we in an ‘already’ phase of the ‘not yet’ Kingdom?”

A. Governing Document of Historical Kingdom

THE GOVERNING DOCUMENT’S (MOSAIC COVENANT) PREAMBLE REVEALS THE FOUNDATION OF THE HISTORICAL KINGDOM:

Exodus 19:4–6: “‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to Myself. 5 Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; 6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.’”

From this Preamble we learn…
1. The Kingdom which God is setting up is, first and foremost, God’s Kingdom ("to Me" – Exod 19:6).

2. The Kingdom God promises is to be given to the singular nation of Israel to administer ("sons of Israel"; v. 6).

3. God does not ignore the other nations of the earth in this preamble. They are His also ("all the earth is Mine" – v. 5), although Israel is His unique "possession" (v. 5; cf. Rom 3:29).

4. Instead of ignoring all the other nations of the earth, God chooses Israel to serve God as a mediator of religious/spiritual blessing to all the rest of the world ("Kingdom of Priests," v. 6; cf. Gen 12:1–3).

5. Because Israel is God’s chosen mediator, Israel is to be a "holy nation" (v. 6).

6. This Kingdom-Covenant (Mosaic) is conditional ("if you indeed will obey My voice and keep My covenant" – v. 5).
   a. Israel pledges to keep the covenant (cf. Exod 19:18 — “…all that the Lord has spoken we will do…”).
   b. God approves of their response (Deut 5:28 — “…the Lord said to me, ‘I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They have done well in all that they have spoken’”).
   c. But God also laments their weakness to carry through on their pledge (Deut 5:29 — “…Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever”).
   d. Breaking the covenant brought an interruption in time of Israel’s mediatorial duties, but not the final end of their mediatorial duties…because of God’s pledge to Abraham and David, especially.

B. Fundamental Characteristics of Historical Kingdom

Based on Constitution and Laws of Israel Found in Mosaic Covenant

1. *Spiritual (Foundational)*
   a. Spiritual Relationship (Exod 4:22–23)
   b. Spiritual Law (Deut 6:5–6; 10:12)
   c. Spiritual Fellowship Facilitated by Sacrificial System (Lev 4:20, 26, 31, 35, etc.)
   d. Spiritual Communication (Exod 25:22; 29:42–46)
2. Political (Deut 17:18–20)

   **National:**
   a. Historical Kingdom Ruled by Law.
   b. Historical Kingdom’s Mediator Had a Limited Sphere of Authority.

   **International:**
   a. General – Israel Granted Supremacy Over Other Nations Based on God’s Favor Alone (Deut 15:5–6; Num 23:8–9, 12).
   b. Specific –
      i. Israel and Canaanites in Palestine – Completely Destroy Them (Exod 23:32; 34:12; Deut 20:16–18).
      ii. Israel and Non-Palestinian Nations (Deut 20) – Leave Them Alone Unless They Became Hostile

3. Religious (Exod 19:6)

   Religion is Sum Total of Outward Actions Expressed to God

   a. Outward Religious Expressions
      i. Priesthood
      ii. Sacrifices
      iii. Central place of religious assembly
   b. Separation of Religious and Political Powers
   c. Priestly Function supported by State
   d. No Freedom of Religion Allowed

4. Socio-Economic (Lev 25:10)

   a. Divine Origin of Israel’s Wealth (Gen 47:1, 6, 27; Exod 11:2–3; 12:35–36)
   b. Personal Freedom in Regard to Wealth

5. Physical (Exod 16:4)

   a. Physical Benefits through Supernatural Acts
      i. Fruitfulness (Deut 7:13–14)
      ii. Food from Heaven (Exod 16:35)
      iii. Water (Exod 15:23–25; Num 20:2, 7–11; Exod 17:1–6)
      iv. Clothing (Deut 8:4; 29:5; Neh 9:21)
      v. Freedom from Disease (Exod 15:26, 23:25; Deut 7:15)
   b. Physical Benefits through Human Obedience to Covenant Stipulations
      i. Conserve Natural Resources
      ii. Promote Public Health

6. Moral (Deut 6:18)
   a. Mosaic Law Divinely Revealed and Written Down for Public Record.
   b. Mosaic Law Required Living in Harmony with God.
   c. Mosaic Law Required Living in Harmony with Neighbor.
   d. Mosaic Law Emphasized a Vital Connection between Moral Conduct and Human Welfare (Both Spiritually and Physically) [Deut 28].

Summary Comments: The Kingdom envisioned by the Mosaic Covenant (the Constitution of Israel) was to be a good Kingdom. If Israel had followed God’s Law, life would have been good for them:

1. The Spiritual (Foundational) Aspect – Based on this Covenant, Israel had a relationship with the true God, as opposed to all other false gods. Surely this is good.

2. The Political Aspect – Based on this Covenant, God would give Israel leadership responsibility over all other nations and lasting peace. Surely this is good.

3. The Religious Aspect – Based on this Covenant, God established Israel as a Kingdom of Priests to the whole world. This nation was to be God’s Mediator before the whole world, and they would not sacrifice their sons and daughters to pagan idols. Surely this is good.

4. The Socio-Economic Aspect – Based on this Covenant, God would grant prosperity to the nation… enough for everyone, including the poor. Surely this is good.

5. The Physical Aspect – Based on this Covenant, God would look after the physical well-being and health of Israel. Surely this is good.

6. The Moral Aspect – Based on this Covenant, Israel would live in harmony with God (commandments 1–5) and in harmony with each other (commandments 6–10). Surely this is good.

C. Ultimate Failure of the Historical Kingdom

The Mosaic Covenant was conditional. To experience the blessings promised in the covenant required Israel’s obedience to it. Surely this spelled failure.
The description of the Kingdom’s end is most vividly portrayed in Ezekiel’s vision.

1. Ezekiel’s Vision of the Departure of God’s Shekinah-Glory (Ezek 8–11).
   a. Ezekiel, first, sees the Glory of God in its proper place in the temple (Ezek 8:4).
   b. Later in the vision Ezekiel sees the Glory of God move “from the cherub” in the inner temple to the threshold of the temple (Ezek 9:3).
   c. As the Glory of God moved to the threshold of the temple, the presence of God’s glory filled the temple with the cloud and the court with the brightness “of the glory of the LORD” (Ezek 10:3–4).
   d. Finally, the Glory of God leaves Jerusalem…a tragic day for Israel indeed (Ezek 11:23).

2. Consequence of the Departure of God’s Shekinah-Glory
   a. Political Supremacy Is Transferred to Gentile Powers (Dan 2, 7).
   b. Yet, God’s Prophets Predict Better Days to Come for Israel “...I will shake the house of Israel among all nations...But not a kernel will fall to the ground” (Amos 9:9).
      i. God will continue to be Israel’s sanctuary even in exile (Ezek 11:16–17).
      ii. God commands the post-exilic Israelites to rebuild the temple – God is still concerned about the temple (Hag 2:1–4).
      iii. The Glory of God will return to the future Millennial temple (Ezek 43:1–7).

II. THE GENIUS OF THE KINGDOM ENVISIONED BY THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

**THESIS:** Understanding the genius (defining characteristics) of the Kingdom envisioned by the Old Testament prophets is key to understanding the DNA of the coming Kingdom and key to answering the question: “Are we in an ‘already’ phase of the ‘not yet’ Kingdom?”

A. The Nature of the Prophetic Kingdom

The Kingdom envisioned by the Old Testament prophets will be an enhanced version of Israel’s historical Kingdom:
1. All the prophets, echoing the words of Deuteronomy 28, warn Israel that God will punish His people for their rebellion and disperse them among the Gentile nations. There is no question that the prophets are referring to Old Testament historical Israel. Thus, **no absolute break in the historical continuity of the people of the nation** (cf. Deut 28:63–65).

2. The prophets promise Israel that during the time of her dispersal, God will take care of her. Thus, **no absolute break in the historical continuity of the people of the nation** (Jer 30:11; Amos 9:8).

3. The prophets proclaim that God will restore the nation which He cast out of the land back to the land which He originally gave her… thus, **no absolute break in the historical continuity of the people of the nation, and the coming Kingdom** (cf. Isa 11:12; Jer 31:10, 28; Deut 30:3, 5; Zech 10:6).

4. The prophets prophesy that Israel will be granted her ancient rights and privileges in a kingdom more glorious than the first one… obviously, **no absolute break in the historical continuity of the people of the nation, and the coming Kingdom** (cf. Mic 4:7–8; Ezek 36:8–11).

5. The prophets announce that this coming glorious kingdom will be set-up in the “last days” (“that day”), and it will be set-up in Jerusalem with “Jacob” (“Israel”)… certainly, **no absolute break in the historical continuity of the people of the nation, and the coming Kingdom** (cf. Mic 4:1–5; Amos 9:11–12)…

6. The prophets describe Israel’s future restoration as a permanent one, never to be interrupted in history again… thus, **no absolute break in the historical continuity of the people of the nation, and the coming Kingdom** (cf. Mic 4:7; Isa 60:20; Ezek 37:11–14, 19–22).

**B. The Fundamental Characteristics of the Prophetic Kingdom**

1. **Spiritual (Foundational; Joel 2:28)**
   
   a. Spiritual Salvation Will Come From God (Isa 12:1–3; 52:7–10; 60:18; 61:10).
   
   b. Spiritual Salvation Will Be Effected by the Grace of God (Psa 45:2; Zech 12:10; Ezek 16:60–63; Psa 145:8–13).
   
   c. Spiritual Salvation Will Be Seen in Its Fullness [Repentance (Zech 12:10–13; Jer 31:19); Forgiveness (Isa 55:4–7; Mic 7:19); Justification (Jer 23:6); Regeneration (Ezek 36:24–38); Work of Spirit (Ezek 36:27; Joel 2:27–28); Sanctification (Zeph 3:11–13; Jer 30:11–12, 17–18); Security (Jer 32:40)].
   
   d. Spiritual Salvation’s Blessings Will Be Centered in the King (Jer 23:6).
e. Spiritual Salvation Will Extend to the World (Psa 98:2; Isa 55:1–3).
g. Spiritual Salvation’s Blessings Will Be Set in the Realm of “Sense Experience” (Ezek 36:24–38).

2. **Political (Isa 2:2–4)**

   a. International Authority – Christ (Isa 2:2–4).
   d. Political Wrongs Righted (Isa 2:4).
   e. Language Barrier Removed (Zeph 3:9).


   c. Jerusalem – The Religious Center (Isa 1:26; 60:14, 18; 62:3, 7; Jer 31:6; Zech 8:3).
   d. Religious Freedom Will Be Eliminated (Zech 14:17–19; Psa 2:6–12)

4. **Socio-Economic (Isa 65:23–25)**

   a. Military Conflict Will Cease (Psa 46:9; Mic 4:3; Isa 9:6–7).
   c. A True Moral Economy Will Be Openly Demonstrated (Psa 72:4, 7; Zeph 1:12).

5. **Physical (Isa 30:23–26)**

e. Beneficial Changes in the Animal World (Hos 2:18; Ezek 34:25; Isa 11:6–8).
g. Freedom From Ordinary Hazards (Ezek 34:23–31; Psa 91:10–12).

6. **Moral (Isa 2:3)**
   b. Moral Values Will Be Based on an Objective Standard (Psa 119:115; Mal 4:4; Isa 2:3).
   d. Moral Value of Truth Will Be Exalted to Its Proper Place (Isa 42:3; Zech 8:3).
   e. Retribution for Wrongdoing Will Extend Only to the Individual (Ezek 18:2–29).

**Summary Comments:** The Kingdom envisioned by the Old Testament prophets is an enhancement of the historical Kingdom:

1. **The Spiritual (Foundational) Aspect** – No one will enter the Kingdom as envisioned by the prophets, unless they repent of their sins and find righteousness provided for them by the King. As the LORD puts it, He will put His “law within them” and write it “on their heart” (Jer 31:33). In other words, He will “circumcise” their heart (Deut 30:6). This is an enhancement of the historical kingdom. No one will enter the kingdom envisioned by the prophets unless they are saved. We know that this wasn’t true of the historical kingdom.

The historical kingdom would have been good, if Israel had obeyed…. However, the Kingdom envisioned by the prophets… while related to the historical Kingdom… will be far better.

2. **The Political Aspect** – Politics will not be done as usual in the Kingdom envisioned by the Old Testament prophets. The international authority will be the Messiah. His capital will be Jerusalem, “the center of the earth.” He will heal Israel’s division and judge righteously between the nations… and they will understand His communication. This is an enhancement of the historical kingdom. No ruler in the historical kingdom was ever like this ruler.

The historical kingdom would have been good, if Israel had obeyed…. However, the Kingdom envisioned by the prophets… while related to the historical Kingdom… will be far better.
3. The Religious Aspect – Religion will be used in the kingdom envisioned by the prophets to facilitate worship of the true God. The King will be the great High Priest. Israel will faithfully serve as His faithful religious ministers. Jerusalem will be the religious center of the world with a religious house (the Messianic Temple) for all nations. Purity and truth will flow through the religious practice in the kingdom envisioned by the prophets. This is an enhancement of the historical kingdom. The historical kingdom’s religious leaders became corrupt and corrupted the true worship of God.

The historical kingdom would have been good, if Israel had obeyed…. However, the Kingdom envisioned by the prophets… while related to the historical Kingdom… will be far better.

4. The Socio-Economic Aspect – The perfect King who has perfect moral strength and perfect ability will keep the peace and care for the needy in the Kingdom which the prophets envisioned. This is an enhancement of the historical kingdom. Certainly, God promised peace and social blessing for the historical kingdom in His Law, however, the leaders of that kingdom refused to obey God’s Law.

The historical kingdom would have been good, if Israel had obeyed…. However, the Kingdom envisioned by the prophets… while related to the historical Kingdom… will be far better.

5. The Physical Aspect – The physical effects of the prophetic kingdom will benefit the whole earth. Every geological and climatic event will only enhance the King’s rule. Water, one of the world’s most precious resources will be abundantly available. As a result, the earth will produce food easily to feed the many people on it. Animals will not harm. Physical deformity and disease will be mitigated. The King will protect His people. This is an enhancement of the historical kingdom. While the historical kingdom’s law had physical benefit attached to obedience, the people disobeyed and reaped the curses far more than the blessings.

The historical kingdom would have been good, if Israel had obeyed…. However, the Kingdom envisioned by the prophets… while related to the historical Kingdom… will be far better.

6. The Moral Aspect – The perfect King will establish His laws and appraise all men according to them… in truth. This is an enhancement of the historical kingdom. While the laws of the historical kingdom were God-given and therefore wholly pure, those who appraised men on their basis were not.

The historical kingdom would have been good, if Israel had obeyed…. However, the Kingdom envisioned by the prophets… while related to the historical Kingdom… will be far better.
C. The Establishment of the Prophetic Kingdom

**Note:** One useful way for us to organize the establishment of the prophetic kingdom on earth… as the Old Testament prophets saw it… is to organize it around what the prophets refer to as the Day of the Lord (DOL).

1. Preparatory Events – Before the “Great and Terrible” Aspect of the DOL
2. Penal Events – During the Darkness of the DOL
3. Transitional Events – At the Dawn of the DOL
4. Formative – During the Light of the DOL

III. The Genius of the Kingdom Announced

**Thesis:** Understanding the genius (defining characteristics) of the Kingdom announced in the Gospels is key to understanding the DNA of the coming Kingdom and key to answering the question: “Are we in an ‘already’ phase of the ‘not yet’ Kingdom?”

A. The Announcement of the Kingdom

1. An angel of the Lord announced the birth of a son to Zacharias. This son would serve as a forerunner of the Messiah… the coming King (Luke 1:17).

2. The angel Gabriel announced the coming of the Messiah to the virgin Mary (Luke 1:31–33).

3. An angel of the Lord announced the coming of the Messiah to Joseph (Matt 1:20–23).

4. An angel of the Lord announced the coming of the Messiah to shepherds watching their flocks in the fields near Bethlehem (Luke 2:8–14).

5. Magi from the east were given insight into the King’s arrival (Matt 2:1–6).


7. Mary responded to Elizabeth’s testimony regarding the Messiah she carried in her womb (Luke 1:46–55).

9. Jesus and His followers announce the good news of the Kingdom (Mk 1:14–15; Matt 3:1–2; 4:17; 10:5–7; Lk 10:1, 9–11).

10. The Kingdom announced is called the “Kingdom of heaven” (Matt 3:2); the “Kingdom of God” (Matt 12:28); “Your Kingdom” (Matt 6:9–10; referring to the Father); but Jesus also calls it “My Kingdom” (Lk 22:30). All these refer to one and the same kingdom.

B. The Identity of the Announced Kingdom

1. Jesus didn’t redefine the Kingdom (nor define it for that matter).

2. Jesus didn’t point out any differences between the Kingdom He announced and the Kingdom envisioned by the Old Testament prophets.

3. Jesus’ commitment to the Old Testament prophetic picture of the Kingdom is seen in His use of two terms in particular: (1) “The Kingdom of Heaven” and (2) the “Son of Man.”

4. Jesus, consistently used the Old Testament to support His message of the Kingdom.

5. The Gospels connect the announced Kingdom with the Kingdom envisioned by the Old Testament prophets.

C. The Fundamental Characteristics of the Announced Kingdom

The Kingdom which Jesus announced has all the essential elements of the Kingdom envisioned by the prophets:

1. Spiritual – Kingdom Foundation
   a. Spiritual Salvation Is Required for Entrance into the Kingdom.
      i. People must repent (Matt 3:2).
      ii. People must believe the gospel (Mk 1:15).
      iii. People must have sins forgiven (Lk 3:3–6).
      iv. People must be “born again”/“born of the Spirit” to enter the Kingdom (Jn 3:3, 5, 8).
      v. Mere physical descent is not enough to enter the Kingdom (Matt 3:7–10).
      vi. One must humble himself/herself like a little child in repentance (Matt 18:1–4).
vii. Only the “poor in spirit” will inherit the “Kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:3).

viii. Love for God is the supreme value for those who will enter the Kingdom (Mk 12:28–34).

ix. Continual dependence upon God to meet daily needs; daily prayer for God's Kingdom to come are characteristics of those who will enter the Kingdom (Matt 6:9–13, 32–33).


c. Spiritual Demands and Factors Announced by the Lord Are Not New to Him; They Are Also Forecast by the Old Testament Prophets (cp. Ezek 36:25–27 w/Jn 3:3–5, 10–11).

2. Political – Administrative Order


3. Religious – Proper Worship

a. The Religious Laws of the Kingdom of Christ Are Related to Those of the Ancient Mosaic Theocracy (Matt 5:19).

b. Yet the Divine Lawgiver (the Lord) Has the Right to Change and Adapt the Law (Matt 12:28; Mk 7:19; Matt 5:33–34, 38–42).

c. Israel Is the Divinely-Ordained Channel of “Religious” Blessing to the World (Jn 4:22; Matt 8:10–11; 10:5–6).

d. Jerusalem Will Be the Religious Center of the Kingdom (Matt 5:35; Jn 2:14–17; Mk 11:15–17).

4. Socio-Economic – Doing Right for the Sake of Others

a. As the Sermon on the Mount Forms the Basis for the Moral Element; It Also Forms the Basis for the Social Element (Matt 5:7, 9, 10–12; 21–28, 32, 39–48; cf. Matt 18:15–17).


5. **Physical – Divine Care**

   a. Christ’s Miracles Cover a Gamut of Physical Issues.
   b. Christ’s Miracles, Chiefly, Authenticate that He Is the Messianic King (Matt 12:28; 11:2–6).

6. **Moral – Doing Right**

   a. The Kingdom Ethic Is Founded on Two Great Commandments Which Summarize the Mosaic Law (Mk 12:28–34).
   b. The Kingdom Ethic Covers the Motivations (Love Springs out of the Heart) of Man (Matt 5:27–28).
   c. The Kingdom Ethic Demands that Good Be Returned for Evil (Matt 5:39–45, 48).
   e. The Kingdom Ethic Will Be Grounded in the Authority of the King (Matt 7:29).

**Summary Comments:** The Kingdom announced in the Gospels is the Kingdom envisioned by the Old Testament prophets:

1. **The Spiritual (Foundational) Aspect** – One cannot enter the Kingdom until one has repented and believed the good news concerning it.

2. **The Political Aspect** – Politics will not be done as usual. The international authority will be the Messiah. His capital will be Jerusalem. Israel will occupy a special place in His administration and Gentile nations will also participate.

3. **The Religious Aspect** – Religion will be used to facilitate worship of the true God. The King will establish the Laws for worship. Israel will be the divinely ordained channel of blessing to the world. Jerusalem will be the religious center of the Kingdom. God’s Temple will be the house of prayer for all nations.

4. **The Socio-Economic Aspect** – The perfect King who has perfect moral strength and ability will keep the peace and care for the needy… and expects His subjects to demonstrate compassion also.

5. **The Physical Aspect** – Jesus’ miracles which covered a gamut of physical issues authenticated that He is the Messianic King and are a foretaste of the physical blessings He promised in His coming Kingdom.

6. **The Moral Aspect** – The perfect King will establish His laws and appraise all men according to them in truth.
Note: Christ always closely followed the picture of the Kingdom painted in the Old Testament prophets, but He did not do so by only repeating words, phrases and texts. He interpreted the Old Testament prophets by unfolding their significance with even more clarity.

D. The Rejection of the King and His Announced Kingdom

E. The Response of the King to the Rejection of Himself and His Announced Kingdom

A summary of events:

1. In Matthew 13, Christ Begins to Set Forth His Plan to Prepare for His Coming Kingdom in a Series of Parables.


4. Next, the Lord Announces That Despite His Imminent Death He Is Not Abandoning The Kingdom Envisioned By The Old Testament Prophets. Instead, He Promises To Establish It At His Second Coming (Matt 16:27–17:8).

5. Next, the Lord Confirms that the Disciples Will Share in His Kingdom When It Is Established on Earth (Lk 12:32; Matt 19:27).

6. Next, the Lord Outlines the Present Rejection of the Kingdom, the Period of Its Deferral and Its Future Fulfillment in The Parable of the Minas (Lk 19:11–28) in Order to Correct the Expectation that “the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately” (Lk 19:11).


8. Next, the Lord Delivers a Series of Parables Concerning Entrance into the Kingdom, Rebuies Israel’s Religious Leader, and Delivers His Final Lament and Pronounced Judgment Against Jerusalem (Matt 21:28–22:14; 23:1–2, 8–


11. *Finally*, During the Lord’s Trials and Crucifixion He Clearly Presents His Messianic Credentials (Matt 26:63–64; Lk 23:2, 39–43; Jn 19:12).

**CONCLUSION**