

I. REVIEW

- A. The last few weeks we have been exploring topics related to Genesis 1. The reason we've been doing this is because in 2 Peter 3:3-7, the apostle Peter says that one of the reasons people will scoff at the Second Coming of Jesus in the last days is the deliberate forgetting of Genesis 1. He says that there is a direct correlation between a scoffing spirit concerning the Second coming of Christ and a wicked lifestyle of following evil desires.
- B. Last week, we focused on how God wrapped Himself in light. God is beyond the highest heavens. The highest heavens cannot contain Him. He created light on the first day. Then He wrapped Himself in light. The Uncreated God wrapped Himself in something created. In love and humility, He has organized and arranged His Being in such a way as to be accessible to His creation. He loves us and wants us to be able to "get" to Him.
- C. We also talked about light and the resurrected body. When Jesus was raised from the dead, His new body was a body of flesh and bones, but it was interwoven with light and full of glory. When the Father raised Jesus from the dead by the Spirit, He wrapped Jesus in a body of full of light. When Jesus returns to raise our bodies from the dead, He will give us bodies that are full of light and glory like his.

Philippians 3:20-21(NIV)

20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Matthew 13:41-43 (NIV)

41 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. 42 They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

Romans 8:18 (NIV)

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

- D. Two weeks ago, we talked about how the heavens and the earth are likened to a house. God has set up residence in this house. The heavens are the upper chambers and the earth the lower chambers. When God created the heavens and the earth, He established His throne in the highest heavens. A throne is the place of government and authority. A king sits on a throne and rules a kingdom from a throne. In the highest heaven is His throne, and the earth is His footstool.

Isaiah 66:1 (ESV)

Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?"

- E. Tonight we are going to look at two important topics. First, we will explore how God's universal kingdom over all creation relates to the kingdom that Jesus will establish when He returns. Then we will also explore what God is presently doing from His throne in the highest heavens, as well as what He is not doing presently and why.

II. THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- A. Most of us have heard the phrase "the kingdom of God." In Scripture, there are two primary ways in which the kingdom of God is understood. The first is the kingdom of God in a *universal* sense. Universal means everything everywhere. From His throne in the highest heavens, God oversees all His creation. He is King and Ruler over everything in all creation. He rules over all. The heavens and the earth are the kingdom over which God rules from His throne in the highest heavens.

Psalm 103:19 (NIV)

The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.

Job 41:11 (NIV)

Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me.

Deuteronomy 10:14 (NIV)

To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it.

1 Chronicles 29:10-11 (NIV)

¹⁰ David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, "Praise be to you, O LORD, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. ¹¹ Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.

- B. Question: Who is the King of the universal kingdom of the heavens and the earth?

- C. Question: Who are the subjects of this universal kingdom?

- D. In other parts of Scripture, the kingdom of God is described and understood as an *earthly kingdom* that will be established by the Messiah on the earth at the end of the age.

Daniel 2:24-47

²⁴ Then Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to execute the wise men of Babylon, and said to him, "Do not execute the wise men of Babylon. Take me to the king, and I will interpret his dream for him." ²⁵ Arioch took Daniel to the king at once and said, "I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can tell the king what his dream means." ²⁶ The king asked Daniel (also called Belteshazzar), "Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?" ²⁷ Daniel replied, "No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, ²⁸ but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you lay on your bed are these: ²⁹ "As you were lying there, O king, your mind turned to things to come

(future reality being described), and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen (future reality being described).³⁰ As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other living men, but so that you, O king, may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind.³¹ “You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance.³² The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze,³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay.³⁴ While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands (something not created by man). It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them (judgment).³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain (a kingdom, cf. vs. 44) and filled the whole earth (the earth the center of this kingdom’s expansion).³⁶ “This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king.³⁷ You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory (Babylon a kingdom on the earth);³⁸ in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold.³⁹ “After you, another kingdom will rise (earthly kingdom), inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth (earthly kingdom).⁴⁰ Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom (earthly kingdom), strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others.⁴¹ Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay.⁴² As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom (earthly kingdom) will be partly strong and partly brittle.⁴³ And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.⁴⁴ “In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will (future reality) set up a kingdom (the kingdom of God, that fills the earth) that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will (future reality, at the end of the age) crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.⁴⁵ This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. “The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy.”⁴⁶ Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him.⁴⁷ The king said to Daniel, “Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery.”

Isaiah 2:1-5 (NIV)

¹This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: ²In the last days the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. ³Many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.” The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴He will judge between the nations and will settle

disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. ⁵Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD.

Isaiah 9:1-7 (NIV)

¹Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan— ²The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. ³ You have enlarged the nation (geographically and in number, including resurrected saints, cf. Is. 49:8ff, 66:7ff; Dan. 12:13), and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder. ⁴For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor (cf. Is. 11, Zech. 12-14). ⁵ Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. ⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

- E. So, Scripture describes the Kingdom of God in two senses. First, the universal kingdom. God rules over the heavens and the earth presently from His throne in the highest heavens over all creation. Second, the future kingdom of the Messiah on the earth. This kingdom awaits a future establishment in context to God's judgment of the earth at the end of the age, when all rebellion will be crushed. This kingdom will have its governmental headquarters in Jerusalem. Jesus, the Messiah, will sit on David's throne in Jerusalem and rule the earth in righteousness from there. Both are the kingdom of God in an important sense.
- F. Question: Which one of these – the universal kingdom or the Messiah's future earthly kingdom – are we a part of simply by virtue of the fact that we were created by God and are therefore a part of His creation?
- G. Who is a part of the universal kingdom in this wicked evil age? The righteous, the wicked, animals, etc?
- H. Which one of these – the universal kingdom or the Messiah's future earthly kingdom – do you think requires repentance and faith in the Messiah in order for someone to have a place in it?
- I. Let's read the following verses. As we read, ask the following question: Which kingdom is being proclaimed as good news?

Mark 1:14-15 (NIV)

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

- J. When John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles proclaimed that the kingdom of God is at hand, they were proclaiming the coming kingdom of the Messiah. Inclusion in this kingdom requires repentance and faith in Jesus as Lord.
- K. We saw from Daniel 2 that the Messiah's kingdom will be established in the Day of the Lord, when God will crush all rebellious earthly governments and blow them away like the chaff.
- L. Several hundred years even before the Messiah showed up on the scene the first time, the prophets Isaiah (Is. 13:6, 7), Ezekiel (Ezek. 30:3), Joel (Joel 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14), Obadiah (Obad. 15), Zephaniah (Zeph. 1:14), boldly proclaimed the nearness of the Day of the Lord. Jesus understood His message about the kingdom of God being "at hand" in the same way – a statement of urgency, irrespective of when the end of the age actually arrives in history.

Zephaniah 1:14-16 (NIV)

¹⁴ "The great day of the LORD is near— near and coming quickly. Listen! The cry on the day of the LORD will be bitter, the shouting of the warrior there. ¹⁵ That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, ¹⁶ a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the corner towers.

Luke 10:8-15 (NIV)

⁸ "When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. ⁹ Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.' ¹⁰ But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ¹¹ 'Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.' ¹² I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. ¹³ "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴ But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. ¹⁵ And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths.

M. To first century Jews, it would not have been good news that God's universal kingdom was now "near" or "at hand," because God's universal kingdom had always been "at hand" from the beginning of creation! God had been sitting on His heavenly throne from the beginning. "Let Your kingdom come" means nothing if we're talking about the universal kingdom, because it is already here. Their hope was the coming kingdom of the Messiah to be established at the end of the age. This too is our blessed hope:

Titus 2:11-14 (NIV)

¹¹ For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. ¹² It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

N. Therefore, when God created the heavens and the earth, these became part of His kingdom. All of God's creation is a part of His kingdom. God has authority over His kingdom. God is

seated on a throne in the highest heavens. God is seated over the heavens and the earth as King. He has all authority and power over the heavens and the earth. God's kingdom over all creation is His universal kingdom. God rules over everything from His throne in the highest heavens. Part of that kingdom is in rebellion against God. But God is being patient with the human rebels. Would be as if Oregon were to rebel against the United States. Just because Oregon thinks it is on its own wouldn't really mean that. The US government would squelch that rebellion in due time. The difference is that God loves the people rebelling against Him.

- O. The universal kingdom and the Messiah's coming kingdom are dynamically related. The Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, is the Eternal Word of God who has always existed. He has always been King. And when He became flesh, the Word became Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus, the God-Man, has been raised to the Father's right hand. Like King David, He has been anointed King. And yet, also like David, He is waiting patiently for the Father to give Him David's earthly throne.

III. WHAT GOD IS PRESENTLY DOING ON HIS HEAVENLY THRONE

- A. When we read Scripture, we need to ask the Holy Spirit to give us insight as to which kingdom is being talked about. What are we actually supposed to have faith in? Abraham is known as the father of faith. What did Abraham have faith in? What was he putting his faith in?
- B. Confusion on this topic can sometimes lead to disappointment concerning what we expect God to do and not do in this age. A wrong understanding on this topic can obscure the goodness of the Father's heart. Some people can get so offended that they even leave the faith. For example, what about all of the injustice in the world? If the kingdom of God is "at hand," why is there human trafficking? If God is ruling from the highest throne, why is not intervening to bring peace to the earth? Am I just not praying and fasting enough? etc. God, what are You doing up there? Don't you see this mess? We want to have clarity on this topic, so that we don't give the enemy room to plant accusations in our hearts against God.
- C. What is God presently doing in and from the highest heavens? What is He not doing yet? What will He do in the future? When we see the full picture in light of the universal kingdom and the Messiah's coming kingdom, our heart will begin to explode with love, gratitude, and thankfulness.
- D. Parts of God's universal kingdom of the heavens and the earth are in rebellion against Him. What do you think God desires for the human beings in His universal kingdom who are in rebellion against Him? What do You think is going on in His heart as the Father of all creation?
- E. Lets start with what God is not doing from His throne in the heavens. Although God has all authority and power over the heavens and the earth, He is restraining from using that power to destroy the wicked. He is giving the wicked time to repent. He is merciful and long-suffering. He loves wicked human beings. God's Father heart is expressed by His patience toward those on the earth. He grieves the over the death of the wicked. He is giving us time to repent. However, the goodness of His Father's heart is also expressed in the fact that He has promised with certainty that one day the mess will come to an end.

2 Peter 3:9 (NIV)

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Ezekiel 33:11 (NIV)

Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?'

- F. However, though God is restraining from the day of wrath, God is actively taking note of everything that happens on the earth. God is looking down from heaven on the earth. His eyes see all. When God created the heavens, He put a sea of glass before His throne. Glass is transparent and clear. You can see through glass. That is the point. God is looking through the glass at the earth. He sees everything we do, think, or say. He knows all of our motives, and one day these will all be exposed for all to see. This is a key part of the gospel.

Revelation 4:6 (NIV)

Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

Hebrews 4:13 (NIV)

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Romans 2:16 (NIV)

This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

- G. God is looking down from His throne in the heavens. He is watching and observing what we are going to do with the hearts He put in us. Will we love Him with all of our hearts? Will we obey Him? Or will we harden our hearts toward Him and disobey Him? Will we scoff at what God says He will do in the day of judgment? Or will we let the fear of the Lord drive us to righteousness and a life of self-sacrificial love following Jesus' example? God is carefully watching and observing the hearts of all mankind. He is considering everything we do and say. He is examining our motives. When Jesus returns, all of us will give an account of our lives before God.

Psalms 33:13-15 (NIV)

¹³ From heaven the LORD looks down and sees all mankind; ¹⁴ from his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth— ¹⁵ he who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do.

- H. God is looking down from His throne right now to see if there are people on the earth who will turn from their wicked ways and seek Him.

Psalm 14:2 (NIV)

The LORD looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God.

- I. He is taking note of the righteous who, though not perfect, are sincerely seeking Him. He is taking note of those who sincerely revere His name and believe that one day they will give an account for their lives. Through the sea of glass, He is looking at those who sincerely desire to obey Him. We can't obey Him in our own effort alone. But God gives us His grace in the Holy Spirit to grow in obedience over time. He has His eye on us. He is cheering us on as we run the race. He sits on a high and lofty throne in the highest heavens. And yet from that throne He gives us strength and grace for the journey. From His glorious throne in the heavens He gives grace to love and obey Him if we will ask Him for it. He will revive our spirits from His throne. His throne is a throne of grace where we find power and strength to obey. We can have confidence that God will give us the grace we need to stand blameless before Him.

Isaiah 57:15 (NIV)

For this is what the high and lofty One says— he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place (His throne in the highest heavens), but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.

Hebrews 4:16 (NIV)

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

- J. From His throne in the highest heavens, God is recording and taking note of all the godly conversations that produce righteousness and obedience in our lives.

Malachi 3:16-18 (NIV)

¹⁶ Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name. ¹⁷ **“They will be mine,” says the LORD Almighty, “in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him.** ¹⁸ **And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.**

- K. In the heavens there is a book called the “book of life.” Names are being recorded in this book. The big question the angels are asking: Who will be among those included in the resurrection of the righteous at Jesus’ return? Who will inherit the Messiah’s glorious kingdom? Who will be a part of the shining Bride? If we persevere in the faith to the end, we will receive the crown of life in the resurrection at the Second Coming. We will be Jesus’ inheritance as His Bride. Those whose names aren’t in this book will be included in the resurrection of the wicked. This is also known as the second death. This is the death that God grieves over the most. As we saw a few weeks ago, God made a covenant with creation that the creation would always exist. But God won’t allow wickedness to devastate the earth forever either. What is the solution? The wicked will also live forever in resurrected bodies. They won’t just be annihilated or snuffed out. But they also will be secluded from the rest of creation in the lake of fire.

Philippians 4:3 (NIV)

Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Acts 24:14b-15

¹⁴...I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, ¹⁵ and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

Revelation 20:11-15

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 2:11(NIV)

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.

- L. From His throne in the highest heaven, God is also taking note of the wicked and those who are perpetuating injustice and violence on the earth. God is listening to the cries and prayers of the oppressed. There will be a day of reckoning. Justice will be served when Jesus returns. God is delaying the day of His wrath because of His love and patience for sinners. However, one day the window of mercy will come to an end. God is in covenant with His creation, and He is committed to fixing it on His terms. He is not going to let this mess go on forever. When Jesus returns, God will judge those who have refused to repent and who have hardened their hearts in pride against Him beyond the point of no turning back. At the Second Coming, fire and burning sulfur will rain down on the wicked of the earth. God will bring all injustice to an end.

Psalms 11:4-7 (NIV)

⁴ The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD is on his heavenly throne. He observes the sons of men; his eyes examine them. ⁵ The LORD examines the righteous, but the wicked and those who love violence his soul hates (covenantally). ⁶ On the wicked he will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur; a scorching wind will be their lot. ⁷ For the LORD is righteous, he loves justice; upright men will see his face.

Psalm 10:17-18 (NIV)

¹⁷ O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear ¹⁸to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more.

IV. CONCLUSION

- A. Genesis 1 reminds us that God is in charge of all creation. He is seated on His throne over His household of the heavens and the earth. He is enthroned over His creation, His kingdom. Right now part of the heavens and the earth are in rebellion against God. God is going to fix that problem when He sends Jesus back the second time. We must resist a scoffing spirit. We must pray and boldly seek the throne of grace in the confidence that God is going to help us walk in love and obedience by His Spirit. We must share the gospel with others while there is still a window of mercy.