

**LESSONS ON PREDESTINATION #26**  
**"The Moral Nature of the Kingdom of Heaven"**

*"Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom." But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father." And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." – Matthew 20:20-28 (NKJV)*

**INTRODUCTION:** In our last lesson we considered the Original State of Satan prior to his fall. We examined the description of him given in Ezekiel 28:11-15. In so doing, we discovered that:

- (1) He was created by God in a state of sinless perfection (28:15) which consisted of:
  - (a) Perfect wisdom - 28:12
  - (b) Perfect beauty - 28:12, 17
  - (c ) Perfect holiness - 28:14
  - (d) Perfect moral conduct - 28:15
  - (e) But yet as a finite creature he was limited in his being-28:13
  
- (2) We observed his assigned role or position by God.
  - (a) He was the first-born of every creature, thus inheriting the highest position of honor and privilege in the kingdom of heaven - Isaiah 14:12.
  - (b) He was placed in God's paradise - 28:13.
  - (c) He was the "anointed cherub", selected and marked out by God to occupy a position of higher authority over the rest of the angels - 28:14.
  - (d) He was nearest to the throne - 28:14.
  - (e) He was assigned the role of overseer and protector of all of God's created works including man - 28:14.

- (3) Summary:  
Satan was the highest ranking official positioned by God in the kingdom of heaven. In rank, he was just under the throne of God. There he was assigned the task of overseeing and protecting the works of God's creation in the role of an obedient, humble servant to the will of God. In that role he performed his duties until his insurrection and downfall occurred.
- (4) We come now to consider the nature of the kingdom of heaven which exists today and in which Satan originally abode.

#### **A. JESUS COMES TO EARTH TO REVEAL THE CHARACTER OF GOD.**

1. Jesus was God prior to His incarnation - John 1:1-4 - ***"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."***

2. In taking on human nature, He primarily revealed the moral attributes of God's character - John 1:14, 18 - ***"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. . . . No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him."***

a. Note that John's focus is on the glory of God's moral attributes of grace and truth. It is normal to refer to God's attributes in two divisions: **First**, His natural attributes which consist of His Self-existence, Eternality, Infinity, Immutability, Omniscience, Omnipotence, and Omnipresence. These are also called His incommunicable attributes, in that they cannot be imparted or conveyed to His moral creatures. **Second**, His moral attributes which consist of His Holiness, Righteousness, Justice, Grace, Mercy, Love, etc. These are also called His communicable attributes in that they can be imparted or conveyed to His moral creatures. What John is saying is that we saw the invisible God marked out and declared by His moral attributes in the being, character, and conduct expressed in the humanity of Jesus Christ. The word "declared" means "to explain or interpret." From this word we get the English word "exegesis". Thus Jesus came to "exegete" God for us, that is to explain or interpret what the invisible God is like. In John 14:8,9 Philip asked Jesus ***"to show them the Father."*** Jesus replied, ***"Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father."*** How so? By observing God's moral attributes as seen in Jesus. In

Colossians 1:15 Paul would say of Jesus, "*Who is the image of the invisible God.*" This is a moral image, not a physical image.

## **B. JOHN THE BAPTIST ANNOUNCES THE SOON ARRIVAL OF THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM.**

1. Matthew 3:1,2 - "*In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!*"

2. A kingdom must have a king or ruler. Jesus was to be that King.

## **C. THE JEWISH UNDERSTANDING AND EXPECTATION OF THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM.**

1. They believed their Messiah would come and set up a political and military kingdom, which would result in the overthrow of their oppressors, namely the Romans.

2. They believed that through their natural descendency from Abraham, they would be the citizens of the kingdom, who would be the rulers, and the Gentiles would be their servants or subjects.

3. They believed that greatness in the kingdom would be measured by occupying a higher rank of position and power over those of a lower rank and order.

## **D. JESUS CONFRONTS THIS ERROR IN THE THINKING OF HIS DISCIPLES.**

1. This is seen in the text we read at the beginning of the lesson.

2. As the disciples have now followed Jesus for some time, it appears to them that something big is about to happen. Jesus has associated Himself as being a King with a Kingdom. They are interested as to what their positions would be in the Kingdom, for faithfully following Jesus. In particular James and John were desirous of holding the two highest offices in the cabinet of Jesus. They did not want to be so brazen as to directly ask the question to Jesus, so they sent their mother instead. Jesus replied that He was in submission to the will of His Father and that His Father would determine who would occupy these positions. **NOTE:** This is an example of God's sovereign prerogative to pre-appoint the destinies of men.

3. The self-centered desire on the part of James and John brought out the envy of

the other disciples. In Matthew 20:24 we read that ***"When the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers."***

#### **E. JESUS CONTRASTS TWO RIVAL KINGDOMS.**

1. In verse 25 He says, ***"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them."*** The people in these kingdoms aspire to greatness by ascending higher in authority over others. They will seek to ascend upward as lords, but refuse to descend downward to the role of servants.

a. This is how the fallen sinful natures of moral creatures view greatness; always seeking a higher rank over others. The Bible identifies the spirit operating in this kingdom as belonging to ***"this world."*** The world which is ruled by Satan, who is called the "god of this world (age)". II Corinthians 4:4.

b. There are two moral principles which operate in this kingdom. They are ONE: **Pride**, in which one esteems oneself as possessing a place of importance and superiority over others. TWO: **Dominion**, a spirit which seeks to gain control over others so one can have their own way. While those who are in this kingdom are all agreed these principles are essential to happiness and greatness, they cannot ever find unity among themselves due to each member seeking to get ahead of the others. This leads to envy, strife, divisions, anger, lying, wars, and unhappiness.

2. Verses 26 and 27 - Jesus says, ***"yet it shall not be so among you, but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave."***

a. Here we see greatness as seen through the eyes of the Son of God. Greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven is not gained by overpowering the inferior, but by serving others. Servants and slaves regard themselves as less worthy than others. They place the needs of others before their own.

b. In Philippians 2:3,4, ***"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."***

c. There are also two leading principles which govern the moral conduct of those in Christ's Kingdom. They are ONE: **humility**, a taking the lower seat at the table or

riding in the back seat. TWO: **servanthood**, meeting the needs of others.

3. Greatness as contrasted by the two kingdoms: kingdom of this world and the Kingdom of Heaven:

- a. World says rule / Heaven says serve
- b. World says dominate / Heaven says submit
- c. World says act in pride / Heaven says act in humility
- d. World says take / Heaven says give
- e. World says seek to be ministered unto / Heaven says seek to minister to others

4. Verse 28 - Jesus says, ***"Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."***

a. Here we have greatness illustrated both by the attitude and actions of Jesus. His entire purpose, His entire life, was shaped by His willingness to serve. His ultimate act of service was the giving of His life on the cross.

b. Jesus was not only God's suffering servant, but it is said of Him in Philippians 2:9, ***"And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."***

#### **F. JESUS DEFINES THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.**

1. As Jesus' ministry continued on toward its climax, the debate continued as regarding the nature of His Kingdom. The Roman officials, the Jewish religious leaders and the personal followers of Jesus are all somewhat perplexed as to what He was up to. In John 18:33-38, the Jews forced a confrontation with the Roman officials. Since He was claiming to be a King with a Kingdom, they wanted to make it appear that He was planning an insurrection against Rome. If this could be proven, then the Romans would put Him to death. They present the charge to Pilate, a governor of the region. We then read in the passage in John,

***Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?"***

***Jesus answered him, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?"***

***Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?"***

***Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."***

***Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?"***

***Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."***

***Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, "I find no fault in Him at all."***

After examining Jesus, Pilate reached the conclusion that Jesus was merely a moral crusader and presented no danger to Roman rule. Since He had no army, His kingdom was not that of a military nature, but one of a mere moral persuasion.

2. At an earlier time in Jesus' ministry, the Pharisees pressed Him to describe the Kingdom, and when it would come. They were, of course, holding to the idea of a Jewish Messiah who would establish the Kingdom by military means which would be visible to all. In Luke 17:20, 21, we have Jesus' description of where the Kingdom resides, and when it comes.

***Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."***

a. There is some disagreement as to what meaning should be given to the Greek word "entos." Its basic meaning is clear. It means "within, or inside." The NKJV translates it as "within you." The KJV renders it "in the midst of" as does the NESV. The expression "in the midst of" can convey one of two meanings. It can be "inside of" or "within you" and thus could not be seen. Or it can mean that Jesus and His disciples were standing in the midst of the crowd and could be seen by all. Some would want it to be translated "among" you. William Hendriksen maintains that "There is no justification for

the rendering "among." (*Commentary on Luke*, p. 810).

b. I believe the translation in the NKJV is the most accurate and conveys the clearest meaning that the Kingdom is an inward, invisible principle residing in the nature of a moral being submitted to the will of God.

c. The evidence for this consists in two factors:

(1) The word is only used in one other location in the New Testament, and there it clearly means "within or inside." In Matthew 23:26 it reads **"Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also."**

(2) It cannot refer to Jesus merely standing physically in the midst of them because it could then be observed with the visible eye, and Jesus says it cannot be observed as being in a physical location or form.

d. Thus the Kingdom of Heaven or Kingdom of God, originates in God as the ruler, and going back to the beginning of time and so rules till the end of time. It was first revealed to the angels, then to Adam, then to Israel, then to the church, then to the eternal state of affairs.

## **G. THE INVISIBLE WARFARE BETWEEN THE TWO KINGDOMS.**

1. As Christ Jesus is now King in the Kingdom of Heaven where humility and servanthood reigns, so Satan is now king of the kingdom of this world where pride and dominion reign.

a. Jesus speaks of Satan's kingdom in Matthew 12:26. He says **"If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?"**

b. In Matthew 4:8, 9, Satan tempts Christ with his kingdom. There we read, **"The devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.'"** What was he saying? If you will leave your Kingdom of humility and servanthood, and come a join mine of pride and dominion, I will make you the king of them all!

c. John would say in I John 2:15-17 - **"Do not love the world or the**

***things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”***

d. In II Corinthians 4:4 Paul referred to Satan as being ***“the god of this world”*** (age).

2. The kingdoms of this world are but earthly, physical reflections of Satan’s kingdom and their rulers are human reflections of Satan.

a. This is why the King of Tyrus as described in Ezekiel 28 is but a reflection of Satan.

b. We now know what the world was like in its pre-fallen state before the angels and men fell into pride and dominion. In our next lesson we shall be prepared to see what it was that led Lucifer to fall and being cast out of the Kingdom of Heaven. But we now know that Satan left the Kingdom of Heaven and exited through the door of pride and dominion.