

Week 2: The Kingdom of God

While we are able to look at the Big Story of the Bible in these four stages—Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration—one theme emerges in all stages—the Kingdom of God. From the very beginning of the Bible in Genesis where we see God as Creator to the very end of the Bible in Revelation when we see Jesus as Cosmic King, the Kingdom of God is the theme of the biblical story.

Graeme Goldsworthy in his book, *Gospel and Kingdom*, defines the Kingdom of God this way: “God’s people, in God’s place, under God’s rule and God’s Blessing.”

So, let’s just look at this pattern from the outset of the Bible:

God’s people: God creates Adam and Eve. He creates them for relationship with Himself, and for relationship with each other. Look what God says of Adam:

The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him” (Genesis 2:18).

God gives Adam and Eve purpose. Genesis tells us:

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it (Genesis 2:15).

We might think that Adam and Eve were only gardeners but something much great is being stated here. There are really two role that we see Adam and Eve are given:

1. Priest: Adam and Eve functioned as priests. They were placed in the garden—God’s special specially designated place of his presence on earth—it was a scared and holy place. And Adam and Eve tended to it. In doing so, they worshipped God and maintained his holy sanctuary.
2. Vice-Regents: In addition to priests, human beings were called to be vice-regents. They were ordained as royalty. They were God’s most special creation. See what Genesis tells us:

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground” (Genesis 1:26).

We see here that God created human-beings in His image—what theologians have called the *Imago Dei*. This tells us that humans are vice-regents, created to rule over the earth on God’s behalf and make sure His will is done.

So let’s remember our working definition of the Kingdom of God: “God’s people, in God’s place, under God’s rule and God’s Blessing.”

We just spoke about God’s people. What about God’s place?

God's place: In one way, Genesis indicates that the whole world is God's. In the beginning God created...and he brings purpose and order to this chaotic world. Genesis tell us:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1).

And

Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters (Genesis 1:2).

But God takes this formless world and fashions it into something he calls "good." So, the whole universe is God's.

But in a narrower sense, God's place for Adam and Eve is the garden. The centerpiece of His creation—there to display his special presence with Adam and Eve.

Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden... And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground — trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:8-9).

God's people...in God's place...

Under God's rule and God's Blessing: Adam and Eve are created for fellowship with God. To glorify God. To have purpose and to have life. They are under God's rule—listening and doing what God says to do. And because of this, they are enjoying the blessings of God. To be under God's rule in the Bible is always to enjoy his blessing.

And God intends his rule and reign—and his blessings—to expand out. Look what Genesis says:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Genesis 1:27-28).

So God's rule and reign will cover the whole earth—humanity will expand and flourishing by living under the rule of God, worshipping him, serving as priests and vice-regents. But we know this does not happen.