

The Story of God

Chapter 7: The Kingdom Divided

(Solomon - Exile)

The story of the Bible is a story about the exaltation of the Son of God as the Hero and ultimate King of the universe, who unites the realms of heaven and earth in Himself. Humanity plays a part in this story: God wants our loving loyalty and offers His loyal love to us. He wants us to join Him in partnership: to work together on this project called "the heavens and the earth."

The Story

Review: God created a world of two realms (heaven and earth) and invited both humans and spirit beings into His Royal Family to rule the world with Him. Instead, humanity joined spirit beings in a great cosmic rebellion, fracturing the Family Kingdom and resulting in death and exile, with humanity under the rule of evil spirits. God has promised a new human who will crush the rebellion (and the original rebel) and restore what was lost, and we are waiting. God has made a new creation - a new people named Israel. He led them out of the nations and into a new garden land. But the people repeated the sins of Adam and Eve, rebelling against God over and over, and are ruled by the people and the spirits they were supposed to conquer. However, eventually God raises up an anointed priest/king, David, who defeats the evil giants and drives away evil spirits. He unites Israel under his reign and prepares to build God a house - a new Eden where God and humanity can dwell together. However, David too fails like Adam and Eve, resulting in a lot of pain and brokenness. He isn't the promised one. But God promises that one of his descendants will be, and he will reign forever over the nations. And so David's son Solomon builds the house for God, asks for God's wisdom over his own, and God does indeed come to dwell in Jerusalem and bless the people of Israel with peace and abundance. Could Solomon be the anointed Savior King who will crush the serpent and end the rebellion?

After Solomon had taken seven years building a house for God, he now takes thirteen years building a new palace for himself - not a good sign. He uses forced labor (slavery) of all the non-Jews living in his kingdom to get all this work done, as well as countless other building projects in cities throughout his Kingdom. He also requires much forced service from the people of Israel.

Remember the pattern of sin that we see throughout the Bible is that people see, desire, and take what is forbidden for them to have. In the law of Moses (**Deut 17**), God had anticipated the people taking a king, and so he gave them rules for the king to live by. Included in the rules were three things that the king was forbidden to take: many Egyptian horses, many wives, and much silver and gold.

Solomon goes on to take all three of the forbidden things in grandiose style. He amasses thousands of Egyptian horses (Egyptian horses are specifically forbidden). He loves 1000 foreign wives from the nations specifically forbidden to Israelites. He hoards so much silver and gold that he “made silver as common in Jerusalem as stone” **1 Kings 10:27**.

Remember that God had appeared to Solomon twice - the second time challenging Solomon to walk in obedience to their agreement and to worship and serve God alone. Solomon has broken the agreement by taking the forbidden things. Now he breaks it even further by worshipping other gods. Solomon still worships YHWH, but he also builds many other temples to the gods of his foreign wives. Remember that these gods are the rebellious spirit beings that YHWH set over the nations at the tower of Babel. Not only does Solomon build temples to these rebel spirits, but he also worships them and offers sacrifices to them - the very enemies of YHWH! **1 Kings 11:4-8**

This treachery of Solomon makes God mad, and rightfully so. God had claimed Solomon as His beloved son, had appeared to him twice, and had given him divine wisdom and earthly blessing beyond measure. Yet Solomon had betrayed God many times and in many ways. So God tells Solomon that He will tear the kingdom away from him. Even so, because of God’s love for Solomon’s father David, God will show mercy even in this judgement: it won’t happen during Solomon’s life, and Solomon’s son will maintain rule over one of the twelve tribes.

In a story that hints back at the people’s slavery in Egypt, when Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, ascended to the throne, all the people came to him and said “Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father... and we will serve you.” Rehoboam’s older counselors advised him to listen to the people, while his younger friends told him to prove his manhood by making the people’s burdens even greater. Just as YHWH had hardened Pharaoh’s heart, so he guides Rehoboam to foolishly reject wisdom and listen to his friends.

With the exception of Judah, all the tribes rebel against Rehoboam’s harsh rule. A man named Jeroboam rules the Northern tribes (called “Israel”), and he fears that the people will return to Rehoboam when they go to Jerusalem to worship YHWH at the festivals. So he creates a completely separate religious system. He makes two golden calves and sets one up near the southern border in Bethel and one at Dan in the north. He appoints new priests who aren’t Levites, and a new divine feast for the people to worship the idols. We are reminded of the golden calf incident at Mt Sinai in Exodus, only now it’s twice the rebellion. The city of Samaria becomes the capital city of Israel, with Jerusalem remaining the capital of Judah. The two kingdoms begin to see each other as enemies.

In both the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, we now get a series of kings. All of them are critiqued by the standard of David, and most of them fall utterly short. In the North, none of the kings is faithful to YHWH, and in the South, only a few worship YHWH alone, and none measure up to David. When a king does give God his loyalty, God responds, usually in miraculous ways, though loyal kings are few and far between. Most of the kings in both kingdoms worship the spirit beings of the nations around them. Even though some

of the wicked kings appear to have earthly success, God considers them worthless because of their lack of loving loyalty to Him.

God raises up a series of prophets who challenge the people to repent and give their loving loyalty back to YHWH. The prophets also call the people to reunite the divided kingdom. Their calls fall mostly on deaf ears.

Elijah and Elisha are the two biggest of these prophets, and God works through them in powerful ways to demonstrate that He is the MOST HIGH of all the gods and that He alone is worthy of the people's loving loyalty. They warn of dire consequences if the people continue in their rebellion.

It's worth noting that two of the most wicked kings, Israel's Ahab and Judah's Manasseh, both humbled themselves and repented of their evil, and YHWH responded in gracious love to both.

One of the prophets (Ezekiel) sees a vision of Jesus (as the Glory of YHWH) leaving the Jerusalem temple surrounded by His divine throne guardians, because of the people's idolatry. Both Israel and Judah have become like faithless, adulterous wives and useless vines that produce nothing. The people need a new heart and a new spirit, which God promises to one day give them.

Another prophet, Micah, sees God coming down from heaven to trample the mountains (both physical and spiritual high places). He tells that in the last days God will raise up Jerusalem as the highest mountain (in other words - the connection point of heaven and earth), with a God-King coming to rule from Bethlehem, who will bring back both Israel and Judah, put an end to war forever, and usher in a new Edenic Kingdom.

While the prophets give MANY dire warnings of the consequences of rebellion, they also say that God will still fulfill His promise to rescue both Israel/Judah and all of humanity through the long-awaited Savior King who will end the cosmic rebellion and rule the nations with justice and righteousness from a new Jerusalem. However, one of the prophets, Isaiah, says that when this Rescuer comes, the people won't look at him, won't desire him, and will reject him. The very one we should see, desire and take (remember the **SIN PATTERN**), we won't. Yet even this is God's doing and the Savior King will somehow triumph anyway, ushering in a new Edenic world where God dwells with humanity forever.

We all know where this story is headed, because we've seen it before and been told how it will repeat. When Adam and Eve joined the cosmic rebellion, it led to death and destruction, with their descendants ultimately enslaved to evil spirit beings in Babel. Before Moses died, he told the people of Israel that they too would rebel against YHWH and end up enslaved and in exile. The prophets have warned the people countless times to no avail. Now we see it play out.

The Northern kingdom of Israel is conquered first: by the kingdom of Assyria in 722 BC, with the northern tribes hauled off as captives and essentially scattered to the nations.

The Southern kingdom of Judah hangs on a while longer but is eventually conquered by the kingdom of Babylon in 587 BC. Jerusalem is destroyed, including God's temple, and many of the people are exiled to Babylon.

All this destruction, death, and exile is the result of the people's stubborn rebellion. **2 Kings 17** describes it well.

It's no coincidence that Babel and Babylon sound the same. In fact, in Hebrew, they are actually the same word. The Biblical writers want us to see the kingdom of Babylon as the new Babel, with the people now in exile and slavery because of their continued rebellion. Just as Babel was the low point in humanity's story, so now the Babylonian exile is the low point for God's people. It's a bitter irony that the one people that God kept as his own inheritance have been taken captive by the disinherited people of the cosmic rebellion.

But this is not a victory for the rebellion, instead it is God handing out the consequences to a rebellious people. (See Jer 21:3-10, esp v5) God is still very much in control (not the Babylonians), both in bringing this judgement and in the promise that He will still restore all things.

The Promised One

We've learned more about who the new human (the seed of Gen 3) will be.

-REVIEW-

- He will be a new and better Adam, a descendant of Eve, who will pass the test, crush the serpent, undo the rebellion, and rule the world as priest/king.
- He will be a new Noah, bringing rest to the world through his righteous sacrifice and restoring God's blessing to humanity.
- He will be a son of Abraham, displaying faith (loving loyalty) in YHWH and blessing the nations.
- He will be a son of Joseph, who, like Joseph, will be betrayed by his brothers and suffer greatly though he is innocent, but will then be exalted to rescue and care for the people as a Shepherd Rock. All the nations shall somehow become part of His family and he will be a mighty conqueror who will rule the nations.
- He will be a son of Judah, who will offer his life in exchange for others, will crush the head of his enemy (the serpent), and will rule over the nations.
- He will be a prophet like Moses, working signs and wonders, and rescuing the people from slavery.
- He will be a second Joshua who will lead the people victoriously into the promised land.
- He will be a new faithful priest who will do what is on God's heart and mind.
- He will be a son of David, who will have the power to drive away evil spirits.

-He will be an anointed son of David and son of God, who will be a new priest/king - who will build a new temple and will rule on his throne forever over all the nations - an eternal Kingdom.

-NEW-

-He will come from Bethlehem, but also come from "of old" (He'll be divine.)

-He will rule from a new Jerusalem, which will become the new Eden.

-The earlier promises are picked up and expanded upon.

Application & False Stories:

Lie: Life is all about success: money, power, sex, pleasure.

Truth: God measures people in a very different way - He measures their loving loyalty to Him.

That is the thing that REALLY matters in life and in eternity.

God is slow to anger, like He tells us in Exodus, giving humanity many chances to return to Him. But He will judge the wicked.

Resources:

VIDEO: "1 & 2 Kings" <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/kings/>

The Drama of Scripture pg 102-111

Series Goals

- Evoke wonder & participation (a new supernatural lens)
- It's all about Jesus and His Family Kingdom (relationship and purpose)
- God's story over all other stories (confront lies)

Overarching Plot Focal Points

(each story connects to these)

- God wants to grow and share His Family Kingdom
- Humanity was created for *rich relationship* and *profound purpose* in the Family Kingdom
- A cosmic rebellion fractures the Family Kingdom
- God promises a hero to crush the adversary, rescue humanity, and restore the Family Kingdom

- Humanity must choose between trusting God's promise or continuing in rebellion