GOD IS…KING

Exodus 15:11-18

Our country prides itself on its democratic ideals that advances the will of many rather than the will of one. While many good things have developed out of our nation's 'rule of the people', its rejection of monarchy does create potential misunderstandings of, or even a blindness to, the roles king and kingship play in the Bible. For example, God's kingship offers one of the early, and important, things He reveals about Himself. This lesson will consider God's identity as king and begins a series exploring some of the things God revealed about Himself through Moses and His interactions with Israel in bringing them out of Egypt and forming them into a nation.

"The LORD will reign forever and ever"[1]

- Moses, reflecting on God's defeat of Egypt at the "Red Sea" (*Exodus 14*), composed a song praising God in which he announced, "the LORD will reign forever and ever" (*Exodus 15:18*).
- God clarified one important meaning of Moses' song when He met with Israel at Mount Sinai; He would "reign forever and ever" over Israel whom He selected to be His kingdom in the world (*Exodus 19:5-6*).
- Moses expressed the connection between God's covenant at Mount Sinai and His rule over Israel when he described that event as both the inauguration of God's covenant with Israel and His coronation as the nation's king (*Deuteronomy 33:1-5*).
- God emphasized His role as Israel's king by commanding the nation to organize itself around Him and His tabernacle (*Numbers 2*) and by His place at the head of Israel as they moved through the wilderness (*Numbers 10:11-36*); Israel moved as a royal procession with king God leading them.
- Balaam, when trying to curse Israel at Moabite king Balak's request (*Numbers 22-24*), pointed out God's identity as Israel's king when he said, "the LORD their God is with them, and the shout of a king is among them" (*Numbers 23:21*).
- Despite submitting themselves to God's rule at Mount Sinai and despite experiencing His sovereign protections and provisioning, Israel rejected God's kingship (*cf. 1 Samuel 8:1-22; 10:17-19*).
- While God's response to Israel's rebellion included various punishments like their captivity to Babylon, it also included a promise that God would reestablish His rule over the nation (*Isaiah 52:7-12*).
- God's reestablished rule, however, would take a different form than it took at Mount Sinai – God would assert His rule through Jesus (*Isaiah 52:13-53:12; John 18:33-37; 19:1-3, 19; Matthew 28:18*) who would create a new Israel (*cf. Ezekiel 37:15-28; Galatians 3:26-29*).

[1] Exodus 15:18. All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.

- In addition to giving Jesus "authority on heaven and on earth" (*Matthew 28:18*), God gave Jesus an important mission; He charged him with the task of defeating His enemies so "that God may be all in all" (*1 Corinthians 15:20-28*).
- The goal of God's reestablished rule seeks to not merely submit humanity to Him but seeks to reestablish His plan in the creation with a notable change – God will not rule *through* humans, He will rule *with* humans (*Revelation 22:1-5*).

Applications

- Israel struggled to submit to God's rule, reminding us of that same potential in our own relationship with God.
- As with Israel, our submission to God focuses on obedience to His will in ways that should change our lives to reflect His character in the world. But, like Israel, our lives too often reflect the character of our world.
- While God's rule is patient and benevolent, it cannot not coexist with our self-rule; He requires our complete submission to Him.
- God's rule is counter-intuitive; His desire to co-rule with us reveals His grace and mercy and thus amplifies rather than dilutes His sovereignty.
- Even though the Bible pictures our co-rule with God as a future event, God expects us to live in the present as emissaries of that future. Our lives ought to be defined by the characteristics of His rule, by things like mercy, grace, patience, and goodness that we exercise in our relationships with all people.

For the coming week:

To help extend the lesson and to encourage you to make it personal, take time during the coming week to consider the following material:

Read and reflect

Read Psalms 96 and 97, two psalms that poetically describe God's reign. Consider what images the authors use to describe God's rule and what those images reveal about His kingship. Reflect on how those two psalms add to your understanding of God's rule over your life.

Pray and apply

Spend time praying this week, asking God to help you better understand, and submit to, His rule. Additionally, identify one practical, everyday thing you can do to express your submission to Him and then commit yourself to doing it.