

The Partial Kingdom (part 1)

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Date: 21 June 2015

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[0:00] To rightly understand the Bible is to understand the big picture. And that is Vaughan Roberts' concern in his book, *The Big Picture*.! And in it we see the kingdom of God stretching from Genesis to Revelation, from the beginning of this creation to the end of this creation and the beginning of a new creation right on through eternity.

So the big picture is that God is intent on bringing his kingdom to earth. Now there are three phases of the kingdom that we've looked at so far.

I don't know if phases is the proper word. Three ways to consider his kingdom. What are those three? What did we see in Genesis 1 and 2?

The what? The pattern of God's kingdom. What did we see in Genesis 3 to 11? Perished kingdom. And then what did we see in chapters 12 to 24 of Genesis?

Promised kingdom. So God isn't giving up on his plan. Once the kingdom in its perfection perished, he didn't give up on his plan.

[1:19] He's rather committed to restoring it. And he lays down different promises and hints of this in chapter 3 right after man rebelled.

But then it's especially in Genesis 12 after the kingdom had perished, after the flood has destroyed the earth and everyone in it but eight, and all the animals but those on the ark.

And then he makes his plan clear through his covenant promises to what man? To Abraham.

Abram. Now what thing, three things were promised to Abraham?

Remember? Give me one. Land. A people. A couple. Nations. A whole nation.

A multitude of people. So a people, a land, and a people. What was the other one? Blessing. These three things. Do you hear any hints about the kingdom in those three things?

[2:21] God's people, God's place, a land, under the rule and blessing of God? And again, we're seeing this theme is now being developed.

These promises to Abraham are God's promises to restore his kingdom on earth. That what was lost in Eden is to be restored.

And he promises that in these covenant promises to Abraham. So it's the promised kingdom or the kingdom in promise. Now do you see any overlap at all between the promises made to Abraham and the creation mandate back in Genesis 1.28?

That's for you to mull over and think about and to interact with. Is there any overlap between what God says to Abraham, this is what I'm going to do, and what God has said to Adam and Eve in chapter 1 and verse 28.

Mark? Mark? The command to be fruitful and multiply and apply to establishing people. Okay. So the original command was to be fruitful and to multiply.

[3:33] And now God promises to so bless Abraham and multiply him and make him fruitful so that he will become a nation of people.

Any other links between the creation mandate and the covenant with Abraham?

Remember God first blessed Adam and Eve and then he gave the command, be fruitful and multiply. We see that divine initiative, didn't we, in the creation mandate.

God blessed them and then said, be fruitful, multiply, subdue the earth, fill it, and rule over it. And so with Abraham, God says, I will bless you and then you will be a blessing.

And you will have many, a whole numerous offspring and you will have a land. So again, we see the same pattern of God's blessing leading to the fruition of what was promised.

[4:40] What we need to see is that the covenant with Abraham is not something altogether new. God is indeed restoring the pattern.

So we see the elements of people, place, and blessing in the pattern in Eden. And it's not just coincidental that we see it in the promises to Abraham.

Because God's not going to do something altogether different. God is intent in bringing his kingdom to earth. And it's that same kingdom that he brought in the garden.

He is now going to restore it. So we don't have here something, a plan B that's kind of been scuttled together at the last minute since the kingdom perished. And oh, well, that was plan A.

But now we're going to do something different. No, it's plan A is still the purpose. It's just got this built-in detour that God has built into it for the display of his glory.

[5 : 39] But it's still plan A. God's people in God's place under God's rule and blessing. Another matter that we see in the way of overlap between the situation in the garden, the pattern, and now in the promised kingdom is the scope of the kingdom.

How far is it to reach? Global. The whole earth. Be fruitful and fill the whole earth, he says in Genesis 1, 28 to Adam and Eve.

And now the same thing to Abraham. Through you, I'm going to bless you. And through you, I'm going to bring blessing to all the nations of the earth. So we see the scope.

It was always God's purpose to bring the Gentiles into his kingdom. That wasn't a plan B. That wasn't something just tacked on because Israel rejected him.

And therefore, well, I guess then if they're going to reject me, I'm going to gather a people from the Gentiles. No, from the beginning, God's plan was to the ends of the earth. And that is indeed what we see in the promise to Abraham.

[6 : 52] So we come then to the partial kingdom. Roberts is helping us with these alliterations.

And this is called the partial kingdom. Now, so far, we've looked at about a fourth of the first book of the Bible. We said we've got eight steps along the way.

And we've had three steps. And we're still not even halfway through the first book of the Bible. That's because the beginning is important.

In the beginnings, we see these foundations being laid for the kingdom of God. But today we're speeding up. And we're not going to get done today. We're going to have to cut this lesson in half. We're going to cover a thousand years of Israel's history from Abraham all the way to Solomon's reign. King Solomon. So the aim of this chapter is to see how God's promise of this coming kingdom is partially fulfilled in Israel's history.

[7 : 56] So we call it the partial kingdom. The partial fulfillment of that promised kingdom of God bringing his kingdom to earth. And the three key elements to the kingdom of God are then developed in this large section of scripture.

God's people, God's place under God's rule and blessing. God being that king. So we begin this morning with God's people. How is the theme of God's people reflected in this period of a thousand years of Israel's history?

If you want to hold your bookmark in Genesis 12 where we saw last week God's promised kingdom, I want you to see how that is now going to be partially fulfilled in Israel's history.

So Genesis 12 to the promise concerning God's people is I will make you speaking to Abram. I will make you into a great nation. And in the following chapters, we see that God puts some further definition on this great nation.

[9 : 11] He even says, I'm going to give you the descendants as many as what? Sand of the sea, stars of the heavens. And then he says, I'm going to take you as my own people and I will be your God.

So there's going to be a people of God on earth again. They're going to be Abraham's descendants. They're going to become a great nation that God will call his own people.

Now that's the quick overview of that is that what we find from Genesis 12 to Exodus 18 traces out the partial fulfillment of this promise.

Abraham has a son, Isaac. Isaac has two sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob is the son of promise who is later called Israel, the name of God's people.

And this grandson of Abraham had 12 sons who were fruitful and multiplied into a great nation that God called his own people. So that's the partial fulfillment at a quick look.

[10 : 14] Now we're going to bring the helicopter down to earth and we're going to walk through Genesis 12 through Exodus 18.

This great numerical growth got off to a slow start, didn't it? I'm going to make you a great nation, Abram.

And what's wrong with Abraham? He's too old and what's wrong with his wife? She's barren. And they just keep getting older and there's no seed of promise.

So it's a terrible start. It's an impossible start. And it becomes a great trial of Abraham's faith.

So we learn right out of the gate that if there's ever to be a people of God on earth, it's going to be due to God's supernatural activity. He's going to cause an old barren woman to give birth to a son.

[11:18] Is there anything in the kingdom of God in the way that God calls out his people that shows that it's an impossibility unless God does a supernatural thing to bring people to himself?

Wasn't he talking to Nicodemus in John 3 and he said, Unless you are born again, born from God, a supernatural thing has to happen to you or you will never enter what?

The kingdom of God. It's the same thing. If ever there's to be a people of God, something supernatural, a supernatural birth must take place. It was pictured in Abraham and Sarah giving birth to Isaac.

And it is fulfilled in you and I being born again and thereby entering the kingdom of God. So that's the start.

Finally, the miracle baby Isaac is born. But then came the command to sacrifice Isaac. Remember, he's the promised seed.

[12:20] It's not through Esau. It's through Isaac that my seed will be called. Well, this seemed like nipping the seed promise in the bud that here he is.

This is the seed and now you're telling me to sacrifice him on Mount Moriah. But in faith, Abraham obeys God and at just the right time, God provides a ram instead of Isaac.

And the people promise then of a multitude, of a great nation coming from Abraham continues through Isaac.

Then Isaac marries Rebekah and they have twins Jacob and Esau. Again, which son was chosen as the promised line? Jacob.

The second one out of the womb. And we saw last week that God's choice of who his people are in his kingdom is a sovereign choice of his. And he doesn't follow the natural order.

[13:20] The natural order of the day was for the older. And God says, no, the older will serve the younger. I've chosen Jacob. And we saw that it was all grace, too, wasn't it?

Because Jacob was no better than Esau. And Paul makes much of that point that when they were both children in the womb, before they'd done anything good or bad, God chose Jacob.

So it's all sovereign grace, his choice of who will be the people of God in his kingdom on earth. All are undeserved rebels of his kingdom with rebel hearts that have to be conquered by grace.

And then another obstacle to the people promise comes then when Esau wants to kill Jacob for having stolen the blessing. If he kills Jacob, that's the end of the people promise.

Since it's got to be fulfilled through Jacob's line. So Jacob flees to northwest Mesopotamia to get a wife from Abraham's relatives.

[14:23] And Jacob marries. And he has 12 sons by two wives and their two handmaidens. We saw last week as they're competing for Jacob's affection.

And we see that God's people promise is not derailed through that sinful family, but is actually fulfilled by means of that sinful family. There are now 12 sons.

Not yet a nation, but the people promise is progressing through God's activity, God's grace, not man's merit and man's performance.

So the 12 sons, still far from being a nation, but there's more to come. And tracking this people promise remains central to the biblical account as we're working through Genesis 12 to Exodus 18. It's God tracking that people promise that we want to see. That's giving unity to all those chapters of that portion of God's word. Word. And so as Jacob is heading back home, he's been away for 20, 21 years.

[15:32] Married Rachel and Leah and had many children. And he's heading back now. Back home. Because God said, go back home.

What's his fear? Esau's killed me. Last I saw Esau, he wanted my neck. I wonder if that grudge has only been nursed over the last 20 years.

He was petrified of going home. Genesis 32. You might turn over there. Because here he prays to God.

He says, you know, when I crossed this Jordan River the first time 20 years ago, I had only my staff with me. Now I've become two troops. In other words, you've blessed me just like you promised you would.

Save me, I pray, from the hand. This is Genesis 32, 10 to 12. Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau. For I am afraid he will come and attack me and also the mothers with their children.

[16 : 43] And if he does, the people promise is over. But you have said, I will surely make you prosper and make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted.

Do you see the theme that God is tracing out in this portion of God's word? What's going to happen to the people promise? Looks like Esau's going to come and wipe them out.

And so he wrestles all night long with a man whom he later learns and learns in the process was God himself. And I believe this is where we find Jacob's conversion.

And he's given a new name to commemorate it. His name, Jacob, he deceives. It's now changed to Israel. He struggles with God.

And though he feared Esau and his 400 men coming to them, that they would wipe him out. You remember how he got all the groups and the gifts going ahead and he comes with his wives and children last.

[17 : 43] And he's hoping to pay off Esau and win his favor before he actually arrives. Though he's scared to death, he finds that God has prepared Esau's heart so that he's met with a friendly reception.

And once again, the people promise is preserved. The promised people are not wiped out as feared. And then he gets, as he comes back into the promised land, into the homeland, he camps outside the city of Shechem.

And he buys a parcel of land there from the ruling man of the area named Horan. And he buys just enough place to pitch his tent and build an altar.

So he buys it from Hamor, the father of a young man named Shechem. And he must have named the city after his son Shechem because that's the name of the city. So if he's filling out a job application, it's just Shechem.

That goes for my name, my place, Shechem. Well, you can follow the record in Genesis 34, Jacob's daughter Dinah.

[18 : 47] Okay, Jacob's got the 12 sons. And his daughter Dinah goes out to meet the women in the land there in Shechem. And he's raped by this boy named Shechem, the son of the ruler of the land.

And Shechem wants to marry Dinah. So he and his father pay a visit to Jacob and his sons to offer any price that they would ask for a dowry. And Jacob's sons are incensed.

But they hide their feelings. And they say, well, if we were to settle down and intermarry with you, that would require something on your part.

Your men would need to be circumcised as we are. And if you do, if you have all your men circumcised as we are, well, then we could settle down and mix with you. And your children marry ours and ours marry yours.

So that's the deal. Well, Shechem and his daddy think this is a great deal. And they intend to snooker Jacob and his sons out of all their wealth.

[19 : 52] They're seeing all this wealth that they have. That will soon be ours as we start intermarrying and laying hold of that wealth. So they agree to the demands. Somehow they sold the idea to all the men of the city.

And they agree to it. They were all circumcised. On the third day, while all of them were still in pain, Simeon and Levi, two of the sons of Jacob, took up their swords and attacked the unsuspecting city of Shechem, killing every male, including Hamor and his son Shechem.

And then all the sons of Jacob pile in for the looting of the city and take everything in it. Now, why is this chapter in our Bibles?

It's a sick chapter, isn't it? It's a revealing chapter. Is it just there to show us that this world is no place in which to raise daughters? It may teach us something about that.

Is it just to show us that the sons of Jacob were just as good as their father, Jacob, at deceiving people? Well, it does show us that.

[21 : 07] But the last two verses of the chapter give us the key. Why is this in the Bible? Well, chapter 34 and verse 30. Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Dad's having a talk with his two

murderous sons.

You have brought trouble on me by making me a stench to the Canaanites and Perizzites, the people living in this land. Remember, they're just visitors. And so he says to them, We are few in number, and if they join forces against me and attack me, I and my household will be destroyed. What's Jacob's concern? The people promise. And you've made me a stench in the nostrils. We're just visitors in this land, and if these people gang up, we're just a few people. It'd be easy to wipe us out. Well, the best they can respond is, Well, should he have treated our sister like a prostitute? No, but that doesn't give you the right to mass murder all the men in the city. But we see the threat again to God's people promise. What's going to happen? That's the greater lesson.

[22:18] What happens in chapter 35? God tells Jacob, You go up to Bethel and settle there where God met with you 21 years ago before you went on this journey, when you were fleeing from your brother.

So in 35.5, Then they set out, and the terror of God fell upon the towns all around them so that no one pursued them. Well, the people promise goes on. And again, not by something that meant it. Men died. Their efforts were trying to destroy the people promise. Look what Simeon and Levi did to destroy this promise, to wreak havoc upon them. And yet God says, No, I'm going to put my terror in their hearts. They will not touch you. That shows us God's control of men's hearts.

He can put fear in people's hearts to change the way they behave. And that's what he does. Why? Because he's protecting the people promise. He intends to have a people on earth who are his people in his kingdom under his rule and blessing.

[23:30] Well, he goes to Bethel, and there God appears to him again and blessed him and said to him, I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and increase in number. Heard that before? God's not doing some different thing.

He's restoring his intention from the beginning. Be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you and kings will come from your body. God is well capable of preserving his promise and bringing it to pass. A nation will come from your body. And then he even expands the promise. A community of nations. Put that one in your back pocket and remember that. This promise is stretching, isn't it? So God is able to keep his promise, but it's only by the supernatural blessing of God that there will ever be a people of God on the earth.

Now, the next obstacle to the people promise follows in Genesis, and it's a widespread famine that threatens to wipe out not only Jacob's family, but indeed the people's all around.

[24:43] It was a widespread famine. If it wipes out Jacob's family, the people promise is over. But again, the sovereign God years before had sent one of Jacob's sons down into Egypt to do something about the famine.

What was his name? Joseph. Oh, why do we have the Joseph story in our Bibles? Let me suggest that at bottom, one of the major reasons and themes is God is tracking out the people promise. Because if Jacob and his sons die by the famine, it's over. But it's not going to be over because God is determined to have a kingdom on earth.

So he sends Jacob or Joseph ahead. And the way he sent him ahead? Oh, well, it involved a lot of sin, didn't it, on the parts of the other boys. But God is sovereign over it all, and he maneuvers Jacob around or Joseph around until he rises to second in the land.

And there he's instrumental in what? In saving the lives of many people. First and foremost, the promised line, his family, Jacob's family. But then also, many others in Egypt and the surrounding nations.

[26:00] Again, we're seeing God's purpose is not just for his family, but it's stretching to the nations around. So the big picture in the story of Joseph is God protecting and fulfilling his people promise to make Abram into a great nation to be his people.

Now, when Genesis ends, Jacob and his entire family of 12 sons and their wives and their families have moved to Egypt to live during the famine. And as the book of Exodus starts, the first thing we're told is what?

The names of the promised people of God. We're told their names of the sons of Israel and the total number of his descendants.

What does it say in verse 5 of Exodus 1? How many? 70. A total of 70. Okay, we've gone from Abraham and Sarah, 12 sons.

Now we're at 70. Still not a great nation, is it? But it's on the way. But why even bother? Because God is tracing out the people promise.

[27:12] That's why we have the total number given to us. This clearly belongs to the main storyline being told. God is intent on having a people become a great nation.

And so Exodus 1, 6, and 7 says, Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died. But the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous so that the land was filled with them.

If you're not hearing echoes of Genesis 1, 28, by now you're deaf and you need to get on board, this is the storyline. God is tracing out. Be fruitful and multiply.

What's happening? 70 people are now being fruitful and multiplying. And it's just going like crazy. The land's filled with them.

Indeed, to the point that they become a threat to the nation of Egypt and their national security.

What if these guys in our wars with somebody else would just go over to the other side? We'd be toast.

[28:17] Now they're concerned. Why? Because there are so many Israelites. So we see three population control measures of Pharaoh.

He doesn't know, but we know he's fighting against God's people promise. So any bets on who's going to win by now? He's going to reduce the numbers of Israelites.

That's his intent. His first plan, forced labor. If we work them hard enough, they'll not have time and energy to reproduce. Wrong. Rather, we read that the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread.

Verse 12. Then he tries selective infanticide. He commands the Hebrew maid servants to kill the baby Hebrew boys as soon as they are born and let the girls to live.

But the midwives feared God and disobeyed Pharaoh. Verse 20 says, So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous.

[29:24] So again, all of his efforts to diminish the population are overcome and they become even more numerous. Now, this selective infanticide is not just commanded to these two Hebrew midwives, but he commands all the people of Egypt, every boy that is born to the Hebrews, you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live.

So clearly, God's word is interested in tracing out the threats to and God's fulfillment of the people promise against all hindrances in the way. Then comes the story of Moses and his protection as he's laid into the Nile River and how he was spared to later lead Israel out of Egypt and that cruel oppression that they were under.

Exodus 2, 23 to 25 says that the Israelites groaned in their slavery. Now, Moses was spared. We must never think that all the Hebrew baby boys were spared.

He's an exception. They threw the boys into the Nile and they died and the people are oppressed! And that, and Exodus 2 says the Israelites groaned in their slavery and they cried out and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God.

God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. So, God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.

[31:05] Why? Because they were his people and he had promised their great patriarch father Abraham, his son Isaac, and his son Jacob that he would multiply them into a great nation.

And so, what Exodus is putting us on notice is that God is coming then, through his mediator, Moses, to fulfill his promises that he made to Abraham.

We're not starting, again, something new. Exodus is not a line in the center, now let's try something else. That failed, let's try. No, I'm here to enforce what I planned and promised to Abraham.

And that is to make his offspring a great nation. So, Moses is called on the backside of the desert at age 80 to come and to lead Israel out of Egypt.

And this history of Israel is then revealing important things about the kingdom of God. The way to enter God's kingdom, we've seen, it's by a supernatural birth.

[32:14] If there's to be a people of God, it will be due to God's supernatural activity. Furthermore, in this history of Israel, we're learning the way that God saves his people.

How will God save a people? By substitution. By way of substitution. So, an angel of destruction is coming upon Egypt at midnight, and he's going to kill the firstborn of every home.

But there's a provision of salvation made for the Israelites in the Passover lambs. And if those Passover lambs will be slain in their blood, applied to the doorposts and the lintel and posts of the doors, and they stay inside under the blood, then God says, when I come at midnight in my wrath to destroy, I will see the blood and I will pass over you.

How are the people of God to be saved from God's wrath? It will be by way of substitution. And that's why we say partial fulfillment in the history of Israel.

Because can the blood of bulls and goats and lambs take away sin, really? No. They were just partial. These were temporary measures and they pointed to which lamb?

[33:31] Christ, our Passover lamb, has been slain. So, again, we're seeing the partial fulfillment in the Passover. It's teaching us something important about God's kingdom.

God will save a people by substitution. And another thing we learned about the way of salvation is that he will save them by conquering their enemies.

Because now the Israelites are spared. All of them are called God's firstborn son. That's interesting. The whole nation is called God's firstborn. So, the firstborn are spared by means of the coming Passover lamb.

And now they're out fleeing and they've come to the Red Sea and the Egyptians are pursuing them to destroy them. Here's the people promise threatened again. What happens if the Red Sea doesn't open?

There's no way around. There's no way. It's almost extinction and God opens the way. And he leads them through and then what does he do to their enemies? He destroys them.

[34:33] So, Israel is saved by the destruction of their enemies who were holding them in bondage and not letting them into God's kingdom. Say you and I in the kingdom.

How were we saved? It was by the destruction of those enemies that held us in bondage, sin and Satan. And by destroying those who held us in slavery, he set us free.

So, we're seeing in this history pictures of the final fulfillment but these things are partially fulfilled in Israel's history, these promises.

And so, he brings them out to Mount Sinai where God had earlier met with Moses in the burning bush and there he enters into a covenant with the nation of Israel. You will be my people and I will be your God.

He saved them to be a covenant, a kingdom of priests, Exodus 19, 4-6, to become a kingdom of priests to serve their God. So, I say it's in that period especially that we see the people promise being traced out, ending right around Exodus 18, 19.

[35:41] But even as you go further, the book of Numbers, anybody know why it's called Numbers? Because there's a lot of numbers in numbers. They took a census. one year after God led them, the Israelites, out of Egypt.

One year later, he took a census. That's how Numbers begins, the very first chapter. And it was a census of all the young men, 20 years old and older, who could serve in the army.

And the numbers are given of each of the 12 tribes, except for the Levites. And Numbers 1, 46, gives the total. 603,550.

Okay? Almost 604,000 people strong. But that's just two. Just the 20 and older men who can serve in the army.

If you want to get a picture of the whole number of the Israelites at this time, who all do you have to add? All the women and children. the Levites, the whole tribe of Levi, the young men, any 19 and under men, and any older men who are too old to serve in the army.

[37:00] And by the time you add them all together, estimates are 2, 3, 5 million people. That's a great nation.

And that's the partial fulfillment of the people promise. I'm going to bless you and make you a great nation, Abraham. And there is this stream of consciousness in God the Spirit through his writers to trace out that people promise in the opening chapters of the Bible.

That's not the only promise. We're going to trace it out with the land and with the blessing as well.

But I want you to see that that's the big picture here that God is tracing out. I say it's and we say in this study it's the partial fulfillment.

Anybody want to tell us why we say it's only the partial fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham? We're part of the people. So as you read the rest of the Bible you come to find out that that children's hymn is true of believers.

Father Abraham had many sons. Many sons had father Abraham and I am one of them. And so are you. If you've believed in Christ you are Abraham's descendants and children of the promise.

[38:23] Galatians 3.29. So we're seeing that God's promise to Abraham is of the stars and sand of the sea and of an innumerable group of people.

And what do we find at the very end in Revelation chapter 7? Innumerable people surrounding the throne from every tribe and language and nation. The people of God.

The holy city. The new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God as the bride prepared for her husband. The whole entire believing people of God.

So that's why we say it's partially fulfilled in the history of Israel. It's pointing us forward to the final fulfillment. We'll look more at that final fulfillment when we come to that study.

But let's worship with a sense that this God is a God of promise and a God of his word and he takes the delight in making the likes of us to become his people.

[39:31] We're dismissed.