

# The Perished Kingdom

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[0:00] We're studying the book called God's Big Picture. And it's talking about the big picture of the scriptures, the main storyline of the scriptures.

! We don't want to miss the big story when we're reading all the little stories in the Bible. So our whole study in this course is to keep before us what's the big picture.

And we noted that the unifying theme running throughout scriptures is what? The kingdom of God. You can't open the Bible in the New Testament and read the words of Jesus without realizing that. His whole message was summarized as he preached the kingdom of God. The message he sent his apostles out to preach and sends us out to preach is the gospel of the kingdom of God.

So that's Jesus' unifying theme. He sees that as the thing that binds all of scriptures together. And so we go back in the Old Testament and we're tracing our way right through with this view of the kingdom of God.

[1:17] Now let's recite our working definition together of the kingdom of God. It begins, it's God's people. Let's say it together. God's people in God's place under God's rule and blessing.

Once more. God's people in God's place under God's rule and blessing. Now, by way of review then, we saw last week that the opening two chapters of the Bible set before us the pattern of God's kingdom.

Because there we have the world as God created it and meant for it to be. A world in which God is king. We see that right away. He's the creator and he has creator rights over all that he's made. He's the one giving commands. He's the one enforcing the law. He's the king. And Adam and Eve are his people. They are God's people. He made them.

And he says, I've made you. You are mine. So they are God's people in a relationship with him in which God says, you will be my people and I will be your God.

[2:28] And they're living in God's place. The Garden of Eden where God's presence dwelt on earth. Where he came and met with his people. And then they're living under God's rule.

Under God's commands. As God gave commands to them. And wrote that law upon their heart. They lived under that rule. Obediently. And so they also lived under God's blessing.

Because blessing abounds wherever he reigns. And wherever his reign is gladly submitted to. So those are all the basic elements of the kingdom of God.

God's people. God who is king. Has God's people in God's place. Living under his rule. And blessing. Right there in Genesis 1 and 2.

Now, I don't think that I gave enough emphasis to the first recorded command that God gave to his creatures. In Genesis 1 and 2. And I want to just go back and do that before we go on this morning to the next lesson.

[3:35] And can anybody tell me what the first recorded command is that God gave to his creatures? Yeah.

Okay. Chapter 1, verse 28. I'm not saying it was the first command God gave. But it's the first recorded command. I do believe he told them first.

He told Adam, don't eat of this tree. You can eat of all the other trees. But you can't eat of this. I believe that happened first. Because now we find God speaking to the two of them. In other words, he's already made Eve now.

By the time he gives this command. Verse 28. Chapter 1. But it's the first recorded command. 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. In some ways, that is the most important verse in the Bible.

[4:40] Now, it didn't strike you that way, I'm sure, as it didn't me, until I began to appreciate that the kingdom of God is the cord running through the scriptures.

And here we have the first recorded word that the king gives to his people. And it's a word that the rest of scriptures will constantly point back to.

We'll keep seeing this whole idea of a multitude of offspring. Of filling the earth with the offspring of mankind.

And so ruling over the earth and so on. So we'll see just how significant this verse is in terms of understanding.

In that sense, it's one of the most important verses of the Bible. In terms of understanding the whole big scope of scriptures. The importance of this verse is found in that it sets forth the goal of God's creation.

[5:48] What was God after in creating a world? What's the goal of his kingdom? And basically, the command can be divided into two parts.

Or two commands. Number one, fill the earth with your offspring. Secondly, subdue the earth. Rule over it.

And we notice right away that God's goal for his kingdom exceeds the boundaries of the Garden of Eden. This isn't his little kingdom, just this little garden.

No, God's aim is universal. The whole earth is in view in this command, isn't it? The first part of the command, fill the whole earth with your offspring.

Be fruitful and increase in number. Fill the earth. There's not to be no one child policy like in China was allowed in God's kingdom.

[6:47] Why not? Why does God want lots of Adam and Eve's offspring filling the earth? Have a thought for that? More people to glorify God.

And what is it peculiarly about the offspring of Adam and Eve that is full of God's glory? Mark? His image. His image. Okay, so God, in one sense, there's not a plant or flower below but makes his glories known.

And the heavens declare his glories. There's nothing made that doesn't reflect his glory. But nothing shines with the glory of God like his image bears. He didn't make the flower in the image of God. But he made man in his own likeness he made him. And so God wants his glorious image to be filling the whole earth. That's what's behind this command.

[7:48] You notice in chapter 1, verse 28 is preceded by 26 and 27. Look at 26. And notice the connection between God's image and this command to fill the earth with it.

Genesis 1, verse 26. 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 and over the livestock, over all the earth and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

There's his intention. I want my image bearers filling the whole earth and ruling over it. Now we see him doing it. Verse 27.

So God created man in his own image. In the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them. They both bear his image. Why is this emphasis?

Then comes the command. Then God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it. You see the connection? God wants his image to be seen.

[8:54] He wants his glorious likeness to fill all that he has created here on the earth. So we see that the chief aim of God in creation is his own glory.

He wants to fill his creation with his own glory. So that's the first part of this great command that sets forth the goal in God's kingdom is to fill the earth, to go beyond the boundaries of Eden.

The second thing is subdue the whole earth and rule over it. Notice verse 28 says, subdue it. That is the earth. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over everything, every living creature that moves on the ground.

So mankind, the one that bears God's likeness, is the one who's to rule over the whole earth and everything in it.

You see why we say he was the pinnacle of God's earthly creatures? Because he is to rule over all of it as one who bears the image of God.

[10:00] That's an exercise of kingship that he's to have on the earth. He's to rule it and to rule it as God's vice regent, God's vice king.

So God wants to enlarge the borders of the garden to fill the whole earth. You know that the earth, even before the fall, was not one big garden of Eden.

It wasn't. Rather, the land outside of the garden was still in the rough and still required man's workmanship to bring it into subjection, to subdue it.

This command is before the fall. And what God is saying is that I don't just want you to stay in the garden and leave all the rest of creation just to grow wild.

I want you to go out and put your hoe to it and put your creative imagination to it and all the knowledge and wisdom that I give you as my image bearer.

[11:05] I want you to go out and shape the rest of the world, expand the borders of the garden until it fills the whole earth. That's a little bit different view on the environment than some would have, as if we're just to leave it alone.

No, that wasn't exactly the way it was. God says, it's not to be left alone. I want you to go out there and subdue it and rule over it. So that's the command that God gives.

Now, he will need then to use all the gifts and creativity and all that he is as an image bearer of God, the knowledge and all that God has put in him in order to fulfill this plan of God for his earth.

So God planted the first garden, the Garden of Eden, and he put Adam in it and gave him a helper to tend it. But he also commanded him then to do some gardening.

Now, I've planted this garden. Now, you go out and you tend the rest of the world, make it like the garden. You be a gardener, reflecting my image in all that you do.

[12:18] Now, the obvious labor shortage is addressed. One caretaker and his helper may do fine for the Garden of Eden. But there's going to need to be some more workers if the whole earth now is to be cultivated, subdued, brought under the rule of mankind.

So, what's he say? Be fruitful. Increase in number. Fill the earth with your offspring. There's your helpers. In that way, the whole earth will be subdued and ruled over for God.

And so, the rest of the Bible will trace out this goal. God wants his image bearers to extend his rule over the whole earth. And in so doing, to reflect his glory in the creation.

So, again, we're looking at the foundation, the pattern of the kingdom. And I want you just to notice how verse 28 begins as it's introducing this command. It begins with God's blessing, doesn't it?

God blessed them and said, be fruitful, and so on. What's the significance of that? That before God commands them, he first blesses them. Is there any significance in that?

[13:36] Shows his love? Pardon? He was behind the command. He was going to help them do it. Okay, he's going to help them do it.

He's giving them quite a command. And he says, you need my blessing to fulfill. And I give you that blessing. I bless you. I give you the ability to do everything that I am now going to command you to do.

You see, in the kingdom of God, God enables his people to do his will, his rule.

He equips them with everything that they need. So everything that Adam and Eve need in order to be fruitful and multiply in number and fill the earth, he gives them everything they need to subdue the earth and rule over.

He gives them. He blesses them. The blessing is the foundation for the fulfillment of his commands. Mark, did you have a comment? Yeah, it reminds me too that God's grace precedes our obedience.

[14:43] Amen. Amen. So are there applications for us, people of God? Yes, whatever we do, God is telling us right up front, you are not self-sufficient.

I didn't make you to be self-sufficient. You need me to do what I call you to do. So seek my blessing and you will have it. God blessed them and said to them, that's the order, the primacy of grace, equipping them for all that God called them to do.

We've got to go on. Remember, by way of review, we saw that living under God's rule brought God's blessing, and that blessing was seen in three perfect relationships.

Can you give me one of the three perfect relationships? God and man? Man to man? Adam and Eve? Pardon?

Man to beast? Man to environment? The rest of creation? Those three relationships were all in perfect harmony. And that's what it means to be living under the blessing of God.

[15:53] And as long as man lives obediently under God's rule, he will experience God's blessing of perfect harmony in all these relationships. This is the good life, life as God meant it to be.

Now, today, that was the pattern of the kingdom. Today we come to the perished kingdom, and we've got to run. Genesis 3 tells us how God's perfect kingdom was ruined.

This is real history. This really happened as much as today is happening. There was once a day when this happened in a real garden with a real talking serpent that the New Testament identifies as Satan, an angelic creature made by God, but who in pride rebelled against him.

Now, how did God exercise his rule in his perfect kingdom? He gave commands, okay? Through his word, didn't he?

Where does Satan start his attack on God's kingdom? On what God said. God's word. We see something important here.

[17:03] God's authority and rule comes to bear upon his creatures through his word. And that is where Satan, the enemy of God and his people, comes and makes an attack upon God's word.

First of all, he casts subtle doubts upon God's word and character. Has God said? And then he follows up with outright denial of God's word.

God said you would surely die. You will not surely die. That's bold, isn't it? First, the question, the doubt casting. Then the bold denial.

You will not surely die. And then outright slander of God's character. He's not as good, not so good. After all, remember, here is Eve living the good life under God's rule and under God's blessing with no complaints at all.

And then the devil says, did God really say that you must not eat from any tree in the garden? Making God sound harsh?

[18:07] You mean he's not letting you have your way in this garden? He's not letting you eat whatever you want? Well, she had never thought of it that way before.

Of course not. She was living under the rule of God's word. And here comes another word. And he's emphasizing what God has forbidden her.

And Eve puts him right. Well, we are allowed to eat from all but one tree. He told us we must not eat fruit from the tree that's in the middle of the garden. And you must not touch it or you will die. You will not surely die, he says.

Flat denial. A conflicting word with the word of God. So, in the kingdom of God, where once there was only the word of God, there's now another voice. It's the voice of the enemy denying God's word.

And he then gives her a different spin on things to give her a different view of God's character. You will not surely die. We're in Genesis 3, the opening verses. God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be open and you'll be like God, knowing good and evil.

[19:14] You see, God doesn't want you to be like him. And he's withholding something good from you. He knows if you eat this, you'll become like him. So, he doesn't want that. And so, he's holding out on you, Eve.

Well, she had never thought of God in that way before. And armed with this new information about God, she now begins to look at the fruit differently.

The forbidden fruit. And she examines it for herself and she doesn't see anything wrong with it. And verse 6 tells us, when the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, she learned that by looking at it and examining it.

And she also saw that it was desirable for gaining wisdom. How did she learn that? Well, Satan's word. You will gain the wisdom of knowing good and evil.

So, she leans on her own understanding. Looks it over. It doesn't look harmful to me. She leans on Satan's word that it's desirable for gaining wisdom. I can come to find out more intently what good and evil is.

[20:20] And then, she eats. She eats. So, Satan tempts her to doubt God's word. To set up herself as her own God.

Determining what is right and wrong. And so, we have this great declaration of independence. She's not willing to live anymore under the rule of God. She now will rule for herself and determine for herself what is right and wrong.

And she said what those people said in Jesus' parable. We will not have this king to rule over us. Remember that? That's the first sin in the garden.

In the perfect kingdom. We don't want the king who exercises his rule, how? By his word. We don't want him to rule over us anymore. And so, she sins.

She rebels. And she becomes the temptress to get Adam to join her in rebellion against God. Now, on the surface, their sin might seem innocent enough. It's just eating a piece of fruit.

[21 : 32] But it was forbidden fruit. And that's what made it so horrendous. That this good and gracious king that made her and had every authority to command her, she had thumbed that God and said, I know you said don't, but I will if I want to.

And that is the essence of all sin. It is setting aside God's authority and going our own way. We all, like sheep, have done what?

We have turned away from him and we've gone our own way. We've said, I can figure out the best life, the good life. And so, this is the perished kingdom.

We don't have time to look at the way Satan uses the same tactics today in our own lives to tempt us, to get us to cast off God's commands. But there are consequences to rejecting the rule of God. And not a one of them are good. To cast off God's rule is to forfeit God's blessing. And so, what's the opposite of God's blessing? His curse.

[22 : 53] And isn't that what we find immediately in Genesis chapter 3? We find the curse of God now entering the world. So, these are the consequences.

Don't want to live under God's rule? You don't want to be God's people living under his rule? Well, then this is what happens. And what we can do is trace out the curse.

It fractures and breaks and ruins all three of those perfect relationships that they had. So, let's consider each one. First of all, the relationship between men and women.

What happened to that perfect marriage? Anyone? Pardon? There's now shame.

They were open with each other. Absolute openness and not ashamed. They were naked and not ashamed in front of each other. Not just talking about some physical thing. But there was the idea of openness to their very soul as well.

[23 : 51] There was nothing to hide from each other. Now, they're not only covering up from God, but they're covering up their own shame from each other. What else do we see happen to the original first marriage?

The perfect marriage? Strange and we can be very defensive. Being defensive with one another? Somebody said something over here?

So, they start arguing with each other. No one's willing to take the blame. They're very defensive when God says, Okay, Adam, who told you you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree I told you not to eat from?

Well, the woman you put here with me, she gave me some and I ate it. So, he's both casting blame on God for giving him the woman, but he's also blaming her. So, God comes to the woman's door and says, What is it that you've done?

Well, it was the serpent. He tempted me. And so, they enter into argument. First argument in the marriage. Do you remember yours? This was theirs.

[24 : 51] Never in the kingdom of God. Never meant to be an argument in the kingdom of God. Now, there is. Because they don't want to live God's perfect way under God's rule.

What else happened to the perfect marriage? The roles of man and wife. They didn't want to accept them. They wanted to be each other's role.

Okay. We learn of the woman that she, God says to her in verse 16, Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.

That idea, your desire for your husband. If you look in chapter 4, we see the same terminology about sin that desires to rule over Cain. And so, what it is saying is that, Eve, your desire will be to rule over your husband.

Your desire will be to control your husband, but he will rule over you. Now, she had been perfectly happy to live under the rule of her husband. There were no complaints in the perfect marriage.

[25 : 54] Now, she's got a beef with Adam. She doesn't want to have him rule. She wants to control him. And yet, part of the curse for her will be that she will have him rule over her.

And now, that rule is no longer perfect, loving rule. Authority vested in her as one that he treasures as flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone.

She's a part of me and self-sacrificially serving and loving her. No, his rule will now be authoritarian and mean and self-centered. And what happened to the perfect marriage?

It went up in smoke. Why? Because they didn't want to live God's way, under his rule. And the very relationship of marriage is just a sign of what happened to all human relationships.

As instead of harmony, there is now conflict and rivalry in human relationships. All right? Another relationship. The relationship between human beings and creation or the environment.

[27:00] What happened to that? By the sweat of your brow. By the sweat of your brow. So, a curse is now introduced into the very earth.

To Adam he said, because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, you must not eat of it. Cursed is the ground because of you. Through painful toil, you will eat of it all the days of your life.

It will produce thorns and thistles for you. And you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow, you will eat your food. I was talking with Scott Friday night about his grandpa.

His father came over from Germany, I believe it was. I remember John Lydig telling me about the early days of his life working out, hoeing the corn.

Weeding the field with a hoe and by pulling out the weeds out of the corn with his dad. And John said, there we are.

[28:03] We're sweating. It's hot and humid and bugs. And he says, oh Adam, what have you done? Why was he saying that?

Because he's tracing back his hard reality of frustration and difficulty and eking out a living in the earth back to its source.

Adam sinned. And a curse was put on the whole earth, the environment. So instead of enjoying harmony with his environment and knowing the environment as a friend, now he would know it as well as an enemy.

And so we have tornadoes and hurricanes and earthquakes and destructive storms and death and decay. And all worked into the system of the environment because God has cursed it because of man not wanting to live under his rule.

And then the relationship, obviously the most important relationship, was ruined between the human beings and their God. Right away they turn away from God and run.

[29:15] They clothe themselves. They try to cover up their sins. They try to deny. They try to rationalize. They try to blame others. Whereas before they welcomed God. Now they go and they put fig leaves on him and they hide among the fig trees so that they look like just a branch on the tree.

And that's, for the first time in their lives, they felt fear. For the first time in their lives, they felt guilty. They felt dirty. They felt shame.

And they felt like God is not our friend. He's our judge. He's coming to judge us. And they ran from God. And you know the whole world is on the run from God.

And a brother tell me he invited a friend, an acquaintance of his, to come to church. But he says he's running from God. Well, you know, everybody's running from God by nature. That's how we're born. We're born on the run.

Because we've sinned. We're guilty. And he's going to judge us. So that's the condition then of the kingdom.

[30:20] God's people and God's place living under God's rule and blessing. Oh, how it's all fractured now. And now there's death introduced. God had said, eat of the fruit and you will surely die.

The implication is if you don't, you'll live forever. You can eat of the tree of life and go on living forever. But once they ate, death immediately happened spiritually.

They were cut off from God. Death is separation. And they were separated from God in their spirits. They now had an anti-God nature.

And were dead toward God. And now they were experiencing death at work in their bodies. And eventually they would die physically as well.

And experience the second death, which is the lake of fire. Death, the result of sin. And for by sin, the entrance of sin, came death.

[31:21] Romans 5 and verse 12. Now what does all this have to say about us then? So we could say, well, so what? What's this got to do with us? Well, we are all born outside of the Garden of Eden now.

We're all born outside of the kingdom of God. We've got to now be born again to get into the kingdom of God. Adam and Eve were placed in the kingdom of God by the Creator.

But now they are cast out, banished, cut off from the presence of God. They must leave the garden. And it's fiery cherubim guarding the way back lest they come and eat the tree of life.

We're all outside the garden. We're all outside of life. We don't have the right to the tree of life. We don't deserve eternal life. And we have these same God-hating hearts.

We were born with that fallen, sinful nature that we received from our forefathers and all the way back to Adam, fallen Adam.

[32 : 26] We're no longer under God's blessing. We're under his curse. The wrath of God is coming for us. Death is now at work in us. And although death is universal, never, never, never think of death as normal.

Yes, it's universal, but it's not normal. It's a catastrophic disruption of God's created order. You don't find death in Genesis 1 and 2.

It was to have no place in the perfect kingdom. So that's the ruin of God's kingdom.

I signed you Genesis 3 through 11. Chapters 4 through 11, what are they doing? They're just tracing out the spread of sin and the curse right into the world.

It wasn't just something that happened to Adam and Eve, but it happens to their offspring. What happened to the first offspring of Adam and Eve in Genesis 4? Murder.

[33 : 31] Fratricide. An older brother kills his younger brother. How's that for harmony in human relationships? The very family. Murder in the family.

Death is now involved in the created order. Violent death. Hatred. Genesis 5. We have a genealogy.

And these guys lived a long time. 900 years, some of them. But what is true of every one of them? What does it keep saying over and over? And he died. He lived so many years.

And he died. And he died. And he died. You see, death, the curse, it's now not just affecting Adam and Eve, but it's affecting the whole human race, all their offspring. We can try to avoid death as long as we can.

And we can even try to blunt the harsh realities of it. Some people don't even like to use the word death. You know people like that? They just avoid it like the plague. As if there's some superstitious reality that if I say it, it'll happen.

[34 : 39] That's black magic. Vaughn Roberts says in his book that there's a hospital in America that refers to death as, quote, negative patient care outcome.

So be careful when you go into the hospital. You could have negative patient care outcome. No, God says it's appointed now unto man once to die and then the judgment.

And that just emphasizes the loss of what happened to the blessedness of living in God's perfect kingdom with everlasting life. It's gone. Why gone?

Because man didn't want to live under God's rule with him as king. Then chapters 6 to 9, we have this big flood. Why? Why the flood? Why? Why?

Why? Why does death come upon the whole human race and many of the animals as well but for eight people?

[35 : 41] What would cause God to take his image bearers that have now rebelled against and wipe the earth of them? Again, they've rebelled against God. The earth is now full of violence, full of rebellion.

And God says, I'm going to wipe the earth clean and start over. Again, you see, death is spreading. Sin is still in the world. And that's what we're seeing as history goes on from the Garden of Eden. We find sin spreading. And then we get to chapter 11 in the Tower of Babel. How is the Tower of Babel rebellion against God's command in Genesis 1.28?

We're willing to spread and multiply all the whole earth. So instead of obeying God's command to spread out and to rule the whole earth, no, let's stay together.

Instead of going out everywhere so that God's glory could fill the earth, let's live for our glory. Let's make a city with a tower to heaven and let us demonstrate to the world our glory.

[36 : 49] And so they set themselves to stop God's plan. God's plan was to spread out his human beings all over the earth. Even fallen creatures still bear something of the image of God, albeit faintly.

And God wants the earth filled with his image bearers. They said, no, let's stay together. So God confuses their languages and what happens? They spread out. And they start to live together in their little pockets.

And then what happens with this group and this group? Well, they grow prejudice against one another. They hate each other. They fight and battle and war because the earth is under a curse. And they're not able to fulfill God's original mandate to multiply and fill the earth and subdue it because they're not under God's blessing but under God's curse.

That's the kingdom, the perished kingdom. And folks, that's where the Bible could have ended. I just had a part of my Bible fall out.

[38:02] But, you know, that could be all that we have of our Bibles. It could have all ended right there. It would have been a short read, wouldn't it?

I think we're so used to having the rest of the Bible. We're so used to salvation and God's grace and his coming to man and saying, well, there is a way out.

But why? He didn't owe us a way out. He owed us death, the second death after physical death, eternal death in the lake of fire.

Do you know when the angels fell and rebelled against heaven? He did not have a plan devised for their salvation. But he reserved a place in hell for them forever.

Blackest darkness. No grace for the fallen angels. No savior sent for them. But when mankind, his highest creature on earth, fell, God had already planned before the creation of man to send a savior.

[39:15] Next week, Lord willing, we'll look at the promised kingdom. Because the perfect patterned kingdom no sooner perished and was spoiled, but that God begins to speak about this coming kingdom of God by way of promise.

So the first week was read Genesis 1 and 2. The second week was perished kingdom, chapter 3 to 11. Now you just read the whole Bible. The promise, especially the Old Testament.

The promised kingdom. And we'll see that God was not satisfied to just let his perfect creation be spoiled by the devil. But he's going to come and restore it.

And restore fallen man in a most surprising way. So let's worship him today as we sing the praises of Jesus. And as we do to realize this is what God did to restore his kingdom on earth.

We're dismissed.