

THE KING'S STORY (16)¹

The King Returns

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.

2. He began by establishing the kingdom of creation, and then following the Fall, He established the kingdom of Israel².

The kingdom of creation was established and ruled over by the covenant of works and the Noahic covenant, while the kingdom of Israel was established and ruled over by the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants.

But none of these covenants, nor being in either of these kingdoms gave eternal life to sinners.

All these kingdoms and covenants could do was keep the promise alive that one day God would establish a new kingdom with a new covenant that would.

3. When Jesus Christ came into the world, He brought with Him the good news of salvation for His people by establishing the kingdom of Christ which He ruled over by means of the new covenant.

It is now possible for sinners to be brought back into relationship with God.

Jesus by His death on the cross has initiated the new covenant, bringing forgiveness for all who trust in Him.

Then after being raised from the dead and ascending to God's right hand, He, along with His Father, has sent the Holy Spirit to live in His people, changing their hearts so that they can obey His law.

4. In the kingdom of Christ, those whom Jesus has saved, in response to His grace, seek to live faithfully under His rule.

By listening to and obeying His words.

"My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:27)

By living lives worthy of the gospel.

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and exiles to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul. Conduct yourselves honourably among the Gentiles, so that when they slander you as evildoers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day he visits." (1 Peter 2:9-12)

By living as citizens of heaven.

"By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed and set out for a place that he was going to receive as an inheritance. He went out, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he stayed as a foreigner in the land of promise, living in tents as did Isaac and Jacob,

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.

coheirs of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God." (Hebrews 11:8-10)

This will include proclaiming the gospel and making disciples of all nations as the way by which Jesus builds His church and grows His kingdom.

"Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

But this won't be easy – it will feel like a war as we fight against our sinful nature, the world, and the devil.

"But know this: Hard times will come in the last days." (2 Timothy 3:1)

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." (2 Timothy 4:7)

Yet one day the struggle and the suffering will be over.

"For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

It will be over when Jesus returns, for we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

"They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven." (Acts 1:11)

"...because he has set a day when he is going to judge the world in righteousness by the man he has appointed. He has provided proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:31)

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate them one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' ... "Then he will also say to those on the left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels!' ... "And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matthew 25:31-34, 41, 46)

B. Jesus will return to judge His enemies

1. Christ will return to conquer evil and wickedness.

"Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse. Its rider is called Faithful and True, and with justice he judges and makes war. His eyes were like a fiery flame, and many crowns were on his head. He had a name written that no one knows except himself. He wore a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God. The armies that were in heaven followed him on white horses, wearing pure white linen. A sharp sword came from his mouth, so that he might strike the nations with it. He will rule them with an iron rod. He will also trample the winepress of the fierce anger of God, the Almighty. And he has a name written on his robe and on his thigh: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS." (Revelation 19:11-16)

This world opposed to God, with kingdoms, nations, governments corrupted by Satan, and all the false religions, belief systems, ideologies will be destroyed.

"Then a mighty angel picked up a stone like a large millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, In this way, Babylon the great city will be thrown down violently and never be found again." (Revelation 18:21)

"After this I heard something like the loud voice of a vast multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah! Salvation, glory, and power belong to our God, because his judgments are true and righteous,

because he has judged the notorious prostitute who corrupted the earth with her sexual immorality; and he has avenged the blood of his servants that was on her hands. A second time they said, Hallelujah! Her smoke ascends forever and ever!" (Revelation 19:1-3)

"Then I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and against his army. But the beast was taken prisoner, and along with it the false prophet, who had performed the signs in its presence. He deceived those who accepted the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image with these signs. Both of them were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur." (Revelation 19:19-20)

The devil will be thrown into the lake of fire.

"The devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet are, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." (Revelation 20:10)

Sin and death will be utterly defeated.

"Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:14)

Nothing will spoil the place Jesus is preparing for His people.

2. Christ will return to judge those who have rejected Him.

Those who will not repent and believe in Jesus will face an awful judgment.

"This will take place at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels, when he takes vengeance with flaming fire on those who don't know God and on those who don't obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will pay the penalty of eternal destruction from the Lord's presence and from his glorious strength on that day when he comes to be glorified by his saints and to be marvelled at by all those who have believed, because our testimony among you was believed." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10)

They will be justly punished in hell.

"Then I saw a great white throne and one seated on it. Earth and heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. I also saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged according to their works by what was written in the books. Then the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them; each one was judged according to their works... And anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:11-13, 15)

They will be excluded from the new creation and all of God's blessing.

"Nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those written in the Lamb's book of life." (Revelation 21:27)

"Outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood." (Revelation 22:15)

Even though they do not want to be in hell, they still will not have Jesus as their Lord.

"Let the unrighteous go on in unrighteousness; let the filthy still be filthy; let the righteous go on in righteousness; let the holy still be holy." (Revelation 22:11)

C. Jesus will return to save His people

1. Christ will return for His people.

"And just as it is appointed for people to die once—and after this, judgment— so also Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him." (Hebrews 9:27-28)

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, in the same way, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For we say this to you by a word from the Lord: We who are still alive at the Lord's coming will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the archangel's voice, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are still alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17)

His people will be found in every corner of the earth – both Jews and Gentiles.

"And they sang a new song: You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slaughtered, and you purchased people for God by your blood from every tribe and language and people and nation. You made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they will reign on the earth." (Revelation 5:9-10)

"After this I looked, and there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: Salvation belongs to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Revelation 7:9-10)

"The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it... They will bring the glory and honour of the nations into it." (Revelation 21:24, 26)

His people will be transformed and will have bodies fit for eternal life in the presence of God in the new creation.

"Dear friends, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when he appears, we will be like him because we will see him as he is." (1 John 3:2)

"So it is with the resurrection of the dead: Sown in corruption, raised in incorruption; sown in dishonour, raised in glory; sown in weakness, raised in power; sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body." (1 Corinthians 15:42-44)

2. Christ will return to bring His people to the place He has been preparing for them.

"Don't let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also." (John 14:1-4)

It will be a new heaven and a new earth – all things will be made new.

"But based on his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness dwells." (2 Peter 3:13)

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I also saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away." (Revelation 21:1-4)

"For the creation eagerly waits with anticipation for God's sons to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to futility—not willingly, but because of him who subjected it—in the hope that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage to decay into the glorious freedom of God's children." (Romans 8:19-21)

"The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like cattle, but the serpent's food will be dust! They will not do what is evil or destroy on my entire holy mountain," says the Lord." (Isaiah 65:25)

It will be a new Jerusalem – God will dwell with all His people forever.

"Then one of the seven angels, who had held the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues, came and spoke with me: "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." He then carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, arrayed with God's glory. Her radiance was like a precious jewel, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. The city had a massive high wall, with twelve gates. Twelve angels were at the gates; the names of the twelve tribes of Israel's sons were inscribed on the gates. There were three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. The city wall had twelve foundations, and the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb were on the foundations." (Revelation 21:9-14)

"I did not see a temple in it, because the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." (Revelation 21:22)

"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord's glory, as the water covers the sea." (Habakkuk 2:14)

The King's Story ends with the King ruling and reigning over His people in a new creation.

"Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when he abolishes all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign until he puts all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be abolished is death. For God has put everything under his feet. Now when it says "everything" is put under him, it is obvious that he who puts everything under him is the exception. When everything is subject to Christ, then the Son himself will also be subject to the one who subjected everything to him, so that God may be all in all." (1 Corinthians 15:24-28)

It will be a place where there will be no sin, shame, death, pain, tears, fear or danger, where God's people will enjoy His blessing and are free to worship Him forever.

Unlike the kingdom of creation and the kingdom of Israel, there is no chance of the kingdom of Christ being spoilt.

"He who testifies about these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20)