

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Lesson # 2

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND BIBLICAL CONTEXT

As you *gleaned* from the **Introduction on The Kingdom of God** last week, the Subject is extremely *comprehensive and complex*. This is an *introductory series* which will provide you with an *understanding* as to how wide, deep and long **The Kingdom of God** is and *the roles and responsibilities each of us* (the Redeemed) have in advancing it *strictly in conformity* with **God's Plan of Salvation**. We must always keep in mind that **The Kingdom of God** is *totally opposite* from **earthly kingdoms** in its *nature, magnitude and purpose*. The Kingdom of God is *totally and radically different* from earthly kingdoms *essentially* for the following reasons:

- a) **It's Nature**: because **God is Sovereign** over His Creation as well as the Kingdom He is advancing on the Earth; *His reign cannot be compared to earthly kingdoms in any way*. The Nature of His Kingdom *embodies His Divine Characteristics* such as His Awesome and Limitless Power, Holiness, Righteousness, Truth, Compassion, Mercy, Unconditional Love, etc.
- b) **It's Magnitude**: because God's Kingdom is **Spiritual and Eternal**, the relationship of His people with Him is based on Unwavering Faith, total Obedience, Genuine Praise, Worship, and Service which leads to Eternal Life.
- c) **It's Purpose**: God's **Purpose in Advancing His Kingdom** is to **Redeem, Restore** and **Empower** sinners so that **the Redeemed** can live freely, justly, peacefully and joyfully on this Earth being *healthy, fruitful, prosperous and victorious under His Reign/Lordship*.

One other aspect which we need to remind ourselves of is this: the *expansion* of **God's Kingdom** takes place in this world which is *contrary to God's Plan of Salvation*. That means, the Believers will be *constantly confronted* with temptation, opposition, persecutions and various religions, ideologies and the like. *However, we must understand that the advancement of God's Kingdom is not dependent on us, the Believers. It is God who will advance His Kingdom!* Our roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are (a) *maintaining* our **Faith**, (b) being **obedient to His Commandments**, (c) *sincerely* praising and *regularly* worshipping the Lord and (d) *diligently serving* the Sovereign God using our **Spiritual Gifts with integrity according to the Divine Call and Appointments each of us received!**

A. Historical Background

After the Fall of Adam and Eve from Eden (Genesis 3) and increasing sinfulness of the generations after them, God initiated His Plan of Salvation with Noah (Genesis chapters 6 -9) and later on with Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 12, 15, 17) based on **His Promises and Covenant Relationship**. **God's Promises and the Covenant**

were *reinforced* and *expanded* by **the Law** given to Moses for the Israelites who have *multiplied in number* while living in Egypt for *430 years* (Exodus 12:31-42).

B. Biblical Context

The *Seed* for **God's Kingdom** was in **His Promises** imbued with **divine blessings** given to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 17:1-8) in which the words "covenant," "nations" and "kings" were included. The **Seed** was *first realized* in **Isaac** whom God *multiplied* in his sons, **Essau** and **Jacob** (Israel), both of whom became **nations**. God gave Jacob/Israel **12 sons** (Genesis 35:1-29) whom He multiplied into the **12 Tribes of Israel** that entered the Promised Land (Canaan) led by Joshua. Later on, the Israelites were led by many **kings** among whom was **King David**. God *fulfilled* His Promises, but the Israelites failed to keep their part of **the Covenant** due to their repeated disobedience and unfaithfulness. *Consequently, they suffered many setbacks, tragedies and loss of territories*. The Israelites *eventually lost their nationhood* during the reign of the Babylonians, Assyrians and the Romans. But God *continued to advance His Plan of Salvation* in keeping with His Promises using the few **Remnants** found in subsequent generations. Hallelujah!

The Israelites struggled to adjust and adopt to the Sovereignty of God because they failed to accept His Vision and Plan for their lives! They *kept looking back* and yearning for Pharaoh's cruel, oppressive and exploitative rule rather than the reign of God who is full of love, compassion, mercy, truth, freedom and justice! Consequently, there was a constant struggle, many setbacks and few triumphant periods in the history of the Israelites. Sadly, the Kingdom of God was *fully realized and maintained* only during the time of **Joshua** and the reign of **King David** and **King Solomon**.

II. THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The initiation, development and consolidation of The Kingdom of God happened *slowly through many generations* in the Old Testament era. **The Foundations for the Kingdom of God were introduced and implemented during the time of Moses**. God's Promises and the Covenant with the Israelites were *expanded and reinforced* by **The Law** which introduced (a) **The Spiritual** - the Tabernacle and the Priesthood - to establish the boundaries in the Covenant Relationship between God and His people, (b) the **Moral laws** and **Ethical codes** to establish new customs and traditions and (c) the **Socio-Economic** regulations to govern the Israelite community. During the 40-Years of Exodus Experience, God *demonstrated* the Glorious Nature of His Reign, *reformed* the Spiritual and Social Norms of the Israelites, *reorganized* the Community Relationship structure *through the new judiciary system based on truth, justice, faithfulness, obedience and service*

under the Covenant and the Law. Let us now briefly examine the following Scriptures to understand the radical nature, significance and magnitude of **the Covenant** and **the Law**.

A. THE COVENANT

The Covenant has the following *fundamental characteristics*.

- It is God who *decided to initiate* a relationship with Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob/Israel, Moses, etc. and not the other way around;
- When God *initiated the relationship* with those *whom He chose*, it was always (a) Spiritual in Nature based on (b) His Promises and (c) the faithfulness and obedience of the people He chose;
- God made **His Presence** known by showing up at different times in different miraculous ways to develop and strengthen the Covenant Relationship. God also **blessed** the people that He chose **spiritually, socially and economically, materially**;
- God *tested* the faithfulness and obedience of His chosen people from time to time; and
- God *always honored* the **Covenant** by keeping **His Promises**; but the people that He chose were not always faithful and obedient to the Covenant Relationship.

The **Relationship** between God and the people He chose was based on the **Covenant**. Let us examine, for example, the relationship between God and the old couple, Abraham and Sarah.

1. **Genesis 12:1-9. God Initiated the Relationship with a Promise**

There are three fundamental aspects when God initiates a Covenant Relationship with the persons He chooses:

- a) **God's Challenging Command, Promises and Blessings** (vv. 1-3)
 - Mysterious but Unmistakable Appearance. God appears *mysteriously* but His Presence is *unmistakable*.
 - Divine Command: "**Leave** your country, your people and your father's household and **go** to the land I will show you."
 - Promises Permeated with Assurances and Blessings. "I will make you into **a great nation** and I will **bless** you; I will make **your name great**, and you will be a **blessing**. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse, and all the people will be **blessed** through you."
- b) **Abram's Faithful and Obedient Response** (vv. 4-6).

Abram at once *left* his country, people and his father's household which he had known for 75 years! The Scriptures shows that Abram didn't doubt God as *demonstrated* by his *obedient action propelled by faith!* Abram demonstrated his faith under extremely difficult circumstances:

- His age – 75 years old!
- His wife’s age – 65 years old!
- Leaving everything he had known all his life *for a place and future* only dependent on what God (whom he didn’t know) promised him!

c) God’s Affirming Reappearance (7a)

- “The Lord **appeared** to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.”

d) Abram’s Reverent Worship Marked by an Altars (7b-9)

- “So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had **appeared** to him.” Again, when Abram reached Bethel, the Bible says, “There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the Name of the LORD. Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.”

2. Genesis 17:1-27. God Reinforced the Covenant Relationship

In this chapter, we see that 24 years have passed since God *appeared* to Abram when he was 75 years old. **During the 24 years, the LORD had blessed Abraham and Sarah spiritually, socially, and materially** (Genesis 14:13-24; 20:1-18; 23:5-6). By this time Abraham had become well known and established in the region (social status), his number has increased (servants, maids) as well as his wealth, i.e. increase in land size, amount of silver, gold and the number of cattle he possessed. The Bible highlights several things which indicate that the relationship between God and the Abraham and Sarah household will be *consolidated* as follows:

- a) Reaffirmation of the Covenant**
- b) Change of Names: Abram to Abraham & Sarai to Sarah**
 - Abraham – “Father of many Nations”
 - Sarah – “Mother of Nations”
- c) Elevation and Extension of The Covenant to Eternity and Descendants**
- d) Reinforcement of The Covenant with Circumcision of the Flesh**
- e) Pronouncement and Naming of the Promised Child, Isaac**

3. Genesis 22:1-19. God Tested the Faithfulness and Obedience of Abraham

B. THE LAW

Those who are attending the Discipleship Development Classes, they get in depth exposure as to *how* God used **the Law** to *introduce, establish, expand, organize and consolidate* the **Spiritual, Social, Economic and Administrative** institutions (system of justice, ethics, government) of the Israelite Community which are the foundations of His Kingdom on earth.