

HAS GOD INDEED SAID?

PART 2

Rulership in the Seventh Day

Genesis 3:1-4

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die."

What God had said to Adam and the woman about not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil had to do with one thing only: their worthiness to rule in the seventh day. The serpent's question, "Has God indeed said?", and the lie that followed it, "You will not surely die," were both aimed at the woman, and both were an attack on what God had said about what was necessary to rule in that day — a direct attack on the need for faithful obedience, and a complete emasculation of the consequences for failing to give it.

And with respect to rulership in the seventh day, God has also spoken to us.

Hebrews 1:1-2

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds [made an orderly arrangement of the ages].

What He has said to us concerning rulership in the seventh day, by His Son, is found in what the Lord calls the Word of the Kingdom. It's found in the good news given to Paul to carry to the Gentiles concerning the coming Day of Christ's glory, the gospel of the glory of Christ — good news that carries within it promised blessings of an incalculable nature for the faithful, and severe warnings for those who would choose not to take God at His Word.

The hope promised through this good news is founded on the certainty of the resurrected Christ's return to establish His Kingdom — a return that will begin with the resurrection/rapture of the church to His Judgment Seat, and will be brought to completion by His literal return to the earth to overthrow Gentile world power for all time, bringing about a complete change in the present system of rulership.

2 Thessalonians 1:10

when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

As we've seen from the Matthew 13 parables, Satan has continued his concerted attack against the Word of the Kingdom to prevent, or at least stop, fruit production among those who have heard it, understood it, and organized their lives accordingly. And this attack, just as it was in the garden, is centered on the very same question he asked there: "Has God indeed said?"

The central pillar of the corrupted doctrine that grows out of this question — introduced by the tares at the beginning of the dispensation — challenges the very next event on God's prophetic calendar: the return of Christ to establish His Kingdom, that much-heralded return which begins with the resurrection/rapture of the church, all Christians from these two thousand years of this dispensation, to Christ's Judgment Seat, to settle matters of life or death for them in the age to come.

Revelation 2:11

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death."

And the challenge to what God has said about this is found in the very question asked by the tares — the same passage we sat with last week, worth hearing again in full, because it's the one line the tares keep circulating in every generation:

2 Peter 3:1-4

Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."

We saw last week that there's a direct parallel between the actions of the children of Israel while Moses was delayed on the mountain of God and the actions of the church while the Lord remains in the heavens. In both the type and the antitype, we find a questioning of the promise given to return — a questioning that opened the door to doing what was right in the eyes of those waiting, and one that was endorsed, even encouraged, by the leaders of the people.

Exodus 32:1, 5-6

...as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him. [Where is the promise of his coming?] ... So when Aaron saw it [the golden calf], he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD." Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

Now, with respect to the church, this same move to do what is right in one's own eyes, during the time Christ has remained in the heavens, has come from the work of the tares as they chose to stand away from the faith — giving rise to the appearance of the "scoffers" we've just read of in 2 Peter 3.

Scoffers and Mockers

These same apostate Christians are also spoken of in Jude, where they're called "mockers."

Jude 1:17-18

But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts.

"Scoffers" and "mockers" are, in fact, both a translation of the very same Greek word, one that means to deride, to belittle, to mock. And the "ungodly lusts" these mockers are said to walk in, in Jude, find their expression in the scoffers' question in 2 Peter: "Where is the promise of His coming?"

The appearing of these scoffers and mockers, as part of Satan's unrelenting attack on the Word of the Kingdom, was something Paul had also warned about.

Acts 20:29-31

For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

Notice that Paul doesn't only warn of wolves coming in from outside; he warns just as plainly that this would rise up "from among yourselves" — from within the church's own leadership. And when he spells out what that departure would actually look like in practice, in his letter to Timothy, it doesn't look like open unbelief at all. It looks like extra devotion.

1 Timothy 4:1-3

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

"Forbidding to marry" and demanding abstinence from foods God gave to be received with thanksgiving — these are not the marks of people who've stopped caring about holiness; they're the marks of people manufacturing a holiness of their own, stricter than God's own Word, while quietly setting that Word aside. And it's against exactly this background that Paul charges Timothy to keep preaching the truth regardless, because a day was coming when people would prefer a comfortable myth to it.

2 Timothy 4:1-4

I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires,

because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

"Itching ears" says it all: teaching that scratches whatever the hearer already wants to feel, rather than delivers what's actually true. And it's this standing away from the faith that has called into question "the promise of His coming," a premise that finds its ultimate expression in the present Laodicean condition of the church — a church that is completely lukewarm with regard to the Word of the Kingdom, a church the Lord has Himself described:

Revelation 3:17

"Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—"

The Judgment Seat and the Bride

We need to understand that departing from the faith is not just a denial of the literal return of Christ; it's an implicit standing away from everything associated with His return. It replaces what God has said with the fables of men. And this, of necessity, includes the coming judgment of all Christians at His Judgment Seat — a judgment some see as only ever a time of blessing, with the complete absence of any negative consequence.

1 Corinthians 3:12-17

Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

Notice what's actually being tested in that fire: not the foundation — that's already Christ, settled once and for all — but what each of us has built on it. Gold, silver, and precious stones survive the fire; wood, hay, and straw don't. Either way, the person is saved. What's at stake is the reward, not the rescue. And that's precisely why the outcome of this judgment matters: to reject the idea of negative consequences for unfaithful Christians is to negate the very purpose of this judgment, which is to identify those who will be the Bride of Christ, who will rule with Him during the Millennial Kingdom. Yet throughout Christendom there's a teaching that all Christians are automatically the Bride of Christ — again, contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture, set in place from the very foundation.

Genesis 2:21-22

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

Notice what that picture actually shows us. Eve isn't simply gathered up from among the animals or the dust at large; she's formed from Adam's own side, taken from him while he's in a deep sleep — a type, we would say, of death — and then brought to him and presented as his own. The church that will be the Bride of Christ is drawn out in exactly this pattern: out of Christ's own death, formed from what is His, and presented to Him. That is a specific, deliberate act of formation and presentation, not a status handed automatically to everyone who happens to believe.

There's also the denial of a literal Millennial Kingdom, many believing that the Kingdom is here and now. And going hand in hand with this is the false teaching that being eternally saved and entering the Kingdom are one and the same thing.

Acts 14:22

strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

Being found worthy to have a position with Christ in the coming Kingdom is inextricably linked to the salvation of the soul. And this central focus of biblical teaching is not only generally ignored, it's completely denied by those who falsely teach that man is a two-part being rather than the three-part being Scripture describes.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, [whole] soul, and [whole] body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Has God indeed said?"

We could go on, but what should be obvious to us by now is that departing from the faith is to reject the gospel of the glory of Christ. In other words, it remains a direct attack on the Word of the Kingdom, a denial of the whole purpose of God. And that, of itself, takes us straight back to the serpent's action in the garden.

The Word of the Kingdom, from the Beginning

Now, in these last days of the dispensation in which we find ourselves, the false message being proclaimed — the message that has produced the antitype of the molded calf incident within the church — comes as a direct result of the leavening process begun by the tares, the scoffers, the mockers. It's a process the Lord had already made clear to His church in the Matthew 13 parables, given at a time before His church had even come into existence.

There's a sequence of seven parables given in Matthew 13, given after an event in Matthew 12 in which the scribes and Pharisees attributed the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan, resulting in the removal of the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens from Israel. The message the Lord gave through the parables that followed is entirely for the church, which was to come primarily from the Gentile nations.

Matthew 13:1

On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea.

Jesus gave these parables in the hearing of His disciples and the multitude of eternally saved Jews.

Matthew 13:10-11

And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given."

It's worth remembering that the word "parable" is simply a transliteration of the Greek word *parabole*, meaning to lay alongside. It's a way of teaching, through figurative language, that lays down a foundation and then, parable by parable, adds more information alongside what's already been given, until a complete picture emerges.

In Matthew 13 the foundation is laid with the parable of the sower, in which the subject of the whole sequence is revealed:

Matthew 13:18-19

"Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom..."

Everything that follows — the parable of the wheat and tares, the parable of the mustard seed, the parable of the leaven, and the rest — adds further information concerning anyone who hears the Word of the Kingdom. This parabolic sequence, in fact, gives us a complete dispensational history of the church with respect to hearing the Word of the Kingdom. And if we understand these parables, we understand exactly what has happened to what was the central message of the church at its beginning, as the question began to be asked: "Has God indeed said?" "Where is the promise of His coming?"

Let's be in no doubt about the central place of rulership in the seventh day within Scripture. It's not an add-on; it's the whole purpose of God's revelation to His creation. That's why it was this very message of the Kingdom that was preached to a redeemed people, Israel, at the Lord's first advent.

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!"

And after John's imprisonment, it was the very message Christ preached.

Matthew 4:17

From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

According to Scripture, it's the very reason Jesus had been sent.

Luke 4:43

but He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent."

It would be good for us to remember that everything Jesus said, and every sign, wonder, and miracle He performed, was in relation to the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens to a redeemed people — itself the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy we can trace all the way back to the promised Redeemer of Genesis 3:15, the very reason for the restoration of the heavens and the earth that begins in Genesis 1:2.

It was the same message, to the same audience, that He sent the twelve to preach.

Matthew 10:5-7

These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

And then the seventy:

Luke 10:1, 8-9

After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go... "Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'"

It was the focus of Christ's post-resurrection ministry.

Acts 1:3

to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

And it was the only message of the early church.

Acts 8:12

But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.

And the message of Paul.

Acts 20:25

"And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more."

And yet, as we've already seen through the pen of Paul, it's a message that many would depart from — bringing us right back to the Matthew 13 parables.

The Tares Among the Wheat

Among those who heard, understood, and acted upon the Word of the Kingdom — those sown in good ground in the parable of the sower — the enemy placed those who would depart from the faith.

Matthew 13:36-39

Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels."

Those in view in the second half of verse 38 are not the unsaved, but eternally saved Christians whose actions aligned them with Satan, making them "the sons of the wicked one" rather than "the sons of the kingdom." And the outcome of their actions — the way they've challenged and corrupted the Word of the Kingdom — is shown to us in the parable of the leaven.

Matthew 13:33

Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."

Leaven is always used in Scripture to symbolize sin and corruption. We see this in the feast of unleavened bread given to Israel alongside the Passover.

Exodus 12:15

'Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses.'

We hear it from the mouth of Jesus:

Matthew 16:6, 12

Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." ... Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

And in the epistles:

1 Corinthians 5:8

Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Three is the number of divine perfection, and meal is what bread is made from — giving us a picture of the divinely perfect Bread of Life, the Word of God, and specifically the Word of the Kingdom, the very subject of these parables. And into that divinely perfect Word of the Kingdom, corruption was added —

"Has God indeed said?" — until the Word of the Kingdom became completely corrupted. Just as God had said it would.

The Way of Cain, the Error of Balaam, and the Rebellion of Korah

The question often asked at this point is a fair one: why would someone who has come into a mature understanding of the Word of the Kingdom choose to stand away from it, to deliberately and intentionally challenge the truth by teaching a false doctrine? And, as always, Scripture gives us the answer.

Jude 1:11

Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

The way of Cain is found here:

Genesis 4:3

And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.

Cain, we'll remember, did not act in faith in response to what God had said about bringing an offering; instead, he chose what was right in his own eyes. The same is true of the apostates. They chose not to act by faith in response to what God had said, offering themselves as a living sacrifice, but chose instead to act according to their own desires.

The error of Balaam, for profit, we find here:

Numbers 22:12

And God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed."

Balaam, we'll remember, was hired by Balak to curse the children of Israel, and in this we see a God-given gift used for personal gain. When cursing failed, Balaam instructed Balak in how to assimilate Israel into the surrounding nations, turning them to idolatry and harlotry rather than lose his financial reward. It's not hard to see, from this, how the church has become assimilated into the world, and how much financial profit there is for anyone who finds the right product to market.

And it's no surprise that Balaam turns up again here:

Revelation 2:14

"But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam,"

The rebellion of Korah is found here:

Numbers 16:2-3

and they rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown. They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves,"

Notice who's named here — not fringe agitators, but two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, "men of renown," established and respected. It was Korah, together with these other prominent leaders of Israel, who rose up against Moses and Aaron intending to take the priesthood for themselves. And in this we can see a picture of the church's division into its various denominations and strands, as respected, credentialed apostates sought to take control of the message and the people for their own ends.

Jude 1:19

These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.

2 Peter 2:14

having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children.

Notice, in that verse from 2 Peter, that the enticement is aimed at "unstable souls." An unstable soul is one not firmly established in the Word of truth, one that can be blown to and fro by every wind of doctrine. It's the hope set before us that anchors the soul against exactly that.

Hebrews 6:19

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,

Titus 2:13

looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing [appearing of the glory] of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

Without this hope, and everything it contains, our souls are headed for shipwreck. And because the apostates' corrupted message attacks this very hope, shipwreck is exactly what has happened, and will continue to happen — which brings us back to the same warning we've already heard once, because it's worth hearing twice:

2 Peter 2:1-3

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words;

Steadfast to the End

We find ourselves right now in the midst of the final outworking of this process of the leaven. The corrupted message challenging God's Word, introduced by the tares, has become the norm within the church, so much so that the way of truth is blasphemed. The leaven has done its work.

And yet we can be encouraged.

2 Peter 3:17-18

You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.