

THE NOAHIC COVENANT

THE BEGINNING OF GOD'S KINGDOM PROGRAM

The Universal Kingdom

- We must first understand God's sovereign universal kingdom which demonstrates his control over all creation at all times...not one area of the universe is outside of God's control...his reign is an eternal one
- There has never been a time when God has failed to exercise dominion over his creation

1 Chronicles 29:11-12 ~ Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O LORD, and You exalt Yourself as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone.

Psalms 145:13 ~ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And Your dominion endures throughout all generations.

Psalms 103:19 ~ The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty rules over all.

Daniel 4:34-35 ~ But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'

- God's reign over the universe already exists, is always in operation, and extends to every corner of the universe...the center of God's kingdom and throne is in heaven where he is always in control and where he always accomplishes his will
- "This is the rule of God over the entire universe. In this kingdom nothing happens outside of the will of God because He is sovereign and in control...This aspect of the kingdom of God would, therefore, be the broadest expression of the kingdom of God. His is an eternal, sovereign rule everywhere over the entire creation."¹

The Mediatorial Kingdom

- The mediatorial aspect of God's kingdom is his rule on earth through man who acts as God's representative
- While God's universal kingdom is present now as he eternally rules over all creation, his mediatorial kingdom is not presently on earth
- Although Christ came to usher in this aspect of the kingdom in his first coming, it is yet future since it was rejected by Israel when they spurned the Lord Jesus

Daniel 2:44 ~ In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.

Matthew 4:17 ~ From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

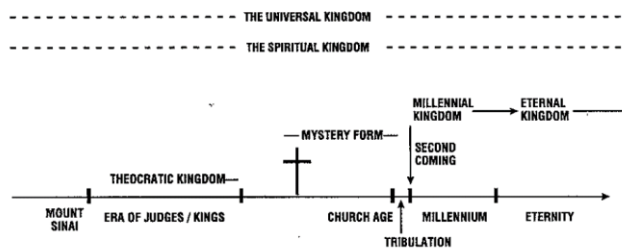
Matthew 6:10 ~ Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.

Acts 1:6 ~ So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"

¹ Paul Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, 140.

- There will be 2 phases to God's mediatorial kingdom on the earth:
 - The Millennial Kingdom – occurs when Jesus Christ destroys all human kingdoms and establishes his own in which he will physically and literally rule after his Second Coming
 - The Eternal Kingdom – occurs after the millennial kingdom when God reigns over a new heaven and new earth that is free from all opposition to his rule, as it was at the very beginning when the universe was created...this is a restoration of paradise lost

VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD



2

The Mediatorial Kingdom Program

Kingdom Program	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→
1. Creation (Gen 1-2)	2. Fall (Gen 3)	3. Promise (Gen 3:15-Malachi)	4. Redemption (Gospels-Epistles)				5. Restoration (Revelation)					

- The establishment of the mediatorial kingdom constitutes the Bible's storyline
- It shows how the "kingdom created" becomes the "kingdom fallen" and then ends in the "kingdom restored"
- The mediatorial kingdom theme of the Bible can be summarized in the following five developments:
 1. First, the kingdom is present with *creation* as God the king of creation tasks his image-bearer, man, to rule and subdue his creation.
 2. Second, the *fall* marks man's failure to rule God's creation; both God's image-bearers (humans) and the creation come under the devastating effects of the fall.
 3. Third, the *promise* plan guarantees the seed of the woman will eventually succeed over the power behind the serpent (Satan); the fall will be reversed and man will effectively rule over creation.
 4. Fourth, Jesus the King brings *redemption* through his atonement, and his death is the basis for the kingdom and reconciliation of all things.
 5. Fifth, with the *restoration* of all things God's kingdom plan is fulfilled as Jesus successfully reigns over the earth; this kingdom merges into the perfect kingdom of the Father.³
- So, the Bible begins with God as Creator/King of the universe and man as the image-bearer of God who is to rule and subdue the earth for the glory of God

Genesis 1:26, 28 ~ Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth"...God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

² Ibid., 145.

³ Taken from Michael Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 23.

- And it ends with the Lamb on the throne and God's people ruling on the new earth

Revelation 22:3, 5 ~ There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him...And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.

- So, the theme of the mediatorial kingdom dominates the entire story line of the Bible...beginning with God as King and man's right to rule under him...and ending with God on the throne and man reigning under him over a new earth

FOUNDATIONS OF THE KINGDOM

The Creation of the Kingdom

- God's plan for an earthly kingdom begins in Genesis 1...in six literal, 24-hour days God created the universe and everything in it (the sun, planets, animals, birds, fish, vegetation, land, sea)
- This would be the realm for God's mediatorial kingdom
- Although God was king and could have ruled over this new world directly, he chose to make man his vice regents and mediators over his creation

Genesis 1:26, 28 ~ Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth"...God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

- "Let us make" is significant in that, prior to this point, God had never said, "Let *Us* make" anything
- This marks a major change in God's creative work...he was personally and intimately involved in the creation of man in a way that he had not previously been with any other part of creation
- "This speaks of the creation of Adam in terms that are uniquely personal. Scripture deliberately employs such pronouns in order to stress God's intimate connection with this aspect of His creation. It establishes a personal relationship between God and man that does not exist with any other aspect of creation...He has no personal relationship with any of those things in the same sense He does with humanity. All those things were created by God through His fiat decree, and they began to exist because He ordered them to. But there is never a hint of any intimacy or personal identification between God and those things. God's relationship with humanity is unique in all of creation."⁴
- Man was made in the "image" and "likeness" of God...he was made "like" God to act on God's behalf...he was to represent God in physical form, something the animals or any other part of his creation could not do
 1. "image" (*tselem*) = semblance, statue, copy, model, a carving
 2. "likeness" (*demuth*) = similitude, pattern, shape
- These terms emphasize the fact that man has been made in the very image of God
- The same two words used in Genesis 5:3...Seth was not identical to Adam but was like him in many ways

Genesis 5:3 ~ When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.

- Although these terms do not define what this image is, they show that God is the original of which man is the copy (but not an exact replica)

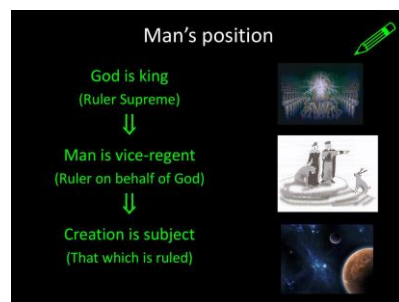
⁴ Ibid., 159-60.

- The image of God does not merely refer to what we are; it also refers to what God created us to do
- Definition of the image of God: “God made human beings, both male and female, to be created and finite *representations* (images of God) of God’s own nature, that in *relationship* with him and each other they might be his *representatives* (imaging God) in carrying out the *responsibilities* he has given to them. In this sense, we are *images of God* in order to *image God* and his purposes in the ordering of our lives and the carrying out of our God-given responsibilities.”⁵
- He was to “rule over” creation and “subdue” it...man was to exercise God’s delegated authority over his creation...he was to rule the earth on God’s behalf and act as his mediator...he had a task to complete
- That mankind was to mediate God’s kingship on earth is evident from the fact that God instructed Adam to work the ground and name the animals

Genesis 2:15 ~ Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

Genesis 2:19-20 ~ Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field...

- This shows that man was created to be a mediator for God...he was to rule over God’s creation for his glory
- God intended man to be sovereign over the planet...to rule over everything he put on earth
- Man is to shape creation in such a way as to reflect the beauty, order, love, power, and glory of the Creator
- He is to represent God’s authority to a world over which he was given dominion



- “So, from the beginning the kingdom mandate from God was holistic. It included both spiritual and physical. It involved relationships with other human beings. Understanding this helps us avoid any misconceptions that God’s kingdom purposes are only spiritual. Or that when Jesus arrives on the scene, the kingdom he offers is just ‘spiritual’ in nature.”⁶

The Command of the Kingdom

- Adam and Eve were created to be in fellowship with God, but they were in a state of unconfirmed holiness
- So, God gave them a command, a condition to meet to express obedience to their Creator from their hearts

Genesis 2:16-17 ~ The LORD God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”

- This command was given to help Adam understand that, while he had many privileges, he must obey God and operate within the framework God determined
- He needed to understand that his role as vice-regent was to operate under the recognition of the ultimate King

⁵ Ware, “Male and Female Complementarity and the Image of God” in *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, 79.

⁶ Vlach, *He Will Reign*, 64-65.

- Adam knew “good” because he was created in God’s image and was living in a place of perfection
- But Adam did not know “evil”...and God wanted to keep him from knowing it experientially, thus the test
- “To have dominion over all things is not a blanket endorsement for man to do as he will. Human dominion must be exercised within the framework of the permissions and prohibitions of the King of whom man is only the image. The tree serves, therefore, as the testing point of man’s covenant fidelity. To partake of it is to demonstrate false dominion, a hubris in which man has become in some mysterious sense like God.”⁷
- The consequences of failing the test would be death, in three forms:
 1. Spiritual death – the state of spiritual alienation from God
 2. Physical death – the process of physical death would start upon disobedience to the command
 3. Eternal death – eternal destruction for all those who die physically while being spiritually dead

The Corruption of the Kingdom

- Unfortunately, Adam failed the test...he and Eve sinned and declared their independence from God

Genesis 3:6 ~ When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

- This disobedience by God’s image-bearers was instigated by Satan in his attempt to foil God’s kingdom program...this battle between God’s kingdom and Satan’s kingdom would dominate human history
- This defection from the command of God brought massive consequences beyond anything Adam could have ever envisioned:
 - Curse on the serpent – v. 14
 - Curse on Satan – v. 15
 - Curse on the woman – v. 16
 - Curse on the ground – vv. 17-18 (instead of creation working for man, it would work against him)
 - Curse on the man – v. 19
- The domain of the kingdom – the earth and everything in it – was now stained with the effects of sin
- Thus, man’s commission to rule and subdue the earth as God’s vice-regent has failed for the time being
- The effects of the Fall prevent man from completely fulfilling his responsibility as vice-regent since absolute dominion was forfeited and yielded to Satan, who is known now as the “ruler of this world” (John 12:31)
- But in man’s darkest hour, a glimmer of hope shone...there was hope for a coming Savior-King

Genesis 3:15 ~ 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.”

- The battle between the “seed” of Satan and the “seed” of woman will continue until it will come to a climax when an individual from the seed of the woman brings victory
- “He” will deliver a mortal wound to Satan but will suffer (“bruise him on the heel”) harm in the process
- Eve may have thought her son Cain was this deliverer

Genesis 4:1 ~ I have gotten a man, the Lord

- Lamech (Noah’s father) also believed Noah could be the one to remove the curse

⁷ Eugene Merrill, “A Theology of the Pentateuch,” in Roy Zuck, ed., *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, 19.

Genesis 5:28-29 ~ Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and became the father of a son. Now he called his name Noah, saying, “This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the LORD has cursed.”

- Lamech was aware of the curse in Genesis 3, he was awaiting an individual who would take away the curse, and there was an expectation that Noah could be this savior from the curse
- Although neither Cain nor Noah were the promised Savior-King, it reveals the expectation that God would restore the creation through a special man
- “The storyline after the fall of man in Genesis 3 will be the process by which God restores man to the kingdom mandate of Genesis 1:26-28. If there is to be a successful earthly kingdom, God’s image bearers must be saved and restored. This will all be tied to the ultimate man and king – Jesus the Last Adam and Messiah.”⁸

THE KINGDOM AND THE NOAHIC COVENANT

Background

- The Noahic Covenant comes within the context of the Great Flood...after the fall of man, wickedness grew greatly upon the earth, to the point that God was sorry that he had made man

Genesis 6:5-6 ~ Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.

Genesis 6:11-12 ~ Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. Then God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.

- This is one of the greatest statements in Scripture on the depravity and wickedness of sinful men
- As a result, God determined to blot out man, animals, creeping things, and birds from the face of the earth

Genesis 6:7 ~ The LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.”

- But in contrast to rest of mankind, Noah found favor in the sight of the Lord...God determined to spare Noah and his family and to use them to preserve birds and animals that would be used to re-populate the earth

Genesis 6:8 ~ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

- Noah would be the instrument through which God’s kingdom plan would play out...he would be much like Adam in that Noah was the new representative of humanity through whom God’s purposes would proceed
- “The baton of the kingdom mandate was handed to Noah who in some ways functioned as a ‘Second Adam.’”⁹

The Promise of the Covenant

- The first mention of the covenant between God and Noah occurs in Genesis 6:17-22
- It is a prediction of the covenant that will be established with Noah after the flood...God is about to destroy the whole earth by flood but he assures Noah that his family and the animals would be preserved in the ark

⁸ Vlach, *He Will Reign*, 63-64.

⁹ Ibid., 71.

Genesis 6:18 ~ But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

- Shortly after the promise of the covenant, the floodwaters came

Genesis 7:11-12 ~ In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened. The rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights.

- This flood was essentially a reversal of creation in which the creative process is reversed...it was catastrophic

Genesis 7:23 ~ Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark.

The Establishment of the Covenant

- After being in the ark for over a year, Noah and his family exited the ark to find a dry earth
- Noah worshipped God by offering sacrifices of every kind of clean bird and animal
- In response, God promised that as long as the earth remained, there would be a regular order of day and night and of seasons
- By this regular order man would be able to plant and harvest without fear that another flood would destroy the earth

Genesis 8:21-22 ~ The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done. While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, And cold and heat, And summer and winter, And day and night Shall not cease."

- In v. 21, God promised to: 1) Never curse the ground in this way again; 2) Never destroy every living thing as he had done in the flood
- In v. 22, God promised that earth's cycles would persist...the normal daily and annual cycles would continue uninterrupted as long as the earth endures
- This includes the seasons ("seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter") as well as "day and night"
- These will end only when God finally destroys the present heaven and earth and brings about the new heavens and earth
- This earth will remain as it is because God is sovereignly holding all of his creation together in his hand
- Nothing (including climate change) will cause the earth's destruction until God brings about the new heaven and earth with fire

Genesis 9:8-17 ~ Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, 9 "Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; 10 and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth. 11 I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth." 12 God said, "This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; 13 I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. 14 It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will be seen in the cloud, 15 and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." 17 And God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth."

- Here is the formal statement of the Noahic Covenant, the very thing God promised previously
- Notice that God's role as the initiator and authority for the covenant is reasserted five times in vv. 12, 13, 15, 16, 17
- Three different groups are the recipients of the covenant promise from God:
 - Noah and his descendants, which includes every successive generation after him, or all mankind (v. 9)
 - All the living creatures that were with Noah on the ark (v. 10)
 - The earth itself (v. 13), since the whole earth was destroyed by the flood
- The covenant remains in force as long as the earth remains
- "God declares He will never destroy the earth again with a flood. And he guarantees to preserve the stability of nature. This promise must have been assuring since it guaranteed the uniformity of nature and opportunity for man to function without threat of global catastrophe. As long as 'the earth remains' humans can rely on the cycle of seasons. Not only is this promise a blessing to all of creation, it will allow for God's kingdom and salvation plans to unfold in history. *Thus, the Noahic Covenant functions as the platform for God's plans to play out.* It is also the basis for other biblical covenants that will follow."¹⁰
- The certainty of later covenants between God and his people is rooted in the order of nature promised in the Noahic Covenant

Jeremiah 33:20-21 ~ "Thus says the LORD, 'If you can break My covenant for the day, and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levitical priests, My ministers.'"

Isaiah 54:9-10 ~ "For this is like the days of Noah to Me; when I swore that the waters of Noah should not flood the earth again, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you, nor will I rebuke you. For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken," says the LORD who has compassion on you.

- One critical element of the Noahic Covenant was the establishment of human government and the institution of capital punishment for those guilty of murdering God's image-bearers

Genesis 9:5-6 ~ Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man.

The Sign of the Covenant

Genesis 9:13-14, 16 ~ I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will be seen in the cloud...When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.

- As a sign of this covenant, the rainbow is a visible, repeatable phenomena that serves to remind God of the covenant that He has made with all the earth, never to destroy the earth again by flood
- The rainbow should also serve to remind us of what God did in destroying the whole earth because of its wickedness, and of his mercy towards us through his promise not to do it again

¹⁰ Ibid., 72.

- “Rainbows are the result of well-known physics. When light enters at an angle into a substance where it travels more slowly, different wavelengths are bent differently. This effect is called *dispersion*. Since colour depends on wavelength, we see this dispersion as a band of different colours. The shorter wavelengths (violet and blue) are bent the most, the longer wavelengths (red and orange) are bent the least.”¹¹
- Rainbows form when sunlight hits raindrops or water in the air
- The light refracts as it enters the water, then reflects internally from the opposite concave surface, then refracts again as it leaves the drop...thus, two refractions and one reflection
- Although there are numerous shades of color in a rainbow, most categorize them in 7 colors: ROYGBIV
- Of the rainbow, John Gill said, “though it is a bow, yet without arrows, and is not turned downwards towards the earth, but upwards towards heaven, and so is a token of mercy and kindness, and not of wrath and anger.”¹²



The Connection to the Abrahamic Covenant

- The Noahic Covenant sets the scene for the Abrahamic Covenant
- Noah had 3 sons: Shem, Ham, Japheth
- The descendants of Shem are listed in Genesis 10:21-31
- The specific line of Shem leading to Abraham is listed in Genesis 11:10-26
- These were the “Semites,” those people from whom the Israelite nation would come
- Also, the description of the nations (Genesis 10) and the rebelliousness of the nations at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11) is seen in their failure to scatter abroad over the face of the earth and their desire to make a name for themselves (Genesis 11:4)
- “Nations, therefore, are an important part of God’s kingdom purposes. What occurs at Babel is not just a ‘failure and punishment, but of God’s intended will for the diversity of nations from creation...’ Nations have a positive role in the eternal state...grasping a proper connection between Genesis 10-11 and Genesis 12 is important. The Table of Nations is the context from which Abraham and the nation Israel will occur. Genesis 10-11 provides the context for Israel to be the platform for universal blessings. God’s purposes for the nation Israel are not simply for the benefit of Israel alone. God uses Israel as a vessel to bless all people groups.”¹³

¹¹ Sarfati, *The Genesis Account*, 612.

¹² John Gill’s *Exposition of the Entire Bible*, adapted from Online Bible by Larry Pierce.

¹³ Vlach, *He Will Reign*, 79.