

The Church

History and Origin

Gen 3:15

1

2

15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”

In the punishment given to the woman after her sin in the Garden, God tells her that her seed would bruise the head of the servant. This is the first indication that there was something or someone coming that would have an impact on Satan and Satan’s rule of death. But this is not a promise concerning the Church, it is a messianic promise, one that concerns the coming Christ. Then in...

Gen 12:1-3

3

1 Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives, And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you; 2 And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; 3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

Again, though this is an obvious reference to Jesus and the impact he would have on the world, it is not yet a specific reference to the Church. Other than generic references to local kingdoms of the world we don’t see a reference to a kingdom of God’s people until...

Ex 19:5-6

4

5 ‘Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; 6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.”

This is when God defines the Israelites as a kingdom. Now there is a caveat to this. In the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when they are told that their descendants would be a great nation and that God would establish a covenant between He and them, that is an obvious reference to their becoming a great kingdom, but it is here in Exodus that God sets the defining parameters of that kingdom...

5

“If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant”

The determining factor of what will define the people of God’s kingdom is their faithful obedience to God’s will. This is what is seen as we progress through the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, God establishing the Law of His Kingdom, the Law that the people would have to faithfully obey in order to be His Kingdom. As we have seen in our study in the Book of Judges, there were numerous local rulers that were called king, but there was never any one king that ruled over the whole of the Israelite people until we get to 1 Samuel where the people cry out for a king to be like the nations around them...

1 Sam 8:4-5

6

4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; 5 and they said to him, “Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations.”

There is a point in this that needs to be noted. God tells Samuel...

1 Sam 8:7

7

7 The Lord said to Samuel, “Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them.

Saul, the first human king of Israel, but in choosing Saul God says they rejected Him. Implied in this statement is the fact that the kingdom of God’s people is to be ruled over by a spiritual king, not a king from mankind. That is also a defining characteristic of the Kingdom of God, not only does it have a spiritual Law it also has a spiritual ruler. While Saul was the first of kings from mankind, he was not the last. After Saul came David, then Solomon, then the divided kingdom, with each having their own list of kings. The nation of Israel was at its peak, it’s strongest, under David and Solomon, with the pinnacle being when under Solomon. This sets the stage for the prophecy that is made in...

2 Sam 7:12-13

8

12 “When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

God sent Nathan and has made a covenant with David that when he dies and his time is done, God would raise up a descendant after him to rule and that the kingdom would be established forever. This promise is made to David on more than one occasion, keep this promise in mind. The Israelites continued their downward spiral after the glory of Solomon’s days and were soon in constant battle trying to defend themselves from the nations around them and failing to do so. Then in 2 Kings 24 and 25 we see Nebuchadnezzar lay siege against Jerusalem and burn it and destroy the Temple that Solomon had built. By this time the northern kingdom of Israel was gone, having been overrun and destroyed as a viable nation. With the destruction of Jerusalem, the nation of Judea, the southern kingdom was also destroyed. From man’s point of view, the kingdom of God’s people was over, but remember the promise that God had made...

9

“I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever”

This brings us to Daniel, of noble lineage, as seen in **Dan. 1:3**, considered to be one of the 4 major prophets of the Old Testament, he was one of the many, along with 3 other noble born young men, to be taken into Babylonian captivity during the first taking of captives by Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel and his friends excelled at their training and were put into service for the king. As is seen when Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt, God was with him and he prospered and was successful at everything he did. Here, the stage is set for the events of Daniel chapter 2. Nebuchadnezzar has a dream about a statue.

Dan 2:31-33

10

31 “You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. **32** “The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, **33** its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

11 Please note something, that in as far as the ancient world is concerned, these kingdoms here were the world powers of their day. The boundaries of their rule were only restricted by their ability to get somewhere. Everywhere they could travel they conquered. And basically, each succeeding empire was vaster than the one it follows. In terms of sophistication and advancement of society, these empires all left lasting legacies that even to this day still have an influence of the world. Many of the principles that exist in our legal systems date from these times. Astronomy, math, philosophy, architecture, these empires were pioneers and originators in all these areas. Their power and their influence were as close to absolute as possible at that time. Then...

Dan 2:34-35a

12

34 “You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. **35a** “Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found.

All these great empires that ruled the world of their time brought low by this stone, a stone that had no earthly origin, cut without hands. The point is that the stone was cut, it was prepared for a purpose, but not by anything of human design or manufacture.

Dan 2:35b

13

35b But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

What is this stone that outlasted these great kingdoms, even long after they were nothing more than footnotes in history? Daniel says that it would fill the whole Earth. The way that the prophecy from Daniel reads it might be understood that this stone represented a kingdom that would be far greater in power and influence, and have a far greater reach than any of these world powers depicted. In a very real sense that is true, but it must be remembered that the origins of this kingdom are not Earthly, that would make this kingdom not Earthly.

You see, for all intents and purposes, the kingdom of Israel was pretty much over when the Babylonians conquered them and destroyed the Temple. Yes, there was a time when a remnant of the Jews that had been taken into captivity were allowed to come back to Jerusalem and to rebuild the Temple, though not nearly to its original splendor. But for the most part the nation of Israel was never again the world power that it had once been under David and Solomon, a power that rivalled even those of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, though maybe not in influence, but Solomon had spread the reaches of the Israelite kingdom so that many dignitaries came to pay tribute to him. That was what had been destroyed when Babylonia conquered them. That was what the people longed for, prayed for, and that was what had been promised.

2 Sam 7:12-13

14

12 “When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. **13** “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

In His anointing of David as king, God tells him that after his days are complete, this has to be understood to mean that when David’s time as king was done that God would raise up one of his descendants to reign as king and that his kingdom would last forever. This isn’t referring to Solomon or any other descendant of David that reigned as king in either Judea or Israel. We know that because those kings, nor their kingdoms are still around, they were destroyed. Isaiah speaks of the same future kingdom in...

Isa 9:6-7

15

6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. **7** There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore.

This prophecy is about the stone that struck the feet of the statue and grows into a kingdom that fills the Earth. Now note, it doesn’t say that it will control the Earth, but rather that its borders will be worldwide, that no Earthly authority will ever be able to subdue it, and that both it and its king will be forever.

The Jews understood this to mean that there would come a time when God would restore the Israelite kingdom to the glory it had under Solomon. They never understood that the nature of the kingdom to come would not be Earthly but heavenly.

16

“A stone not cut with hands”

Matt 1:1

17

1 The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham:

Jesus, a descendant of Abraham through the lineage of David, Jesus, through whom all the prophecies would be fulfilled.

Matt 16:18-19

18

18 I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. **19** I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

Jesus, the man, Christ the incarnate God, came to save man from his sin and to establish the one true kingdom of God’s people, the kingdom that He, the descendant of David would rule forever, the kingdom that would spread throughout the world and not be under the authority of any manmade kingdom or government. The fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament are found in the kingship of Jesus the Christ. Christ tells a parable about a vineyard owner who planted vines and set a wall around it and then rented it out to vine growers, he sent slaves to gather in the harvest, but when they got there they were killed and abused by the vine growers. He sends a larger

group of slaves and then his son but the results are the same each time. Christ then poses a question to them...

19 *“What will the master do then?”*

Christ is trying to get the people to understand what He is all about. The descendants of Abraham had been chosen as God’s people, His kingdom. All they had to do was follow Him as their king. But they killed His prophets and then they killed His Son. What should the master do? God provided a way for His people. Just as He guided the children of Israel to the promised land of Canaan to a kingdom of His people He also guides people who today choose to be followers of Him and His truth to the one true kingdom ruled by Jesus Christ.

Matt 3:1-2 **20**

1 Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, **2** "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

The kingdom of heaven is at hand. God sent John to prepare the way for the coming king and kingdom and that’s what John came preaching, it is at hand. Remember the stone that struck the feet of Nebuchadnezzar’s statue? That represents a kingdom that will last eternally and be forever ruled by an eternal king.

Mark 1:14-15 **21**

14 Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, **15** and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Jesus Christ preached the same message to the people,

22 *“The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*

Jesus then tells people how to be a part of that kingdom, how to become one of the king’s people.

23 *“Repent and Believe in the Gospel”*

The prerequisite to be a part of the kingdom of the Jews was to be a physical descendant of Abraham. The prerequisite for being a part of this new kingdom that Jesus Christ has established is repentant faith, faithful obedience, a commitment to God through Christ in obedience to the Word.

Christ came and gave Himself for man’s sin and in doing so He presented Himself to the world as the true Son of God, the king ruling over the kingdom of God, the Church.

This is the first lesson in a series that we are going to be looking at concerning the history of the Church as seen in the Book of Acts. We tell people that our goal is to be just like the Church that can be seen in that first century so I think it behooves us to look at that Church.