

What is the Kingdom Like: Part 3

In studying what the Kingdom of God is like, what we have learned so far is the following:

- It will have no end, it is an eternal Kingdom.
- The citizens of the Kingdom are also eternal and will have no end.
- The Kingdom will be given to the true citizens of the Kingdom of God.
- For now it is an unseen Kingdom that lives within the souls of its citizens.
- It is not of this world.
- It cannot be shaken or moved.
- It is a Kingdom of ultimate power.
- It is a Kingdom that is marked by mercy, redemption, compassion, and forgiveness.
- This Kingdom is inside out and upside down when compared to human logic, reasoning, and wisdom.

The next aspect of the Lord's Kingdom that we are going to study comes from the fact that our King holds in His hand a scepter of righteousness. Accordingly, He always deals with us on the basis of righteousness because He loves righteousness. So you might say that the Kingdom of God is a **kingdom of righteousness**. To examine this, let's turn to **Hebrews 1:8-9**, which quotes **Psalm 45:6-7**. In this passage, the writer of **Hebrews** makes a comparison between Jesus and the angels and argues that Jesus is far above and transcends all angelic authority. In making

this argument, we are reminded of how God the Father has specifically referred to God the Son.

Hebrews 1:8-9

But of the Son He [*the Father*] says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the **righteous** scepter is the scepter of His kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. Therefore God, Your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions.

The righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom. This is such a fascinating little phrase. First of all, a scepter is just a rod or staff which serves as a token of sovereignty and royal or imperial authority. However, I find it interesting that throughout the Bible there is no record of the Jewish kings ever having or using a scepter; yet, there is plenty which speaks of a rod or scepter being used in Gentile kingdoms. It is all about the imagery. When you understand the imagery utilized in this passage, you will understand why the Jewish kings never used a scepter.

We find a perfect example of the use of a royal scepter by a Gentile king in the book of ***Esther*** as she describes the rules of conduct for anyone approaching the Persian King Ahasuerus—rules which even applied to Esther his Queen.

Esther 4:11

All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that for any

man or woman who comes to the king to the inner court who is not summoned, he has but one law, that he be put to death, unless the king holds out to him the golden scepter so that he may live.

In this instance, the royal scepter was a symbol of life or death: if it was extended to you then you would live; but if it was not extended to you, you would die. It was a symbol of either acceptance by the king or outright rejection. Now we do not want to miss the imagery in this passage as it was intentionally communicated to us for a reason. We have a king, the inner court, one law: death, and the extension of mercy or life. In this imagery, the king is not unlike the Father who is the blessed and only sovereign, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords (**1 Timothy 6:15**). He sits in the inner court, or what we would call the most holy place (**Hebrews 9:24**). [Keep in mind, the design of the Tabernacle, with the outer court and inner court, was patterned after the heavenly Tabernacle (**Hebrews 8:4-5**)]. Moreover, since the Father dwells in unapproachable light (**1 Timothy 6:16**), no man can come before Him unless He extends the scepter of righteousness to him. The imagery is pretty spot on; let's continue with it and take it a step further.

“The righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom.” In **Numbers 24:17**, Balaam, a prophet of God, prophesied over Israel and said, “A star shall come forth from Jacob, a scepter shall rise from Israel.” Rabbinical teaching suggests that the star (which is used, the world over, in all manner of royal symbology) refers to the kingdom of David—hence the Star of David—whereas the scepter refers to the coming Messiah who would have ultimate rule and sovereignty. But as we have learned in our studies, the Davidic kingdom provides for us a picture or a type of

the Messianic kingdom, so both images (the star and the scepter) point to the Messiah. Then in ***Psalm 60:7; 108:8***, the Lord says, “Judah is My scepter.” Once again, we have the tie in to David (the line of kings proceeding from Judah) and to the ultimate king, the Messiah, the Son of David, the one and only Jesus Christ (***Matthew 1:1***) who is the scepter of God. This leads us to the promise that God made directly to David—a promise that can only be fulfilled in the Messiah.

2 Samuel 7:8, 16

Thus says the Lord of Hosts...“Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.”

Clearly, at this time there is no Davidic king ruling in Israel; in fact, the physical line of Davidic Kings was cut off back in 586 B.C. when Judah was conquered by Babylon. Thus, this statement can only be understood from the perspective of the spiritual and the fact that Jesus is and always has been the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords whose throne is established forever. This statement about the Kingdom of the Messiah is not unlike the image we are given through a prophecy of Isaiah, which occurred 300 years after King David lived.

Isaiah 9:6-7

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never

end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!

The point is that the reference to the “righteous scepter” is a reference to Jesus our Messiah. He is the child who was born to us (*Luke 2:11*) and His kingdom will last for all eternity. Jesus is the scepter of power and authority, the symbol of the Father’s ultimate sovereignty, which He holds in His hand. Therefore, if the Father so chooses to stretch out His scepter, those who approach Him will have life; but all others will die.

Psalm 110:1-2

The Lord [*the Father*] says to my Lord [*Jesus*]: “Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.” The Lord will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, saying, “Rule in the midst of Your enemies.”

The scepter (Jesus) gets extended from the Father and He (Jesus) will rule even in the midst of His enemies. Thus, I would posit that the reason the Jewish kings never used a scepter is because the Father protected His typology (which He seems to always do) for He did not want the image of His Son as a scepter to be corrupted and abused by unfaithful Jewish kings.

Going back to the story of Esther and King Ahasuerus; as with this Persian King, we cannot come to the Father unless He extends His scepter to us. If He does we

will have life. I believe we can see this imagery played out in the following scriptures.

John 6:44-45

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

John 6:65

...no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.

John 6:37

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

The Father is the one who has made His choices and has extended to us His only Son, like a royal scepter. In fact, we have come to Jesus only because the Father offered us life through Jesus, whereby upon our choosing Him in return, we get to come into His presence confident we are accepted and pleasing to the Father. In that regard, I want you to take note of one more little detail which comes from the story of Esther when she came before King Ahasuerus without having been called. This passage speaks of our needing to choose Him in return in order to experience the life He offers.

Esther 5:2-3

When the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, she obtained favor in his sight; and the king extended to Esther the golden scepter which was in his hand. So Esther came near and touched the top of the scepter. Then the king said to her, "What is troubling you, Queen Esther? And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be given to you."

Clearly, Esther obtained favor and acceptance in the king's sight, but did you notice she drew near and touched the top of the scepter. This was a sign that she accepted the rule, authority, and sovereignty of the King and was humbled under his majesty. Likewise, we must come and touch the scepter of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and show that we accept the rule, authority, and sovereignty of the King and thereby humble ourselves under his majesty. We must be willing to touch the scepter, to touch the Son so to speak. This is why we find Jesus correcting the Pharisees because they refused to bow under the scepter and to reach out and touch Him: ***John 5:39-40***, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life." They were unwilling to bow themselves in humility under the Lord's scepter of righteousness and find life. It was freely available to them, yet they refused. And unlike the graciousness of king Ahasuerus who offered up half of his kingdom to Queen Esther, when we draw near and humble ourselves under Jesus, the Lord's Messiah," He offers us the entire kingdom for He makes us joint heirs with Jesus Christ (***Romans 8:17***). This means we have

right to the whole, the entirety of the Kingdom, not just a part.

Jesus is the royal scepter. The way is narrow that leads to life (**Matthew 7:14**) because Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life and no one comes to the Father except through Jesus (**John 14:6; 11:25**). In other words, unless a person is willing to bow under the Lord's designated authority and reach out and touch the scepter of righteousness, they will die and will not be accepted into the presence of the King. This is the one law.

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. **These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power**, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed.

*For other scriptures on this promise of eternal destruction, see also **Isaiah 66:23-24; Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41-46; Romans 2:5-8, Philippians 3:19; Jude 7, 13; Revelation 14:10-11; 20:14; 21:8; 22:15***. All of these passages speak of eternal or everlasting destruction and punishment away from the presence of the Lord. Many of them mention eternal fire and quite specifically the Lake of Fire. This is the place

designated for all who have not touched the scepter of righteousness. Make no mistake, all will bow before Him, for He is the Lord of Lords—this no one will be able to deny—but not all will have chosen to touch Him. But for those who have chosen to humble themselves, have bowed before the scepter of the Lord, and reached out and touched Him, listen to what it says.

Hebrews 10:19-22

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

We can have confidence—with the full assurance of faith—to draw near into the inner chambers; even into His most private chambers. He has made us able, He has made us accepted, and He has extended to us life—He has extended to us His one and only Son, who is the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings (***Revelation 17:14; 19:16***). And in extending to us life, He has also given us the kingdom.

Let's go back to ***Hebrews 1:8-9***. Jesus is the scepter of His Father's Kingdom and since He has loved righteousness and hated lawlessness the Father has anointed Jesus with the oil of gladness more than all others. This gives us an interesting insight to the inner-workings of the Godhead. I believe it reveals the independence of the three persons of the Godhead. They live in complete unity, but they have

independent aspects to their personhood. Jesus chose and has always chosen righteousness, for “loved” is in the *aorist active indicative*. From the beginning to the end He is marked by loving righteousness and hating iniquity, and that is a statement of fact (hated is also in the *aorist active indicative*). Jesus clearly has a choice in the matter; and He has actively chosen to love righteousness and detest lawlessness or iniquity. Thus, the scriptures say: “For the Lord is righteous, He loves righteousness” (***Psalm 11:7***); and “He loves righteousness and justice (***Psalm 33:5***).

As a result, God the Father has poured out on Jesus the full abundance of His Spirit of joy or His Spirit of gladness (the Greek word is translated both way). This speaks of the abundance of the Spirit which is found only in Jesus. And since “anointed” is in the *aorist active indicative*, the Father has always anointed Jesus with this oil of gladness, and that is a statement of fact, because Jesus has always loved righteousness. This is why in the Old Testament Jesus is referred to as the “Anointed One,” which is also translated as the “Messiah” in the Old Testament and the “Christ” in the New Testament. But it is the same word (***1 Samuel 2:10; 2:35, 12:3, 5; Psalm 2:2; Daniel 9:25-26; John 1:41***). And since the Father anointed the Son with this oil, we have followed in His example. That is why the priests of the Old Testament were anointed with oil and why we anoint with oil. It is symbolic of our being swathed in the same Spirit of joy or gladness.

In that regard, ***Isaiah 61:1-3*** speaks of Jesus being anointed by God with the Holy Spirit and His in turn anointing us with the same oil of gladness. This passage is understood to be a Messianic proclamation largely because Jesus claimed this passage as His own in ***Luke 4:18***.

Isaiah 61:1-3

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has **anointed** me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, **the oil of gladness** instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.

2 Corinthians 1:21 and ***1 John 2:20, 27*** also speak of our receiving the anointing from Jesus, just as He promised in ***Isaiah 61***.

Jesus was anointed by the Father because He loved righteousness and hated iniquity or lawlessness. Similarly, when we make the choice to love Jesus—to bow under and touch the scepter of righteousness, and in so doing to despise and detest iniquity—we are anointed with the same oil of gladness with which Jesus was anointed. And in this we are like Him; after all, He shares with us all that the Father has given to Him (remember we have become joint heirs with Jesus Christ).

Accordingly, I believe we need to spend some time understanding what it means for us, like Jesus, to love righteousness and hate lawlessness. After all the Kingdom of God **is a kingdom of righteousness**; therefore, it is not a surprise that the citizens of the Kingdom should reflect this characteristic. However, this is a study we will pick up next week. But in preparation, I want you to start thinking about that

statement. Do you love righteousness and hate lawlessness? What would it look like for you to love righteousness and hate lawlessness? What in your life would be different if you decided to absolutely love righteousness and absolutely detest iniquity? Clearly, this would impact all your relationships, not just with the Beloved, but with everyone. Clearly, this would impact your connection to this world for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world (**1 John 2:16**) and therefore has no place in the heart of the citizens of the Kingdom of God. Clearly, this would impact your view of what is important and not important in this life. Understanding what it means to love righteousness can and should be a game changer for all of us; and the fruit which flows from those who have touched the scepter should be the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

1 John 2:28-29

Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming [*this has overtones to the Garden and the way Adam and Eve hid from God*]. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.

Just so there is no confusion, “practices” righteousness in in the *present active participle*. Everyone who now and continually practices righteousness is born of Him (“born” is rendered in the *perfect passive indicative*). This leaves a very big

question mark over the lives of those who do not now and continually practice righteousness. So it is critical that we understand righteousness for ourselves so every one of us will know what it means to now practice and continue to practice righteousness. This is an area where the enemy has twisted people into knots of legalism and knots of liberality, both of which has effectively crippled the Beloved. But we will be diligent in our studies and attempt to recapture any territory that has been taken over by the enemy through heretical wrong belief. But make no mistake, we are to love righteousness and detest iniquity; after all, we are to be like our one and only King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Let's pray