

The Pattern of the Kingdom

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[0:00] Well, our study we began last week is on the book by Vaughn Roberts, God's Big Picture, Tracing the Storyline of the Bible.

Now, I gave a handout last week, and I didn't print enough, so does anybody need one to print enough? I'll make sure that we have more. Keep your hands up high if you haven't got them. Thank you, Chuck. And you might just stick that in your Bible as a bookmark or something in the front of your Bible, and helping you to see how each section of Scripture that you're reading in fits into the big story.

So that's the purpose of this study, to understand God's big picture that the Bible gives us.

Now, I just want to give a word of explanation of how books are used in these adult Sunday school classes, and this is true of when Pastor Jason's teaching, as it is as I am.

[1:03] The book that we choose forms the text that lays out the basic structure of our study. Today, perhaps 75% of the lesson will be drawn from the book.

Much of the lesson is directly quoted from the book without saying every time, as Vaughn Roberts says, da-da, da-da. All right? So you just take that for granted.

This is, we're using this book and using it in that way. But as always in these Sunday school classes, I will take liberties with the book, liberties to tweak it, to leave some of it unused, and to use other sources and my own thoughts as well in developing the lesson.

So by using this book, I'm not saying I agree with everything in it. I don't. But what I teach to you from it, I do believe is a faithful representation of God's word.

So that's just a bit of the method to our madness and how we come about using books for the Sunday school hour, and I want to make sure that we all understand that so we're not trying to plagiarize when we are teaching and not quoting every time we use the idea.

[2:19] So if it was something good, it was probably Vaughn Roberts. If it wasn't so useful, that was probably my thought. Last week, we saw the importance of grasping the big picture of the Bible, so that as we read in any part of it, any verse, we'll be able to see how it fits into the bigger puzzle, the big story line of Scripture, which is God's salvation of sinners through Jesus Christ to his own glory and praise.

Now what is the unifying theme that Roberts uses to show the unity, then, of the Scriptures? Do you remember? The kingdom of God.

That's the thing that will draw all the pieces together. And we saw briefly just how central this theme is in Jesus' own preaching.

Remember we said that we want to make sure that the unifying theme is something that comes out of Scripture, and it's not just something we bring to the Scriptures and try to squeeze it into our mold.

Well, we're not going to see... Well, let me just say that when we come to the New Testament, we see the kingdom language just jumping off the pages.

[3:41] The Lord Jesus, the summary of his ministry is that he preached the kingdom of God. He welcomed people. He commanded people to enter it. He sent out apostles to preach the kingdom.

The very gospel is called the gospel of the kingdom. And so we see that this idea of establishing God's kingdom on earth is at the very heart of what God is doing in the world.

It's at the heart of the message of the Bible. Now, our working definition, then, of the kingdom of God. Remember the three parts? God's people in God's place under God's rule and blessing.

Well, you guys did your homework. I'm proud. That's good. Once more, God's people in God's place under God's rule and blessing. So God's people, there are people who are brought into special relationship with our God such that he says, you are mine, and we say, you are mine.

I will be your God, and you will be my people. In God's place, the place of his presence, where he dwells with them and under God's rule and blessing, because following God's rule brings God's blessing.

[5:04] Those who are holiest are the happiest. So in the kingdom, there is a king who rules and a people who are ruled and a sphere where this rule is recognized.

So Roberts breaks down the Bible into eight different stages, development stages of this kingdom of God. And that takes us from the opening chapters of Genesis right through to the closing chapters of Revelation.

This morning, we're on the pattern of the kingdom. The pattern of the kingdom, Genesis 1 and 2. What's the purpose of having a pattern?

Anyone? To give direction? Anything else? To duplicate. So it's to guide you and to be the prototype, as it were, the pattern, so that in the end, what you make is to look like the pattern. There's to be the similarity. Genesis 1 and 2 shows us God's original, perfect creation.

[6:18] In Genesis 1 and 2, we see the world as it was meant to be. And as such, it forms the pattern of God's kingdom.

Now, what we'll see in Genesis 1 and 2 is that though it does not use the words kingdom, king, and so on, the concepts of the kingdom are clearly here.

God's people, God's place, God's rule, under God's rule and blessing. And later scriptures will give us more clear terminology as to God's people, God's place, God's rule and blessing.

The language of kingdom and king. But we already see it's here. The greater light, as you go through the Bible, there's more light given on this concept of kingdom.

But I want us to see that the concept is here. So we'll see the pattern of the kingdom drawn from Genesis 1 and 2 and four lessons this morning. The first is that God is the author of creation.

[7:24] The very first thing God wants us to know when we come to this book is that he created everything that exists. He, in the beginning, created the heavens and the earth.

When we see that phrase, the heavens and the earth, that's the Bible's way of speaking of all that is. The universe, the cosmos, the world, and everything in it. God claims that in the beginning, he created it.

Now nothing's more foundational to the message of the Bible, and it meets us in its opening verse, in the beginning, God. And that one verse goes a long way into sorting out a lot of false worldviews that are prevalent in men's minds today.

You notice that the existence of God is not proven. No, it's just stated. He is the one great presupposition. He is.

And what we learn in Genesis 1 is that he already is when nothing else was. He predates creation. He's before all things, as Colossians tells us.

[8:35] He alone is eternal. There was never a time when he was not. The human author of Genesis, Moses, says in Psalm 90 and verse 2, Before the mountains were born, or before you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

So he's the great I am, the one who was and is and is to come. So right away we see that God is not equal with creation. God is not a part of creation.

Rather, he's the author of creation. Who spoke and it sprang into being. Even nothing obeys him and becomes something.

Let all the earth fear the Lord. Let all the people of the world revere him. For he spoke and it came to be. He commanded and it stood firm.

Psalm 33. So in six days he finished his masterpiece. What did you get done in the last six days? Anybody make a son?

[9:50] A horse? A human body? A galaxy? A human soul? God made it all in six days.

And when he was done creating it, he gave us his assessment on it. And what was that? Some of you said it's good.

Is that all he said in his assessment? Very good. Very good. All right. After each day except two, he says it is very good. It is good. But at the end of the six days of creation, he looks it over.

Here's the ultimate quality control. With the scrutinizing eye of God that he is, looking it over and saying, it is very good.

Remember what he was looking at. A real world. A material world. Now this view of the material world is important.

[10:52] It's very different from many religions and philosophies, which are only concerned with the spiritual. And they view the body as a far lesser value than the soul that inhabits it.

And they view material things as much lesser or even as evil. So in some worldviews and religions, the highest goal, the nirvana, the heaven, to attain is to escape from the material world.

Since it's evil and only spiritual things are good. So salvation for these worldviews is the soul being released from the prison of the body in order to live in the non-material world in which God lives.

That's it. That's the highest end. Well, there's more of Plato in that than there is of the Bible. It's Greek Gnosticism, and it runs through many belief systems and even, sadly, through some Christians' heads.

What's wrong with such an idea of material things, like the body, like the material world, wood, lights, and pianos, and all the material things?

[12:12] What's wrong with viewing them as evil? Well, you see, we've just got God's assessment. He didn't say it's very evil. He says it's very good.

And with that, he obliterates all such worldviews that denigrates the material creation. No. It's good. It's very good.

And you know that to call good evil is just as bad as calling evil good. Isaiah 5 refers to both. There's a curse on both.

So we dare not call evil good, but neither should we call what God made that is good evil. And that's precisely what many philosophies and religions do.

So God made you a body, soul, creature. Your body is as much a part of who you are as that soul that inhabits your body. Your body matters to God, not just your soul.

[13:13] When man fell, as we'll see next week, and he became lost and under God's curse, God sent a redeemer. Did he just come to save part of us?

Did he just come to save our souls? And to say, oh, well, their body, that's evil, let's just leave that alone. We'll just save their soul and take their soul to heaven. No, not at all.

He came to save us, all that we are, body, soul, creature. And we see that by raising Jesus' body from the dead and saying, that's what's going to happen to us. That when Jesus comes again, he'll give a shout and the graves will open and out will come our bodies, our self-same bodies, and they will be transformed into his glorious body.

Why? Because your body matters. It's you. It's part of who you are. You see, that's the material world, you see. That's flesh and blood. That's part of what God made and created and pronounced very good.

And so we look forward to the prospect of all of eternity living not as disembodied spirits in a non-material world, but living as fully human, body, soul, creatures that God made in a materialistic heaven and earth.

[14:37] Now this is so important if we're to understand God's place when we come to talk about God's kingdom. God's people in God's place. What is that place of God's kingdom?

It's not another spiritual dimension out there, but it's a material world of real dirt and trees and bodies. Jesus says, when you pray, pray your kingdom come.

Come where? Father in heaven, your kingdom come to earth, which is your will being done on earth as it is in heaven.

And earthy earth is the place of God's kingdom, this earth. So if Genesis 1 and 2 is the pattern of God's kingdom, then this is where God is taking us.

It shows us the place of his kingdom. It's the creation. And as the pattern, the final product should look something like this. And as you turn to the last two chapters of the Bible, that's exactly what you find in Revelation 21 and 22.

[15:52] It looks a lot like Genesis 1 and 2. And there is the tree of life, and there is the river of the water of life, and there is God and there is man and they are living together again.

So the pattern setting forth the place of God's kingdom, it's earth. The physical universe matters in God's kingdom as does the spiritual.

He made it and declared it very good. So it has implications on the place of God's kingdom. Any questions on that? God is the creator or the author.

That's the first thing that we see in Genesis 1 and 2. God is the author of creation. All right?

The second lesson we see in Genesis 1 and 2 has to do with the king. Who's the king of creation? Okay, God.

[16:53] Now, he's not called king, but we see him as the ruler, the lord, the sovereign, the authority over creation.

What's the connection? Why is the creator of creation also the king of creation? What is that connection? Somebody explain that to us?

Did it just happen or is there some connection between those two? There? The maker is responsible for what he's made. Okay, so if he made it, he's responsible for it.

Anything else? Who owns it? Yeah. So what he makes, he owns. It's his. It belongs to him.

And we see that relationship throughout the scriptures. And that's what we find here. Again, it's just kind of dropped into our laps. It doesn't explain it all here in Genesis 1 and 2, but we see it in action.

[17:56] Where do we see evidence? So what is the right of the creator over the creature? Rule over. To rule over. What does that entail? Ownership.

Ownership. What else? Rules. Rules. Laws. Accountability. Accountability. Taking care of it. Providing for it.

Good. What do we see of that in Genesis 1 and 2? That God is the king. He's the one that's ruling over the creation.

There's not just one answer. There's a lot. What did you read in Genesis 1 and 2? Okay, so there's a command, isn't there? We see the command given.

Who's giving the commands in the garden? Is it Adam? Is it Eve? Is it God? Yeah, it's God. Oh, oh. So part of the creator's right, part of the potter's rights is to give commands to the clay, to the creature.

[19:01] That means he's the authority. He's the king. And again, it's not so much proven, it's not so much explained as it is just, bump, there it is.

It's the presupposition. I made it. I have the authority to give commands to my creatures. That's not, that's the most, perhaps the one that jumps into our minds, but there are other commands.

What other commands does God give to his creatures? Genesis 1, 28. Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth. Subdue it. Rule over it. Command given to Adam and Eve.

What other commands do you see? Yeah. Yeah. Okay. He placed man in the garden.

I want you here. I want you ruling over it and taking care of it. Well, I don't feel like, no, there's none of that, is there? It's just, I'm the king, this is where you're going to live. You're going to live here in the garden, you're going to take care of it.

[19:59] Doesn't even command the light and let there be light and there is light. We see he's the king of creation and he shows it by his authoritative word, giving commands and everything jumps in obedience.

But not only in giving commands, what else does a king do besides give commands? He gives mercy if he's a gracious king and our God is and God gave all kinds of things to his people, exactly. What else does he do with regard to those laws that he gives? He not only gives the laws, but he what? He enforces them. You see any of that in the garden? So this command about not eating the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, what's going to happen if they do?

All right. There's the enforcement of it. Adam, I'm the author of your commands. I'm also the one that will enforce it and the day you eat you will surely die. Again, we're learning who's the king in the kingdom.

It's God. And man is the one who's ruled. So creation establishes that basic relationship between God and creation and especially man.

[21:19] And it's the relationship in which God is the one ruling, man is the one ruled. And in that, we have the most basic idea of God's kingdom. God is king.

We are his subjects. And so the Bible is full of language that reflects this relationship. You go to the Psalms and you're worshiping in Psalm 95.

Why should we bring this worship to the Lord? For the Lord is the great God, the great king above all gods, and the mountain peaks belong to him. You get that?

The mountain peaks belong to him. Why? The first country to climb the peak and plant their family. No, they're not the ones that own it.

God says, the mountain peaks belong to me because I made them. He goes on to say in that Psalm, the sea is his. Why? For he made it.

[22:19] There's the relationship. It's his because he made it and his hands formed the dry ground. Know that the Lord is God, Psalm 100. It is he who made us and not we ourselves.

And we are his because he made us. So being the creator of all, he's also the king and ruler of all. In creating all things, he has the authority and right to rule all things, to set the limits of our behavior, the limits of our freedom, to give us laws from heaven.

So that's his place as king and our place is willingly to be ruled and to obey and to worship and to bow down. Revelation 4, 11 shows that our duty as creatures is not only to submit to our king but to give him the glory that he deserves which is in part the glory of creation.

To sing of his worth because he is worthy to receive worship. Why? Because he created all things. And that's something that fallen man is slow to give to God as Romans 1 points out.

But all things are created by him and for him so we honor him as the king of creation. So, he's the author of creation and then right on the heels of that we see he's the king.

[23:43] So, you see how these concepts have to do with the kingdom even here in its pattern. Now, in these opening two chapters what is the pinnacle of creation?

As we look at all that God made as these two chapters reveal it, what's sitting on the top? Roger? Man. Man. Okay. He creates everything else before man and then the last creation is the highest. Now, why do we say that? Is that just an inflated view of ourselves that we're just a bunch of egotistic people and everybody thinks of themselves as the center of the universe? Is that what's going on here? Why is it that we say the Bible displays that man is the highest creature? Made in his image.

[24:51] Okay. That's something that is said of man alone. Genesis 1, 26 through 27.

We see it from when the Lord is contemplating creation. He is saying within the Trinity one to another, let us make man in our own image, in our own likeness and let them rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

So, God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female, he created them. Over and over this concept, man and woman, mankind, generic, humanity, is made in the image of God and reflects that glorious image of God in a way that nothing else does to that extreme.

Now, the heavens declare his glory but there is something unique about humankind that is different from all other creatures and it is this idea that he is made in the image, the likeness of God.

You ever said he's a chip off the old block? She's a spitting image of her mother. It doesn't mean they're identical but it means that they have a strong resemblance.

[26:16] They bear a strong family likeness and that's the idea that we have been made in God's image. Our very constitution, our very nature, reflects something of God's nature in a way that nothing else in creation does.

Listen to what Edmund Clowney says and here I am quoting, man is a creature because he's made by God but he's a unique creature because he's made like God.

You see it? There's the creator creature distinction. Man is not equal with God because God made him. He's a creature of God but he is a unique creature.

Why? Because he is made like God. Distinction, creator, creature, similarity. He is made in God's likeness.

So now we're looking at God's people in the kingdom of God. God's people and God's place. We're looking now at human beings and theologians have divided the image of God into ontological categories that there are ways that our very being, our makeup reflects God's likeness and then our functional image of God that the acts that we've been called to do reflect God as well and that seems to be the connection of verse 28 that immediately after saying that I will create man in my own image and then God did create man in his own image what did God say?

[28:03] God blessed them, verse 28, and said to them be fruitful and increase in number fill the earth subdue it rule over everything in it. God is the ruler. We just saw that.

God rules over the creation and now here's his vice regents. He puts man, mankind as to rule over the earth for him and so in that way they reflect God.

God is the ruler over creation. He blesses creation and he has chosen man to bring blessing and to rule over the creation to subdue it.

and so we reflect not only his moral image his nature but there is this reflection of the kingly function as we rule and subdue the earth.

We're called to reflect God's image and the way that we rule over the earth. What implications does that have? Oh, we don't have time to talk about that for the environment but let me just drop that in your lap for Sunday discussion.

[29:12] What implications does that have for our care of the environment? Do we just waste it and use it any way we please? Do we put the amoeba in the wetlands on equal par with mankind?

What concepts flow out of Genesis 1 and 2 that should shed light on our relationship with the environment? We don't have time.

There are ditches on both sides in Genesis 1 and 2 we'll put up guardrails and keep us in the middle. So God's place this earth with God's people the highest of God's creations in Genesis 1 and 2.

And then lastly rest is the goal of creation and here we see the blessing that God intended for the kingdom of God that it's under God's rule and blessing that the original kingdom existed.

God tells us that on each of the six what he did each of the six days of creation and then when he comes to the seventh day it says he was done creating so he rested from his work of creating and he didn't return to work the next day like you and I do.

[30:40] So in one sense his rest continues. It's a rest from creation and he's going to invite all mankind to enter into that rest that is eternal and Hebrews chapter 4 talks about that eternal Sabbath rest that yet awaits us.

There is a resting from our good works and trusting in Christ that is also involved in this day of rest but then he created a day of rest. Chapter 2 opens up with him giving us a Sabbath a day of rest and in that we are to be imaging God.

God creates six days and rested the seventh and he wants his image bearers to reflect him. Yes they are to rule over the earth and subdue it but they are to rest on the seventh day and they are to give glory to God the creator as they enjoy the blessings of his creation.

And so that's Genesis 1 through the opening verses of chapter 2. Then in chapter 2 what we have is a second account of creation. It doesn't contradict the account of creation in Genesis 1 it rather complements it.

Chapter 2 tells the story of creation with a focus on the last two human beings especially Adam but then Eve as well. Whereas the first chapter is talking about all that God creates and man is found there at the end.

[32:12] Chapter 2 retells the story with the spotlight on mankind and it goes into further detail of what God did in creating man and we see him fashioning man out of the dust of the earth and breathing into his nostrils the breath of life and so on.

But in describing life in the garden in chapter 2 we have a picture of the goal of creation. This is life as it was designed to be.

This is life under God's rule and blessing and we see it in a series of perfect relationships. First there's the relationship of God and human beings that we see in chapter 2. We already saw the beginnings of it in chapter 1 but we're told of God's loving care for the man that he made.

He placed him in a beautiful garden provides for all of his needs especially for a woman who will answer his needs to be the complement the thing that he needs that he doesn't even know he yet needs.

God is good and he's taking care of his creature and Adam and Eve are given great responsibility by God more on that later but in this relationship of God and man we saw that there's authority and there is submission.

[33:28] God rules and man is ruled but even this authority of God we see is not oppressive but it's part of his kind care over his subjects.

even his laws are for their good and emphasize his generosity toward them so you're free to eat from all the trees in the garden wow what a law from a king to give us free rain except for just one tree what a good God to provide and then to tell us beware don't eat from this tree because in the day you do you will surely!

die! you see it's all part of his kind care for his creature as well as exerting so he exerts his authority but it is for the best of his people we gotta run on so they live under God's rule and blessing and outside of that their perfect existence is absolutely impossible they've got to be rightly related to God in the kingdom to enjoy anything perfectly a second relationship we meet with is that between man and woman in chapter two they were made for each other in the relationship of marriage we

learn man was created first something that the new testament emphasizes something that was not found in chapter one of Genesis but chapter two does tell us about that and first Timothy two says that's significant and first Corinthians God created

Adam first and established authority over the woman that's why she's not allowed to be an authority over the man why because Adam was created first you see it in first Timothy two well again we're looking at these two creatures that God made man and woman we see that oh just as there's authority in the kingdom of God between God and his creatures oppressive she does not refuse it she does not complain about it it's a loving authority in which he regards her as bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh and he cherishes her and she thrives under that authority this again is life under God's rule life God's way and it's blessed you know Adam had the only perfect wife and Eve had the only perfect husband and they had the perfect marriage that's what God designed for them what goodness that God wanted for his creatures and they enjoy that blessing as long as they live under God's rule and so together they both enjoy marital blessing the man and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame complete openness and intimacy without any fear or shame blessings abounding under the rule of God so God and man that relationship we saw the first human pair Adam and Eve and the establishment of the home and then thirdly the human beings and the rest of creation that's the third relationship we see in this chapter it's man in their environment and Adam and Eve were given authority over the creation to rule over it to subdue it but again that authority is not abused Adam is put in the garden to work the ground and to take care of it that doesn't speak of abuse we find him naming the animals clearly he is over the rest of creation and the whole world was not yet a garden there's a distinction between the garden of [37:16] Eden and the rest of the earth and you see that right from the very beginning they are to do something to the rest of the earth they are to expand this garden on out into the ends of the earth they are to rule over the earth and subdue it to bring it into subjection that suggests that outside the garden there's a lot of work to be done in the perfect humanity the perfect world and so they were to work the earth and to cause it to yield blessing to man and glory to God extending the garden to the ends of the earth till the whole world is one huge garden with man filling the whole earth God's own image reflecting God's glory and so mankind is obeying God's instructions that's what we see in Genesis 2 and so there is this harmony between man and his environment man and the earth surrounded with plenty there's no famine there's no drought there's no lack all these trees he could eat of just the trees themselves and there's the river watering the garden so when mankind is in harmony with

God there's a harmony between each other God and man man and woman and man in his environment the only perfect existence is to live within God's rule that's the circle of blessing and you learn that in Genesis 1 and 2 so what does this all have to do with the kingdom of God well here's the perfect life here's the pattern of the kingdom here's the good life life as it was meant to be God's people Adam and Eve in God's place the garden of Eden living under God's rule his words his laws and God's blessing that always attend his word as it's kept now next week we'll see that sadly this perfect kingdom does not last long and we'll look at the perished kingdom Jim I gave you the wrong title that's next week's sorry about that this was the pattern of the kingdom the parish kingdom for next week so you might want to read chapter 3 to 11

I gave! it to easy Genesis 1 and 2 for the pattern now we're going to look at the kingdom perished chapter 3 through 11 especially chapter 3 and the immediate chapters following well that's the kingdom of God seen in its earliest stage and as we said the further we get into the study and the further we get in scriptures we'll see this kingdom God's people God's place living under God's rule and blessing spelled out even in greater detail but even already I trust that you can see this morning in chapters 1 and 2 of the Bible the basic players are in place the basic ideas of what the kingdom of God is is there so let's worship God today with an appreciation of what he's made and how he intends to redeem the universe and to bring it into subjection and into the glory of God we're dismissed