

## THE KING'S STORY (5)<sup>1</sup>

### The King Blesses

#### A. Introduction

1. The Bible is a story.

It is a story that makes God's glory known.

It is a story about Jesus Christ.

It is a story of salvation achieved through judgment.

It is a story of the King who establishes kingdoms and rules over them by means of covenants.

2. The story of the Bible begins with the King creating.

God the King creates the kingdom of creation<sup>2</sup> and chose to rule over it through people whom He made in His image.

He created them with the purpose of reflecting Him by displaying His character in their lives and by representing Him as they ruled over creation on His behalf.

For this to happen they needed to live within the boundaries of the moral law and obey the creation mandate to subdue the earth and fill it by being fruitful and multiplying.

The result is that Eden's borders would extend, and with God's image bearers spreading over the face of the earth, the whole world would *"be filled with knowledge of the LORD's glory, as the water covers the sea."*

This purpose of God was something He wanted to last forever, so He made a covenant with the first man Adam as representative of the all humankind.

The covenant of works which God made with Adam, would reward Adam and those He represents with eternal life if obeyed the terms of the covenant (working and watching over Eden and not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil); and would curse Adam and those he represents with death, should he disobey.

3. Sadly, the next part of the story of the Bible begins with the King cursing.

God the King curses Adam because he broke the covenant by failing to take care of Eden and by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Adam's sin brought the curse of death to all humanity.

Though as creatures, people are still obliged to obey their Creator by keeping the moral law and the creation mandate, the curses made this harder.

But there was a glimmer of hope, as before the King curses, He preaches the gospel to Adam and Eve.

Eternal life is still possible, but it won't come by the covenant of work.

"I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel." (Genesis 3:15)

An offspring of the woman will come to save them.

With these words God promises an ongoing struggle between the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman, and also that a Saviour will come.

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

<sup>2</sup> 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.

Outside the Garden of Eden, it soon became clear who the offspring of the serpent and who the offspring of the woman, with Cain becoming the first of many to strike the offspring of the woman's heel as he murdered His brother Abel.

As more children were born, the majority of them sided with the serpent, until the earth was filled with wickedness and corruption and violence, and the only offspring of the woman that remained was Noah and his family.

4. At this point in the story of the Bible, God the King decides to start again by judging.

He wipes out the entire line of the serpent with a flood with Noah and his family saved through judgment.

Whilst the offspring of the serpent was destroyed by the flood, Noah carried with him onto the ark and then out into the new world the seeds of sin, and it wasn't long before the offspring of the serpent was thriving again.

The serpent's offspring united against God at Babel, and God responds again in judgment by scattering humanity over the face of the earth.

As for the offspring of the woman, it didn't look like there was one.

"Terah lived 70 years and fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran." (Genesis 11:26)

"Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Long ago your ancestors, including Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River and worshiped other gods.'" (Joshua 24:2)

Had the offspring of the serpent managed to crush the head of the offspring of the woman before the Saviour could arrive?

No, there was still hope, because after the Flood was over, God made a covenant with Noah.

Whilst this covenant did not save or give eternal life, it did remove the threat of another flood, ensuring that the world would not be destroyed because of human sin before the promised Saviour arrived, and before He had saved all His people.

5. So, the stage is set for the next part of the story of the Bible, as God the King creates a new kingdom within the kingdom of creation.

The kingdom of Israel – which He creates by blessing Abram and making a covenant with him.

Out of this kingdom will come the promised Saviour, and this kingdom looked forward to and pictured the salvation He would bring.

## **B. God blesses Abram by entering into a covenant with him**

1. The God who spoke creation into being, speaks again and creates a new man.

God preaches the gospel to Abram while he was living in Ur calling him out of a life of idolatry to a life of faith.

"Now the Scripture saw in advance that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and proclaimed the gospel ahead of time to Abraham, saying, 'All the nations will be blessed through you.'" (Galatians 3:8)

"You, the LORD, are the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans." (Nehemiah 9:7)

Abram is promised a great nation and a great blessing.

"The LORD said to Abram: Go from your land, your relatives, and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:1-3)

"The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." (Genesis 12:7)

The great nation will require Abram to have two things: a place and a people.

The kingdom of Israel will be comprised of Abraham's descendants living in the land of Canaan.

The great blessing is not only that Abram's name will be great and he will be a blessing to others; it is that the whole world will be blessed through him, meaning, the offspring of the woman will also be the offspring of Abraham.

## 2. Abram would need to have faith that God would keep these promises.

To be a great nation, Abram needed to be fruitful and multiply.

But he was old in years, and Sarai his wife was barren.

"Abram and Nahor took wives: Abram's wife was named Sarai, and Nahor's wife was named Milcah. She was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milcah and Iscah. Sarai was unable to conceive; she did not have a child." (Genesis 11:29-30)

To be a great nation, Abram needed to rule over a land.

But there were people already in the land, and he had no land of his own.

"Abram passed through the land to the site of Shechem, at the oak of Moreh. (At that time the Canaanites were in the land.)" (Genesis 12:6)

## C. God blesses Abram by establishing the covenant with him

### 1. God confirms these promises he made to Abram by making a covenant with him.

Abram wonders how he could be a great nation when he is childless.

"But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what can you give me, since I am childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" Abram continued, "Look, you have given me no offspring, so a slave born in my house will be my heir." (Genesis 15:2-3)

God repeats the promise of a people.

"Now the word of the LORD came to him: "This one will not be your heir; instead, one who comes from your own body will be your heir." He took him outside and said, "Look at the sky and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "Your offspring will be that numerous." (Genesis 15:4-5)

Abram wonders how he could be a great nation when he has no land.

"He also said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess." But he said, "Lord GOD, how can I know that I will possess it?" (Genesis 15:7-8)

God repeats the promise of a place.

"On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "I give this land to your offspring, from the Brook of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates River: the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hethites, Perizzites, Rephaim, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites." (Genesis 15:18-20)

Abraham believes God will keep His promises.

"Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness." (Genesis 15:6)

2. The covenant is then confirmed by a covenant-making ceremony.

Animals are killed and cut in two and the two halves are laid facing each other.

"He said to him, "Bring me a three-year-old cow, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." So he brought all these to him, cut them in half, and laid the pieces opposite each other, but he did not cut the birds in half. Birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away. As the sun was setting, a deep sleep came over Abram, and suddenly great terror and darkness descended on him." (Genesis 15:9-12)

Only God passes between the halves of the dead animals.

"When the sun had set and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch appeared and passed between the divided animals." (Genesis 15:17)

God will ensure that the promises are kept – Abram will be a great nation and a great blessing.

#### **D. God blesses Abram by expanding the covenant with him**

1. The covenant God made with Abram is expanded in two ways.

Firstly, loyalty is demanded.

"When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him, saying, "I am God Almighty. Live in my presence and be blameless. I will set up my covenant between me and you, and I will multiply you greatly." (Genesis 17:1-2)

Abram is called to walk before God and be blameless, to reflect Him by displaying His character.

This loyalty is shown first of all by practicing circumcision, which will mark out those who are the offspring of Abram that will inherit the promises of the covenant and the accompanying blessings.

"God also said to Abraham, "As for you, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations are to keep my covenant. This is my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you, which you are to keep: Every one of your males must be circumcised. You must circumcise the flesh of your foreskin to serve as a sign of the covenant between me and you. Throughout your generations, every male among you is to be circumcised at eight days old—every male born in your household or purchased from any foreigner and not your offspring." (Genesis 17:9-12)

Those who refused the cutting off of circumcision, would be cut off from the people of the covenant and would not be able to enjoy the blessings it brings.

"If any male is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that man will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant." (Genesis 17:14)

Secondly, royalty is promised.

"I will make you extremely fruitful and will make nations and kings come from you." (Genesis 17:6)

"I will bless her; indeed, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she will produce nations; kings of peoples will come from her." (Genesis 17:16)

The offspring of the woman who will be an offspring of Abraham, will also be a royal figure.

2. God creates the kingdom of Israel by blessing Abram and making a covenant with him.

In this covenant, God promises Abram that He will make him a great nation. He guarantees that Abram will have numerous offspring who will live in the Promised Land of Canaan.

If Abram's descendants live under God's rule, they will continue to enjoy God's blessing which will flow out to the nations.

The ultimate blessing to flow to the nations will be that a future offspring of Abram will be the promised Saviour.

But Abram still has no child and no land to speak of.

He needed to live by faith in God's promises, and to encourage him to, God gives him a new name.

"Then Abram fell facedown and God spoke with him: "As for me, here is my covenant with you: You will become the father of many nations. Your name will no longer be Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I will make you the father of many nations." (Genesis 17:3-5)