

# The Big Picture of Scripture

## Lesson 6: The Kingdom of God Revealed in Eden

- I. Intro: the Kingdom of God is the central theme of all of redemptive history. The Kingdom of God is first established in the Garden of Eden when we see *Adam and Eve living in obedience to God in God's Eden-sanctuary*. The Kingdom is lost by sin and the rest of the Bible is about *the gracious restoration of a people to be the willing subjects of God in His Kingdom*. There are several more episodes where the Kingdom of God is given expression (e.g., Noah, Abraham, David), but its perfection isn't reached until the consummation at Christ's return in the book of Revelation.
- II. The Creation Narrative
  - A. The creation narrative must never be read merely as a once-upon-a-time story. The fact that God is Creator and man is His creature establishes at the outset the basis for the understanding of the Kingdom of God. The only perfect existence for the creature is found within the framework of the rule of his God.
    1. The creatorship of God shows us that all reality is God's reality and all truth is God's truth. Nothing exists except by the will and word of God. If we believe in God as Creator, then we can't divide the world between spiritual and secular. The fact that all reality depends on the creative word of God means that the Word of God must judge the ideas of men about truth and error—not the other way around. When man turns on God in his judgments, it's like taking a pocket flashlight to shine it on the sun to see if it's real. The truth of God's Word and world can't be subject to the puny light of man's self-centered wisdom.
    2. God's Word *created* what is and can alone *interpret* what is. There are no brute facts in the world. God's already interpreted them all by His Word, and ultimately by Christ.
  - B. The accounts of creation in Gen 1 and 2 tell us about the *beginning* of all things, and they also tell us about God's purpose and intended *relationship* between all things.
    1. It's important to understand that qualities such as harmony and goodness are not a self-evident standard outside of God to which He conformed His creation. Rather, God Himself is the source of harmony and goodness and He defined them by setting forth an arrangement in creation that expresses *His* goodness and *His* harmony, Gen 1.31; 2.18, 21-25. Creation is God's creation and, as such, cannot but be good, perfect, and harmonious. The universe was created in harmony and with order. Everything had a proper function and coexisted in proper relationships with itself.
    2. This means God *defined* goodness and harmony by creating and God *upholds* the goodness, order, and harmony of creation by *establishing* the relationship between all things. The relationship between man and creation, man and the animals, man and man, male and female, marriage and family are what they are by God's design. God establishes these relationships at the beginning to *declare* the purpose for which they were created and *fix* the place in which they would properly function, according to His design, in perfect harmony.
    3. When sin perverts these relationships it breeds chaos, confusion, pain, sorrow, loneliness, grief, and death.
    4. It's the glory of the gospel to restore all things to their proper relationships under God's rule, Col 1.20.
- III. The Kingdom Revealed in Eden
  - A. The Kingdom of God means *God ruling over God's people in God's place, the material universe*. This basic understanding of the Kingdom is never changed in Scripture, cf. Rev 21.1-3.

- B. The central significance given to man at creation is that he's made in God's image, Gen 1.26-27. What this means isn't fleshed out until the NT (Eph 4.24; Col 3.10), but at the outset it means man is 1) a creature ruled by God and 2) the focus of God's special condescension and care.
1. Creation is for man's benefit and humanity is the representative of the whole creation so that God deals with creation based on how He deals with mankind, Gen 3.18; Rom 8.19-21.
  2. Man is the creature of God. This fact can't be changed by denying or ignoring it. Modern man thinks of himself as being in charge and capable of whatever he sets his mind to, but we're dependent upon God for every moment of our existence. The biblical doctrine of creation directly challenges man's independent, autonomous, rebellious mindset.
  3. *Humanity doesn't exist apart from a special relationship with God.* All attempts to say what it means to be human must fail when they leave God as Creator out of the reckoning.
    - a) Furthermore, it belongs to the God-man relationship that man is told what his functions are, Gen 1.26-28; 2.15. God has told man how he relates to God and the world. This isn't self-evident within creation and can't be self-determined by man himself. God must reveal it, and reveal it He has. Thus man's work is God-given because it's God's world and man's place in it has been determined by God.
    - b) Man's uniquely responsible to God and answerable to God. He has no choice in the matter. It's a matter of his existence and can't be altered or avoided. And at the heart of this responsibility is man's freedom to make real choices between real options, Gen 2.16-17. Man didn't have the freedom to choose what the consequences of his choice for the forbidden fruit would be, but he had the freedom to choose the fruit.
    - c) It's in the context of this freedom and responsibility that God establishes a test of man's obedience regarding the forbidden fruit.
    - d) The choice for Adam and Eve was not between remaining ignorant and gaining the knowledge between good and evil. It was between remaining good and becoming evil themselves. Whatever choice they made, they would come to know both good and evil.
      - (1) They would either know right and wrong through their submission to God, who alone defines good and evil, or reject God as the Revealer of good and evil by asserting themselves as the self-determiners of good and evil and thereby come to know that they'd lost the good and come under the evil.
- C. The Pattern of the Kingdom in Eden
1. The *generation* or *creation* of the heavens and the earth centers on the people of God under God's rule in God's sanctuary. In this way, Adam and Eve living before God in the Garden of Eden provides us with the *pattern* of the Kingdom and indicates God's *intention* for humanity.
  2. In the Kingdom of God, everything in creation relates perfectly—as God intends—to everything else and to God Himself.
  3. This will be lost by sin and the rest of Scripture will reveal God's purpose to restore it, not through the First Adam, but through the Second Adam, who'll be not only perfect man in perfect harmony with God and His creation, but the One able to reconcile what's been lost by sin but putting away sin forever, Rev 21.1-3.