S1E7: The Not-so-Magic Kingdom

CREATION: God Builds His Kingdom (Gen. 1-2)

Genesis 1 and 2 never call creation a kingdom, but the language is royal: dominion, subdue, fill. Before we get to the Fall, this episode sets the starting point: what God built, and the picture we'll carry through the rest of the story.

Creation is a kingdom. A ruler, a people, and a land, with God's presence, people, and place in perfect harmony.

What makes a kingdom?

- Think of the stories we love: princes, princesses, knights, fairy tales, and Disney. A kingdom is how relationships, resources, and power are managed so people can live together
- Three things at the least: a ruler, a people, and a land (a first grader's answer was "a queen!")
    - Ruler: government, law, and who enforces and interprets it
    - People: culture, language, values, trade, and education
    - Land: property, possession, defense, expansion, and making it productive
- Lose any one of the three and a kingdom declines or collapses. Humanity has fought wars, and told its best stories, over keeping, claiming, or reclaiming a lost kingdom
- Genesis 1-2 has all three: the eternal Creator is ruler, the world is the land, and Adam and Eve are the people. God establishes his kingdom

Why creation matters for redemption

- The Bible's plot is creation, fall, and redemption. If we miss what God intended, we can't make sense of what went wrong or how he fixes it
- Redemption is bigger than saving our souls from hell and atonement for sin, though that's part of it
- Protestants often split the world into sacred and secular: spirit, faith, and the private on one side; matter, science, and the public on the other
    - Believers conclude the spiritual side matters most to God. A secularist says the opposite. Either way the world is cut in half
    - The Bible won't let us. God made spirit and matter together as one good creation

The triangle: Presence, People, Place

- Presence: God as King dwells in and is active in his creation
- People: a community, Adam and Eve, expressing the image of a relational God (one God in three persons, which we'll return to)
- Place: the good physical space of Eden for them to use, enjoy, and grow as image bearers
- Together: God's people in obedient fellowship with him, in perfect fellowship with one another, and in responsible enjoyment of his world
    - Obedient fellowship depends on worship
    - Perfect fellowship comes from the complementary design of man and woman, each bringing something needed to the shared work
    - Responsible enjoyment means stewards who make creation bigger and better

One triangle through the whole story

- At every major turn from here to Revelation, the triangle helps explain God's redemptive work, as he expands his rule, his people, and his presence
- Gospels: God present in a body, Jesus. His people are those who follow him. The place is concrete: Nazareth, Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem
- Acts: after Pentecost the Spirit fills all believers. The people are believers from every nation. The place is the whole world (Acts 1:8, Jerusalem to the ends of the earth)
- Revelation 22: the whole globe is a garden with trees of life, filled with every tribe and tongue, and Jesus as king in their midst

Act 1 in review

- Made as image bearers for four purposes: dominion, work, relationship, and worship
- The vision: from two people to many nations, and from one garden to a world that is itself a garden

The Kingdom of God is God's people dwelling in God's presence under his rule, using and enjoying God's place together for his glory. Genesis 1-2 is only the start. What a gift.