

LESSON 4

The Kingdom of God in Human History: The Patriarchs

Genesis 2:16-17; Romans 6:16

And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die,"

Genesis 2:16-17.

Don't you know that if you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of that one you obey—either of sin leading to death or of obedience leading to righteousness?, Romans 6:16.

Class Overview: This lesson shows that God's kingdom did not begin with Moses or the church—it has always existed. From the garden of Eden to Abraham, God revealed His will directly to mankind, judged sin, and rewarded righteousness. Genesis records God's dealings with humanity through sacrifice, covenant, law, and judgment, all of which point to His unchanging authority. The patriarchal age demonstrates that God's kingdom is defined not by land or government but by people who hear and obey the voice of the King.

Class Objectives:

By the end of this class, you should be able to:

1. Explain how the conflict between God's kingdom and the kingdom of darkness began in Genesis.
 2. Recognize that God's authority has always been active, even before the Law of Moses.
 3. Identify key examples of God's direct dealings with humanity in the patriarchal period.
 4. Understand that God's kingdom is not tied to territory but to faithful obedience.
 5. Apply the lesson by choosing daily to let God reign instead of sin.
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Introduction

Previously, we discussed that God's rule has been over the heavens and the earth. The scriptures set Him apart from all peoples, powers, and authorities. His reign is eternal, and no one can hinder His purpose or rule.

God's rule has never been limited to heaven or the physical world. From the beginning, He has governed humanity. The book of Genesis shows us how God engaged directly with people, teaching them His will, setting standards, and holding them accountable. In this lesson, we will examine how God reigned

during the time of the patriarchs, guiding individuals and shaping His kingdom on earth even amidst rebellion and sin.

In this lesson, we will explore how God interacted with humanity as He ruled over His kingdom.

From the Beginning to the Fall

1. The Beginning of the Conflict Between the Kingdom of God on Earth and the Kingdom of Darkness.
 - a. Genesis 1:31: *God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed.*
 - b. Genesis 2:8-9: *The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he placed the man he had formed. The Lord God caused to grow out of the ground every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food, including the tree of life in the middle of the garden, as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*
 - i. *The tree of life, and the tree of pleasantness or adversity.*
 - ii. There was no indication of temptation until Satan (the Spirit that works in the children of disobedience) enticed Adam and Eve.
 - c. Genesis 3 is not just the story of the first sin, but the beginning of two opposing kingdoms—the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.
 - d. Genesis introduces us to the struggle that still defines life today: Will we submit to God's reign, or will we yield to the kingdom of darkness?
2. The conflict remains the same as it was then.
 - a. Romans 6 links this conflict directly to us: we choose daily who will reign: sin or God.
 - b. Romans 6:12-13: *Who reigns in your body?*
 - c. Romans 6:16-17: *Who do you choose to obey?*

After the Fall

1. *Patriarch*: God directly communicated His will to man. Patriarchal rule was a form of God's direct kingdom administration before the Law of Moses.
2. Throughout Genesis, we see God interacting directly with the righteous and providing them with information concerning commands he wanted them to follow.
 - a. Genesis 3 – Discipline and consequences.
 - b. Genesis 4 – Instruction concerning sacrifice (Cain rejected, Abel accepted).
 - c. Genesis 5 – Enoch walked with God, proving a standard of righteousness existed.
 - d. Genesis 6 – Humanity's thoughts continually evil; God's standard made rebellion obvious.
 - e. Genesis 7–8 – God judged wickedness, renewed His covenant.
 - f. Genesis 9 – God established law and discipline for violators.
 - g. Genesis 11 – God judged arrogance at Babel.
 - h. Genesis 12 – God spoke directly to Abraham and instructed him.
 - i. Genesis 14 – Melchizedek, priest of the Most High God, shows others beyond Abraham knew God.

- i. His appearance shows that God was making Himself known beyond Abraham's family. Even in a sinful world, others recognized and served the Most High God.
3. Though people often rebelled, God did not abandon His creation. Instead, He continued to rule by speaking directly to mankind and setting forth His standards.

Conclusion

From Adam to Abraham, God ruled by directly revealing His will to mankind. Though people often rebelled, He never relinquished His authority. He judged evil, rewarded faith, and raised up men like Enoch, Noah, and Abraham who trusted Him. Even in the earliest days of human history, God was showing that His kingdom is not just about territory or nations—it is about people who acknowledge Him as King. The challenge for us is the same as it was for them: will we let God reign in our lives, or will we choose the kingdom of darkness?

From Eden to Abraham, one truth stands firm: God has always reigned, and His kingdom belongs to those who choose to walk with Him.

For Discussion

1. Why do you think God placed both the tree of life and the tree of knowledge in the garden? What does this teach about choice and God's rule?
2. How does the fall of Adam and Eve show the beginning of the conflict between God's kingdom and the kingdom of darkness?
3. In the patriarchal period, God spoke directly to people. What advantages and challenges might that have brought compared to how He speaks today through Scripture?
4. What do Cain and Abel's sacrifices reveal about God's authority and mankind's responsibility in worship?
5. How do the lives of Enoch, Noah, and Abraham illustrate what it looks like to live under God's reign in a rebellious world?