

YOUR KINGDOM COME

by

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INTRODUCTION

It is obvious that the title of this lesson is taken from what is commonly referred to as the “Lord’s Prayer.” But it is not so obvious to most of the people who repeat this prayer on at least a weekly basis just what they are praying for. What is this “kingdom” to come? Is this a reference to heaven? Are we praying for “heaven on earth” or what?

Most people are somewhat surprised to discover that the gospel (good news) of Matthew, Mark, and Luke is not about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Sometimes I ask students to imagine I am someone who would like to go to heaven when I die, I am in a car wreck with five minutes to live, and they have discovered me along side the road. My only hope for heaven is the words they will share with me. And I encourage them to give me some good news, the gospel, if you will. But they are limited in what they can use. They can only give me the gospel message from Matthew, Mark, or Luke. I will not receive anything from John, Romans, Ephesians, or any of the rest of the Bible. Most of the students are stumped. At the end of five minutes I have expired. Dead and gone to hell. No one seems to be able to get me to heaven out of the first three Gospels (referred to as the Synoptics). Yet they are called “Gospels.” Surely they must have some good news to share. And that they do. But the gospel focus of the Synoptics is the Kingdom. In Mark 1:14-15 we read: “Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,¹⁵ and saying, **“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”** Jesus was preaching the good news of the kingdom of God. That is what He was inviting people to believe in. Naturally He was not inviting them to believe in His death and resurrection because He had not yet died and risen.

But let us be clear. Are we suggesting that the Synoptics present a different way of getting to heaven than the rest of the Bible? Not at all. We are just suggesting that the emphasis of these three Gospels is not getting to heaven. It is getting the kingdom of God on earth—“thy kingdom come, they will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” It is the Gospel of John which focuses on our getting eternal life (John 20:31). That is the expressed purpose of John’s Gospel.

But let us back up a minute. We are going to suggest that the kingdom of God is not only the focus of the first three Gospels, but also the entire Bible. It is not the only theme running from the beginning of the Bible to the end, but it is one of the majors. So let’s go to Genesis and try to get the Big Picture before we go any further.

THE BIG PICTURE

Gen 1:26–28. Though most Bible scholars would probably offer the Abrahamic Covenant of Gen 12:1-3 as the most important covenant in the Bible, it may well be that the original “pact” with man made by God with Adam is the foundation for all the others. Here in Gen 1:26–28 we read:

²⁶ Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have **dominion** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, **over all the earth** and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” ²⁷ So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸ Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; **fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (emphasis mine).

We must notice that the emphasized words point toward world dominion, that is, a kingdom over all the earth. This was God’s first and foremost intention for man. It is directly connected to His creation of man. But why, we must ask. What is so important about dominion over the earth and subduing it? In order to answer this question we must slip be-

hind the curtains of creation to that which existed before the earth was created. The drama begins to unfold for us in Job 38:1–7:

Job 38:1–7.

¹ Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said:
² “Who *is* this who darkens counsel
 By words without knowledge?
³ Now prepare yourself like a man;
 I will question you, and you shall answer Me.
⁴ “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?
 Tell *Me*, if you have understanding.
⁵ Who determined its measurements?
 Surely you know!
 Or who stretched the line upon it?
⁶ To what were its foundations fastened?
 Or who laid its cornerstone,
⁷ *When the morning stars sang together,*
 And all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Clearly the Lord speaks to Job out of the whirlwind concerning the original creation of the earth. But even if the universe was created *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) as most theologians suppose, this passage in Job affirms that something existed before the creation of the earth besides God. It is the angels. The “morning stars” and the “sons of God” were the angels. Surely there is no reference here to men for they did not exist before the creation of the earth. These are the angels, the good and holy angels.

This passage helps us understand the purpose for the creation of the universe. Apparently, it was a display of the glory of God. The “glory” of anything refers to an “open, public display of the nature or character qualities thereof.” Since we are speaking of the “glory of God,” we mean an open, public display of the character qualities (attributes) of

God. The creation of the universe did not display all of His attributes, but most certainly some of them—His omnipotence, His omnipresence, and His omniscience, for starters. And when the angels saw this incredible creation (the Big Bang, perhaps) and subsequent formation of the earth, they sang and shouted for joy. Imagine the wonder we have on July 4th over a phenomenal fire works display. If you are in a big crowd, you can hear the oohs and aahs when a particularly spectacular rocket explodes. Compare that to what the angels saw, and we get a little hint at their rejoicing.

Gen 1:2. We are suggesting that this entire event described in Job 38 occurred before we ever get to Genesis 1. One of the main reasons for thinking this is the description of the earth in Gen 1:2. There we are told that the earth was “formless and void.” In the Hebrew language in which the OT was written, it says the earth was *tohu wabohu*, and in our language this Hebrew phrase has the ring of “topsy turvy.” However, the phrase has a negative connotation. The only other use of this term in the OT is in connection with judgment. In Jer 4:23 the Lord parallels the judgment to come upon unfaithful Jerusalem with the state of the earth in Gen 1:2. It is a warning to them. If they do not repent, He will turn them upside down. He will make them formless and void. We are left with a picture of judgment on the earth in Gen 1:2. Not only was the earth *tohu wabohu*, it was also covered with darkness and salt water. These too are used repeatedly in the OT as symbols of God’s judgment (Amos 5:20—Is not the day of the Lord darkness and not light; is it not very dark with no brightness in it?).

But what would cause the earth to be found in such a state of judgment when we open the Book of Genesis? How could something created to proclaim the glory of God (Job 38:1–7) to the angels not be described as under some form of judgment? Perhaps the history of the angels will again help us get the Big Picture.

Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. We are told in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 that Lucifer was the most gifted, most beautiful, most intelligent of all the angels. Because he had a corruptible nature different from God’s incorruptible nature, he was capable, as were all

the angels, of sin. And sin he did. He challenged God's right to rule the universe, both spiritual and physical. In challenging God he persuaded a third of the host of heaven to stand behind him. Because God cannot dwell with evil and the boastful cannot stand in His sight (Ps 5:4–5), Lucifer and Company had to go. They were cast down to Planet Earth. Somehow they turned what could have been a garden into a garbage heap. However, only spiritual beings could live on the earth at that time. God decided to put the earth into a state of judgment. And this is how we find the earth as the curtain of clouds is pulled back in Gen 1:1.

Gen 1:1 and Psalm 8. Actually, Gen 1:1 might best be understood as an introductory statement just like any topic sentence we would find at the beginning of a paragraph. He basically says, "I want to tell you how God refashioned the atmosphere and earth" so that a being a little bit lower than the angels could live here. Gen 2:1 is a summary statement looking back on the refashioning of the atmosphere and the earth. The Bible speaks of three heavens: our atmosphere, the interstellar spaces, and God's home, so to speak. When "the heavens and the earth" are mentioned in conjunction, it is a reference to our planet and our atmosphere.

Some might suggest that the word for "create" in Gen 1:1 means *ex nihilo*. However, we know this is not true because of its use in Ps 51:10 where David pleads with God to "create" a clean heart within him after his sins surrounding Bathsheba. In both Gen 1:1 and Ps 51:10 we have the same word for create ($\alpha\beta$). David did not lack a heart. But it was a dirty heart. It needed refashioning, cleaning up. So did the earth. Gen 1:2 serves as a parenthetical statement to describe the state of the earth when the recycling began. Gen 1:1–3 might be translated:

When God began to refashion the heavens and the earth, (and the earth was formless and void and there was darkness over the face of the deep and the Spirit of the Lord hovered over the face of the waters), God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

So God refashioned the atmosphere and the earth so a being more limited than the angels (Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2) could live here—more limited in intelligence, power, mobility (physical instead of spiritual), and revelation of God. Why? To answer the two great questions of the universe raised by the rebellion of Lucifer: 1) Is God sovereign; and 2) Is God love?

The Two Big Questions. Does God have the right to rule the universe, and is God worthy of being loved? God could not allow this challenge to go unanswered. Thus by creating a being more limited than the angels God felt He could settle these two questions. He laid His eternal reputation on the line when He made mankind. It is His intention to prove to the angelic world that He does have the right to rule the universe (He is sovereign), and He is worthy of being loved (He is love).

Lucifer, who became Satan, opened to question these character qualities of God. Therefore, he wants to prove that he can rule the universe as well or better than God. Thus the angelic conflict of the ages will be settled on the battle field of planet earth. Will men follow God or Satan? The answer to that question will also determine the answers to the other two concerning God's sovereignty and God's love.

So God refashioned the atmosphere and the earth for physical beings. He made man and challenged him to take dominion over the earth. There was much to do and only one "do not." Do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve did eat of this tree. Their failure and its consequences accrued to all of their offspring, that is, the entire human race. Men, animals, fish, birds, even the earth itself would feel the effects of the Fall of Adam and Eve. And the rest of the Bible is the story of God's salvation plan, His plan to restore to mankind what was lost through Adam and Eve.

Revelation 21–22. The best way to get a feel for the flow of Scripture and God's restoration plan is to look at the beginning of the Bible and the end. We have already

looked at the beginning. Now let's look at the end. Here in Revelation 21 we see the New Jerusalem coming down out of the third heaven to a new heavens and a new earth. When we realize that everyone living in this New Jerusalem will have a glorified body such as Jesus had after His resurrection, we realize that once again only spiritual beings will be living on the earth. The earth itself will once again be "perfect," just as it was when created in Job 38. What we mean by "perfect" is that there will be no sin on the earth and no effects of the same. There will be no fallen angels on the earth, and every man and woman has been "perfected" in the sense that their sin nature inherited through Adam has been completely removed when they received their glorified body. From the perspective of the earth, things have come full circle.

Five Stages for the Earth. We might actually visualize the earth in five stages: 1) The original creation of Job 38 where only spiritual beings could live on the earth; 2) The state of the earth in which physical beings could live as long as a thousand years like Methuselah; 3) The state of the earth today after the flood of Noah when all creation groans and labors, waiting for the day of redemption (Rom 8:20–23) when it will be delivered from the bondage of corruption; 4) The state of the earth during the one thousand year reign of Christ where men can once again live to be 1,000; 5) The state in which only spiritual beings can live here once again as revealed in Revelation 21–22. And so, we see symmetry: Original State \Rightarrow 1,000 Year Life Span State \Rightarrow Present State of Groaning \Rightarrow 1,000 Year Life Span State \Rightarrow Original State—full circle. It is God's plan of restoration.

However, as we seen God's plan to restore the earth to its original state, we must not lose sight of the fact that He also intends to restore man to his original purpose in taking dominion over the earth. This is the Kingdom Concept. Dominion = Kingdom. The reign that man was to have in the beginning will be realized in the end. The second Adam (Jesus Christ) will realize what the first Adam lost—dominion over the earth. And in setting up His kingdom on earth, the second Adam will be joined by those faithful to Him to reign right along side with Him. In other words, they will be reigning with Him in His kingdom just as the offspring of Adam were supposed to reign with him over planet earth.

And it is in the achievement of the kingdom reign over the earth that God answers these questions about His character. Through man's reign God answers the question about his own reign.

In Jn 14:21 Jesus says, “**He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.**” Whenever I obey one of God's commandments, I am helping to answer the two key questions. I am says, “Yes, Lord, you are sovereign and have the right to rule the universe, and yes, Lord, you are worthy of being loved.” To obey His commandments is to be submissive to His Lordship, and to obey His commandments is to tell Him we love Him.

On the other hand, whenever I rebel against His commandments, I am casting my vote for Satan as the rightful ruler of the universe, and I am telling God I do not love him enough to obey Him. This is Satan's will for my life—to get me to assert my own independence against God and His reign over my life. That is what the Bible calls pride, the very essence of Lucifer's original sin.

Summary. So, before the earth was created habitable for man, God and the Lamb reigned over the universe. In Rev 22:1–5 once again God and the Lamb are reigning, forever and ever. But this reign was opened to question by Lucifer. So man was created to solve this dilemma concerning the sovereignty of God. In Genesis 1–2 man was created to reign, not over the universe, but over planet earth. He failed, but in Revelation 20:4, 6 we find redeemed man reigning over planet earth for 1,000 years. John Milton wrote the well known *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, both based on the biblical narrative of the Fall and the Restoration. He might have titled it *Kingdom Lost* and *Kingdom Regained*, for that is the biblical story of how the kingdom man was supposed to have in the beginning of human history was lost, but one day that kingdom reign will be realized as the God/man Jesus Christ leads many sons to glory and they reign with Him in His kingdom. That is why when Jesus made His ministerial entrance, the good news (gospel) He

announced was the good news about the kingdom. What did this mean? It meant He was the King ready to set up the kingdom promised to these people in the OT. This would be the kingdom where those who believed and followed Him would reign for 1,000 years. Perfect justice would be meted out through the King and those servant-kings who would reign with Him. Remember when Peter asked Jesus in Matthew 19 what they would get out of giving up everything to follow Him, Jesus replied, “To you it is granted to sit on the twelve thrones reigning over the twelve tribes of Israel in the regeneration.” Of course, these disciples did not know what He meant by “the regeneration,” but they knew if they were faithful to Him, they would reign with Him. This is the Big Picture. What are some of the details?

THE LITTLE PICTURES

We went from before human history to the end of human history in order to get the Big Picture. But there are a lot of Little Pictures along the way. There are thousands of years of human history between the creation of First Adam and the reign of the Second Adam. What was God’s plan along the way? Why didn’t Eve give birth to Jesus so the Second Adam could reverse the effects of the fall right away? After all, the Lord predicted that the seed of woman would crush the head of the serpent (Satan). Why so many generations? This brings us back to the original angelic conflict between God and Lucifer.

Little Picture #1.

After man’s fall in the garden God gave man every chance to fulfill the kingdom mandate on his own. We will remember that one of the necessary steps in subduing the earth was to “be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.” Before they could subdue the earth they had to be fruitful, multiply, and spread out over the earth. But because Adam and Eve failed to keep the one “do not” given to them by God (the test), Satan won round one, and God had to bring judgment against man. Part of that judgment was to put Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden. God confronted them with their sin. After their fellowship with Him was restored through a blood sacrifice (when He clothed

them with animal skins), the Lord gave man a chance to rule himself by using his conscience as his guide. Before man could spread out and reign over the earth, he had to demonstrate some ability to rule over himself. Unfortunately, man also failed the “conscience test.” Cain killed Abel. Before long violence and sexual perversion filled the land. And whenever these two join hands, the cup of iniquity is soon filled; then God judges. This time a universal flood destroyed mankind on the earth, except for the righteous few, Noah and his immediate family.

So the first Little Picture was Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. They lived in innocence, not knowing the difference between good and evil experientially. Their test was to avoid eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When they failed the test, God’s judgment came, and they were put out of the Garden.

Little Picture #2.

The second Little Picture was man’s attempt to rule himself by his conscience. He now knew the difference between good and evil. But in their fallen condition, men could not keep from sinning. Corruption grew rampant over the earth. Murder multiplied. Lamech boasted over murdering a minor and wrote a song to celebrate his sin. So God again judges with the flood. Left to his own conscience, men with a thirst for evil could not be restrained.

Little Picture #3.

After the flood we see the third Little Picture. God again tells Noah to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.” He is still giving men a chance to take dominion over the earth, but this time the Lord institutes some external controls. The internal control of man’s conscience was insufficient to curtail his evil impulses. Perhaps human government would do the trick. So capital punishment was instituted. No longer would murder be tolerated in a just society. Justice demanded blood for blood. But the test to fill the

earth was failed. Instead of spreading out, men began to build larger and larger cities. And in these cities they erected ziggurats for idolatry. These high towers were built for worship of the stars. The Tower of Babel was one such ziggurat. When God looked upon man and saw he had failed the test to multiply and fill the earth, He judged by giving multiple languages. These languages were a judgment. They caused division. They caused men to spread out over the earth.

Little Picture #4.

This leads us to the fourth Little Picture. From a human perspective, God now realizes the fallen nature of man cannot possibly bring peace and good will toward man in a world wide kingdom. So He begins to work out His plan for bringing a just king and a just kingdom to earth. Such a king will need to be without a fallen nature lest he too would corrupt the earth with violence and injustice. But how will men recognize this king. There must be some tracks to trace, some fingerprints by which they could identify this ideal king. One fingerprint by which an identification could be made was genealogical. If the lineage of this ideal king could be predicted centuries in advance, then one could simply check the king's birth records for the right genealogical fingerprints. But in order to trace one's genealogy records would be necessary, records going back for generations. This would be difficult the way the various races were intermarrying. What to do? Ah, ha. If God were to select one man and begin a new ethnic race from his seed, then the genealogical records of the future king could be kept in tact, assuming there was no miscegenation. Thus cometh Abraham, the father of the Jews.

The Abrahamic Covenant, a sketch of which exists in Gen 12:1–3, promised Abraham a great land, a great nation, and great blessing (that he would be a blessing to all mankind). This latter promise was fulfilled in the seed of Abraham. Through his lineage would come the promised seed which would bless all mankind, that is, the ideal king who would rule the earth in his kingdom and restore man to his original purpose of reigning over the earth with the ideal king. Of course, in order to accomplish this restoration of

mankind, the ideal king had to redeem mankind from the Fall. The only real test for these blessings to take place in Abraham's life was for him to leave his own homeland and go to the land God had promised for him. And once there, he was to stay there. But alas, Abraham and his offspring failed. They kept trying to leave the land of promise during times of famine in order to find food in Egypt. So finally God judged them by leaving them in Egypt for 430 years as slaves to Pharaoh. Nevertheless, though the blessings of remaining in the land of promise were missed, because Abraham was initially faithful to leave Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Israel, God ratified His Covenant with Abraham, and the lineage through which the ideal king would come began. Abraham and Sarah begat Isaac.

Little Picture #5.

Moses and the Law. The fifth Little Picture in God's program for the ages, all of which culminates in the Kingdom of Christ, revolves around Moses. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt. They were never supposed to go to Egypt in the first place. When we step out of God's will for our lives, we begin a life of slavery to Satan. The people needed a deliverer to get them back to the land of Israel. Moses was the man. For the promised seed, the ideal king, to be born this ethnic race, the Jews, needed to be set apart unto the Lord. They needed to be a special people, pure and holy, unlike the Gentile nations which surrounded them and worshipped the stars. To help keep His people holy and pure God gave Moses the Torah, the Law. The nation of Jews already had a relationship with Yahweh which was permanent. The Abrahamic Covenant was irrevocable. But in order to enjoy this relationship, the nation needed to stay in fellowship with Yahweh. This would be accomplished by their faithfulness to the Mosaic Law. It was not given to them to establish a relationship with Yahweh—they already had that. It was to maintain fellowship.

Kings and the Law. But now the people are in the land again. The promises to Abraham are being fulfilled. And the people are ready for a king like the nations around them. God assures them that He wants to be their king. But, no, they want one they can

see just like the surrounding nations. God assures them they will not be pleased with their own king, but the people would not be denied. Saul becomes the first king. He proved unfaithful, so God himself selects a king after His own heart. David was Israel's greatest king. And because he was faithful in all that he did except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite (1 Kings 15:5), God promised David a kingdom that would last forever and the ideal king who would come from David's own line.

Anticipation ran high with the birth of Solomon. David may well have thought that Solomon would be the ideal king God had promised (Pss 2, 89, 110). But Solomon turned into an idolater. The Asherah (a phallic symbol like the May Pole) spent more time in the temple of God than our during the years of the monarchy. Because the people were unfaithful to the Law of Moses and because none of their kings was ideal, God again was forced to judge His own people. The purging accomplished by the Assyrians and later the Babylonians drove idolatry out of Israel. There was no more idolatry in Israel after the Babylonian Captivity. But there was also no king, let alone an ideal one.

Messianic Expectation. The Jewish people were tired of Gentile domination in their land. The Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Medes and the Persians, the Greeks, and finally the Romans—when would God bring in the promised seed, the ideal king, to set up the world-wide kingdom He promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David? With each succeeding Gentile empire with its domination over the Jewish people and their land, messianic expectation increased. By the time of Christ messianic expectation ran at a fever pitch. The Qumran Community, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, were so consumed with messianic expectation, they envisioned four different types of Messiahs: a political messiah from the line of David, a priestly messiah from the line of Aaron, a prophetic messiah like Elijah, and an angelic messiah. But in Jerusalem the only messiah they were expecting was political. They looked for a king who would deliver them from the scourge of the Roman Empire. This king would set up his own world empire, and the Jewish people would be pillars in his royal court.

The Curse of Matt 23:35–36. But when the Ideal King proclaimed Himself as their King and offered to set up His kingdom, the people were so deep in the darkness of a religious system which had drifted far, far from the Law of Moses, that once again God predicted judgment (Matt 23:35–36) upon His chosen people. He gave them forty years, one generation, to respond to the message of the Ideal King. If they would not, judgment would fall exactly forty years after the message of the King began. Jesus began His proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom in AD 30. Forty years later, in AD 70, Titus, the Roman emperor, destroyed Jerusalem and killed almost a million Jews.

So the Jews of that generation rejected the Ideal King and His Kingdom. Because God allows men a choice, they can reject His offers, but they cannot negate His promises or nullify His plans. A world-wide blessing was promised to Abraham; a world-wide kingdom was promised to David. And so Jesus spoke of “the regeneration”: “**Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**” Jesus’ death did not catch Him by surprise. He knew about “the regeneration.” He realized He would need to “come again” in order to establish His Kingdom.

The Kingdom Re-offered. So after His resurrection Jesus did not ascend immediately to His Father. Why not? Because He had many things about His future Kingdom to share with His disciples before He left. He actually spent forty days teaching them things about His Kingdom (Acts 1:3). So just before ascending into heaven they asked Him if now was the time that He would “restore the kingdom to Israel.” He told them not to worry so much about when He would come back to establish His Kingdom. He was more concerned that they be His witnesses throughout the entire earth. Why? Because this is how the promise to Abraham would be fulfilled, namely, that Abraham would be a blessing to the entire world. How? Through Abraham would come the promised seed, the seed promised to Eve before she was expelled from the Garden. Jesus was that promised seed, and by sharing the good news about Him with the world, all the world would receive a blessing, a blessing which came down through the line of Abraham. And by al-

lowing all men to enter into the Abrahamic blessing, God was also giving all men an opportunity to enter into the kingdom reign of the Ideal King. Each person would have a chance to answer the great questions of the universe concerning God's sovereignty and God's love.

Little Picture #6.

So the sixth Little Picture in God's program for the ages is one in which we who believe in Jesus carry forth the message, the good news, the gospel about Jesus to the whole world. The test in this Little Picture is to believe in Jesus. Unfortunately, most will not. The result will be another judgment from the Lord. This one is called "the great Day of His Wrath" (Rev 6:17). It is a time of seven years in which the entire world undergoes tribulation greater than any since the flood of Noah. But this time a great multitude which no man can number will turn to the Ideal King. And remnant of Jews will turn to Him as their Messiah. They will invite Him to come back to the earth to set up His Kingdom. This He will do, as predicted in Revelation 20.

Little Picture #7.

And Revelation 20 brings us to the seventh and final Little Picture. This is called The Millennium because the Kingdom of Christ lasts 1,000 years. During this climactic kingdom Christ restores to mankind what the first Adam lost—dominion over the earth. Satan is defeated. God proves that He alone is worthy of our love and loyalty, and He alone has the right to rule the universe. He is sovereign—the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Before Him every knee will bow. With this kingdom completed after 1,000 years, God's reputation is completely restored. There is nothing left except to set up the eternal kingdom with the New Jerusalem coming out of the Third Heaven to a recycled planet earth. And finally, there is peace on earth, good will toward men.

MY PICTURE

Matt 19:27

Of course, we all want to know where we fit into the picture. We have seen the Big Picture and the Little Pictures, but is there a picture of me in there somewhere. Of course, in different words this is the same question Peter was asking the Lord in Matt 19:27, “See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?” It’s a fair question. It is interesting that God has designed us as human beings such that our basic needs actually revolve around the two questions concerning God’s character, that is, His sovereignty and His love. According to Larry Crabb, our two primary needs are for significance and security. At the highest level our security comes from being loved. And at the highest level our significance comes from doing something which will last forever. Let’s see how God’s coming kingdom helps fulfill these needs.

Security

If we find our need for security primarily met through love, how does our obedience to Christ lead to love? Is there some connection between love and obedience. Of course, there is. In Jn 14:21 the Lord says, “He who has my commandments and keeps them, he is the one who loves me, and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” Though our God is omnibenevolent (He loves all men, believer and unbeliever, alike), He only manifests (makes visible) His love to those who love Him. Isn’t that true of all love relationships. We open up to those who open up to us. Intimacy begets intimacy. When I obey the Lord, I not only say, “Yes, Lord, you are sovereign and have the right to rule the universe and my life,” but I also say, “Yes, Lord, you are worthy of being loved and I love you.” Every time I obey Him, I am saying, “I love you.” This, then, encourages Him to open up to me. I see His love for me in a special way.

Sometimes people say to me that this orientation to living for His coming kingdom is selfish. Really? Is it selfish for me to want to become as close to my Savior as possible. I actually believe that the intimacy I find with Him on earth is roughly proportionate to the intimacy I have with Him for eternity. Let me show you what I mean. In Rev 2:17 Jesus speaks to the overcomers (victorious Christians) at the Church of Pergamos. He promises the overcomer a white stone and on this stone will be written a new name (for the believer) which only that believer and Jesus know. Wow! That is a term of endearment, a special term which reflects the intimacy between the Savior and his child.

But as we go on in the promises to the overcomers in Revelation 2–3 we see the victorious Christian getting closer and closer to the Savior. Christ promises to make the overcomer in Rev 3:11 a pillar in His temple during His millennial reign. But the overcomer in Rev 3:21 is promised a place right next to Christ on His throne during this kingdom reign. The overcomers in Revelation 2–3 are getting progressively closer to the Savior? Is that selfish? No, that's love.

So much for our need for Security. What about our need for Significance?

Significance

In the cradle of civilization (Kuwait and its neighbors) the most significant job a man could have was to be king. The most significant job a woman could have was to be queen. We might say they were obsessed with kingship. Usually, their kings were corrupt and abused their power and position. Of course, Lucifer was obsessed with being king; that is why he wanted God to abdicate His throne. Lucifer wanted to rule the universe.

Ultimately, the question regarding God's sovereignty will be answered in the millennial kingdom of Christ when all will acknowledge that He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. However, if we can understand this Middle Eastern focus on kingship, we

can also understand the significance attached to “reigning” in the NT. Remember, when Peter asked his question of the Lord in Matt 19:27, Jesus came back with a promise which completely satisfied the disciples’ need for significance. He promised each of them a throne and the authority to rule over one of the twelve tribes of Israel. But these disciples were not the only ones who received this promise of future reign in the coming kingdom.

In 2 Tim 2:11–13 God gives us a short course on the spiritual life. And in this short course Paul says, “If we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we endure, we shall reign with Him.” To reign with Christ in His future kingdom is a promise held out to help motivate us to endure in the midst of suffering and various other difficulties we face in the Christian life.

We find the same promises in Revelation. When giving motivation to the Christians in the various churches in Revelation 2–3, Jesus speaks to the Church at Thyatira and says, “**And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’—as I also have received from My Father.**” And in Revelation 5 the twenty-four elders (representatives of the Church which has already been raptured and rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ) sing a new song of praise to the Lamb in which they say, “For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.” And in reference to the martyrs killed for Christ during the Tribulation Period, Rev 20:4 says “they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”

For us today the kingship concept does not appear as significant as it did to people living in the Middle East 2,000 years ago. Most kings and queens today are merely puppets, figure heads without any real power. The thought of sitting around on a throne with scepter in hand probably does not do much for most of us. But if you can think of reign-

ing, thrones, and crowns as symbols or metaphors for significant positions of service, then it all comes alive. I am motivated to serve my King and my Lord. If He gives me a position polishing His crowns in His kingdom, that would be very significant in my eyes. Because I love Him, I want to serve Him.

But in order to rule, one must know how to submit. When I choose in this life to obey God's commandments, I am casting my vote for His reign over the universe and my life in particular. Ironically, those who submit in this life will be reigning in the next. But again, some people say to me, "That's selfish." But, no, they misunderstand. Our reigning, as already stated, is simply a symbol for significance. And a symbol of our reigning is the crowns we are given at the Judgment Seat of Christ where we are rewarded for living a life of obedience to Him. There are a number of different categories in the Christian life for which crowns are promised. But living for these crowns is not selfish at all. Why? Because in Rev 4:10 we cast these crowns down before Him saying (through our representatives, the twenty-four elders), "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power." The things we do in this life to please Him are done through Him as He lives in and through us (Gal 2:20; Phil 2:13). Hence, He alone is worthy of the praise and glory. Is it selfish for me to want to glorify my Savior? I don't think so.

As a matter of fact, just after the Judgment Seat of Christ is completed and before the Tribulation Period begins, the greatest moment of praise and worship the universe has ever seen will take place. And we will do the Wave. Look at it in Rev 5:8–14. There in 5:8–10 the twenty-four elders fall down before the Lamb and sing a song of praise to Him. Then in 5:11–12 we hear angels, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, also voicing their paeon of praise to the Lord. But this is a circle around the elders who have fallen down. Then in 5:13 we see the third band in these concentric circles. Here every creature on earth and in heaven pours out his praise to the Lamb. Three concentric circles. But where is the wave? In 5:14 it says, "Then the four living creatures said, 'Amen!' And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshipped Him who lives forever and ever." But I thought they fell down in verse eight. How can they fall down

again? . . . unless they got up. It's the Wave! And may I suggest to you that none of this worship is selfish. Nor is it selfish to want to live a life which will offer us the opportunity, because of faithfulness to Him, to enter into this kind of worship.

Security and Significance? Absolutely. In answering the two great questions of the universe concerning the character of God (His sovereignty and His love) in His favor as opposed to Satan's, ironically our two greatest needs are being met at the same time. But how does all this relate to missions?

CONCLUSION

Missions is the very heartbeat of God's kingdom program. Let's remember that Adam was supposed to be fruitful and multiply and take dominion over the earth. Finally, mankind has populated the earth. But dominion? No. Oh, yes, there have been attempts at dominion over the earth: Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus the Great, Alexander the Great, the Roman Empire, Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin, and now perhaps a conspiracy for One World Order (see Ps 2:2 for a prediction of a conspiracy of world leaders to achieve One World Order). But there will be no world-wide dominion until Jesus comes again. Then His scepter will sweep out from Jerusalem with centrifugal force until He has conquered the World Dictator (the Antichrist) and set up His kingdom over all the earth (Psalm 110).

But our Lord wants servant-kings from every tongue, tribe, and nation to serve with Him in His dominion over the earth. The purpose of all this, as we have seen in earlier lessons, is that the nations might glorify God:

Psalm 67

To the Chief Musician. On stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song.

- ¹ God be merciful to us and bless us,
And cause His face to shine upon us. Selah
- ² That Your way may be known on earth,

Your salvation among all nations.

³ Let the peoples praise You, O God;

Let all the peoples praise You.

⁴ Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy!

For You shall judge the people righteously,

And govern the nations on earth. Selah

⁵ Let the peoples praise You, O God;

Let all the peoples praise You.

⁶ *Then* the earth shall yield her increase;

God, our own God, shall bless us.

⁷ God shall bless us,

And all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.

Through world evangelization, or perhaps we should say world-wide discipleship (see Matt 28:19–20), each person is given the same opportunity to the eternal security (the love of God) and the eternal significance (a meaningful place of service forever) you have received. And as individuals in each tongue, tribe, and nation respond positively to the gospel and teachings of Christ, God is glorified. What does that mean again? The glory of God is “an open, public, display of His character qualities (attributes).” As the nations are brought out of darkness into His light they become trophies of His grace, His love, His mercy, His omnipresence, His omnipotence, His omniscience, His justice, His truth, His faithfulness, His goodness, and on we go.

Tired of the ho-hum rat race of just trying to exist. God’s kingdom program and our participation in it (missions) gives us a reason for living which transcends the mundane, the trivial, and the banal. It gives you a chance to make your life count for eternity.

Only one life, ‘twill soon be past;

Only what’s done for Christ will last.

