

The Partial Kingdom (part 2)

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[0:00] Well, a short review. The unifying theme of the Bible that we're looking at through Robert Vaughn's God's Big Picture is what?! What's the unifying theme? Kingdom of God.

And we've defined it as God's people. God's people in God's place under God's rule and blessing. The outline so far, we're looking at an eight-point outline. The outline so far, they all begin with P. First, patterned kingdom. Second, parish kingdom.

Third, promised kingdom. Fourth, partial kingdom. Now hear this. This might be the most important thing I've said in a long while. These are not different kingdoms.

Alright? We're looking at all these different kingdoms as they're given to us. These are not different kingdoms at all. They are the one kingdom of God on earth.

[1:02] They're simply viewed in its progression through the different stages of human history. So, please get that through your head. God is not starting a kingdom and it fails, so he starts another one.

It fails. He starts. That's not what we have. We have one kingdom. God's one purpose is to establish his people in his place under his rule and blessing.

And we're just looking at that in different phases. So, what have we seen? The patterned kingdom of Eden that perished by the fall was promised to be restored.

And this promise is partially fulfilled in the history of Abraham and his descendants. Now, that's how far we've come. And there you see how those four things relate together.

The patterned kingdom that perished was promised to be restored and is partially being fulfilled in the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

[2:06] So, there's still much promised that will only be fulfilled by the coming of Jesus Christ, God's Messiah King.

Both in his first and his second coming. So, that's why we talk about partial fulfillment. There's a lot of things that were promised to Abraham that were not fulfilled in his descendants in those opening chapters of the Bible.

They look forward to the coming of his great seed, Jesus Christ. So, we're still looking at the three aspects of the kingdom as it was promised to Abraham.

And we're seeing how were those three aspects fulfilled in Abraham's descendants. We're looking first at the people promise. That God has a people. And remember the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12, 2 and many other places is, I will make you into a great nation.

And that nation will be my people. That will be the people of the kingdom. It's partially fulfilled in Abraham and his descendants as it's traced out in Genesis 12 to Exodus 18.

[3:20] That we're making this survey of the Bible. And so, Genesis 12 to Exodus 18, we have this partial fulfillment. So, how did we see the people promise fulfilled in Abraham's descendants last week?

How did it start? With a good as dead, Abraham and Sarah and God supernaturally bringing a son, Isaac, to them.

And from Isaac, Jacob. And from Isaac, the 12 children. And many, many descendants that God made fruitful. And made them to multiply against the many threats to their extinction.

That's just the brief synopsis of God fulfilling his people promise in Abraham's descendants. So that by the time God enters into a covenant with them at Mount Sinai in Exodus chapters 19 and 20 and following, how many were there in the nation?

A million. Okay. We're told a year after Mount Sinai that there were 600,000, 550 men, 18 years and older, who were fit to fight in the army.

[4:39] So, you do the math and it's several million people, perhaps. That is God's partial fulfillment of making Abraham into a great nation.

Finish the sentence. One of the things we learn from this partial fulfillment is that if, and this is a lesson about the kingdom of God.

Finish the sentence. If there's going to be a people of God on earth, it will be due to what? To God. His sovereign supernatural activity to have a people.

The whole earth combined and man's depravity will fight against that. It will depend on God's purpose and power to bring it to pass. And so, nobody in the kingdom, unless they're supernaturally born again by the spirit of God.

Nicodemus, as religious as you are, unless you're born again, you will never enter the kingdom of God. You see, it's got to be, it's God's supernatural activity that will bring about a people.

[5:52] Now, why was this only a partial fulfillment? Why do we say that the people promise was only partially fulfilled in Abraham's physical descendants? God wants the whole world included.

Anyone else? Yeah. From the very beginning, God said that he was not only going to make a great nation of Abraham, but even in that same breath, as it were, Genesis 12, 3, God had said that he would bring blessing to all the peoples of the earth through him.

So, God, from the start, did not just want Jews and physical descendants of Abraham in his kingdom. He wants his people made up of all the kingdoms or all the nations of the world, all the different languages and cultures and tribes and nations.

And so, that was not yet fulfilled here in this initial fulfillment. That's why we say it's partial. And I don't want to spend a lot of time on it because we're going to get there.

It'll be one of the Ps as we get to that we'll see in Galatians chapter 3 and verse 29 that if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed.

[7:10] If you belong to Christ, you are Abraham's descendants and heirs according to the promise. So, that's where we're headed to a people of God that are so, as many as the stars of heaven, sands of the sea in Revelation 7 says, I saw this innumerable host from all the languages, tribes, and nations of the world gathered around the throne.

That's where we're headed with this promise. So, it's only partially fulfilled in this great nation of Abraham's descendants. But it's a harbinger of even better things to come.

Now, today we're continuing the partial fulfillment of the promise to Abraham. And we're coming to God's rule and blessing. You say, why don't we come to God's place? God's people, we've just seen that in God's place under God's rule and blessing.

Well, the order of the Pentateuch, the order of the first five books of the Bible, trace more out in the second place. After tracing the people promise, it puts more emphasis now upon being under God's rule and blessing.

So, we're following the flow of Scripture as we come to this second part of the promise to Abraham. The kingdom of God is God's people in God's place living under his rule and blessing.

[8:29] Now, the people of the world think it is impossible to live the blessed life under God's rule. We've seen it again this week. To live the blessed life is not to live under God's rule.

It's to be a law to myself. It's to turn my back and to be cut free from God's law and to be a law to myself and to do whatever I want. That's blessing. That's the blessed life.

You see, the world has swallowed the lie of the devil that God's rule is a cramping curse rather than a blessing. That the real blessing is found outside of his law.

The truth is, when Adam and Eve were living in the patterned kingdom under God's rule, they were also living the blessed life, weren't they? Nobody was complaining about being cramped and shut in by God's law.

They were perfectly holy and happy. It was life at its best. It was only when they threw off the law of God, that is our children's catechism says, that instead of being holy and happy, they became sinful and miserable.

[9:40] Why? Because they were no longer living under God's rule and therefore not under God's blessing. Now separated from God.

Now banished from his presence. Now cut off from his blessing and under the curse. So, here is God's promise to Abraham now.

After all of that has transpired, God comes and says, I will bless you. I will bless you. There is the promise of blessing to Abraham and to his seed.

And that is partially fulfilled then. Exodus 19 through Leviticus traces out the partial fulfillment of God's blessing upon his people.

And the blessing promise is chiefly seen to be fulfilled in this period of Israel's history in two ways. So, we are going to look at those two aspects of God's blessing.

[10:49] So, we are going to look at those two aspects of God's blessing as they were fulfilled in that initial family of Abraham, the descendants of Israel. So, first of all, looking at God's blessing.

How did it come? Well, God gave them his law. It's as if God said to his people, close your eyes, hold out your hands, and I'm going to bless you. I'm going to give you a blessing.

And they stood and he placed in their hands the two tablets of the Ten Commandments. My law is the blessing. And we must see it that way.

Or we miss an important truth found everywhere in God's word. This lawless age says foolishness. But in fact, to be given God's law is to be given what is holy, righteous, and good. It's what's good for man. It's indeed what's best for man.

[11:51] Thank God we're not left at trial and error. How should we live our lives? You've only got 70, 80 years of that. Thankfully, we don't just have to go out and try.

And then fail and try and fail to find the way to... What's the best way to live? What's the best way to do family? To do marriage? To do anything in life?

Here, let me bless you with my law. Here's the best way to live. What a blessing. And so they lived under God's blessing as God gave to Israel his written law.

Now, a very common error in American evangelicalism is to think that in giving Israel the law, God was saying to them, Here, here's plan A for your salvation.

You obey these commandments in order to be saved. But that due to Israel's continual disobedience and inability to keep the law, plan A had to be scrapped.

[13:00] And so God came up with plan B. Well, I guess that didn't work. So now I'm going to give you my son that you might be saved through grace and by faith in him. But that's to miss, again, the whole point of God giving his people the law.

The law was not given to Israel in order that by obeying it they might be saved. In fact, the law was never, never given to any sinner that by obeying it he could be saved.

Rather, even before God gave them his law in Exodus 20, he had already saved them from bondage in Egypt. He had already come in his mighty power and redeemed them from slavery. Completely by grace. By the blood of a substitutionary Passover lamb that caused God's wrath to pass over the Israelite homes as it fell upon Egypt.

And by conquest over their enemies that were holding them in bondage. That victory at the Red Sea. All in covenant faithfulness to what God had said he would do.

[14:13] Hundreds of years earlier in his covenant with Abraham. I'm going to do this for your descendants, Abraham. And all by sovereign grace that chose them out of all the peoples of the earth to be his people.

So obedience is not the way to become God's people. God had already made them his people.

Look at Exodus chapter 20. And notice how God introduces the law as he hands it, as it were.

Where he actually speaks it audibly to Israel at Mount Sinai. Exodus 20. Notice the introduction to the giving of the law.

And God spoke all these words. Now what did he say? He didn't start out, you shall have no other gods besides me. No, he first said, I am the Lord, your God.

Do you see that? There's already relationship established before he gives them the law. If I'm your God, you're my people. That's a covenant relationship.

[15:20] And so even before he gives them the law, he is stating the obvious. I am the Lord, your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

Then comes the command, you shall have no other gods before me. And so on. The law comes to those that he had already redeemed from Egypt.

Not as a way to earn salvation, but as their grateful response to the God who by sovereign grace had come down and saved them by his mighty power out of Egypt.

Here's the way to respond to such grace, a gracious salvation that had nothing to do with your obedience or your blessing. Your deservingness of blessing.

And so it's because they were already God's people that they're given God's laws a means of blessing in their life. And that by it they might know, what does this God require of us since we are

his people?

[16 : 25] How, what does he expect us? How does he expect us to live if we are his people? Which they were. By grace. Alone. Robert's talks tells how that when the future English King George VI was a young boy, his queen mother used to remind him before a public event.

She would say, Bertie, never forget who you are. He was a royal prince. And he ought to behave accordingly. And that's what God is doing as he gives his law to his people.

Never forget who you are. You're my people. And therefore, act accordingly. Act like it. You're a people set apart to me.

And so you need to live like that. I am holy. You need to be holy because I am holy. Reflect my holiness in the way you live.

They're not to forget who they are. And they're to live like it. That was the function of God's law. It taught them how to live as God's people.

[17 : 35] It's a family code of conduct. And in it, God spells out what it means to be holy like I am holy. What does it mean for a man, a woman, to be holy like I am?

And he spells it out in ten words there that are the summary of all his laws. And it's further summarized in two great commands, isn't it? Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul, mind, and strength.

And love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. This is what it means to live like God's people. Now, the obedience, here's an important point.

The obedience to God's law is not the way to become God's people. It is required for the enjoyment of God's blessings upon his people. Joshua's last words to Israel were these.

He says, He will turn and bring disaster on you.

[19 : 12] No, the blessings are for those who live under God's rule. And you know, it's still that way. It's still that way in the New Testament. Let me just cut right to the chase.

One day as Jesus was teaching in Luke 11, a woman in the crowd called out, Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.

She was amazed at his teaching and the works he was doing. And she says, Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you. Jesus replied, Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.

According to Jesus, who is it that are blessed? Those who hear and obey God's word.

They live under his rule. That's why whenever God brings a sinner, a rebel into his kingdom, they must have a new birth.

[20 : 15] He always gives them a new heart. A heart in which he puts his law. He puts it on their inward parts. So that they will desire to please God.

They will want to obey his commandments. And so that's the message of the New Testament as well as the Old.

We're not saved by our law keeping. Israel wasn't saved by obeying that law that God gave them. But our law keeping only proves who really is in the kingdom of God.

Who really has been born again. Isn't that the whole message of 1 John? How do you know you're born again? Well, here's the marks of somebody. Isn't that the message of James?

How do you know that you have saving faith? Because it's not alone. It's always accompanied by works. Because God's blessings come to those who are his people.

[21 : 15] And his people are those who live under his rule. Now we'll see the role and the thing that Christ does that's so critical. But that's one of the things he does.

We're going to see that, yes, his obedience secures for us every blessing that we've ever enjoyed and ever will enjoy in the kingdom of God. But we're also seeing that Christ has secured for us a new heart.

So that we do live under God's rule. And therefore, we'll live under his blessing forever and ever. All because of Christ. But the truth is still there.

Trust and obey. For there's no other way to be happy. To be blessed in Jesus. But to trust and obey. And the element of faith is always there, isn't it?

In obeying. Trust and obey. But that's hard to obey this command. That's right. So you're going to need to trust.

[22:15] You're going to need to put your faith somewhere else. Not in your own understanding. But in God. In his son. And so you trust him with that area of your life.

And you obey him. What do you find? You find blessing. Trust and obey. So that's living under the rule of God. We enjoy the blessings of his kingdom.

And so when we're talking about, okay, what went wrong in the patterned kingdom? Well, it perished. And how did it perish? Man jettisoned and put aside God's rule.

And so he lost God's blessing. Part of God's, the partial aspect of God's restoring his patterned kingdom is to bring his people back under his rule.

That's where the blessing is. There's the circle of blessing. You got out? You need to get back in. And we'll see in the New Testament how Christ is the way.

[23:14] And what his life and grace does to make that possible. So that's the first aspect of the partial fulfillment of the blessing promised to Abraham's descendants.

God gave them a law. And he did not give those laws to the other nations. It was Israel that enjoyed the law. And you see that. What advantage, Paul asks in Romans 9, I believe it is.

What advantage do the Jews have? Theirs is the law. Not what disadvantage. What advantage? They had the light. Because only in his light do we see light. So that's the first promise that is partially fulfilled in Abraham's descendants.

The second is God's presence. The purpose of salvation is relationship. God's purpose in saving us is to make us right with him that we might enjoy a relationship with him.

We might enjoy his presence. That's the very essence of eternal life. Isn't that what Jesus taught us in John 17, 3? And this is life eternal. To know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent.

[24:23] It's in a knowing relationship with the true and living God that we have life. That's the good life. And so salvation's purpose is to restore this relationship.

A covenant relationship in which God says, I am your God and you are my people. I'm yours and you're mine. A marriage even as scripture portrays it.

Now, remember how blessing was experienced back in the patterned kingdom in Eden. It was to enjoy harmony. The blessing was to have harmony in three relationships.

What were they? Give me one. Remember the blessedness of Eden was to live in harmony with three relationships.

What was one? To live in right relationship with God. Each other. And creation. The whole environment.

[25:23] Okay? And so that was perfect. Now, when sin came, all three of those were fractured and destroyed. And so, we've got to be put right again with God.

And that's where it starts, doesn't it? It's through God getting right with Him that we then are able to get right with our fellow man and with the whole environment. But it all starts in getting right with God.

That's the blessed life, to be right with God. To enjoy His presence. To no longer run when He draws near. I wonder if that's how you're defining the blessed life.

Is that how you're living the good life? At the very heart of it, it's to be living it with God. Drawing near to Him.

Not facing anything alone. Living with Him. All day long. Well, that's the reason God saves us.

[26:26] That this blessing that was lost by sin might be restored to us. So, man was separated from God. But God promised Abraham that He's going to call out a people for Himself from Abraham's descendants.

Who would once again enjoy relationship with God. He would be their God and they would be His people. And they would live in His presence. That's partially fulfilled in the construction of the tabernacle.

So, what do we find in Exodus? And the last part of Exodus. We find these exquisite instructions on the tabernacle that Moses is to build.

Now, what was the most important place in that tabernacle? The Holy of Holies. I think the NIV calls it the most holy place.

That's the most sacred spot on earth back in those days. And why? Why was that? What did it represent? God's presence with His people on earth.

[27:34] Okay? We had that in Eden, didn't we? God's presence with His people. It was fractured. And now God's bringing His presence back to earth in the midst of His people. Where? In the tabernacle.

In the most holy place. So, the tabernacle. You have inside some outside curtains.

You have this courtyard. And then inside the courtyard you have this tent. And the tent itself is divided into two parts. You have the holy place and then the most holy place.

And inside the most holy place there's only one piece of furniture. What was it? The ark. The ark. The ark of His presence.

Because there between the overshadowing cherubim on top of the mercy seat. God was pleased to dwell with them and to meet with them.

[28:35] Exodus 25, 22. There above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the testimony. I will meet with you. Presence of God.

Relationship. Again. Established where? On earth. Exodus 29. So I will consecrate the tent of meeting. The tabernacle. Notice it's called a tent of meeting.

Because this is where God meets with man. And then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. They will know that I am the Lord their God who brought them out of Egypt.

So that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God. Why did God bring His people out of Egypt? So that I might dwell among them.

Egypt is an unholy place. I am going to bring them out of that unholy place. So that I can dwell with them. And where does He do that? In the most holy place. In the tabernacle that He has built for them.

[29:37] Remember how His glory filled the temple. As it was dedicated later. And the tabernacle first. And then the temple.

The more permanent structure later on. So God is among His people once again. It's also seen in the pillar of cloud and fire, isn't it? That hovered over them and led them.

And protected them. So God's presence with His people is a wonderful blessing. But it also presents a problem. How can a holy God live among His people?

His sinful people. Without destroying them. You see that's the problem. That's the problem.

That's why there was the flashing swords and cherubim at the gate into Eden. No way coming back here. You'll be destroyed. You're a sinner.

[30:36] God's holy. And so now God's going to dwell in the midst of His people. Wonderful. But also dreadful. How can we live with this holy God without being destroyed?

From the start. The Israelites could not keep God's law. And deserve God's judgment. So how could this happen? Well now we're introduced to the sacrifices.

Of the tabernacle. That's in Leviticus. And it's devised to meet this emergency. Of a holy God and sinful people.

Sacrifices were offered every day for the sins of the people. Leviticus 17.11 says that the sacrificial blood that was shed for the people. Makes atonement for their sins.

And that blood speaks of a life that has been laid down for them. So the people could live because a substitute sacrifice had died the death they deserve.

[31:39] And the result is atonement. And one tricky insight into that word is at-one-ment. What does the blood of the sacrifice accomplish?

Atonement. At-one-ment. To be at one with God. Holy God, sinful man. How can they dwell together? Only through the shedding of blood is their atonement and oneness brought about again. And they can enjoy the blessedness of his people because of the sacrifices. But this is only a partial fulfillment. Why? Why do we say that's only a partial fulfillment of the promise of God's presence? The blessing of God's presence? Well, because even in that arrangement, remember, they weren't to get too close to God's presence, were they? So what was there separating them and the most holy place?

A thick curtain. They could not go there. It said, stay out. Who could go into the most holy place of God's presence? Not all priests.

[32:54] Only the one high priest. How often could he traipse in there every week? Once a year? And never without blood. A life laid down for his sins.

In some sense, we might think, oh, the high priest, he can't even go into the presence of God. But once a year and never without blood. What is that saying to us?

Yes, there's the blessing of God's presence, but there's also a need for atonement. A need for sacrifice. God is holy. We are not.

And so even that form of enjoying God's presence, we notice is provisional. It's temporary. It's partial. It's not final.

What about those animal sacrifices? Could they really take away the sins of God's people? It's impossible, Hebrews tells us, for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin. It's not equal.

[33:52] It's not equal. Man made in God's image offends God by breaking his law. Oh, so we'll kill a pig. We'll kill a lamb.

God ought to think. It's even Stephen. No, no. That lamb's blood only had meaning to bring atonement as it reflected the greater sacrifice of God himself in the person of his son, Jesus Christ, dying on the cross.

To take away sin. So it's provisional. It's temporary. It's partial fulfillment of the blessing of God's presence among his people.

And it points to the one sacrifice that would bring God and man together. One mediator between God and man. The man Christ, Jesus.

Who Christ dies for our sins once for all. The just for the unjust to do what? To bring us to God.

That's what this is shadowing. But it's just a partial fulfillment.

[34:54] What event portrayed this at the moment of Christ's death on the cross? That Christ is the one who would bring us to God. What happened?

The moment he died. The temple's veil separating the people and the priests from the holy place was torn in two. The way is open.

A new and living way is open into the presence of God. I am the way, Jesus is saying. And it's through my death, my substitutionary blood shedding, giving of my life that you now have atonement with God.

So that's why we have to say this is just a partial fulfillment of the blessing of God's presence in the old covenant. But it's to be fully fulfilled at the second coming of Christ.

Because now the dwelling of God is with men. And he will live with them.

[36:00] And they will be his people. And God himself will be with them. And be their God. That's the ultimate fulfillment of the blessing promise.

God with his people forever and ever. And no more dread of his presence. Because all of his people have been washed white in the blood of the Lamb.

So that's where we're going. That's where we're headed to the blessedness that Christ wins for us.

That we have the presence of God. So partially fulfilled in God giving his law to his people.

It's a blessing to live under the rule of God. Partially fulfilled in God giving the tabernacle, his presence, to Abraham's descendants.

There in the temple. But we know again that that's just partial. Because what happened to the temple in 70 AD? It was destroyed. So again, it's all partial, partial, partial.

[36:59] That's what it's screaming at us. Yes, these promises to Abraham are being fulfilled. But only partially in his physical descendants. And they're ever begging the question.

What? How are they going to be really fulfilled? Filled up these promises. Well, that's coming. And it's obviously in Christ.

I think one of the applications of this study is, how do you define the blessing of God?

What does it mean when we pray, Lord bless me? Lord bless sister so and so. We use that language, don't we?

It's biblical. But I wonder, we've got to fill it with the right phrase. What do we mean when we want blessing? I want to live under your rule, Lord. I have found that delight is found in walking with you in your ways.

[38:06] Lord, would you bless me today? Would you help me to live under your rule? To enjoy your presence? Is that not what we see again here this morning? To, Lord, to live this day with you.

The world out there, they go to work. They go to the dentist. They go to this place and that. Without you. I go with you. You go with me. You're committed to me.

Lord, make me more aware of your presence today as I live. I don't do anything just to myself or by myself. But I do it unto you. And I've set you at my right hand.

And because you're at my right hand, I will not be moved. I want to know you present with me today. Where has God made his most holy place?

There's a new temple, isn't there? We'll see that. What's the most holy place on the earth, the planet earth now? It's not over in Jerusalem. It's not in some physical temple anywhere.
[39 : 08] It's in the hearts of his people. The Holy Spirit of God now dwells in our hearts. We're his temple.

The temples of the living God. Let's live that way. Let's realize this is blessedness. This is the best thing going. To have God with us.

Well, let's thank him, shall we, together as we leave off these things. Lord, what is your goodness and grace that you would choose to bless a people that didn't want these blessings?

When you came looking for us in the garden, we ran. And we thought that blessedness is to be found away from your commandments and away from your presence.

And, Lord, that's the way we were born, with those kind of hearts descended from Adam. And how we were born with our back to you and to your loss.

[40 : 19] And thank you for pursuing us in grace. Thank you for sending your son to die for us. Thank you for sending your spirit to seek us. And all while we were still sinners.

And for giving us a new heart that then would count as our highest privilege to have you. And to walk under your rule.

And under the blessedness of your presence. Thank you for that, Lord. Thank you for your graciousness. And the way you've saved us. And now help us to magnify your grace. By showing to a world where true blessedness is found.

Bless us then with your presence and your word in this next hour we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.
We're dismissed.