

KINGDOM VISIONARIES

The vision of the Kingdom in the minds of Biblical saints.



PART 1: ADAM, ABRAHAM, AND MOSES

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Kingdom Visionaries Part 1: Adam, Abraham, and Moses

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Welcome to *Kingdom Visionaries*

Welcome to *Kingdom Visionaries*, an extended series of studies designed to explore and unpack the vision of the Kingdom of God which operated in the minds of key Biblical figures.

Part 1: Adam, Abraham, and Moses demonstrates the presence of Kingdom thinking from the beginning, and shows that God intends His Kingdom to come to expression according to His promises with the cultures and societies of human beings.

These studies are designed for individual or group use. While you may derive much benefit from studying on your own, that benefit can be greatly enhanced by joining with a friend or a group to read, discuss, share, challenge, and pray for one another.

Take one lesson at a time, reading the Scriptures and narrative aloud, and pausing to reflect on and discuss the questions provided. Don't be in a hurry. Be willing to take more than one session on a lesson if it will allow you to delve more deeply into the subject matter.

If you're in a group, make sure you prepare for each study by reading through the lesson in advance and answering the questions in writing. Take turns leading your group. Let every member share in the privilege and responsibility of facilitating discussions. Group leaders should not feel like they have to "have all the answers." Their task is simply to lead the group through the readings and questions, and to help everyone participate.

These studies are designed as brief introductions to the subject under consideration. We hope they will enlarge your worldview, help you to become more firmly rooted in Scripture, equip you to minister to others, and stimulate you to want to learn more about the Word of God and the Biblical worldview.

We're happy to provide this study at no charge. If you find these studies helpful, we hope you'll consider sending a gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, to help us in making these resources available to others.

May the Lord bless your study of His Word.

T. M. Moore
Principal

1 The Eternal Kingdom

*The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty;
The LORD is clothed,
He has girded Himself with strength.
Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved.
Your throne is established from of old;
You are from everlasting.* Psalm 93.1, 2

Kingdom confusion

I can think of few Biblical teachings on which it is more important for Christians to be clear than the teaching concerning the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom being what it is, to misunderstand this truth, or to fail to gain a clear and growing sense of it, is to miss the entire purpose of the Gospel, which is, after all, the Gospel, the *Good News* of the *Kingdom*.

Still, many believers are unclear about the Kingdom. Or they may be clear as to their *understanding* of the Kingdom, but not their *experience* of it. They assent to the notion of seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt. 6.33), but their everyday lives reveal little to indicate that *practicing* such a high order mandate has much priority for them.

For many believers, I fear, the idea of the Kingdom of God is just that, an idea, something to think about and ponder, but not something to *know* or *experience*. The Kingdom is a matter of *then and there*, not *here and now*. The Kingdom is something that is yet to come, following the return of Christ, when Jesus will be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords, and will reign in the new heavens and new earth. For now the Kingdom is merely something to long or hope for, and since it is yet to come, it can have little *practical* relevance for our lives in the here and now.

Others may agree that the Kingdom has come, after a fashion, or to some extent, but because it relates only to spiritual matters, it is of but limited application in the day to day realities of our lives in culture and society.

Perhaps most Christians do not regard the Kingdom of God as a primary Biblical theme, one so central to the unfolding of the divine economy that, to miss it, is not merely to miss the Good News by a little, but to miss it altogether.

The Kingdom and the saints of Scripture

Throughout the Scriptures God's people have understood the importance of the Kingdom of God, and have grasped at least some of the implications and expectations that accompany this important teaching.

From Adam to the Apostles, the Kingdom has danced in the minds of Biblical saints, glittering and glistening with portent, pondered and hoped for, to a greater or lesser extent, and with growing clarity. If we could enter the mind of those Biblical Kingdom visionaries, we might discover a new, more complete, and more vital understanding of the Kingdom, one that can take our *idea* of the Kingdom out of the realm of mere thought and into our daily walk with the Lord, in every area of life.

And that is precisely what I intend for us to do, beginning with this series.

Our eternal King

Our God is, after all, the *eternal* God and King. He is *from* forever and *unto* forever, King and Lord and Sovereign without end. Whatever He has made He rules, and has ruled it from the beginning. Whatever He has charged or privileged people with concerning creation, He expects that we should undertake under the cope of His rule and according to the purpose and protocols of His dominion.

The Kingdom of God, as Jesus explained, is not *of* this world (Jn. 18.36). It does not originate in this world, therefore it is not bound by the protocols or practices of this world, and is not to be known or sought in the manner of earthly domains. Our Biblical forebears understood this, yet they also understood that the *reality* of the Kingdom – its eternal character, power, and proximity – meant that their experience of life should be defined by parameters and protocols *from above* or *from beyond* this merely temporal domain. They fixed their thoughts on what they understood of the Kingdom of God and, with greater or lesser success, brought their lives into line with what they understood of this eternal, sure, and indestructible domain.

And beginning in this series we're going to enter the Kingdom mindset and vision of our Biblical forebears, so that the Kingdom of God might become for us something more than a hopeful idea, that the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom of God might be increasingly the framework, reality, and *experience* of every aspect of our lives.

For reflection or discussion

1. What is the Kingdom of God? What is our place in it? How large does the Kingdom feature in your own life as a follower of Christ?
2. Jesus taught many parables of the Kingdom. He said the Kingdom was “at hand” and “within you.” Take one of His parables and see if you can identify the key Kingdom idea Jesus was trying to communicate.
3. Jesus and the Apostles taught the Gospel of the Kingdom. What is the Gospel of the Kingdom, and what makes this especially “Good News”?
4. “Perhaps most Christians do not regard the Kingdom of God as a primary Biblical theme, one so central to the unfolding of the divine economy that, to miss it, is not merely to miss the Good News by a little, but to miss it altogether.” Do you agree? Why or why not?
5. What are your goals for this study? What do you hope to learn?

Next steps: How do you understand the Kingdom of God? How does this understanding of the Kingdom affect your daily walk with the Lord? The various arenas and relationships of your [Personal Mission Field](#)? Talk with a few Christian friends about this idea. Encourage them to read or listen to the articles in this series, and to join you to discuss what you've learned.

Prayer:

2 Adam and Eve: Dominion

Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” Genesis 1.28

From the beginning

The idea of rule and dominion under God – the idea of a Kingdom – has been present from the first days of humankind’s sojourn on the earth. On the day God created Adam and Eve, He instilled in them an idea of dominion, a call to exercise authority, by God’s command and according to His purposes, in acting upon the creation and creatures around them.

As the first couple considered this calling to exercise dominion, the idea of the Kingdom of God as we might think of it was not at all in their minds. This understanding would only precipitate gradually in Scripture, as God unfolded His covenant relationship with His people over the entire course of redemptive history.

Nevertheless, Adam and Eve were given *some* understanding both of what it meant to exercise dominion and what it would entail. Thus, it is essential that we try to understand, if only in broad outlines, what God intended for Adam and Eve and what they must have understood to be involved in carrying out this dominion calling.

The first Kingdom visionaries

Adam and Eve are the first “Kingdom visionaries” whom we shall consider in this series. We may be more effective in seeking the Kingdom and achieving its powerful realization (1 Cor. 4.20) if we can acquire a better understanding of what the coming of the Kingdom should look like in our lives.

To this end, these studies on Kingdom visionaries will help us to gain a clearer understanding of our own callings within the divine economy.

We turn, therefore, to consider Adam and Eve, our first parents in God’s covenant, the first Kingdom visionaries in Scripture.

Three tasks

As Adam, and, after her creation, Eve, began to reflect on God’s calling to exercise dominion, three general disciplines must have begun to take shape in their minds.

First, they would need to *discover the broad parameters* of their calling. They had been placed in a garden, filled with creatures and invested with the resources for future development and use. Before they could begin to exercise dominion over the earth, they would first have to discover what exercising dominion meant within the area immediately assigned to them.

That process of *discovery* entailed many new things: how to relate to, learn from, and help one another; having and raising children; naming the animals; tending to the many and various plants and trees; finding out about minerals hidden in the earth; learning the various ways of harnessing and using flowing water; and so forth. Undoubtedly every day of their lives would have included some *work of discovery*, of seeking to understand the scope and limits of their dominion calling with respect to the whole of the creation around them.

Second, Adam and Eve would have to *master certain skills* of development related to each of the areas of discovery. Raising children and keeping animals require different skills. Pruning fruit trees and harvesting vegetables are not quite the same.

While *discovery* is a function of *learning*, *development* is the product of *work*. Adam's and Eve's calling to exercise dominion required both – learning and work – and they would have seen this quite clearly.

The third task is one of *maintenance or vigilance*: Adam and Eve were to *defend the creation* against any threat to developing the goodness of God and exercising dominion over the garden. This is the sense of Genesis 2.15, which we can gather from the fact that the same verb, *shamar*, normally translated “keep”, is used in Genesis 3.24 to describe the action of the cherubim in preventing Adam and Eve returning to the garden.

Thus, in addition to *learning* and developmental *work*, the calling to exercise dominion required of these first Kingdom visionaries *constant vigilance* against anything that might compromise the good purposes of God.

For reflection or discussion

1. What does it mean to “have dominion”? How would you “have dominion” in your own sphere of influence?
2. How does the idea of having dominion, as Adam and Eve were charged with this, point or gesture toward the idea of the Kingdom of God?
3. Learning, working, guarding: How do you suppose Adam and Eve undertook each of these tasks? What did they actually do?
4. In what ways do you find yourself learning, working, and guarding in order to exercise dominion in your life?
5. Is “Kingdom work” limited to what we might do at church? Explain:

Next steps: Learning, work, maintaining godly order – What role does each of these tasks play in your calling as a follower of Christ? How much of your life can you fit under these three categories? Talk with a Christian friend about these questions.

Prayer:

3 Adam and Eve: Kingdom Vision

Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. Genesis 2.15

The three tasks of dominion

We've seen that, from the beginning, God instructed His people in the work of *rule*, of exercising dominion over the creation.

God created Adam and Eve in a "good" world (Gen. 1.31), and His appointment to them to be fruitful and multiply and to exercise dominion over the creation was aimed at their developing and increasing the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

In order to fulfill their appointed calling, Adam and Eve understood they would have to commit to learning, working in and on their environment, and defending their assigned mission field against whatever might undermine their dominion efforts and compromise the good purposes of God.

But what vision must have captured their minds as they set about these tasks in those first days, prior to the fall?

A vision of dominion

What could Adam and Eve "see", in their minds? What did they talk about as being the likely outcome from their learning, working, and defending the garden? As they pursued the disciplines of discovery, development, and defense, what were the primary objectives? What did they "see" as the fruit of their exercising dominion?

We can, of course, only speculate on such questions, but this much, at least, was probably part of their dominion vision:

- Many offspring to help them improve and extend the garden and its goodness, until enough children had been born, raised, and engaged in the work of having dominion that the entire earth – and they could have had no sense of its dimensions – would become a garden before the Lord.
- A peaceable, orderly, joyful, and fruitful existence in cooperation with all the creatures of the garden, both plants and animals, for the mutual benefit and enrichment of rulers and ruled alike.
- Discovery and development of many unseen wonders and powers (minerals, flowing rivers) and whatever might be made from them to adorn the garden and delight its keepers – that is, they must have had some idea of culture, of the making of things useful and beautiful to assist them in their calling.
- Continuous and deepening resort to divine blessing, to the presence and guidance of God, to help them in their work and to nurture and develop them in their relationships, roles, and responsibilities.

Had Adam and Eve been able to keep this vision in mind, and to be guided by it, the calamity of the fall might never have occurred.

A continuing call and idea

Yet, even after the fall, we see the idea of dominion still at work in the first couple. The entry of sin into their lives, and through them, to the creation itself, did not cancel or nullify the idea of dominion. Adam and Eve continued to work the ground, beget and raise children, teach the story of their creation and fall, and guide their offspring in making culture and seeking the Lord through worship.

This sense or “seed” of the dominion calling remained in them by virtue of their being the image-bearers of God and of His having redeemed them graciously from their transgression. They bore the stain and effects of sin in their bodies; however, renewed in their souls and restored to the blessing of God, they immediately took up the tasks of dominion, pursuing God’s original intention for them, according to His ongoing command and promise, and in spite of the obstacles created by their fallen condition.

From these first Kingdom visionaries, therefore we may learn (1) what are the tasks of dominion: discovery, development, and defense of the creation; (2) that staying within the blessing and Word of God is the only secure place for exercising dominion; (3) and that no obstacle, hindrance, or threat from the fallen world or our own sin must be allowed to keep us from seeking to exercise dominion over the creation and to pass that calling on to subsequent generations.

We are faithful to God and to our first covenant parents when we embrace the idea of dominion as they did and make it part of our daily experience in the Lord.

For reflection or discussion

1. As T. M. seems to be using it in this study, what do you understand by the idea of “vision”?
2. Does every believer have a vision of the Kingdom, or just church leaders? Explain.
3. What value is there for us in trying to piece together Adam’s vision of what exercising dominion might have looked like or accomplished?
4. In what ways can sin keep us from having and pursuing a Kingdom vision? How can we overcome this obstacle?
5. How can you know when some other “vision” is crowding out the vision of the Kingdom in your life? What should you do at such a time?

Next steps: Think of your calling to learn, work, and guard against sin. How would you summarize your “vision” for the calling to exercise dominion God has given you? Ask a pastor or church leader to help you think about this question.

Prayer:

4 Abraham: Kings and the King

“No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you.” Genesis 17.5-7

No king but God

Abraham had some experience of earthly kings, and it wasn't all that great. Shortly after his appearing in Canaan, two episodes involving earthly kings must have colored Abraham's view of such people in something of a negative light.

In Genesis 12 Abraham – then, Abram – fled to Egypt to escape a famine, an event God had sent to test and strengthen Abram's faith – a test which he failed. Abram feared for his life before the king of Egypt, and, to secure his own wellbeing, jeopardized his wife's purity. For this he was soundly rebuked by Pharaoh and sent packing back to Canaan. The embarrassment caused from this incident must have stung deeply.

Shortly after that, four kings and their armies came marauding through the land, defeating five local rulers and, in the process, carrying off Abram's nephew, Lot. It took a bold rapid-strike effort on Abram's part to gain back both Lot and all the spoil captured from the local rulers.

When the defeated kings wanted to settle-up with Abram, he would have nothing of it. He insisted that God only was his King, and he would not allow himself to be put in the position of being beholden to or appearing to have been enriched by anyone other than Him (Gen. 14.17-24). Abram must have reflected that earthly kings can be a greedy, self-indulgent lot.

At the same time, Abram acknowledged the legitimacy of an earthly king who was a priest of God and ruler of a kingdom of peace. Melchizedek, whose name means “King of Righteousness”, was the ruler of Salem – which means “Peace.” He was also a priest of God Most High, the same God Who had made such precious and very great promises to Abram, inducing Him to seek the Lord in the land of Canaan (Gen. 12.1-3; cf. 2 Pet. 1.4). To Melchizedek Abram gave a tithe of everything he had taken from the marauding kings, but only after Melchizedek had blessed him in the name of God, the King Most High.

A vision of kings to come

When God appeared again to Abram in Genesis 17, it was for the express purpose of enlarging the patriarch's understanding of the divine purpose. Abram must learn to think about God's covenant and promises more broadly than simply his immediate family. He would become the father of “a multitude of nations.” Thus he was to be called Abraham, rather than Abram, from this point forward.

Over those nations kings would be set, kings perhaps like Melchizedek, who ruled in righteousness and peace, and were dispensers and administrators of divine blessing according the covenant promises of God. Abraham knew something of what it meant to enjoy the promises of God, to see an earthly kingdom administered by one who was divinely appointed and had divine approval. Thus, the prospect of becoming the father of perhaps *many* such kings must have further added to Abraham's determination to seek the promises of God according to whatever God required of him at the moment.

Twice more, for emphasis

One additional pair of incidents must have reinforced Abraham's growing sense of what God intended to do through him. In Genesis 20 Abraham repeated his mistake with Pharaoh before the pagan king, Abimelech. He explained his duplicity by saying that he didn't think the fear of God had reached this place, and so he feared for his own life.

But God spoke to this pagan king, revealing Abraham's true identity and warning him not to harm this man or his wife, since he was a prophet. This time, instead of merely fleeing back to Canaan with his tail between his legs, Abraham blessed Abimelech in the name of the Lord (v. 17) and brought restoration and healing to his kingdom.

This was followed in Genesis 21 by the same Abimelech coming to Abraham, acknowledging his greatness and the fact of his friendship with God (v. 22), and seeking defense from God's power in a covenant with Abraham! What a strange and wonderful turn of events! The same king Abraham had feared, then blessed and restored, now came to Abraham, fearing the God in Whose Name he had been blessed and restored, and seeking friendship and protection from the one who had dispensed the blessings of the Lord.

What vision was Abraham beginning to "see" concerning earthly kings and their kingdoms, and the eternal and most High King?

For reflection or discussion

1. How did his entanglements with earthly kings affect Abraham's vision and pursuit of the Kingdom of God?
2. With Abraham the idea of a kingdom becomes inextricably involved with the promises of God. Look at Genesis 12.1-3. Summarize the promises God made to Abraham:
3. Would realizing these promises be a good thing for earthly kings and kingdoms? Why or why not?
4. What do you make of Melchizedek – King of Salem, King of Righteousness? What statement does he make about God and kingdoms? In what ways does Melchizedek serve to point us beyond Abraham's time horizons to a future King?
5. From Abraham on, is it possible to separate God's covenant and promises from the idea of kings and kingdoms? Why or why not?

Next steps: Do you think Christians today believe the Kingdom of God should have any impact on the kingdoms of this world? Ask a few Christians.

Prayer:

5 Abraham: Kingdom and Covenant

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.” Genesis 17.1 2

God’s covenant

With Abraham we tend to think more in terms of “covenant” than of “Kingdom.” God called Abraham to enter with Him into a covenant of promise, in which he would know blessings from God and become a blessing to all the families of the earth (Gen. 12.1-3).

That covenant becomes a defining motif for all subsequent unfolding of divine revelation, and all further understanding of the coming Kingdom of God.

We should note two important features of that covenant as it relates to the idea of exercising dominion, or, the Kingdom of God.

First, God clearly connected His covenant with Abraham to the covenant He had established with Adam and Eve. While the word, “covenant”, does not occur with Adam and Eve, all the hallmarks of a covenant relationship are visible between them. With Noah, first, then with Abraham, the idea of “covenant” becomes a defining term in thinking about God’s relationship with His people.

The phrase repeated here in our text, “multiply you exceedingly”, takes the mandate given to Adam and Eve and places it squarely within the covenant God was making with Abraham. God’s covenant with Adam and Eve is being continued and extended with Abraham. We can assume, I think, that everything else entailed in that original mandate – learning, working, and guarding – was reinstated with Abraham as well.

Second, as we have seen, Abraham’s experience in the covenant and promises of God involved entanglements with earthly kings, and these could be difficult and demanding. For Abraham, therefore, such entanglements had always to be engaged with an eye to the Most High King and His eternal reign and rule. Abraham would have understood that whatever his King on High had in mind for him, whatever those precious and very great promises might entail, and however they might unfold, they would be inextricably involved with human affairs, nations, and rulers on earth.

God’s covenant, Abraham would have understood, would be administered, realized, and extended within the earthly domains of kings and kingdoms, some of which, as we have seen, would be the direct descendants of Abraham and heirs of God’s mandates and promises.

A vision enlarged?

Was Abraham’s vision of what God had promised clarified, enriched, and enlarged by his entanglements with earthly kings and dominions? Could he see, down the corridors of history, earthly kings seeking the blessing of God within the context of His covenant, submitting to His rule and protection, coming to know restoration, healing, blessing, and the goodness of the Lord in their kingdoms through those who are friends of God?

And did Abraham envision earthly kings living at peace with, and on the terms of, those who possessed the promises of God, as Abimelech had sought with him? Were the promised blessings of God to be administered among earthly cultures and societies by those who lived in these according to the rule of the eternal King?

We do not know, of course. But surely Abraham, thinking about his own relationship with earthly kings, and reflecting on God's promises and the events which followed his change of name, must have considered that God intended the earth to include nations ruled by kings who knew the blessings of God, who entered into covenant relationship with Him and sought His promises and protection, and who would become dispensers of those same promises to the people in their charge.

But precisely how this would come to pass, and what wonders God would accomplish along the way – none of this was made clear to Abraham. He *trusted in what he had heard from God* and seen in his experience, and this was enough for him to continue seeking the promises of God in his day.

This also must be our own commitment in ours.

For reflection or discussion

1. How can you see that the covenant made with Abraham has continuity with God's relationship to Adam and Eve and Noah?
2. Abraham lived "toward" the promises of God. Explain. How would you "live toward" those promises?
3. What do you make of the second exchange between Abraham and Abimelech (review the previous lesson)? What does it suggest to us about the promises of God? The idea of exercising dominion?
4. Abraham believed and trusted God. What does this mean, and what does it have to do with the covenant of God and the call to exercise dominion?
5. "God's covenant, Abraham would have understood, would be administered, realized, and extended within the earthly domains of kings and kingdoms, some of which, as we have seen, would be the direct descendants of Abraham and heirs of God's mandates and promises." Does this remain true today? Explain.

Next steps: Suppose a new believer asked you what Jesus meant when He said, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt. 6.33). How would you explain that mandate? Ask a pastor or church leader to help you think this through.

Prayer:

6 Moses: The King and His Kingdom

“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” Exodus 19.5, 6

A growing sense

By the time Israel descended into Egypt, the idea of a kingdom, involving them as a people specially chosen by God, had begun to gain some traction in the thinking of at least some of their leaders.

Adam and Eve had passed down the notion of “dominion” so that all those who heard their story and regarded themselves as a continuation of that story must have pondered their own lives in something of that light. As human beings and, more specifically, as those descended from Adam and Eve through Abraham, many among the people of Israel would have understood that they had a duty to learn as much as they could, to work at ordering, managing, and developing their places and possessions, and to guard these against corruption or loss.

It should not surprise us that those who received and acted on this story – from Seth and Noah to Abraham and the patriarchs – became fruitful and wealthy in all their endeavors.

Moreover, from Abraham the idea of a rule characterized by righteousness and peace – like the rule of Melchizedek – and a heritage of kings and nations in which God’s blessings would be known, began to inform and shape the story of God’s covenant people.

It thus seems perfectly in line with this growing trajectory that Jacob should prophesy of his son, Judah, that a King would descend from him, One for whom dominion and rule had been prepared, and He would exercise that dominion and rule not only over the covenant people but all the nations of the earth as well (Gen. 49.8-11).

Israel’s growing prosperity during those early years in Egypt must have fueled the thoughts and hopes of those who clung to these ideas. But their hopes would be eroded by the cruelty of a king who cared not a whit for their history or aspirations, and who saw them only as a means to realize his own selfish ambitions.

A vision recovered

By the time Moses appeared to lead Israel out of captivity in Egypt, the people of God understood well the kind of power an earthly king could wield. It would fall to Moses to help them put away their fears of such human rulers and begin to recover their vision of the kingdom God was preparing for them.

By codifying the Torah (Law) into a preserved body of literature, and instructing the fathers of Israel to teach this Law to their children, Moses helped to restore in the minds of God’s covenant people what years of slavery and oppression had obscured: They were to be a kingdom, a kingdom belonging to God. Their future hopes and the promises of God’s covenant would be bound up in Moses’ vision of their relationship with God and the way He intended to bring them into the fullness of His precious and very great promises.

A kingdom of priests

First, however, God would have to deliver His people from the fear of earthly kings, and to reorient their thinking about kings and kingdoms within a different framework. What God intended for them, what He was

preparing them to be, would require of them a measure of trust, courage, and hope that Israel, in captivity to Pharaoh, had long since abandoned.

The destruction of Pharaoh and his army, and the later defeat of the Canannite kings encountered *en route* to the plains of Moab must have persuaded Moses, Joshua, and the people of Israel that no earthly king could stand in the way of what God intended for His people. He had taken Israel as *His* kingdom, and He would rule them for righteousness, peace, and abundant blessing, as long as they dwelled within the safe parameters of His covenant and Law. Every Israelite would be a priest unto God, observing His rule and honoring Him with sacrifices and daily lives of justice, righteousness, and love.

Thus the early ideas of dominion and rule, given to Adam and Eve and carried forward through Abraham and the patriarchs, became bound up in the covenant struck at Sinai and in the idea of Israel's being a kingdom ruled by God Himself. Israel was to understand that the Lord "was king in Jeshurun,/When the leaders of the people were gathered, /All the tribes of Israel together" (Deut. 33.5).

Dominion, covenant, and kingdom: With Moses these ideas are brought forward and expanded, and with them, a vision of God's Kingdom that would be greatly enlarged and enhanced.

For reflection or discussion

1. Why would God tell His people they were a kingdom of priests when they had just come out of Egypt, freed from centuries of slavery?
2. Why do you suppose it was important that Moses should compile and write the book of Genesis before he began writing the rest of the Law? What kind of "trajectory" was he trying to establish for the people of Israel?
3. Why did God instruct Moses to teach the people to sing that He was God over them? How did He intend that to guide their thinking, once they had entered the land of promise?
4. "Dominion, covenant, and kingdom: With Moses these ideas are brought forward and expanded, and with them, a vision of God's Kingdom that would be greatly enlarged and enhanced." Do you agree? Why or why not?
5. How did the giving of the Law of God serve to solidify the ideas of covenant, promise, and kingdom that had been developing in Israel since the beginning?

Next steps: Meditate on Romans 14.17, 18; 7.12; and 3.31. Does the Law of God have a place in the covenant and Kingdom of God? In the church? In your life? What should that place be? Talk with some Christian friends about this exercise.

Prayer:

7 Moses: Dynasty and Beyond

*“Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise;
Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
Your father’s children shall bow down before you.
Judah is a lion’s whelp;
From the prey, my son, you have gone up.
He bows down, he lies down as a lion;
And as a lion, who shall rouse him?
The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
Nor a lawgiver from between his feet,
Until Shiloh comes;
And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.”* Genesis 49:8-10

Bridge to the kingdom

Moses represents in many ways a bridge to a fuller, broader understanding of God and His Kingdom. We recall that Moses is the author of the Law of God, the first five books of the Bible. His purpose in compiling and writing these books was to establish Israel as a people directly descended from God through Adam, Abraham, and the patriarchs. They were a people of God’s covenant, mandated to rule the earth and exercise dominion under their Most High King.

Moses brings the covenant with Abraham forward to the people of Israel, then points through that covenant to a coming kingdom and dynasty by which, and in submission to whom, they would realize the precious and very great promises of God.

Kingdom and covenant continue to come together and be enlarged under the teaching and leadership of Moses. And this is especially so as Moses points forward to an earthly king, a dynasty of kings, and a coming Ruler for Whom all this kingdom and covenant have been especially prepared.

A dynasty of kings

Through Moses, God instructed His people to embrace the notion of kingdom and kingship, and He promised to give them a king when they came into the land (Deut. 17:14-20).

The kings who would rule in Israel, however, were not to be anything like the pagan kings Israel had known. They were not to be motivated by selfish ambition or the desire for wealth. They were not to take advantage of the people for their own aggrandizement. And they were to live and rule according to the just and holy statutes and precepts of the Law of God. The Law of God would keep the hearts of Israel’s kings humble, so that they could serve the people well.

The kings Israel was to know in the land of promise would thus be regents of God, obedient to His Law, and devoted to serving His people for the fullness of covenant blessings. They would be descendants of Judah, and would begin a dynasty that would only end with One Whose name is Shiloh – a word that means, “Him Whose It Is.”

Thus, Moses reported to the captives in Israel that God had great Kingdom purposes in mind for them, and they must trust Him, enter fully into His promises, live as His Kingdom people according to His Law, and look forward to the day of Shiloh’s coming, when all kingdoms and nations would come under His authority

and rule.

A reminder in the wilderness

When, just as the generation born in the wilderness was preparing to enter the land, the report was brought to Moses of the prophecy of the false prophet, Balaam, he must have been encouraged to see how God had impressed on even this pagan the certainty of these regal and covenantal matters. Balaam acknowledged, quite against his will, that God was King in the midst of His people, and that He would lead and sustain them against every attempt to frustrate His purposes (Num. 23.22-24: note how Balaam's words echo those of Jacob in Gen. 49.8-11). In language pointedly reminiscent of God's promise to Abraham, Balaam declared that God's stated purpose for His people is sure, and all nations would be wise, therefore, to seek His blessing from the kingdom of God's people (Num. 24.8, 9).

Fortified with the recovered stories of their forebears, observers of destroyed kings and realms, and recipients of promises directly related to kings and a Kingdom where blessing and prosperity were to be known by all, Israel was much encouraged to follow Joshua in the work of conquest.

The kingdom vision Moses received reached back to Israel's beginnings and forward to the land of promise and beyond to a final, coming King. It situated the people of Israel as citizens in a nation ruled by God, but overseen by earthly kings, submitted to God's Law. It saw the nations as seeking the favor of God by blessing His people, and knowing the curse of God in opposing them. And, throughout their journey through the wilderness, God gave His people ample evidence that what He had promised, He was well able to provide.

For reflection or discussion

1. How did including Jacob's prophecy in Genesis 49.8-10 serve as a bridge from the past to the future for the people of Israel?
2. "Shiloh" means "Him Whose It Is" – that is, Him for Whom the Kingdom Has Been Prepared. To whom is this referring? Why do you think so? What would have been the effect of this on the "Kingdom vision" of faithful Israelites?
3. Review the final paragraph in this lesson. If this was the case with Israel in Moses' day, how should this affect our own vision of the Kingdom of God today?
4. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this study?
5. How are you planning to put that lesson to work in your daily life?

Next steps: Meditate on Genesis 49.8-10 and Deuteronomy 4.5-9. How should we understand the relationship between earthly kings and the Kingdom God has appointed for us His people? How does God's promised Kingdom come to expression in your Personal Mission Field? Share your thoughts with a Christian friend.

Prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.