

FAMILY REUNION (LIFE IN HEAVEN)

Lesson 14 – Ruling with Christ

A. Jesus Has a Kingdom

1. As Jesus stood on trial before Pontius Pilate, He said: *“My kingdom is not of this world”* (John 18:36).
2. In **Luke 1:31-33**, the angel Gabriel told Mary: *“And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”*
3. Scripture clearly tells us that Christ has a Kingdom. When Jesus said His kingdom is not of this world, He meant that it is not from this world. It did not originate here. Jesus was also saying that His kingdom is not under the curse, as the earth is now.
4. Although Christ’s kingdom is not *from* the earth, it extends *to* the earth (through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit) and one day it will fully *include* the earth and be centered on it.

B. Elements of a Kingdom

1. The dictionary defines “kingdom” as a state or government having a king or queen as its head.
2. Elements of a kingdom include a ruler, subjects to be ruled, territory, a government and a culture.
3. When you think about God’s Kingdom, what do you envision? How often do you think about the territory and the culture?
4. Alcorn writes: “An essential component of any kingdom is *land*.”
5. David Chilton in *Paradise Restored* says: “When God created Adam, He placed him into a land, and gave him dominion over it. Land is basic to dominion; therefore, salvation involves a restoration to land and property.... Man is not saved by being delivered out of his environment. Salvation does not rescue us from the material world, but from sin, and from the effects of the Curse. The Biblical ideal is for every man to own property – a place where he can have dominion and rule under God.”
6. What do you think of the statements above from Alcorn and Chilton?

7. If both authors are correct, what does this suggest about our role in Christ's Kingdom?

C. Ruling the Earth

1. **Genesis 1:28** – *“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.’”* From the very beginning it has been God's plan that man rule the earth.
2. Recall the stewardship parables (**Luke 19:11-27; Matthew 25:14-30**).
3. **2 Timothy 2:12** – *“If we endure, we shall also reign with Him.”*
4. **Revelation 5:9-10** – *And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.”*
5. **1 Corinthians 6:2-3** – *“Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? Do you not know that we shall judge angels?”*

D. Do You Want to Rule?

1. What are your thoughts about the idea of ruling in God's kingdom? Does it make you uncomfortable? Does it excite you? Explain.
2. Alcorn: *“Scripture teaches that our service for [God] now on Earth will be evaluated to help determine how we'll serve him on the New Earth. The humble servant will be put in charge of much, whereas the one who lords it over others in the present world will have power taken away.”* See **Luke 14:11**.
3. If we serve faithfully on this earth, God will give us positions of authority and responsibility on the New Earth. See **Luke 16:10**.
4. On this earth, power and authority are often corrupted. This should not concern us when it comes to ruling in heaven because in the New Earth there will be none of the perversions of power or leadership that we have witnessed on this earth.
5. Ruling is not limited to having authority and responsibility over people. Recall that Adam and Eve governed animals before there were any other people. In the New Earth, some may be given the responsibility over animals, gardens, forests, the environment or even galaxies. What do you think about that?
6. **Thought to consider for next time:** God is grooming us for leadership.

E. Will We Really Rule?

1. **Revelation 22:3-5** – *“And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. **And they shall reign forever and ever.**”*
2. The promise that we shall rule in God’s eternal Kingdom is clear. We will not only go to heaven and dwell in heaven, we will rule in heaven.
3. **Romans 8:16-17** – *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. The NIV version says, “if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.” The sound of this may be too much for us, but this is God’s will.*
4. There is a time appointed by God that even creation looks forward to: *“For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.” **Romans 8:19-21.***

F. Created to Rule

1. **Genesis 1:26-28** – *Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 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.”*
2. God’s intention for mankind was that we would occupy the whole earth and rule over it. God is glorified when mankind takes its rightful place in His creation and exercises the dominion he bestowed upon us.
3. The Fall of man did not revoke or cancel God’s purpose for mankind to reign over the earth as God intended. It just interrupted, twisted and perverted God’s original purpose. Christ’s redemptive work on the cross has restored God’s original plan.

G. God's Future Kingdom

1. In Daniel 7, Daniel had a vision of four huge beasts that “came up out of the water” (v. 3) to rule the earth for a time. The fourth beast is different from the first three in that it rules with arrogance and cruelty (vv. 1-13).
2. **Daniel 7: 13-14 (NLT):** *As my vision continued that night, I saw someone like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence. He was given authority, honor, and sovereignty over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would obey him. His rule is eternal—it will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed.*
3. Daniel then asked an angel standing beside the God's throne for an explanation (vv.15-16). This is what he was told: *“These four huge beasts represent four kingdoms that will arise from the earth. But in the end, the holy people of the Most High will be given the kingdom, and they will rule forever and ever.”* (vv.17-18).
4. Daniel asked specifically about the fourth beast, which was so different from the others and “so terrifying.” This beast had 10 horns, and a little horn that grew out and destroyed three of the other horns (vv. 19-20). Daniel wrote, *As I watched, this horn was waging war against God's holy people and was defeating them, until the Ancient One—the Most High—came and judged in favor of his holy people. Then the time arrived for the holy people to take over the kingdom* (vv. 21-22).
5. Concerning this fourth beast, Daniel was told, *“This fourth beast is the fourth world power that will rule the earth. It will be different from all the others. It will devour the whole world, trampling and crushing everything in its path. Its ten horns are ten kings who will rule that empire. Then another king will arise, different from the other ten, who will subdue three of them. He will defy the Most High and oppress the holy people of the Most High. He will try to change their sacred festivals and laws, and they will be placed under his control for a time, times, and half a time”* (vv. 23-25).
6. The angel continued: *“But then the court will pass judgment, and all his power will be taken away and completely destroyed. Then the sovereignty, power, and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be given to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will last forever, and all rulers will serve and obey him”* (vv. 26-27).

H. A Closer Look at Daniel's Vision

1. Where will the four beasts come from?
2. What do the beasts represent?
3. Where do the beasts rule?

4. What is different about the fourth beast?
5. How long will the fourth beast reign?
6. How will the rule of the fourth beast end?
7. According to verse 18, what will happen in the end?
8. What happens after the Ancient One judges the fourth beast? (See vv. 21-22).
9. After the fourth beast is stripped from his power, who gets it?
10. After the fourth beast is judged, how long will be the reign of the Most High?

I. Ever-Increasing Reign

1. **Isaiah 9:6-7** -- *For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.*
2. In speaking about the reign of Christ, God says, *"Of the increase of His government there will be no end."* This is more than saying Jesus' rule will be unending or eternal. This is saying that the **increase** or **expansion** of his government will never cease.
3. Ways the government of Christ will be ever-expanding: (a) by extending into previously ungoverned territories (think existing planets, galaxies and solar systems); or (b) by creating new territories to rule.
4. **A Little Science:** in 1925, astronomer Edwin Hubble became the first to prove that the universe is expanding. The galaxies outside of our own are moving *away* from us, and the ones that are farthest away are moving the fastest. This means that no matter what galaxy we happen to be in, all the other galaxies are moving away from us. However, the galaxies are not moving *through* space, they are moving *in* space, because space is also moving. In other words, the universe has no center; everything is moving away from everything else.
5. When we consider that the current universe is always expanding, it becomes a bit easier to understand that there will be no end to the increase of Christ's government. Add to this, the unquestioned ability of Jesus to create new worlds, and the words of Isaiah take on added significance.

J. Here I Am, Send Me!

1. So, if the universe is constantly expanding (and it is), and if Christ is able to create new worlds to govern (and He is), who will He send to govern them on His behalf? Recall, when God created the earth, He put man in charge; He gave Adam dominion. It stands to reason, then, that Christ will put his people in positions of authority to carry out His ever-expanding government.
2. Some of God's people will rule over towns, cities, planets and galaxies. This may sound incredible, but not when you consider that God is glorified by what He creates and rules. As we saw with Adam, God delights to delegate authority to His children to rule His creation on His behalf.
3. **Luke 12:32** -- *"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."*
4. **Rejoice!**: If the idea of being given the authority and responsibility of ruling in Christ's kingdom is less than appealing to you, remember that you will be ruling in a totally different universe than we have now. This current universe is fallen; marred by sin and the curse. The devil is busy causing chaos, confusion and havoc. However, the day is coming when Christ will reign uncontested over the new universe, with His people reigning by His side.

K. Service as Reward?

1. Some may say, "no thanks!" to the idea that their reward for serving God on earth is the opportunity to serve even more in His ever-expanding government. To some, the reward for diligent service is rest and relaxation. Does this describe you? (You don't have to answer that out loud!).
2. God's reward for faithful service is increased responsibilities and more opportunities to serve Him. Consider:
 - (a) **Matthew 25:21** -- *"His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'"*
 - (b) **Colossians 3:23-24** -- *And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.*
 - (c) **Hebrews 6:10** -- *For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*
 - (d) **John 12:26** -- *"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."*

(e) **Revelation 22:12** -- *“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.”*

(f) **Galatians 6:9** -- *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

3. Service is not a punishment – it’s a reward. We will serve God with enhanced abilities, stronger bodies, sharper minds and greater resources. We will also be working alongside people with the same mindset and purpose – to glorify God. Serving God will bring tremendous joy!
4. It won’t be all work. As we’ve seen, we will have time to rest, visit, eat, explore and engage in various leisure activities. But we will also have much to do in the service of God as participants in His ever-increasing rule and reign.
5. Will anyone be left out or will we all be rulers? Hear the Apostle Paul: *“Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”* **2 Timothy 4:8 NIV**. Crowns denote rule. Paul says a crown awaits *all* who long for the appearance of Christ!
6. A word from Alcorn: “The more we serve Christ now, the greater our capacity will be to serve him in Heaven.”
7. A Word from the Lord: *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”* **1 Corinthians 15:58**