

Gospel and the Kingdom of God — 3

(Kingdom of the World)

Outline

1. The Rebellious Kingdom—the Kingdom of the World
2. God confronts the Kingdom of the World and shows He is Saviour and Lord
3. Israel's failure to be the Contrasting Kingdom of God
4. Jesus brings the Kingdom of God to earth

1. The Rebellious Kingdom — the Kingdom of the World

Humans are created in the image of God to reflect and represent God by ruling the earth as God's viceroys. However, the devil tempted our first parents (Adam and Eve). The devil began to sow distrust of God in their hearts, and they believed him. So, they decided to define good and evil for themselves apart from what God told them, and their relationship with God broke down. They begin to rule the earth independently of God. Their descendants built the Tower of Babel in opposition to God (Gen 11:9). Humanity's rebellion continued even as God continuously frustrated their plans (Gen 3-11) for their good. Nevertheless, humans kept on rebelling (till today). Humans began to organise themselves into communities, cities and eventually kingdoms — all in rebellion against God's rule. The New Testament calls it by various names, e.g., *the world* (1 John 2:15), *this present evil age* (Gal 1:4) and *the dominion of darkness* (Col 1:13). They all mean **the kingdom of the world (Rev 11:15), a rebellious kingdom against God's rule.**

In Exodus, we see a highly organised kingdom of the world, Egypt, ruled by Pharaoh (Egyptian title for king). While humans were building kingdoms of this world, God chose a Hebrew-speaking man named Abraham, whom He tested and found **he responded to God in faith — which pleased God.** God made a covenant with Abraham that God would make Abraham's descendants His people, who would look to God as their ruler (Gen 12, 15, 17). Thus, Abraham's descendants were cooperating with God to build **a type of the Kingdom of God on earth.**

Through several events, Abraham's descendants settled in Egypt for 400 years (Gen 12-50). By this time, Egypt had become a well-developed kingdom of the world—the first human superpower we see in the Bible and probably in all human history. Pharaoh rules Egypt. Pharaoh is typical of worldly rulers who care only about their **country's security and economy.** They would use any means to ensure their prosperity, even by oppressing and enslaving people. Moreover, we see this happen throughout human history — whether through colonialism, capitalism, communism etc. All worldly kingdoms and systems enslave and oppress others. All human systems are built on injustice. All of them are in rebellion against God. **ALL.**

2. God confronts the Kingdom of the World and shows He is Saviour & Lord.

So the Hebrews (Abraham's descendants) are enslaved and oppressed by Pharaoh to build his kingdom. They cry out to God, who remembers His covenant with Abraham and sends Moses as their deliverer. We see this as **the first confrontation by God against the kingdom of the world.** And, of course, God wins ultimately. God uses weak people (Hebrews) who depend upon Him to defeat the world's most powerful superpower at that time—Egypt. Through the Passover and the parting of the Red Sea, God uses Moses to

defeat Pharaoh's great army and save His people from slavery. **The first worship song** in the Bible (Exodus 15) tells the whole story of deliverance. It contains the **first use of the word salvation** in the Bible.

Exod 15:1-2, 18 Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD: "I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea. ² "The Lord is my strength and my defence; he has become my salvation... ...¹⁸ The Lord reigns forever and ever.

The Exodus 15 song goes on and ends in v18: *"The Lord reigns forever and ever."* It is **the Bible's first time God is shown to reign as king**. Abraham's descendants realise that Pharaoh is not the king, but the God of Abraham is king. **The Exodus story is the first confrontation by God against the kingdom of the world, and it shows that God is Saviour and Lord. Moreover, remember, the critical event in this confrontation was the Passover. Here the destroyer killed the first born of the Egyptians, and the Israelites were set free by the blood of the Passover lamb.**

3. Israel's repeated failure to be the Contrasting Kingdom of God

Abraham's descendants acknowledged God as their Saviour and Lord in Exodus 15:1-18. So, God shows them what it means to live under His reign. He enters into another covenant with them on Mount Sinai. He reveals the Ten Commandments and other teachings in the Torah (first five Old Testament Books). God's instructions flow from His moral essence — He is love (1 John 4:8, 16). He is holy (Ps 99:9). He is a God of justice, righteousness, faithful love and truth (Ps 89:14). God expects His people to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly before Him (Micah 6:8). Following these guidelines, Abraham's descendants who settled in the promised land of Israel, were to be a "contrast kingdom" totally unlike the kingdoms of the world. They were God's chosen people to reflect and represent God to the world. They agreed to obey God as their king at Sinai. However, God knew their hearts. He knew that the Israelites would one day want a king like the other nations (Deut 17:14). Nevertheless, God gave them laws of what an Israelite king should be in Deut 17:16-20. Let us have a look at God's Law of the King.

Deut 17:16 The king must not have a great number of horses. God limits the king's primary weapon (horse and chariot). Instead, God wants the king to depend on Him (*Ps 20:7 Some trust in chariots and some trust in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God*)

Deut 17:17 The king must not take many wives nor accumulate much silver and gold.

Deut 17:18 The king must personally write the Torah on a scroll

Deut 17:19 The king must daily read the Torah that he wrote.

Regarding national security (v16) and economy (v17b), Israel must depend on the Lord. Furthermore, God says that the land must have a Sabbath rest once every seven years (Lev 25:4-5)—this limits agricultural production and once again makes Israel dependent on the Lord.

When they go to war, God gives them commands that provide freedom to soldiers whether to fight or not (Deut 20:1-9)

Can you see how God wants Israel to be a contrasting kingdom dependent on Him, unlike the world's kingdoms?

At first, Israel wanted God to be king. However, when the Ammonites threatened them, they forgot how God had defeated a far greater enemy, Pharaoh, by His strength. They asked Samuel for a king like all the worldly nations around them, as God had predicted they would. God knew they rejected Him as king even at Sinai, for He knew their hearts (1 Sam 8:6-7). Israel became no different from the nations around them. The history of Israel in the Old Testament was a failure to reflect and represent God **because their hearts were rebellious**. There are forty kings mentioned between Judah and Israel in the Old Testament. Virtually all failed miserably to represent and reflect God's rule on earth. Even King David, a man after God's heart,

fell short. He committed adultery and murder in his affair with Bathsheba (2 Sam 11- He numbered his troops showing he depended more on worldly strength than relying on God (2 Sam 24). In both instances, God clearly showed His displeasure by severely dealing with David

Mesopotamia & Egypt were the superpowers of the ancient world. At the same time,

Israel (Canaan on the map) was a small and narrow strip between them— called the “sacred strip”, nourished by the River Jordan. God allowed Israel to be weak in worldly strength so they would depend wholly on Him and reflect His glory to the world.

The principle of depending on God is valid even today. Christianity’s essential message is the gospel message of the cross (trust the gospel of grace, deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Jesus). It gets diluted, sidelined and corrupted the more worldly we get. This principle applies to individual Christians, Christian Churches, and Christian nations. When we sideline the cross, the Christian witness becomes ineffective. However, when we embrace the cross, we can thrive, even if we advance materially (e.g. South Korea is 40% Christian and still prospering materially). That is why preaching the gospel and making disciples are essential.



After King David, his son King Solomon ascended the throne of Israel. God gave Solomon great wisdom to rule His people wisely. Solomon knew how a model king of Israel should rule. He composed Ps 72, where justice reigns, there is no oppression, and there is compassion and care for the poor and afflicted. However, knowing all this, he uses wisdom to build his kingdom by enslaving people selfishly. Solomon breaks the Laws of the King given in Deut 17:16-20 and eventually goes astray. His people hated him and divided his kingdom after his death.

The history of Israel in the Old Testament is a failed kingdom. The world’s kingdoms took them as captives either in exile to Babylon or ruled them as the Romans did in Israel. In the past, God had shown His mighty arm to save Israel from the Egyptian Pharaoh. **God is indeed King** and even made a covenant with Israel. However, now, beaten down, first by the Babylonians, then by the Romans, the Israelites began to wonder whether God would arise again to save them. They asked if the Kingdom of God, as in Ps 72, would ever come to Israel. The prophets had severely warned Israel when they became worldly like other nations. However, they also brought the marvellous prophecy of a messenger of the good news of salvation and the Kingdom of God (*Your God reigns*) in Isa 52.

Isa 52:7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns!”

4. Jesus brings the Kingdom of God on earth.

Isa 52:1-10 Awake, awake, Zion, clothe yourself with strength! Put on your garments of splendour, Jerusalem, the holy city. The uncircumcised and defiled will not enter you again. ² Shake off your dust; rise up, sit enthroned, Jerusalem. Free yourself from the chains on your neck, Daughter Zion, now a captive. ³ For this is what the LORD says: “You were sold for nothing, and without money, you will be redeemed.” ⁴ For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: “At first my people went down to Egypt to live; lately, Assyria has oppressed them. ⁵ “And now what do I have here?” declares the Lord. “For my people have been taken

away for nothing, and those who rule them mock,” declares the Lo. “And all day long my name is constantly blasphemed. ⁶ Therefore my people will know my name; therefore, in that day they will know that it is I who foretold it. Yes, it is I.” ⁷ How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “Your God reigns!” ⁸ Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together, they shout for joy. When the Lord returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes. ⁹ Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem. ¹⁰ The Lord will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

Read Isa 52:1-10 above. When the Lord God of Israel returns to Zion, they will see His salvation with their eyes (v8). Not only is their God still King, but He will bring salvation with Him. Therefore, Jerusalem will burst into song, for the Lord will redeem His people (v8). He will bare His holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see His salvation (v10).

However, the Bible says in Isa 53:1, “*Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?*” Because the Messiah comes as a suffering servant to pay for the sins of Humanity, the Jews find it difficult to believe Him and turn away. They did not understand that God’s kingdom’s essence was the opposite of the world’s kingdom. Jesus was the **Passover Lamb** who shed His blood on the cross to bring salvation to all who believe in Him. Jesus was **crowned** with thorns, **exalted** on the cross and **proclaimed King** of the Jews by the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate. He ordered them to write “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews”, on the cross, in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. The three languages were those spoken by the people in that region.

In summary, God comes in the person of Jesus Christ as King. He confronts evil and invites people to live under His reign. His kingdom contrasts with the values of the world’s kingdom because He fully submits to God. God is holy, and God is love. Jesus fully embraces this truth in His life. He invites us to join Him in His **contrast community**. After Jesus’ resurrection, the apostles preached, “*Repent and believe the good news.*”.

The good news means Jesus lived the life you should have lived of being fully submitted to God but did not. Then He fully paid the penalty of your rebellion to God, which you should have paid but could not. **Repent** means to stop and turn back. Surrender to Jesus the King. Embrace His values opposite to the world’s values out of love for the Father.

John 2:15-16 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. ¹⁶ For everything in the world— the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life— comes not from the Father but from the world.

James 4:4 You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

Jesus gives the values of the kingdom of God in Matthew Chapters 5, 6 & 7.