

THE KING'S STORY (10)¹

The King Casts Out

A. Introduction

1. The Bible is a story of a King, God, who makes His glory known in His Son Jesus Christ.

Two prominent themes in this story are that this King:

- a) saves His people through judgment;
- b) establishes kingdoms and rules over them by means of covenants.

Two of the kingdoms that God the King establishes and rules over by means of covenants are the kingdom of creation and the kingdom of Israel².

2. The kingdom of creation was established through the covenant of works and the Noahic covenant.

In the covenant of works, God gave responsibility of ruling over creation to Adam and his descendants promising eternal life for obedience.

When Adam broke the covenant, so did all humanity with him, and the covenant of works condemned and cursed everyone.

But God in His grace made a promise of salvation.

In the covenant with Noah, God promises to restrain His wrath and preserve the world in order that this promise of salvation could be kept.

3. The kingdom of Israel was established through the Abrahamic covenant and expanded by the Mosaic covenant and Davidic covenant.

In the Abrahamic covenant, God promises Abraham that his offspring will inherit the Promised Land and live in His presence if they obey His rule.

Also, that one of his descendants will be the promised Saviour.

In the Mosaic covenant, what it means for Abraham's descendants, the people of Israel, to live under God's rule in the land, is defined by the law of God.

Obedying the law will bring God's blessing. Disobeying the law will bring God's curse including exile from the land.

What neither the Abrahamic nor the Mosaic covenant promised to the people of Israel, was eternal life if they lived under God's rule by obeying His commands.

They only promised ongoing life in God's presence in the land of Canaan.

In the Davidic covenant, the kingdom of Israel is focused into one person, the king, who was commanded to keep the law of God on behalf of the nation.

If the king is righteous and keeps the law, the people and the land will be blessed; and if the king is wicked and breaks the law, the people and the land will be cursed.

So, as the Davidic kings keep the Mosaic covenant the kingdom of Israel will enjoy the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant. However, if the Davidic kings fails to keep the Mosaic covenant, the kingdom will of Israel will suffer the curses of the covenant.

Yet one of David's sons will reign as King forever. He will be that promised Saviour.

¹ The titles for this series are taken from Biblical Theology by Nick Roark & Robert Cline

² Throughout this series I will refer to 3 kingdoms, the kingdom of creation, Israel, Christ, which is an idea taken from The Mystery of Christ by Samuel Renihan.

4. Was David's son, Solomon, THE son?

It looked for a moment that he might be.

He was an offspring of the woman, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Judah, and in the line of David.

He did what God in the Davidic covenant said the king would do. He secured rest. He built the temple and blessed them with God's presence.

But Solomon turned out to be unfaithful and disobedient, and God disciplined him.

"Then the LORD said to Solomon, "Since you have done this and did not keep my covenant and my statutes, which I commanded you, I will tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. However, I will not do it during your lifetime for the sake of your father David; I will tear it out of your son's hand. Yet I will not tear the entire kingdom away from him. I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem that I chose." (1 Kings 11:11-13)

5. After Solomon died, his son Rehoboam succeeded him as king over Israel.

However, it wasn't long before ten of the tribes of Israel rebelled against him and set up their own kingdom with Jeroboam as their king, just as God warned Solomon.

The kingdom of Israel which was united under David and Solomon was now divided.

The Northern kingdom (made up of 10 tribes) was called Israel, with its capital city Samaria.

The Southern kingdom (made up of 2 tribes – Judah and Benjamin) was called Judah, with its capital city Jerusalem.

Why was this tragic?

The Northern kingdom has chosen to separate themselves from the line of kings that God would bless the people through, and from the temple where He dwelt among them.

It is therefore, no surprise what happened to this kingdom.

B. The Decline and Exile of the Northern Kingdom

1. After Jeroboam became king, he was concerned that the people in the Northern kingdom would continue to go to Jerusalem in the Southern kingdom, to meet with God at the temple.

He was worried that the people's loyalty would revert back to the king of Judah.

"Jeroboam said to himself, "The kingdom might now return to the house of David. If these people regularly go to offer sacrifices in the LORD's temple in Jerusalem, the heart of these people will return to their lord, King Rehoboam of Judah. They will kill me and go back to the king of Judah." (1 Kings 12:26-27)

To stop the people going to Jerusalem to worship God, he set up shrines at Bethel and Dan and put in each of them a golden calf to worship.

"So the king sought advice. Then he made two golden calves, and he said to the people, "Going to Jerusalem is too difficult for you. Israel, here are your gods who brought you up from the land of Egypt." He set up one in Bethel, and put the other in Dan. This led to sin; the people walked in procession before one of the calves all the way to Dan." (1 Kings 12:28-30)

2. Jeroboam and all the kings of Israel that followed after him, nineteen in total, did evil in the eyes of the LORD and led the people astray.

"This disaster happened because the people of Israel sinned against the LORD their God who had brought them out of the land of Egypt from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt and because they worshiped other gods. They lived according to the customs of the nations that the LORD had dispossessed before the Israelites and according to what the kings of Israel did. The Israelites secretly did things against the LORD their God that were not right. They built high places in all their towns from watchtower to fortified city. They set up for themselves sacred pillars and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every green tree. They burned incense there on all the high places just like the nations that the LORD had driven out before them had done. They did evil things, angering the LORD. They served idols, although the LORD had told them, "You must not do this." (2 Kings 17:7-12)

In His patience, God raised up many prophets, like Elijah and Elisha, who confronted and warned the king and God's unfaithful people what the consequences of their rebellion was, but they would not listen.

"Still, the LORD warned Israel and Judah through every prophet and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep my commands and statutes according to the whole law I commanded your ancestors and sent to you through my servants the prophets." But they would not listen. Instead they became obstinate like their ancestors who did not believe the LORD their God. They rejected his statutes and his covenant he had made with their ancestors and the warnings he had given them. They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves, following the surrounding nations the LORD had commanded them not to imitate." (2 Kings 17:13-15)

After 200 years of showing restraint at the people's wickedness and idolatry, God's patience ran out, and He did to the Northern kingdom of Israel what He said He would do.

"I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins." (Leviticus 26:33)

"Therefore, the LORD was very angry with Israel, and he removed them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah remained." (2 Kings 17:18)

God cast out Israel from the Promised Land, as the Assyrians attacked and destroyed Samaria in 722BC and the people of Israel were carried away into exile.

"The Israelites persisted in all the sins that Jeroboam committed and did not turn away from them. Finally, the LORD removed Israel from his presence just as he had declared through all his servants the prophets. So Israel has been exiled to Assyria from their homeland to this very day." (2 Kings 17:22-23)

C. The Decline and Exile of the Southern Kingdom

1. The Southern kingdom of Judah had everything going for it.

They had the Davidic line of kings that God would bless the people through.

They had the temple in their midst and the priests to teach them the law of God and offer sacrifices on their behalf.

But theirs is a sad story of decline too.

Though there were a number of good kings during Judah's history...

"Asa did what was right in the LORD's sight, as his ancestor David had done." (1 Kings 15:11)

"Jehoshaphat son of Asa became king over Judah in the fourth year of Israel's King Ahab. Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king; he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah daughter of Shilhi. He walked in all the ways of his father Asa; he did not turn away from them but did what was right in the LORD's sight." (1 Kings 22:41-43)

"In the second year of Israel's King Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, Amaziah son of Joash became king of Judah. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jehoaddan; she was from Jerusalem. He did what was right

in the LORD's sight, but not like his ancestor David. He did everything his father Joash had done." (2 Kings 14:1-3)

"Azariah did what was right in the LORD's sight just as his father Amaziah had done." (2 Kings 15:3)

"In the third year of Israel's King Hoshea son of Elah, Hezekiah son of Ahaz became king of Judah. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi daughter of Zechariah. He did what was right in the LORD's sight just as his ancestor David had done." (2 Kings 18:1-3)

"Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah; she was from Bozkath. He did what was right in the LORD's sight and walked in all the ways of his ancestor David; he did not turn to the right or the left." (2 Kings 22:1-2)

...many of their kings were just like their northern counterparts, leading the people into sin.

"In the fifth year of Israel's King Joram son of Ahab, Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat became king of Judah, replacing his father. He was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for Ahab's daughter was his wife. He did what was evil in the LORD's sight." (2 Kings 8:16-18)

2. The decline of the Southern kingdom hit its lowest point when Manasseh became king.

He restored idol worship including the worship of Molech that involved sacrificing children in the fire.

"He rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had destroyed and reestablished the altars for Baal. He made an Asherah, as King Ahab of Israel had done; he also bowed in worship to all the stars in the sky and served them. He built altars in the LORD's temple, where the LORD had said, "Jerusalem is where I will put my name." He built altars to all the stars in the sky in both courtyards of the LORD's temple. He sacrificed his son in the fire, practiced witchcraft and divination, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did a huge amount of evil in the LORD's sight, angering him." (2 Kings 21:3-6)

Under Manasseh's reign the Southern kingdom reached the point of no return.

"Manasseh set up the carved image of Asherah, which he made, in the temple that the LORD had spoken about to David and his son Solomon: "I will establish my name forever in this temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel. I will never again cause the feet of the Israelites to wander from the land I gave to their ancestors if only they will be careful to do all I have commanded them—the whole law that my servant Moses commanded them." But they did not listen; Manasseh caused them to stray so that they did worse evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites." (2 Kings 21:7-9)

The people of Judah were more evil than the nations who did not know God.

Exile was now guaranteed. God was going to cast out Judah from the Promised Land, like He did Israel.

Even though Josiah brought about reformation in the kingdom, it was not enough to prevent this judgment from falling on the nation.

"In addition, Josiah eradicated the mediums, the spiritists, household idols, images, and all the abhorrent things that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem. He did this in order to carry out the words of the law that were written in the book that the priest Hilkiah found in the LORD's temple. Before him there was no king like him who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength according to all the law of Moses, and no one like him arose after him. In spite of all that, the LORD did not turn from the fury of his intense burning anger, which burned against Judah because of all the affronts with which Manasseh had angered him. For the LORD had said, "I will also remove Judah from my presence just as I have removed Israel. I will reject this city Jerusalem, that I have chosen, and the temple about which I said, 'My name will be there.'" (2 Kings 23:24-27)

Because Judah's kings were not faithful to God's law and caused the people to do evil in God's sight, the curses of the Mosaic covenant came upon the people and the land.

Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army in 587/586BC invaded the land of Judah, destroying Jerusalem and temple, and taking the people into exile.

With no king on the throne, no temple, and no land, all of the kingdom of Judah's hopes had vanished.

"By the rivers of Babylon—there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion. There we hung up our lyres on the poplar trees, for our captors there asked us for songs, and our tormentors, for rejoicing: "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." How can we sing the LORD's song on foreign soil?" (Psalm 137:1-4)

"You have covered yourself in anger and pursued us; you have killed without compassion. You have covered yourself with a cloud so that no prayer can get through. You have made us disgusting filth among the peoples. "All our enemies open their mouths against us. We have experienced panic and pitfall, devastation and destruction." My eyes flow with streams of tears because of the destruction of my dear people." (Lamentations 3:43-48)

3. It is as if the Fall has happened all over again.

Once again, the one who represents God's people has been unable to keep the covenant.

The King has cast them out. But...

His mercies are new every morning.

The promise of salvation remains.

"Because of the LORD's faithful love we do not perish, for his mercies never end. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness!" (Lamentations 3:22-23)