

Kingdom (Part 1)

2/9/2025

In Matthew 13:18-19 after telling the crowd the parable of the sower Jesus begins an explanation of its meaning by saying - *“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the word of the **kingdom** and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.”*

God begins His Word to mankind with the words - In the beginning God. And shortly after we read God made mankind. Then the very first two people God had created rebelled against God's message to them. They believed the deception of the serpent, and sin entered into the world.

By Genesis chapter 6 we read this about the condition of things on the earth - Genesis 6:5 *“The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.”*

Then came the flood from which only 8 souls survived. But then the cycle of sin took off again. Then God found a man, a sinner among sinners, but a man who was willing to listen, obey and trust God. God made promises to this man and from those promises came the nation of Israel. A little farther down the line of time we read this about the descendants of Abraham, the man who had faith in God and God's promises.

Genesis 49:10 *“The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.”* (KJV)
shîylôh pronounced shee-lo' *tranquil*; an epithet of the Messiah.

God had called out a people from among a sinful fallen world. God made them into the nation Israel. Moses led these people out of Egypt and Joshua led them into the promised land. But their history continued to be one filled with rebellion against God because of their sin. And they soon expressed a desire to be like the world from which they had been called out. Upon Joshua's death the people returned to their sinful ways as we read in the book of Judges 2:8-19 -

“Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of a hundred and ten. And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath Heres in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served the Baals. They forsook the Lord, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They aroused the Lord's anger because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. In his anger against Israel the Lord gave them into the hands of raiders who plundered them. He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist. Whenever Israel went out to fight, the hand of the Lord was against them to defeat them, just as he had sworn to them. They were in great distress. Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders. Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them. They quickly turned from the ways of their ancestors, who had been obedient to the Lord's commands. Whenever the Lord raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the Lord relented because of their groaning under those who oppressed and afflicted them. But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their ancestors, following other gods

and serving and worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways.”

The last of these judges spoken of above was Samuel. We read in 1st Samuel 8:1-9 -
*“When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as Israel’s leaders. The name of his firstborn was Joel and the name of his second was Abijah, and they served at Beersheba. But his sons did not follow his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice. So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, “You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have.” But when they said, “Give us a king to lead us,” this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord. **And the Lord told him: “Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights.”***

God had spoken to Israel through Moses about this very thing while they were still wandering through the desert years before prior to entering the promised land. God told them when they get into the land and want an earthly king to rule over them that their king must meet certain standards and comply with certain requirements. (See Deuteronomy 17:14>)

And so Israel got what it asked for - earthly kings. These kings ruled over them for a little more than 450 years starting with Saul around 1050BC and ending with Zedekiah in 586BC. We see king Zedekiah being spoken of in the next passage from Ezekiel. Recalling Ezekiel lived during the time when Babylon had taken the nation of Israel into captivity for 70 years just as the Prophet Jeremiah had clearly warned them of.

Ezekiel 21:24-27 *“Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘Because you people have brought to mind your guilt by your open rebellion, revealing your sins in all that you do— because you have done this, you will be taken captive. ““You profane and wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose time of punishment has reached its climax, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: Take off the turban, remove the crown. It will not be as it was: The lowly will be exalted and the exalted will be brought low. A ruin! A ruin! I will make it a ruin! **The crown will not be restored until he to whom it rightfully belongs shall come; to him I will give it.**’*

The people of Israel began to be exiled into that Babylonian captivity around 594BC. At first it involved taking certain leading members of the nation. It is believed that Daniel was part of this early group. When the city of Jerusalem officially fell in 586BC most of the other inhabitants of the city were then exiled leaving behind only a small number of the very poorest of people.

Around 539-538BC a man known to us as Cyrus The Great defeated Babylon and released those captured by the Babylonians. This decree of Cyrus can be read about in 2 Chronicles 35 and 36, and Ezra 1:1-11.

Then came the Greeks under Alexander The Great. And when Alexander himself died with no heir apparent his generals fought for power. Two of whom built substantial kingdoms which would hold great sway over Israel’s future. Those being the Ptolemaic and Seleucid dynasties.

Then in 63BC The Romans would take control of the land of Israel under Pompeius Magnus.

During the centuries spoken of above Israel would have no real kings of their own. They would simply be a small part of other worldly kingdoms.

It is said there are 4 things necessary to make a kingdom.

1. A King
2. A people
3. A place
4. A law

When Israel rebelled against God (#1) He took/sent the people (#2) out of the land (#3) He had given them and made them subject to the law of the Babylonians (#4).

But God never relinquished His kingship. God used Nebuchadnezzar to take Israel into exile and used Cyrus The Great to release them from that Exile. But more than that God had told Israel that He God was going to do this ahead of time. God used the prophets to warn Israel. And God used Jeremiah specifically to pronounce their exile and it's duration. But more than a century before Cyrus The Great was even born we also read the following in Isaiah 45:1-5
"This is what the Lord says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: I will go before you and will level the mountains; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. I will give you hidden treasures, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, who summons you by name. For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me. I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God."

Isaiah began his calling as a prophet in the year king Uzziah died 740BC. Cyrus The Great reigned from 539-530BC. Cyrus defeated the Babylonians and released those exiled via a decree (see 2nd Chronicles 36:22-23). Cyrus is also spoken of again in Isaiah 44:22-28 - 24 *"This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the Lord, the Maker of all things, who stretches out the heavens, who spreads out the earth by myself, who foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners, who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense, who carries out the words of his servants and fulfills the predictions of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, 'It shall be inhabited,' of the towns of Judah, 'They shall be rebuilt,' and of their ruins, 'I will restore them,' who says to the watery deep, 'Be dry, and I will dry up your streams,' who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid."*

Again when Isaiah prophesied the above it was more than a century before Cyrus The Great was even born, and a time when all twelve tribes of Israel were still intact and prosperous. The ten tribes of the North would be dispersed by the Assyrians about 20 years into Isaiah prophesying or 722-721BC just as Isaiah and other prophets of God had foretold.

When Jesus came to earth the people of Israel were in a desperate state of domination by Rome. Many were looking for the Messiah and expected him to become an earthly king and rescue them. In John's account of the Gospel we read this at the close of the account where Jesus had fed the 5,000 -

"When they all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

*After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." **Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.**" (John 6:12-15)*

In John 18:36 Jesus is on trial before Pilate when he tells Pilate the following - "Jesus answered, "**My kingdom is not of this world.** If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. **But my kingdom is not from the world.**"

So who is in real control of this world? Who is ruling as king?

In John 14:30-31 Jesus and His disciples are in the upper room on the night He was betrayed. Jesus tells His disciples the following - "*I will not say much more to you, for **the prince of this world is coming.** He has no hold over me, but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me.*"

Earlier in John 12:27-33 we read this which helps explain what Jesus is talking about in the above passage - "*Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now **the prince of this world will be driven out.** And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die."*

In 1st Peter 1:10-12 we read this - "*Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted **the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow.** It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.*"

Here are a few more passages which speak of this **wrestling or struggle.** (As Paul refers to it in Ephesians chapter 6.)

2nd Corinthians 4:4 "**The god of this age** has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

Ephesians 2:1-2 "*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of **the ruler of the kingdom of the air,** the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.*"

1st John 5:18-19 "*We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the One who was born of God keeps them safe, and **the evil one** cannot harm them. We know that we are children of God, and that **the whole world is under the control of the evil one.**"*

Acts 26:15-18 *“Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’“ ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them **to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.**’*

Colossians 1:13-14 *“For he has rescued us from the **dominion of darkness** and brought us into the **kingdom** of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*

Matthew 13:19 *“When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, **the evil one** comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart.”*

In the book of Job chapters 1 & 2 we see **Satan** and the limited power God has allowed him to have over mankind.

Paul describes our battle with Satan in the following way in the letter he wrote to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 6:12 *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”*

And James tells us in his letter - *“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the **devil**, and he will flee from you.”*

We see this at work when Jesus is tempted by the **Devil** as recorded in Matthew 4:1-11.

In the following I would like to try and present a picture for perspective on this Idea of who is in control of what.

Consider for a moment that I invite you over to my home and property. I then take you out into my back yard where I reach down and pick up a grain of sand from the ground and place it in your hand. Then I say to you here this is a part of my kingdom, I want you to have some control over it for awhile. I will tell you what you may and may not do with it, but you can be the prince of this part of my kingdom. Wouldn't you just be amazed at the power you now have?

God gave Satan power over some things for a period of time on this small speck we call earth amidst this vast universe. Earth a speck smaller by comparison than that grain of sand I placed into your hand in the story above.

Consider the first verse of Psalm 19 concerning a piece of property that belongs to God - *“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”*

Some time ago I read an article written by a prominent Astronomer. He was speaking about his chosen field of study - the study of the heavens. He said I am not even sure why we pursue such a subject as this. For we could not even make it to the first star out there in our short life span. It would take 40,000 years for us to travel to the closest star in our galaxy traveling at the

current speed of the voyager 1 spacecraft. (Voyager 1 is traveling approximately 38,000 mph). And as for the rest of what is out there he said, well we can't even begin to imagine such great distances, let alone consider going there or making use of it. So why do we even have such an intense interest in finding out about it?

God's Word spoke it all into existence, and maintains it all as well. *"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, **sustaining all things by his powerful word.**"*

Earlier in this lesson we looked at part of John chapters 12 and 14. Lets us now consider another part of that conversation between Jesus and His disciples on the night He was betrayed. This is from from John chapter 13:33-36 in the middle of that bigger conversation - *"My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." **Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later."***

Two things to consider about what Jesus had told Peter.

1. Jesus was going to the cross, (see John chapter 21 for "you will follow later")
2. Jesus was also returning to Heaven where God sits enthroned as King.
And it is only through Christ on that cross that we may approach God.

In conclusion -

We are in God's hands and God is in control of everything and always has been. Something the psalmist came to understand despite how the world may have looked to him at the time. After speaking of the troubles he has faced in this world he concludes the following concerning God in Psalm 73:23 - *"Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand."* The Psalmist realized this upon entering the sanctuary of God - *"When I tried to understand all this, it troubled me deeply till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny."*

On the night Jesus was betrayed he prayed for His disciple. But He also prayed for us as well. Here is part of that prayer - *"I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world **but that you protect them from the evil one.** They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. **Sanctify** them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*

Have we found sanctuary in the truth of God's Word? Do we recognize God as our King?