

SERIES ON THE KINGDOM OF GOD

LESSON # 1

I. A BIBLICAL OVERVIEW OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

God's **Vision** about **His Kingdom on Earth** is comprehensively *revealed* in Genesis chapter 1 and 2. We need to understand from the start that **God's Kingdom** is not limited to the *physical reality* we see and *experience* on Earth. In other words, **God's Kingdom** is as *infinitely vast* as the Universe. **The Earth is just a grain of sand in that vastness of the Universe!** In spite of the *minuteness* of our existence in God's Universe, The LORD has *revealed just enough of Himself* and **His Vision for Humanity** in the Bible which by itself is Awesomely, Gloriously Amazing! Just thinking and understanding the way *our galaxy* is organized and functions in the universe, how *unique* our Solar System is, i.e., that the Sun, the Planets and the Moons are within the *incomprehensible array of the numerous galaxies* that exist in the Universe. Such knowledge gives us a sense of how Vast, Awesome and Wonderful **God's Kingdom** is! We also get a sense of how Powerful, Glorious and Majestic God is! We don't even have the *appropriate* knowledge, *adequate* understanding and *precise* words to express the awesome power, glorious nature and majestic presence of God! As people who live on Earth *which is like a grain of sand* in the **infinite vastness** of the Universe, you get a real sense of how *insignificant* we are! That should give us a **very humble perspective** about *our relationship* with the God who created the Universe! As the disciple of Christ, we will do well to remember that all the time!

A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The History of Humanity on Earth *began* when God *decided* to create us and put us on **His** Earth! Understanding that there was no history of humanity before the formation of the Earth should cause us to have **an eternal attitude of gratefulness and appreciation** toward God who decided to include us in His Creation. The other perspective we should always maintain as part of **God's Kingdom** as described in Genesis chapter 1 is the fact that:

1. God *first situated* the Earth as one of the Planets just at the **precise distance** from **the Sun** so that the Earth **can never** get too close or too far from it! That is how God ordained it and will remain so until He decides to end it!
2. God *first formed* the Earth with vast Oceans, Seas, Lakes, Rivers, springs and water systems under the surface of the earth to *sustain* all living things.
3. God *first formed* the Earth with an Atmosphere *protective* of and *suited* for all plants, animals and humans, etc.
4. God *first formed* the Earth with *fatherly consideration* for "His Children" making it *abundantly plentiful* with diverse living things such as vast variety of trees, plants, vegetations, flowers, etc. as well as vast and diverse array of land animals (wild and those that can be domesticated) and vast array of fishes.

5. Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the seas and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" (v. 26). God *first prepared* the Earth for a healthy, joyful, prosperous and abundant living *before* He created and put Man on **His** Earth! **We need to always remind ourselves that the Earth is God's!** Such an understanding would have given us the perspective of being **good stewards** of the *abundant but limited resources* God put on Earth not only for us but also for the fish, animals, etc.!!! If we had such *a perspective*, we wouldn't cut down the Sycamore Trees, the Amazone Forest, etc. *without any regard* to what such irresponsible logging and deforestation would do to wild animals, indigenous people, and the Environment.

B. BIBLICAL CONTEXT

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters" (Genesis 1: 1-2). There is a reason/purpose as to why the Bible *begins* with these words. The first sentence says it all! Anyone who doesn't *acknowledge* that God "created the heavens and the earth" can neither understand nor accept the rest of what the Bible says about God. *It is crucial that our belief begins with full understanding and acceptance that God is the Creator and that we are also part of His Creation!* Any *doubt or deviation* from such a biblical stance *will cause* the person not to understand, receive and be blessed by all the Divine Knowledge, Wisdom, Instructions, Commands, Revelations, etc. *flowing from* the Word of God. Genesis chapter 1 describes how God formed the Earth and *the hierarchy* of what came first, second, third, etc. in the **Order of Creation!** Man *came last* in the **Order of Creation** to let us know humanity had nothing to do with the Creation of the Universe and the Formation of the Earth! Such a clear understanding of the **Order of Creation** established Man's place in Creation as well as in his relationship with The Creator.

Genesis chapter 1 and 2 also give us *insight* into **God's Vision, Plan and Dominion for Humanity.** Genesis chapters 1 and 2 give us *insight* into how God **envisioned His Kingdom** is to *manifest* on Earth. It gives us a *window* into **God's Perspective** on how He *sees Man* and *wants* him to live on **His** Earth. We will do well to have **God's Perspective** on how we *see, understand* and *implement* His **Vision** and **Plan** for our lives so that we exercise proper **Dominion** over the things He *granted us sovereignty.* Being *given Dominion* over the things God created for our use and benefits *entails* being *responsible and accountable* to the One who *granted it.*

There are three words/concepts we need to firmly understand in order for us to *envision* what God *sees* and *wants* for our lives. These words are **Vision, Plan** and **Dominion.**

So, let us begin with their dictionary definitions.

1. Vision.

- a) Something *seen* otherwise than by ordinary sight; something beheld as in a dream or ecstasy or *revealed* as to a prophet.
- b) A visual image without corporal presence; also, an object of imaginative contemplation, as to have a **vision** of acquiring something worthwhile in the future.
- c) Power or activity of the imagination; for example, as a poet, an architect, a musician or mathematician with vision.
- d) Unusual *discernment* or *foresight*; as a man of vision.
- e) Actual sight; ocular perception.
- f) The sense by which light and color are apprehended; as, the organ of vision is the eye.

There are many references in Scripture about **Vision**. Here are few of them:

- a) **Old Testament.** Genesis 15:1-4; 1 Samuel 3:1-15; 2 Samuel 7:1-17; Psalm 89:1-19; Proverbs 29:18; Isaiah 1:1; 21:1-2; 22:1-5; 28:1-7; 29:1-11; Ezekiel 7:1-26; 8:1-4, 11-24; 12:1-27; 43:1-3, for example.
- b) **New Testament.** Matthew 17:9; Luke 1:22; 24:23; Acts 9:1-12; 10:1-19; 11:5; 12:9; 16:1-10; 18:1-9; 26:1-19; Rev. 9:17.

2. Plan.

- a) A draft or form, one drawn on a plane, as a map, esp., a top view or representation of a horizontal section; an orthographic projection on a horizontal plane; graphic representation; diagram.
- b) Method or scheme of action, procedure, or arrangement; project, program, outline or schedule.
- c) In perspective, one of a number of plans conceived as perpendicular to the line of vision, and interspersed between the eye and the pictorial objects.

Synonyms: Plan, design, plot, scheme, project mean a method devised for making, doing, etc. **Plan** always *implies* mental formulation and, sometimes, graphic representation; **design** often suggests a particular pattern; **plot** *suggests* a laying out in clearly distinguished sections with attention to their relations and their due proportions; **scheme** *stresses* calculation of the end in view; **project** more often *suggests* imaginative scope and vision.

3. Dominion.

- a) Sovereign or supreme authority; sovereignty.
- b) Territory governed.
- c) One of the self-governing units along with other sovereign power.
- d) Domination.

II. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION AND HIS KINGDOM ON EARTH

The *biblical overview* of **God's Kingdom on Earth** stems from Genesis chapters 1 and 2 and *extends* to the Birth, Death, Burial, Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ *followed by the Birth of the New Testament Church* and the *anticipated glorious culmination* at the **Second Coming of Christ**. In this **Divine Timeline** *ordained* by God, the Bible describes *the initiation of God's Plan of Salvation* necessitated by the Fall of Adam and Eve (Genesis chapter 3). The **Advancement of God's Plan of Salvation** *runs uninterrupted along the Divine Timeline* all the way to the **Incarnation of Jesus Christ**, the Birth and Expansion of the **New Testament Church** and to the *culmination* at the **End of Time**. *God's Plan of Salvation is both the catalyst and vehicle by which God planned to advance His Kingdom on Earth. God's Plan of Salvation always involved a man* such as the faithful and righteous **Noah**, *husband and wife who acted by faith* such as **Abraham and Sarah**, *leaders like* **Moses, Joshua and Caleb** who were *unwavering* in their belief and commitment to God, *intelligent and insightful* Extraordinary Women of faith such as **Rahab** the prostitute, and the *love inspired and guided* **Ruth** the Moabite. The list of those who were involved in advancing God's Kingdom on earth with genuine faith and unquestionable commitment is extensive including the God loving, praising and worshipping **King David** of Israel, as well as **prophets** such as **Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel** in the Old Testament. In the New Testament era, God's plan for advancing His Kingdom on earth included the calling, training and appointing the 12 Disciples of Christ as well as the extraordinary women of faith such as **Mary Magdalene**, the trio family – **Martha, Mary and Lazarus**, and *the 120* mentioned in Acts 1:12-17 which became the *initial core* of the **New Testament Church**. The advancement of **the Kingdom of God** was based on the **Birth, Expansion and constant Revitalization of His Church**. Hence, therein lies **the Role of the Church in advancing the Kingdom of God** *ignited and empowered by the Holy Spirit and inspired by the transformational power of the Word of God.*

In subsequent lessons, we will learn ***the Long Eternal Ark of God's Plan of Salvation vis-à-vis the Advancement of the Kingdom of God*** from specific scriptures. We will also learn how the advancement of God's Kingdom in the Old Testament is *fundamentally different* from the way God planned to advance His Kingdom in the New Testament era. Furthermore, we will discover the different ways people, especially His Chosen People (Israelites and later Christians), *reacted to the Vision, Plan and Sovereign Will* of the Creator. Part of the main goals of this series are (a) to help us understand **what** the Kingdom of God is, (b) **how/why** God unfolded it on earth and (c) **whom** it is intended to benefit. *Obviously, all of God's children ought to yearn, learn and know these things.* Not knowing God's **Vision and Plan** for our lives will lead us into dark alleys, dead-end streets and cliffs of no return! God said, "... For I know the **plans** I have for you, .. **plans** to prosper you and not to harm you, **plans** to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11).