



The Kingdom of Our God

This gospel of the kingdom
shall be preached in the whole world
as a testimony to all the nations,
and then the end will come.

Matthew 24:14 NASU

The Kingdom of Our God

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1 - Identifying a Kingdom

βασιλευσ. That's Greek to me, but it's "king" to a Greek. "Basileus."

βασιλεια. That's "basileia." According to James Strong's definition, it means the rule of or the realm of a king. Every time the KJV New Testament offers the word, "kingdom," whether it is referring to a kingdom of this world or of heaven, good or evil, it is translating Strong's Greek word number 932: basileia. The writers of the material that became our New Testament all agree on the word to use when referring to the concept, so perhaps it will be simple to determine what they meant when they used it.

Location based on the submission of people

There are many people living in the United States who consider themselves citizens of Cuba. Some of them have created a government in exile. They have written a code of laws, designed an economic structure for their country, and have records of deeds and other documentation of ownership of property that they intend to immediately establish as authoritative over the claims of foreign investors or socialist governmental usurpers who presently control things in their country, once they have the power to do so. They will step up to own and rule their nation one day, if the present "owners" or "rulers" are ever pushed aside. Presently, since they cannot effectively rule on site in Cuba, they are *not really* the Cuban government. Cuba is the domain of Miguel Díaz-Canel, who was proclaimed president by someone other than the citizens of Cuba in 2019, after the 2016 death of Fidel Castro. He is the ruler of Cuba because *he can* rule there. Since Díaz-Canel can force the people on the island to submit to his domination of them, the island is, in effect, the location of his kingdom. Since he cannot enforce his dominion on the Cubans who are on United States property, the place where they are is not part of his kingdom even though they claim that they are citizens of the nation he controls.

If the people rebel, they can reject the ruler

As I write this, I am sitting on property that once belonged to Native Americans. Colonizers from Europe declared that this land instead belonged to them - first Spanish, then French, then English. The English managed to maintain control of the area best,

and therefore, could effectively call it part of their “empire.” In the late 1700's, settlers here, along with those in 12 other British colonies in the area, declared that the land belonged, instead, to them. King George asserted that it did not, but could not prove that it belonged to him, since he could only assert that idea with talk, but not with force. Since he could not effectively rule here, he finally had to admit that this was not part of his kingdom and ceased trying to rule here. When the point in time came in which a sufficient number of people rejected George’s authority, his kingly dominion over the area ceased to exist. The struggle that we call the “Revolutionary War” was the rebels’ effort to prove the local absence of his kingdom. Just as he and other kings had displaced the authority of the rulers of the Natives, his authority was displaced, and thereby his kingdom was displaced.

What if there is a pocket of lawlessness in a kingdom?

In New York City, there is property that is not quite governed by the United States, but which is occupied by foreign citizens who are on official mission from their countries as ambassadors or as representatives to the United Nations. The property itself does not become the property of the foreign nation, but since the people occupying it have “diplomatic immunity” from the enforcement of local laws, the situation becomes possible that the foreigners can perform acts that are against the laws of the United States, but cannot be prosecuted by any national or local government officials for the illegalities. If the renters of property or of an office are diplomatically immune, they can refuse to pay rent and the owner of the property has no legal recourse and therefore cannot throw the defaulting renters out. The owner cannot collect back rent by force of law. No local law can affect the immune persons.

This scenario is an example of subjects of one government, or kingdom, being on the property of another government, or kingdom, but in essence causing the kingdom of which they are citizens to exist in that place simply by their presence. Traffic fines are another example of the dominance of these foreign governments. Diplomatic missions have their own regulations and many require their staff to pay any fines due for parking violations. A 2006 study by two economists found that there was a significant correlation between home-country corruption (as measured by Transparency International) and unpaid parking fines. The study determined that approximately 30 countries (or 20%) had no more than one unpaid fine per diplomat over a five-year period, and 20 had none at all. Six countries had in excess of 100 violations per

diplomat: Kuwait, Egypt, Chad, Sudan, Bulgaria and Mozambique. The corrupt countries' citizens are empowering their nations' corruption in the territory of the United States. They are bringing their government with them as they occupy space here.

Please consider an idea that I deduce from these evidences - that without regard for claims or deeds or rights, if a piece of property cannot be reigned over by a king, it is not part of his domain, or his dominion, or his kingdom. The contrasting concept is perhaps that in any place where a king is obeyed, either by force of his will or of the power of the love, fear, or level of deception of the mastered people, that place *is* part of his kingdom. I have deduced, therefore, by definition and in actuality, that the domain of a king is **the place where he is obeyed**.

2 - Identifying the Kingdom of God

Our God is a King. He has always been a King. Jeremiah called Him a King over the nations and an everlasting King (Jeremiah 10:6-10). Micah prophesied that Messiah, Who was going to enter humanity as a Ruler through the tribe of Judah, had been doing things as a King from eternity (Micah 5:2). Identifying Him as both God and King in all of His doings is usually pretty easy. He owns everything and therefore has authority over it all. His declaration, as a Son of man, "All authority has been given to Me, in heaven and on earth," (Matthew 28:18) was in context of His humanity. From eternity past, He had authority over all things as Father God, He then was given authority over all things as Son of Man.

When He declared that He is a Door, we usually think of it the way we think of everything that we think - with regard to how it relates to us. He is a Door to us through Whom we can access His Father. He also, however, became a Door into the earth for His Father. When there was no intercessor to call on in the earth, He became His own Intercessor (Isaiah 59). Having previously given the earth into the hands of men, when there was none to agree with His reign over them, He became a man. As a man, He agreed with every blessing He desired as God to pour into the earth by means of His Kingdom through humans (Isaiah 9:6,7; 2 Corinthians 1:20). Please read those Scriptures.

Location based on the submission of people

Jesus was completely in agreement with His Father regarding every desire of His Father. One of God's desires was to give humans authority in the earth. Even though humans can agree with unclean spirits and lend them *power*, humans have the *authority* in the earth (Genesis 1:26-28). It was given to Adam & then to Noah as representative of God's charge to their human descendants.

When our Father does something in the earth, it is with the agreement of at least a prophet through whom He reveals it (Amos 3:3,7; Genesis 7, Genesis 18:16-25). Yahweh submitted to human agreement and influence when He intended to destroy Sodom in Genesis 18:32 & 19:18-22. He honored Abraham's desire that the city not be

destroyed except according to Abraham's protocol. Lot was told that until he was safely out of Sodom, the destroying angel of God could do nothing in the city.

When Yahweh intended to destroy Nineveh, He sent Jonah, a prophet, to announce it. He had difficulty getting agreement out of the prophet. Finally, when the prophet went to the city and announced their doom, the people of the city agreed with God about their unrighteousness, let Him change their hearts, and thereby turned God's destroying hand away from themselves. It made the prophet angry when his declaration of the intentions of God were not fulfilled. He was still disagreeing with God, but the agreement of the people of Nineveh caused God to side with their submission and to extend mercy to them rather than destroy them. He found agreement in the earth and it made Him happy. He moved to the agreement even though it meant moving away from His prophet.

To sum up this idea, when Jesus became the Door to Father to bring His Kingdom into the earth in a way and at a level of manifestation that had not yet been seen, Father entered the Door. So, with the absolute agreement of the Son of Man, Father has established a presence of Authority in the earth that will never stop increasing, even though the earth will pass away (Isaiah 9:7).

If you ponder the Trinity, consider that the first Citizen of this Kingdom is the Man Christ Jesus, Who has been given all authority in heaven and earth as a man. He learned obedience through the things that He suffered. He was given authority to reward His obedience. He was born King because His submission was complete before the creation. He was slain before the foundation of the creation. He came to the earth to fulfil the will of Father.

He is the One Who comes to the Other One - Him Who sits on the throne (The Father is King in this picture) and takes the sealed scroll out of His hand (Revelation 5:7). Father is the King of the universe (Psalm 103:19). The Son is the King of Heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18). One day, we will become one with Them (John 17:20-23) as They are one with each Other. We will reign with Them. We are being prepared for that work by submitting to them and seeking unity with them now. It is a mystery that we can walk into by submission to the King, whether it fits between our ears or not.

If the people rebel, they can reject the ruler

The government of the United States is, in Abraham Lincoln's opinion, a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people," (Gettysburg Address, Nov. 1863). This, by default, declares it to be *anti-Christ*, since the Christ is a King of kings. By its constitutionally stated intent, it exists to be subject to its citizens, and no one else. However, just as it is possible for foreign governments to control space in the United States with corruption, it is also possible to release the righteousness and supernatural life of the domain of our King, Jesus, in the portion of the United States that we occupy. By definition, the government of the United States is not subject to the authority or the Kingship of Jesus our King. People who are subject to the authority of the Kingship of Jesus, though, can still realize (bring into reality) His authority in their positions of authority, including being in positions of government.

By proven example, the laws of the land where our real citizenships rest can be brought to have influence at least over the space here that we can influence. The righteousness of our King can become the law in our homes, businesses, or other spheres of influence, including places of great authority, such as legislation, education, business, news dissemination, and spiritual networks like congregations. When we gain earthly authority, we can exercise it under the influence of our home government - the Kingdom of our God.

What if there is a pocket of lawlessness in a kingdom?

The Holy Spirit inspired people to write the Scriptures using the word, "Kingdom" to describe the authority of God in the earth and in heaven. The word could have been translated, "reign." There are exceptional times when God imposes His will on one or more humans so that they are swayed to obey Him, even though they may not be aware of His existence. Just as His reign can be imposed on earthly property and authority, it is possible that His will can be resisted. Sometimes even His sons and daughters can refuse to submit to His authority, and rebel against the presence of His Kingdom. There are many Biblical examples of unbelievers submitting completely to God's authority and reign, and of other people who were believers refusing to submit to Him. In the place where He reigns over the obedient, there is His Kingdom.

In the pockets of rebellion against His authority, His Kingdom is denied presence, even among believers. The allowance of this rebellion is temporary, because one day the prophecy will be fulfilled that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Him to be Ruler.

It is important to consider that, in the present time, while submission to the reign of our King is still predominately voluntary, even unbelievers who in a particular situation do what they are set in place by Him to do, are participating in His Kingdom in the earth. As Jesus told Nicodemus, anyone who hasn't been born of God cannot see His Kingdom, and, apart from having been born of water and the Spirit, no one can enter His Kingdom. Still, if God instructs an unbeliever's heart to contribute to His works or His people, when the unbeliever obeys, he/she is submitting to the King and the Kingdom is thereby present in the place.

3 - The Bible Describes the Kingdom

From Genesis to Revelation

Genesis 1:26-28

Appendix A is a partial list of Biblical references to God's Kingdom. Some of the writers give very clear revelation of His declarations regarding His government. Initially, the Creator spoke His intentions regarding humans in Genesis 1:26. Men and women were the crowning touch on the world our God created. One of the reasons for their placement in the earth was to rule over it, and over everything that moved in it. He authorized their domination of the earth in verse 28, commissioning them to rule.

Psalm 8 marvels at the position that God has put man in.. In Genesis 1:26, "God said, 'Let us make man...'" In Psalm 8:5, David wrote of man that Yahweh had "... made him to be a little lower than..." and then used the same word that translators generally agree to translate as "God" in Genesis 1:26. Translators argue about how to translate it in Psalm 8:5. Arguable options include God, god, gods, heavenly beings, and angels. Verse 6 points out that in the "just a little lower than awesome" position Yahweh put us in, He has given us authority over everything His hands made. If it finds its way into the earth, and was created by Yahweh, He has lent us His authority over it to dominate it.

Even though that authority seems to be given absolutely, Yahweh still claims a final control option over the power that He is sharing with us. In Genesis 1:28, He commissioned humanity to rule. CO - missioned. Our mission is to take part in His mission of ruling His creation. He disciplines rulers who fail to do things His way. This makes it clear that His release of authority to humans includes guidelines and parameters of righteousness that must be adhered to in order for the particular humans to continue to have authority that they may exercise.

When the earth was full of evil-intentioned leaders, Yahweh found one leader who would serve Him by ruling well and washed the rest of humanity out of the earth. Noah was given the second entire-human-race assignment of dominating the earth in the first two verses of Genesis chapter 9. When two chapters later the leader Nimrod was

leading people away from the instruction to fill the earth and dominate it, Yahweh caused His will to triumph over theirs. By confusing their languages He was enforcing His desire that they would move out and represent Him in all the earth. He drew agreement with Himself out of their inability to continue to agree with each other. He empowered them to obey Him.

Deuteronomy 17:14-20

When Yahweh was giving Israel a covenant, He included instructions related to government, religion, and to civil affairs among citizens. Part of His instructions to the people included prophecy that they would gain the desire for a king like the nations around them had. In the revelation about their coming demand for a king, He gave rules about the king's household and his rule. He was establishing His authority over anyone who became king to the nation, including the fact that no one was to pick who the king would be but God. He declared before they came up with the demand for a king of their own that if he was not God's own, he would not really be king. Yahweh was the king's King.

1 Samuel 8:1-22

In 1 Samuel 8, the Lord indicated to Samuel His desire to reign over Israel as their King in verse 7. By asking for a king like the nations around them had, they were rejecting Yahweh's theocracy and requesting a human-led kingdom. Yahweh warned them about the nature of human kings and the abuse they would endure by having one reign over them.

Isaiah 45:1-7

One of the clearest pictures in the Scriptures of an unbeliever being a part of the earthly manifestation of the Kingdom of Heaven is in Cyrus, king of Persia. Here, Cyrus is called God's "messiah." The word Isaiah quoted Yahweh as using to refer to Cyrus was "mashiyach," which is usually translated in the KJV as "mine anointed" or "his anointed" or "the anointed" or "thine anointed." Twice those translators transliterated it into "Messiah" because they deemed by the context in two places that the term was referring to Jesus, not just any anointed. The basic translation between Hebrew, Greek and English is "mashiyach", Christ, and an "anointed one," respectively. The Hebrew word is transliterated into English as "messiah".

Yahweh instructed Israel to anoint their kings and priests and prophets with oil as an act

of setting them apart, or sanctifying them, to God. Yahweh Himself claimed to anoint Cyrus. He also named him, called him, held his right hand to give him power, opened doors to him, went before him to make crooked places straight, break gates, take kings' armor off in front of him, gave him treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, and directed him in all his ways. The reason God did all these things for Cyrus, even though he did not know Yahweh existed, was because Cyrus was going to help build God's city, and let His exiles go free without paying any ransom. He intended to use Cyrus to prove to the ends of the earth that He was the only God, Yahweh, Who loved Jacob, Israel.

Cyrus did not even acknowledge the existence of Yahweh in the beginning of the process, but Yahweh still ruled over him and through him to accomplish His will in the earth. When Paul wrote to the church in Rome, "submit yourselves to the governing authorities, because they are God's servants," in Romans chapter 13, it was either the year 57AD or 58. Nero ruled over the Roman Empire from 54AD until 68. Paul said that the authorities exist were appointed by God. Even Nero, a murderous pervert, could claim his throne as an appointment from God. This is a further example of unbelievers being in positions to serve God, even unknowingly.

The first few verses of the book of Ezra are testimony of Cyrus fulfilling a prophetic word that came through Jeremiah specifically about rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. Cyrus was quoted there as giving Yahweh credit for having given him all the kingdoms of the earth. He freed any Jew in any land who felt led to go to Jerusalem to conduct the work of rebuilding.

Psalms

In 10:16, Yahweh is declared to be King forever and ever. David called Yahweh "the King of Glory" in Psalm 24. The sons of Korah wrote in Psalm 47 that He was a great King over all the earth in verses 2 and 7. Asaph wrote in Psalm 74:12 that God had been his King from of old, working salvation in the earth. Psalm 93:2 - God's throne is established from eternity past. Psalm 95:3 - Yahweh is the great God, and a great King above all gods.

Daniel 4:17

In chapter 4 of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. In it, he saw a "watcher, a holy one" coming down from heaven to speak to him. The messenger was being quoted by

Nebuchadnezzar, so what he said could just have been created by the king's imagination, but since Daniel gave an interpretation of the exact words, it seems as if he was convinced that the messenger in the dream was bringing a decree from the Most High (verse 24). The interpretation includes two interesting ideas about the King of Heaven in verses 24-26.

“This is the interpretation, Your Majesty, and this is the sentence of the Most High that has been passed against my lord the king: You will be driven away from people to live with the wild animals. You will feed on grass like cattle and be drenched with dew from the sky for seven periods of time, until you acknowledge that the Most High is ruler over the kingdom of men, and He gives it to anyone He wants. As for the command to leave the tree's stump with its roots, your kingdom will be restored to you as soon as you acknowledge that Heaven rules.” (from Holman Christian Standard Bible®© Holman Bible Publishers.)

The Most High rules in the kingdom of men, He gives kingdoms to whomever He chooses, and Heaven rules. His preference is to do it through men & women, by their agreement with His desires & plans. He will even do it through unbelievers.

Hosea 13:9-11

Hosea quoted Yahweh as prophesying to Israel:

"O Israel, you are destroyed,
But your help is from Me.
I will be your King;
Where is any other,
That he may save you in all your cities?
And your judges to whom you said,
'Give me a king and princes'?
I gave you a king in My anger,
And took him away in My wrath.

(Hosea 13:9-11 New King James Version)

The Lord wanted to be a King to the nation. Even when He allowed a king to lead them on His behalf, when He became provoked by the king, He exercised His Kingly authority and removed the earthly king. His desire is to rule. When we allow Him to rule through

us, He loves it. When we don't, He changes it. When we allow Him to rule, we are blessed and the people we lead are blessed.

Zechariah 14:8,9

In chapter 14 of Zechariah's writings, he described "a day for Yahweh" in which God would call all nations together to fight Jerusalem. One result of the battle is the splitting of the Mount of Olives. The day will be dark and the night will be light (verses 6 and 7). Verse 9 is a declaration that Yahweh will be King over all the earth then.

Matthew 2:2

In the beginning of the second chapter of Matthew's good news, he mentioned some "wise men" who appeared in Jerusalem and caused quite a stir by asking King Herod where his replacement was. "Herod" is a compound word that is a title, not a name. It describes its bearer as a "hero". This Herod was Herod the Great. He was a descendant of Esau - an Edomite, and had absolutely no genuine authority to rule over anything in Israel. He was a mercenary employee of the Roman government, chosen for his job because he was more likely to be loyal to Rome than Palestine in the event of a local controversy. When the wise men inquired about someone who had been "born" as King of the Jews, Herod sensed a great threat to his power. His response to the perceived threat was to try to destroy it by killing any child who could possibly be the bearer of such challenging power.

The wise men did some sort of work that may have been astronomy, astrology, scientific study, alchemy, medicine, magic, or witchcraft, and may have included a mixture of any or all of these possibilities. The word which is translated "magi" or "wise men" here is instead translated "sorcerer" when it was used by Luke in Acts 13:6-8 to refer to Elymas. The various descriptive terms used to describe him were sorcerer, false prophet, Jew, Bar-Jesus ("son of Yah's salvation"), Elymas, child of the devil, and enemy of all righteousness. When describing him as a "sorcerer" (some translations "magician"), this is the only other use of the word in the New Testament.

These were interesting characters. They received some revelation: that not only would a star be a sign that a King would be born in Israel Who would be worthy of worship, but that a star they had been observing was the particular star, and that the King was therefore birthed and available to be worshiped. They had extra-Biblical revelation that led them to find Jesus, and further revelation that led them to leave the country without

returning to report the location of Jesus to Herod. The revelation instructed them to search for a King, not a Savior. He is, of course, both King and Savior, but their instructions, which must have been from God or an angel sent from Him, were descriptive of a King. It is possible that some of Daniel's writings as a leader in Babylon influenced them.

If you want to know how to introduce someone in a way that pleases them, listen to the way they introduce themselves. If they say, "Hello, my name is Joe," then probably they would be bothered by you introducing them as "Joseph", for example. Father introduced Jesus to the neighbors as "King Jesus" according to the narrative about the wise men from the east. That is likely, in my opinion, to have more importance than we have been giving it.

Matthew 3:2

"Repent, because the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." That was the first sermon preached by John, son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, according to Matthew in chapter 3 of his good news. John was demanding that his listeners change their minds about how they related to God's values and commands. It was being required in order for them to be able to receive the good news related to the fact that God was about to reveal Himself in the earth as a King. The Kingdom of Heaven was about to gain access to the earth in a way it had never had access previously, because the Man Christ Jesus had not yet been on hand to give it such access.

An act of repentance is simply the process of changing thoughts. The Greek word "meta" was almost always translated in the King James Version as "with". Sometimes it was rendered "after" or "against" or "among" or "between". The second part of the compound word metanoeo was translated "understand" most of the time in the KJV. "Think," "consider" and "perceive" were three other possibilities for its meaning, according to those translators. The word, therefore, means something like "after-thought," or "think against." I infer that it means that I am thinking a certain way, and then something happens, and after the happening of that something, my thoughts are different.

Though there was a Greek word used in the New Testament to refer to changed behavior (G4762: "strepho" Matthew 18:3), metanoeo doesn't mean "change behavior." Proper metanoeo, however, actually changing my thoughts, will result in a genuine,

lasting change of behavior, at least eventually. The idea that repentance means a change of behavior invaded Christian culture during times of “revival,” when people en masse experienced drastic changes in their value systems and therefore impressive changes in their behaviors. Most movements that proceeded from revival brought with them a focus on sin and on behavior, and that focus demanded changed behavior as evidence of salvation.

As Paul wrote in chapter 12 of his letter to the church at Rome, we are transformed by the renewing of our minds. We must stop being conformed to the world, and we must offer our bodies to our holy God as holy instruments, set apart to Him, but we are changed by having our values changed - being empowered to think differently. John the Baptizer was instructing people to change their minds, and then to give evidence of that change by bearing fruit that was appropriate outworking of changed minds in Matthew 3:8. God is not interested in simply changing our behavior. He wants to change our hearts. Beatings can change behavior, but changed hearts are a more genuine way to changed behavior that endures the challenges of time and difficulties.

The reason John demanded of Israelites the changing of their hearts and minds was that the King of Righteousness was about to appear among them. John was a prophet. Jesus described him as the greatest prophet ever born (Luke 7:28). His major ministry was baptizing people as they considered their sin, and his call to them in that act was to turn from it and to agree with their righteous God that it was wrong (Matthew 3:6). If they could not discern what their sin was, he was given revelation to help them see it (Luke 3:10-14).

His mission in the earth was confronting sin to prepare the way of the Lord in the earth. As each person appeared in front of him, I can imagine him reading them in the spirit and discerning their sin. His entire world view was in terms of sin. When Jesus came to him to be baptized, John looked at Him to discern His need for baptism. John could suddenly only see his own sin when he looked into the heart of the Son of God. He asked Jesus to baptize him! (Matthew 3:14)

With this calling to expose and confront sin, with the greatest prophetic empowerment yet seen in the earth at work to see into hearts and find even hidden sin, John was the most excellent prophet to be related to the law given through Moses. This law was given to make the descendants of Israel a holy nation in covenant with Yahweh. Everything

John processed through his mind was filtered through the question of right and wrong, or good and evil. As he watched Jesus eating with whores and traitors, healing on the sabbath day, drinking and eating instead of fasting and praying, he was challenged by the conundrum of the Holy One Who had come to take away the sin of the world seeming to be resting among that sin instead. His perspective of the Kingdom of Heaven was filtered through the same filter everything in his life had to pass through: sin, sin, sin.

Even John's mind could not be changed to the extent that it was readied for the Kingdom. He was confused as he tried to understand what he was watching Jesus doing when he had been thrown in prison for confronting the sin of Herod & his brother's wife Herodias. To try to relieve that confusion, he sent word to Jesus to ask Him if He was really the One waited for, or if there was maybe someone else who would really come finish confronting and removing all of the sin in the nation. Remember John's introduction of Jesus: "... the Lamb of God, Who comes to take away the sin of the world." (John 1:29).

John's ministry was formed from the conflict of good and evil. Jesus' ministry was formed from Life. The two trees mentioned in the garden of Eden were the tree of Death, which Yahweh called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of Life (Genesis 3). Finally, humanity was about to again be given access to the Tree of Life.

Most Pharisees could not metanoeo. They could not change their minds. Jesus said of some of them one day that even though they studied the Scriptures, they could not apprehend the life they sought from the writings (John 5:38-40). They were looking for a life based on good versus evil; real Life was based on His identity and His nature. I am making a labored point of the real meaning of metanoeo because without understanding the difference between what the Scriptures teach about having a renewed mind and what the Scriptures teach about reformed behavior and obedience, we have only distorted news to offer the world about Salvation and the Kingdom. Salvation is received by an act of faith in the sacrifice of Jesus as a Savior. Entering the Kingdom is accomplished by acts of obedience to the King. Later, inheriting the Kingdom is the reward for becoming trustworthy with regard to our purposes in the earth as assigned by the King.

Many denominations and movements and cults are presenting horrible distortions of what the Book teaches about becoming sons and daughters of God. Any “gospel” that demands obedience to rules or even to the King as stipulations required to become or to stay “saved” is a false gospel. I will continue on this thought a little later.

Matthew 19:23

I have been told that there is a small, low gate in Jerusalem that can only be passed through by a camel that crawls on its knees. This was invented by some theologian to explain how Jesus could possibly state that rich men are not likely to get saved and go to Heaven. Since Jesus was not talking about “going to Heaven,” the novelty story was unnecessary. His statement was related to “entering the Kingdom,” not to “going to Heaven when you die.”

Rich men, like the one who “went away sad” when Jesus invited him to become a disciple after giving all of his possessions away, frequently find it difficult to surrender their lives and their futures and their wealth to a King. Especially if that King clearly doesn’t consider their valuables as valuable as they do. Especially if that King clearly is insanely generous to people who don’t deserve generosity.

Entering the Kingdom is the process of living a life in which everything for which I am responsible and everything of which I am in possession must be surrendered to the ownership and management of Jesus the King. Even though it is as difficult to empower a rich man to hand his riches over to Jesus as his Chief Financial Officer as it would be to squeeze a camel through the eye of a needle, Jesus can make it possible.

Mark 1:14,15

In the first chapter of Mark’s gospel, he wrote about the first sermon Jesus preached. In the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, Luke wrote about His last sermons. When John was imprisoned, Jesus began to preach, “Metanoeo, because the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” For forty days after His resurrection, Jesus kept appearing among the disciples, teaching them about His Kingdom. Immediately before His ascension into Heaven, He told them that they needed power to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. He instructed them to wait in Jerusalem until they received that power by being baptized with the Holy Spirit.

He did not give instructions about church planting or evangelism or outreach ministries or fund raising techniques. He taught them about His Kingdom. In Matthew's record of Jesus giving what we usually call "the great commission," Jesus predicated the commission on the fact that He had been given all authority in Heaven and on the earth, not that He had become the Passover Lamb. The command is related to baptizing converts and making disciples of them by teaching them to obey Jesus. Salvation is in the picture, but only as an initiation, not as an end.

The process of conversion, of being born of God and having sins forgiven by the blood sacrifice's propitiation, is by faith only. No work, no payment, no begging is required for the filthiest murderer or thief or liar to become a son or daughter of God. What is required is simply the acceptance by faith of a gift of Life. A Kingdom, however, is built on authority and power that are submitted to by the subjects of the king. Obedience is paramount as a requirement with regard to being the subject of a king. Salvation is received by faith and preserved by changed nature. Authority in the Kingdom, now, as we enter it, and later as we inherit it, is a reward for obedience to instruction, and responsible stewardship of our callings as sons and daughters.

Matthew 10:1-15

In Matthew's gospel, he described the ministry of Jesus as it developed from preaching the coming of His Kingdom to doing works that demonstrated the presence of His Kingdom. By chapter nine, Jesus was going about in all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and disease among the people.

In the last two verses of chapter 9, He gave his disciples what I would call the "Lord's prayer." What the Roman church dubbed "the 'our Father'" and others have called "the Lord's prayer," I think should be called "the disciples' prayer." It speaks of needing forgiveness, which the Lord did not need, and it was given to them in response to their request for instruction regarding how to pray.

This prayer instruction, however, was given as an overflow from the heart of Jesus: "Lord of the harvest, thrust laborers out into Your harvest."

Luke 10:1-24

Luke recorded the instructions Jesus gave the apostles for this Kingdom-preaching mission in what we have rendered chapter nine of his gospel. In chapter ten he described a second, similar mission, on which 70 or 72 others were sent by Jesus to work miraculously and preach that His Kingdom had come near to the people. He further told them to pray to the Lord of the harvest that He would thrust laborers into His harvest.

Acts 8:12

In chapter 6 of the Acts of the Apostles, Luke wrote about a controversy that was caused in the church by a problem that was related to the daily distribution of food to widows. The “Hellenistic” Jewish widows, who spoke Greek and observed fewer traditional Hebraic customs than the Hebrew speaking widows complained that they also had less food than the Hebraic widows in the daily distributions. The apostles decided that they should stop trying to manage the food ministry and devote themselves to praying and studying and teaching. They ordered the Hellenistic believers to bring to them seven men who were full of the Spirit and had good reputations, so that they could authorize them to fulfil the food ministry obligations for the Hellenistic widows.

Seven believers with Greek names were brought to the apostles, who prayed over them and laid their hands on them to commission them to the work. Apparently disregarding the intention of the apostles to do no more than ordain the seven men as “table servers,” the Holy Spirit took advantage of their hands being on the men and imparted to them the power to do miracles and to teach and preach with great wisdom and power.

What Stephen was preaching is not mentioned by Luke; simply that many men tried to argue with him as he worked miracles and taught but could not win against the Holy Spirit in him. In chapter 7 Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin on false charges. They murdered him.

In the beginning of the next chapter, Luke wrote that a great persecution broke out and that all of the believers but the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Philip, another of the seven, went to Samaria as a result of the persecution. There, he proclaimed Messiah to them, healed many sick and cast out many demons, and he preached to them the good news about the Kingdom of God and of the name of Jesus Christ.

Acts 28:30,31

Paul's appeal to Caesar in the courtroom of Festus, the governor of Celicia, when being charged by Jews from Jerusalem of profaning their temple, caused him to be in Rome to appear before Caesar by chapter 28 of the Acts of the Apostles. Luke wrote that while waiting for that trial, Paul lived for two years in his own rented house. There, he received all who came to him, teaching them about Jesus, and preaching to them about the Kingdom of God.

Within the first three verses of Acts, Jesus was recorded as teaching about the Kingdom of God, and within the last three verses, Paul was preaching about the Kingdom of God. These facts present a strong Biblical example of what our preaching should include. If we are simply preaching salvation from sin, or the love of the Father, or how to be nice people in a nasty world, without clear teaching about what is required of us as citizens of the Kingdom where God reigns, we may be in an error that could be serious.

Hebrews 12:28

The writer of Hebrews described our interaction with the Kingdom as, "we are receiving" it. The King is imparting to us presently the privilege of seeing and entering His Kingdom. As He said to Nicodemus, we have to be born from above in order to see or enter His dominion. Even though Billy Graham has led many people to believe that Jesus saves lost people from their sin, by interpreting John 3:3-8 as meaning that we cannot go to Heaven when we die if we have not been born again, that is not what Jesus said to Nicodemus. He was talking to him about His Kingdom manifesting in the earth. Even though it exists right in front of us, we cannot see it if we are not born of God. Paul was describing the same issue in his first letter to Corinth (especially 2:14).

When we make the mistake of not separating the good news about God's Kingdom from the good news about His Savior, we misinterpret many otherwise clear Scriptures and many theologians simply invent "truth" to teach that fills in holes thereby created in their systems of knowledge. It can happen in any area of truth, but with regard to the relationship of good works and being saved, many very horrible heresies have been created that either establish mistruth that leads to what Dietrich Bonhoffer called "cheap grace," or to the ditch on the other side of the road, which leads many Pentecostal Holiness followers to need to "get saved" again every sunday. Or to really get saved this time...

Receiving Him as a King is receiving His Kingly dominion over our lives. It is surrendering to Him as the proper Authority over our lives. Receiving Him as a Savior is receiving life. It is allowing His payment for sin to become the payment for *our* sin. It is being born of God. My identity as a son of God is not based on my behavior or obedience. It is based on the identity of my Father and my relationship with Him.

2 Peter 1:5-11

In Peter's second epistle, he wrote about "doing things" that would "supply an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of Jesus." If my understanding of entering the Kingdom of Heaven is that it is simply going to Heaven when I die, I cannot read 2 Peter 5-11 without being confused about what being diligent to add virtue to my faith, and knowledge to my virtue, and self-control and perseverance and godliness and brotherly kindness and love to the rest of it have to do with being secure in my salvation. The point Peter was making was not related to salvation, however. It was about entering the Kingdom of God so that I have an inheritance in the Kingdom of God.

I am not making this observation based only on the content of the passage, but on the teaching of the Scriptures in general about what the Kingdom is and isn't. I am basing it on the fact that the Book clearly teaches that the Kingdom of God is His reign. He can reign over people who have not been born again, though they cannot see His hand at work reigning over and around them if they have not been born of His Spirit. Entering the Kingdom now means that I will inherit the Kingdom later. Refusing to submit to the King now means that I will in some fashion be a subject of His Kingdom later rather than reigning with Him in it. Suffering with Him now means that I will be an heir with Him later (Romans 8:16-17).

These truths help me to properly extract the truth from the words Peter wrote. His instruction is related to the Kingdom, and is therefore, related to obedience and actions and deeds. If it was related to salvation instead, it would have to be limited to being instruction about faith. Even though faith without works is dead faith, it is still sufficient to be saving faith. It will not gain anything but judgement in the Kingdom, though, to have no obedience and to fail to walk in the works that Jesus has laid out before me (Ephesians 2:1-10).

Revelation 17:14

In Jeremiah 10:7 Jeremiah called Yahweh “King of the nations.” When John received the Revelation of Jesus, he mentioned in chapter 1, verse 5 that Jesus was already Ruler over all the kings of the earth. In the revelation given to him, it was pointed out to him in 17:14 that Jesus was already Lord of lords and King of kings. He is not waiting on anyone to crown Him as Ruler over Heaven and earth. He told His disciples in Matthew 28:18 that all authority had already been given to Him. A king with no kingdom is not a king. A king who has not yet been crowned is at best a prince, and at least a contender for a throne. Jesus already has a throne, many crowns, and a Kingdom where He is obeyed.

4 - Developments in the Manifestations of God's Kingdom

The authority of man

In Genesis chapter 1, the Creator is quoted as authorizing humans to have dominion over or to rule over everything that moves on the earth. There is no indication in Scripture that if something that He created to be somewhere else, like Heaven, came into the earth and moved on it, it would be exempt from man's authority over it since it was in his realm. Please infer from this that even if the trespasser was more powerful than the humans it encountered, the humans could stand in their authorized rule and overpower it.

When a bear and a lion invaded the space where David had authority and responsibility, he stood in that authority and supernaturally overpowered the invaders. He did the same thing against Goliath. Jacob prevailed against the Elohim that he found in the earth (Genesis 32:28). When Moses and Abraham rose humbly in presumption even against Yahweh and challenged His intentions of destroying people, God submitted to their intercession. He let them reign when they stood in the authority He had given them as men in the earth.

When humans rule over the creation under the rule of the Creator, His Kingdom is in the earth. They are functioning in His image, in His likeness, in His stead, in the earth. It is a fulfillment of His intentions from chapter 1 of Genesis.

The New Nation: Israel

Yahweh called Abram to be a father of nations (Genesis 17:5). He promised Abram when He renamed him Abraham that he would be father to many nations, both through Isaac and through Ishmael. When Abraham offered Isaac's life to Him on an altar, Yahweh promised Abraham that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through

him and his seed. Yahweh wanted to make Abraham's descendants a nation that belonged to Him and that would represent His Kingdom in the earth. He desired a certain nation to be His Kingdom and to be His kings in the earth, ruling under His rule.

When Joseph was raised to rule over Egypt as a representative of Yahweh there, his whole family was raised to royalty with him, including Israel his father. Their descendants multiplied in Egypt for 400 years. By that time, they were no longer honored as royalty, but cast down to slavery. Yahweh raised up Moses to deliver them out of Egypt and to lead them to the property He had promised Abraham would belong to his descendants forever.

In chapter 20 of Exodus, Yahweh began to give the descendants of Israel the law that constituted His covenant with them. Before this, in chapter 19, He revealed to them what His desires were regarding them. He told them through Moses that He wanted them to be three things to Him. One was that they would be a holy nation. From the time of Israel's household of sixty-six people leaving their famine-stricken home and moving to join Joseph and his wife and sons in Egypt until the time when Moses was raised up as another Egyptian prince from Israel's descendants, they were simply descendants of Israel. Yahweh wanted them to be a nation, one set apart (sanctified: made holy) to Him. They had no land, no flag, no identity other than being Egypt's hated ones - their slaves. Yahweh wanted to transform them into a nation and be their King by giving them a covenant.

The holy nation part of their intended collective identity made them representatives of the King of Glory in the earth to the nations around them. He was calling them to be examples of life and provision and freedom as they manifested His rule in their midst and showed the world what God was like as a King among His people. He wanted to fulfill Isaac's blessing of Jacob, that nations and peoples would bow to the people He covenanted with.

Another desire Yahweh had for them was for them to become a kingdom of priests. This would give them responsibility not only in the earth, but in Heaven. This manifestation of Yahweh's Kingdom would represent the nations around Israel in Heaven, as these priests stood in intercession on behalf of their neighbors. The third part of His call to them (He actually listed it first) was that they should be to Him a treasure, valuable but portable, a personal treasure.

The heart of a King is in the King's hands if He likes

Proverbs 21:1 - The king's heart is in the hands of Yahweh like a river; He turns it wherever He wants to turn it. When God wants to use a man in the earth, He can harden or soften his heart to submit to or stand in the way of any plan, whether it is God's plan or man's. This is a Kingdom representation of Philippians 2:12&13. God works in our hearts or we cannot even want to do what is right. God led Pharaoh and Cyrus and many others to do exactly what He wanted them to do. This is His authority and power as a King over the universe being realized in the earth among men.

The Kingdom of Heaven

This phrase is only quoted by Matthew. The "Kingdom of God" is the phrase used more often, including a couple of times in Matthew. Neither phrase appears in the Old Testament. Even so, it is the fulfillment of Yahweh's desires of Israel, which Peter says we have realized as His people. In 1 Peter 2:4-10 he pointed out that we, as believers, have become the treasured people, the holy nation, the kingdom of priests, that Yahweh asked Israel to become in Exodus 19. Peter added that we are also the antitypes of Hosea's prophetic children, "No-Mercy" and "Not-My-People".

John's sermon

The Kingdom of Heaven was new, simply because in Jesus, it finally became possible! John announced it, even though he did not enter it. He was the end of the previous manifestations of God's authority in the earth, through Israel. The least in the Kingdom of God is greater than John, even though he was the greatest prophet ever born (Matthew 11:11). John's sermon to Israel was an instruction to get a changed mind, so that they could receive the King. "Metanoeo, because the Kingdom of God is at hand!" It required so much mind expansion that even John couldn't get it. His entire relationship with the Kingdom was the announcement of it's approach and then the introduction of the King. Then his part was over and he left the stage.

All of the personal revelation he got pointing to Jesus as the Messiah, the Savior, the One Who had authority, was insufficient to convince him that things were as they should be when he started to see liberty and Life coming forth instead of legal nails in a coffin

of conviction. Jesus taught as One with authority, but what He was teaching seemed to be a mixture of greater demands than the Law of Moses had dreamed of and greater freedom than the whores and tax-collectors had dreamed of. When he sent word from Herod's prison to inquire of Jesus if there had been some mistake, Jesus reminded him of the miracles and of the breaking of yokes.

Jesus' sermon

When John was thrown in jail for confronting Herod's sin publicly, Jesus picked up the same sermon, and His disciples finished the baptisms. They baptized more people than John and his disciples did. Soon, however, He stopped simply preaching and baptizing and began working and teaching. As He performed miracles and taught, He was recognized as teaching with authority, not just imparting information, like the Pharisees. He began to change the way He spoke about the Kingdom. He was no longer simply announcing that it was at hand, but demonstrating its presence. He began to tell people that they had come close to it.

The sermons of the 12, the 70, Paul

Jesus instructed the 12 to preach His Kingdom as they went into cities and villages working miracles. They were told to harshly judge communities that rejected their message. After their return, He sent out 70 or 72 others to join them, creating more than 40 teams of people bearing good news to the places He would follow them into. They did miracles and preached freedom in His name. Nobody was getting saved yet. They were simply preaching surrender to authority.

As He went preaching, His sermon regarding the proximity of the Kingdom shifted to "among you" or "within you." He even told Pharisees who would soon be plotting His death so that He could accomplish His resurrection that His Kingdom was within or among them. He was completely in charge of His presentation as a Lamb at the feast of Passover when He was sacrificed. He was a King and a Priest, like Melchizedek. He commanded Judas to betray Him as they reclined at the table. He informed Pilate (John 19:11) that even though Pilate perceived that he had over Jesus, he could not have that power if it had not been given to him by a higher Power.

His encounter with a Roman centurion in chapter seven of Luke's good news caused Jesus to marvel. Imagine doing something that causes your Lord to marvel! On days I find it easy to believe that He marvels at how poorly I am doing, but the joy of doing something so right that it stirs His heart stirs mine to strive for the narrow way with the hope of hearing a "well done!" one day. This centurion impressed Jesus with his grasp of the idea of authority. He knew that the connection of faith to authority makes that authority a force that cannot be overpowered.

When people tried to make Him King themselves, He rejected their manipulative endorsement. He was already King, made so by His Father. He did not need to ever be crowned by a man. All He required from any man was submission. When He called Saul to submit to His authority, He struck him down from his horse and from his mission. Even though Saul thought that he had been effectively destroying the ekklesia of Jesus, the work he had been doing was benefitting it. What his work accomplished, according to Luke in chapter 8 of the Acts of the Apostles, was to drive believers away from the apostles so that they could begin their own ministries. The apostles were stuck in Jerusalem, and all the rest of the church was driven out to preach the word in all Judea, in Samaria, and as time has proceeded from then, still toward the ends of the earth, fulfilling Jesus' prophetic command in Acts chapter one.

In Damascus, Jesus showed Paul what he was going to suffer for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Over the next couple of decades, Jesus taught Paul about His Kingdom, and Paul taught others about it everywhere he went, even in what may have been the last two years of his life in Rome (Acts 28:31).

Your sermon

It is difficult for me to believe that we should not be preaching the Kingdom also. I can think of no way to justify not preaching it, in fact. The Roman church began a heresy of drawing men to herself instead of leading them to Jesus that has continued among almost all of her children. Almost every movement and denomination that proceeded out of the Roman church has brought various parts or forms of her failure with them unknowingly. Clergy castes, spectator style gatherings, castle and fort style buildings, invitations "to church" instead of invitations to Jesus, church-controlled government over nations instead of Spiritually gifted believers invading government and every other

culture-influencing entity, and many more distractions from the King getting glory and from the equipping of all the saints to do spiritual work.

When we do invite people to Jesus, we are usually inviting them to Him in His revelation as Savior. When we do not additionally commend them to follow Him as a King, as a Lord, they become distracted with the business of church culture or bored with the irrelevance of church culture, and in either case, make no difference in the world. They get a “Get-Out-Of-Hell-Free” card and wander back to the dead existence they suffered before meeting Jesus, sometimes as active church members.

Some hearty souls become easily convinced as they read the Book that there must be more. They become leaders or heretics or reformers or something or anything other than onlookers sitting still on a pew rotting. Some are eventually calmed down by the less disruptive and less visionary folks, and since they can find no real manifestation of the “more” they were convinced must exist somewhere, they give up. A good allegory of this subject can be found in “Escape From Christendom” by Robert Burnell.

Many congregations have had leaders that grasped that all of the saints are supposed to be at work in the vineyard. Most of these leaders, when trying to convince the saints who have not yet perceived that Jesus is a King and that they are supposed to be useful, are either thrown out or worn out before they succeed at shifting their congregations to becoming colonies of Heaven.

Some theologians are not honest enough in their books to replace error when they find it or have it pointed out to them. They may not intend to deceive their followers, but when a hole is pointed out in their systems, they simply create something that supports the presence of the hole rather than backing up in their teachings to the place or time that the hole was created and repair it. For example, the Roman church falsely taught that their priests were offering a sacrifice of the blood of Jesus on their altars to pay for the sins of the communicants that had been committed since their last experience of the ritual they call “the mass.” This falsely put the priests between the church members and salvation. To be excommunicated by the Roman church meant that by separating someone from communion, they were cutting that person off from any further forgiveness of sin, thereby cutting them off from Christ and condemning the person to hell.

With the priests in this manipulative position, their power in baptism increased, also. Salvation received another contingency - baptism by a Roman priest became a requirement for escaping hell. For converts who were in poor health, since baptism was not easy or possible, sprinkling became acceptable. Sprinkling was declared to accomplish a work that was previously called "dipping" (please study the word "baptize"). A further step was baptizing infants so that they could become saved by the church. Since the ritual saved them, faith was clearly not required as a part of the access to salvation.

To change the theology, the identity of the organization would nearly need to change. I can only think of one denomination in recent history that has repaired their core theology. The change was so drastic that in essence, the shift was from cult to denomination. Denying the personhood of the Holy Spirit, salvation that is partly based on following parts of the law given to Moses, and the only access to salvation being the cult is a short list of their heresies. Now the organization is a member of the National Association of Evangelicals. Initially called "Armstrongism," and begun as a radio ministry, the Worldwide Church of God cleaned its theology up pretty well when its founder died. Such a theological realignment attempt is usually met with the kind of response Luther got from the Roman Church in 1521 and Wesley got from the Anglican Church in the late 1730's.

A more relevant example is that some theologians, when confronted about the absence in their papers of any proper theology about the Kingdom of God, simply excuse it with declarations such as saying that the Kingdom and the Church are synonymous, or that receiving Jesus as Savior is not possible without receiving Him as Lord, or that the Kingdom of Heaven is simply a reference to a future time when Jesus becomes King of kings because life as we know it has ended.

Even a casual reading of the parables about the Kingdom and the promises of judgement included in them and in epistles and the revelation should convince a believer that their points are all related to performance. Since the basis of the good news that Jesus saves is that it is only possible through faith in *His* works, we should easily infer from this wealth of writing and preaching about works found in Kingdom-related Scriptures that there is another layer or level of our relationship beyond simply becoming a son or daughter to God by faith.

Preaching obedience to all of His commandments is one of His commandments. One of the most life-impacting, life-changing and life-giving concepts we are given the privilege of sharing as good news is this truth: that being where the King has instructed us to be, doing what He has instructed us to do, puts us in the place where His protection and provision and supporting relationships and destined opportunities are to be found.

Nothing can separate us from His love, but almost anything could become a separating factor or influence hindering us from fulfilling our purposes. The reasons include the fact that all we need has been placed where we need it in order to use it in the work we have been assigned. If we are in a different place, it has no need to be moved to the place where we are. It still needs to be in the place where the work should be done. An example of this concept is presented to us in the story of Jonah's ship trip. He did not experience Yahweh's provision and protection when he went to sea. Instead, he was apprehended with severe discomfort and faced the real danger of death.

Almost everyone in the New Testament writings had something to preach about the Kingdom. What do you have to say about the Kingdom, and how often is it on your lips?

At hand, within you, upon you, received

The progression of the declarations in the Scriptures about the Kingdom began in the Old Testament with it being God's desire. With John, it was declared to be "at hand" (Matthew 3:2). Jesus continued this announcement when John was imprisoned.

The description changed as Jesus began to establish His Kingdom, however. His response to some Pharisees one day as they asked Him when His Kingdom would appear was to inform them that it was already within them (Luke 17:20,21). Soon, their work in His Kingdom would be to hand Him over to the Romans so that He could be offered as a sacrifice for their sins.

When Jesus cast out a demon and was accused of having demonic powers to do such works, He answered the people who accused Him with teaching about the Holy Spirit and an announcement that His Kingdom had "come upon" them (Luke 11:14-20). The writer of the letter to the Hebrews, in 12:28, described our reception of the Kingdom as either present or past tense. In simple, common terms, His Kingdom already exists

anywhere He is obeyed. In one smart aleck's terms, "It is not pie in the sky in the sweet bye and bye, but steak on your plate before it's too late."

We are not waiting on Him to bring His Kingdom. He is waiting on us to instruct our converts to obey His commandments.

The 1000 years

Please read chapter 20 of the Revelation of Jesus. Many of the characters and images offered as revelation to John are not explained. The time line represented by the narrative he recorded may consist of several cycles of time that overlap or are separated from each other by spans of time that are not indicated. Although there are individuals and groups who claim to have every mystery understood, I am struck by the amazingly small number of people who could recognize Jesus the first time He entered the earth by their understanding of the Scriptures. The only people who may have come close, the wise men from the east, may have used writings in their studies that did not even include the Jewish Scriptures. Everyone else got personal, supernatural revelation from the Holy Spirit or a messenger from Heaven.

That being the case, it is easy for me to believe that, apart from such revelation, no one will recognize His return based on Scripture study alone. By "alone," I do not just mean only studying the Scriptures without the experience of any sign occurring, such as an angel who throws a big rock into the sea. I mean being able to interpret the occurrences that are given as signs based solely on having read about them in the Book. If the scenes described are figurative instead of literal, such as a sea representing humanity, etc, properly assigning the interpretations of the symbols will take personal revelation in addition to that revelation which John received. Bible study does not unravel the mysteries of the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

My point is simply to declare that I have not received any additional revelation regarding the literality of the thousand year bondage of satan in an abyss. I am being presumptuous in the following assessment of it, but I think it is a pretty good guess.

The writing in chapter 20 indicates that there is a resurrection from the dead of the people who refused to worship the beast or his image, and refused to receive his mark on their foreheads or hands. This is clearly described as the "first" resurrection; the rest

of the dead are not raised until after the thousand year period mentioned is completed. Sorry for all the plastic and paper which was therefore wasted on tapes and books popularizing a very different and therefore not correct story in the Left Behind series.

These beheaded saints, and clearly no others, reign with Jesus on the earth for a thousand years while there is no influence from the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and satan, as John described him. That sounds pretty blissful. No devil to blame any bad behavior on for 15 or more lifetimes.

Somehow, evil is still brewing in the hearts of men and women and boys and girls though, apparently. They haven't died and gone to heaven in this blissful scene. They are not perfected or improved in nature, but they don't have supernatural demonic leadership to organize them under principalities. They are living under the authority of the Prince of Peace. When satan is released from his millennial prison, however, he will have no trouble dragging more people than "the sand of the seashore" into a controversy with the Christ. Their end will be accomplished by fire from heaven.

Complete authority over all without rebellion

After the judgement described at the end of chapter 20, John saw a new heaven and a new earth. The reign of Jesus in the new creation has no end. It will never stop increasing. There are no enemies at hand to oppose it. It will be a perfect environment led by a perfect Ruler.

5 - Developments in Our Kingdom Engagement

Seeing

In John's good news, he recorded a conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus. Nicodemus approached Jesus, and started a conversation with Him by announcing his conviction that Jesus was a rabbi whom Yahweh had sent into the earth. He could tell that Jesus was from God, because of the miracles he had seen and heard about.

If he had a question he was hoping to have answered, he never got to ask it. Jesus answered his praise by informing him that unless a person has been born "anōthen" (Strong's G509), meaning either "from above" or "again" or "from the top" or "from the beginning," (the 13 times the word appears in the New Testament, it was translated 5 different ways in the KJV), the person cannot see the kingdom of God.

Even though Billy Graham has preached innumerable sermons in which he declared that "you must be born again" to go to heaven, Jesus did not say that. Jesus was not talking about dying or going anywhere. He had been preaching that the Kingdom of Heaven had come to earth. Now, He was informing Nicodemus that it was possible to see it. It was not, however, possible to see it if he had not been born again, or from above.

Paul had some teaching on the same subject to offer the congregations in Corinth. In Chapter 2 of 1 Corinthians, he reminded them that during his times with them, his declarations to them were not influential on them because they were full of wise and brilliant and persuasive words, but because they were accompanied by powerful works. Just as Jesus pointed to His powerful works to answer John the baptizer when he was concerned he had picked the wrong person as Messiah, Paul pointed to miracles as the persuasive power of God accompanying his teaching.

He spoke truths using spiritual words and powerful works. People who were not born of God could not discern the spiritual words, and therefore could not connect the powerful works to the Kingdom of Heaven. Like the demon-worshipers in Lystra, having seen the miracles Paul performed, who could only believe that Paul must be Hermes and Barnabas must be Zeus. Spiritual people can see and hear and understand spiritual things. Having been born of the Spirit of God, we can see the hand of God in the miraculous things that happen all around us, and can, seeing the Kingdom, be clever enough not to believe that we are just lucky when things go well.

Just being capable of seeing does not mean that we will see, though. If I walk around with a clothespin on my nose, I can't smell anything. I am capable of smell, but I am not able to appreciate the ability because I am closing off the sense. I could also suffer from smelling something and pretending I don't smell it. Other things that I smell could be offensive, so I try to escape or avoid them. The Kingdom is manifesting around me all the time. I have to look, now that I can see, if I am going to acknowledge Him in all my ways.

Entering

In the first few verses of Matthew chapter 18, Jesus answered His disciples question, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" Their question had nothing to do with dying, and nothing to do with going anywhere. It was a "now" question. "In Your Kingdom, who is the greatest?" might be a good paraphrase of it.

Having that in mind, and avoiding having in mind the centuries of distractions from teachers who have taught that the phrase "the Kingdom of Heaven" refers to a future state of affairs in which I have avoided being cast into the lake of fire, and only that future time and place, consider what Jesus answered them. He mentioned entering the Kingdom and being great in the Kingdom.

If we don't turn around and become like little children, we cannot enter the Kingdom. If we become humble, like children, we are great in the Kingdom. There is no indication that staying immature is beneficial in the Kingdom, though. We grow in the Kingdom by increasing in knowing the ways of the King and obeying His commands to love God and love people. We need to stay humble, but we should not stay immature. Maturity is quite easily measurable by examining the ways we respond to situations. With no regard for

whether a situation is a danger, an opportunity, confusion or a mystery, if my response is not formed from the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) it is from my flesh or from some unclean spirit's influence, and is a response that is death.

If I respond to circumstances with answers and actions that are birthed in the fruit of the Spirit, I am bringing Life to the situation - for myself, and for others I can influence. That is entering His Kingdom - being under His influence as my King.

Inheriting

In several of his writings, Paul warned his readers about losing their inheritances by not walking in the Spirit of the King and therefore failing to be influenced by Him to righteousness in their behavior. In these passages, he was writing to believers, and was not describing ending up in the lake of fire.

Habits and attitudes listed by Paul as disqualifying us from receiving our inheritance include cheating, being unjust, sexually immoral, idolatry, adultery, male prostitution, homosexuality, thievery, greed, drunkenness, revelry, swindling, moral impurity, promiscuity, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissension, envy, and carousing. Also, flesh and blood are not able to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. Scripture locations from which this list was compiled are 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 1 Corinthians 15:50, Ephesians 5:5 and Galatians 5:19-21.

Positive things that Paul wrote about inheriting include the fact that we have received an inheritance through Christ (Ephesians 1:11), the Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14), our Father has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints (Colossians 1:9-14), and that our service to the Lord Christ will be rewarded with an inheritance from Him (Colossians 3:23-24).

Inheriting, then, is the result of entering. Our obedience to our King is entering. Our service in His Kingdom, in the form of obedience to His instruction and to His influence on our minds and hearts, will bring us gain. The gain will be an eternal inheritance, which has been made available by His grace in calling us and enabling us to righteousness.

The idea that believers will end up in the lake of fire by sinning after being born of God is a fruit of not knowing the difference between the Kingdom of Heaven and the family of Jesus. The idea that we will enter into “eternal rest” when we die believing in Jesus for salvation is a fruit of not grasping that resting in Him doesn’t necessarily mean not having anything to do besides sitting on a cloud playing a harp. This life is preparing us to be His people in the next step of His plan for His universe. Being trustworthy with responsibility now will gain us the reward of being counted trustworthy with authority later (Matthew 25:23).

6 - The Greatest People in the Kingdom

Please read each of the Scriptures listed below. Allow the context, including to whom Jesus was speaking, questions He was answering, or arguments He was settling, to influence your understanding of His value system regarding the potentials and limitations of human greatness.

Matthew 18:1-5

One who humbles himself like a child is the greatest

Matthew 23:8-12

One who serves is greatest

Mark 9:33-37

One who wants to be first in the Kingdom must be last, and the servant of all

Mark 10:42-45

One who wants to become great must be a servant

One who wants to become first must be a slave to all

Luke 9:46-48

Whoever is least among you is great

Luke 22:24-30

Whoever is greatest must be like the youngest

Whoever leads must be like the one serving

7 - Hierarchy in the Kingdom

Nowhere does a Scripture declare that the 66 books most of the followers of Jesus have canonized as the Holy Bible are all that our God has to say to us. In fact, the opposite is true. In Daniel 8:26, Gabriel told Daniel to seal up a vision because it was for a later time. In the Revelation of Jesus, seven thunders spoke something that a voice from Heaven told John not to write down. In Daniel 12:4, Daniel was told to shut up words, and seal them. Paul indicated to the congregations in Corinth (1 Corinthians 14:1-12) that a person could bring edification, revelation, knowledge and teaching to others gathered by exercising gifts from the Spirit of God, even though they had no New Testaments.

Further, the Scriptures are not useful for influence in making day to day decisions such as how to overcome a sickness or an unclean spirit or witchcraft. We need ongoing revelation to walk in righteousness.

My point in raising the idea that there are still mysteries that we should expect to be getting informed about is that there are truths related to the Kingdom of Heaven that have not been given to us yet, because we have not been in a position to understand or use them yet. Some of these truths are going to inform us regarding hierarchy in the Kingdom when we receive them. I don't have complete understanding of the snapshots I enumerate here, but I expect to be informed about much of this as the Spirit of God gives understanding to people who have been chosen to have ears with which they can hear it.

Daniel 4:17:

His watchers have authority

Daniel 10:

Princes are ruling spirits, both clean and unclean, serving Yahweh and opposing Him

Matthew 20:25-28:

Ruling as Servants is the style of leadership in the Kingdom

Colossians 1:16:

Thrones, Dominions, Powers, Principalities; these are positions of authority over the earth that are part of the Kingdom. As Daniel heard from the messenger who brought him revelation in Daniel 10, Michael is a prince. There was a throne over Persia that was inhabited by an unclean prince who opposed the messenger when he brought revelation from Yahweh to deliver to Daniel. The messenger was not strong enough to get past the prince, though he tried for 3 weeks. Finally, Michael was able to get the messenger through.

When humans share their authority with unclean rulers over their cities and nations, those rulers inhabit thrones created for servants of Yahweh to sit in as they provide protection and provision and information to humans under the authority of the King. Instead of bringing the blessing of the Kingdom, unclean rulers in the thrones of authority bring division and curses and sin and destruction to an area where humans give them power.

These Scriptures allude to authority, but don't give clarity about the responsibilities, limits of, or typical practices of the positions:

1 Timothy 5:17:

Ruling Elders

Colossians 2:9:

Rulers and Authorities

Hebrews 13:7:

Rulers speak God's Word

Hebrews 13:17:

Obey Rulers

Ephesians 3:10:

Principalities and Powers in Heavenly Places

Ephesians 6:12:

Powers, Principalities, Spiritual Wickedness in Heavenly Places

There are people in the earth now who will gain understanding of the protocols for interaction with Heavenly spirits who are our allies, servants, and rulers with us in the Kingdom. We will know when to instruct them and when to ask them for instruction. We will reveal our God's manifold wisdom to them, and they will help us in the battle in the earth to bring forth the manifestation of the rule of the King of Glory.

8 - *The Kingdom in the Parables*

Please examine the list of parables in Appendix C, at the end of this work. For each parable that has clearly been given by Jesus as a teaching regarding His Kingdom, you will find there the reference address in Scripture, a title or subject description, and very brief description of the lesson contained in it. Please do not simply read the appendix - go to the Scriptures and read each parable and let each one influence your heart and your mind. As you read words from Jesus about His Kingdom, I recommend that you remove from your mind any presuppositions about what His Kingdom is or is not. Simply ask Him, "What do You want me to understand about your Reign, Lord?"

Note that some of the parables in the list have only two descriptive lines, but that some have three. The ones that have three lines are parables that include warnings of judgements for failures. There are two basic arenas of judgement mentioned, with two exceptions. One judgement is based on the nature of those judged; either they are good, or they are bad. These parables have a warning of fiery punishment in their ends. The other judgement ends with the characters of the story who fail being thrust outside or left outside, where darkness is usually mentioned instead of fire. The exceptions to these two general outcomes are in the parable of the minas found in Luke 19, and the parable of the unforgiving servant. There, Jesus described the sentence for the judgement as being death in one and torture in the other.

The parables that have darkness in their ends are:

Matthew 22:1-14 - The Wedding Feast

Matthew 25:1-13 - The Virgins and the Bridegroom

Matthew 25:14-30 - The Talents

Luke 13:22-30 - The Narrow Way

Luke 14:15-24 - The Great Banquet

The parables that have fire in their ends are:

Matthew 13:24-30 & 37-43 - The Wheat and the Tares

Matthew 13:47-50 - The Dragnet

Matthew 25:31-46 - The Judgement of the Nations

Parable ending in prison and torture:

Matthew 18:21-35 - The Unforgiving Servant

Parable ending in death:

Luke 19:11-27 - The Minas

9 - Jesus ONLY Talked in Kingdom Terms

Two of the most important words Jesus used in His teachings to His disciples were “apostle” and “ekklesia.” Both of the words were used in the context of the societal and political culture of Rome and the Roman empire during His earthly lifetime. Looking at their uses during His time can help us find some treasure we need in our times.

Apostle

The beginning of chapter ten is Matthew’s record of Jesus having called twelve of His disciples “apostles”. “Apostle” was not a religious word until religious people gained power over it. Previously it was a political/military title. Rome was a proud city when it governed an empire. People born in Rome were citizens of what they claimed to be the most important city in the world. Roman citizens were given honors and privileges that subjects of Rome’s empire did not enjoy, such as exemption from taxes, great legal protections based on Roman laws that superceded local laws in any province, and the implied sense of being more important than subjects of the Roman empire.

The practice of creating “colonies” of Rome was a tool of the empire that was designed to offer leading people in distant occupied lands what they would perceive to be advanced social and legal status. It also served to empower the local representatives of Roman government with a greater grip on the areas in which colonies were planted. Citizens of the colonies were given the status of being citizens of the city of Rome itself. This prestige was used to create loyalty to Rome among leaders in an area that was under Roman rule. A colony was established by the introduction of a group of Roman citizens into a city to “seed” it with important people who were sometimes retired military or political leaders. These colonizers were called apostles. The mission of colonization was apostolic. They were “sent” forth from the city that blessed their identity as superior to non citizens, and were therefore called “sent” people, or “apostles.”

Since Jesus was in the process of colonizing the earth with citizens of the Heavenly Jerusalem, He used the term that would mean “citizens of an important city, sent to colonize” in the ears and minds of the people to whom He was sending these colonizers. In the spirit of building a Kingdom by means of colonization, He called His

leading disciples “apostles.” No other rabbi had apostles as disciples. It was secondarily related to His ekklesia. It was primarily related to the fact that He was establishing His Kingdom.

Next in chapter ten of Matthew, Jesus sent these apostles to invade cities. They went forth with instructions that they were to preach about His Kingdom to the people they met in the cities. They were instructed to influence homes where they were welcomed, by letting their peace come upon the homes. The Prince of Peace sent them out to create colonies of Heaven. The preaching about the Kingdom would be accompanied by working of miracles. Rejection of their message was answered with judgement - judgement promised by Jesus to be more harsh than what was imposed on Sodom and Gomorrah, which made them burned and ruined heaps.

Ekklesia

Dictionaries are not authoritative regarding the use of or definition of words, no matter what your English teacher said. Dictionaries offer a record of current use, and in some cases, various uses, of words at a point in time. If I hear or read a word that is new to me, I can use a dictionary to find possible meanings and possible pronunciations for that new word. As years go by, definitions change, especially in dictionaries that include slang or colloquial entries.

Etymology is sometimes included in dictionaries, and there are resources (especially online) that are only offering etymology of words. The etymology is the source of a word's parts or meanings. The relationship between the words “master” and “minister” can be tracked back to “mas” meaning “more” or “greater,” and “mini” meaning “less” or “smaller.” A minister serves a master. Etymology can track meanings back to other languages.

If I were to trust most religious dictionaries, I would be led to believe that the word “church” is a modern word derived from the ancient word “ekklesia.” Making that mistake would continue a tragedy that has been hindering the people of Jesus from entering His Kingdom for many centuries.

In truth, the English word “church” is derived from a Middle English word “chirche,” which is from the Old English word “cirice,” and probably its origin is from a Greek word “kyriakon.” The earliest meaning, then was pretty literally “the lord’s.” The Greek word

“kuriakos” appears twice in the New Testament:

1 Corinthians 11:20 - “...the **Lord’s** supper.”

Revelation 1:10 - “I was in the Spirit on the **Lord’s** day...”

That is what “church” meant in its historical use.

In truth, the Greek word “ekklesia” has a very drastically different meaning than anything that resembles the modern word “church,” or any of the words from which the word “church” can trace its origins.

Ekklesia was a political word with some social uses beyond its more normal governmental use. Each municipality or village had one or more ekklesias. The meaning of the word was from the compound of a word meaning “called” and another word meaning “out of.” An ekklesia was a group of people called out of a larger group, with some purpose or assignment or project or responsibility. An ekklesia was called together when a vote was taken from it regarding a law or representative for a government position. An ekklesia tasked with the authority to make a judgement in an argument or some other matter would rule over the people being judged between.

Three times of the 114 or more times the word ekklesia can be found in the New Testament, most English translations are reasonably honest in their interpretation of it. In Acts chapter 19, in verses 32, 39 & 41, the word is usually translated “assembly.” In this section of Scripture, Luke quoted a Roman town clerk once, and used the word himself in his narrative, to describe a mob, a court of law, and the crowd as it was dispersed. In each of the uses, it was describing a group of people who had been called out of a larger group with a purpose.

The other more than 100 times ekklesia is in the Greek texts, it is usually mistranslated using the quite inappropriate “church.”

10 - Jesus Never Talked About "Church"

Matthew 16

Early Greek and Roman myths about origins of the earth and people included the ideas that there were gods, humans, and hybrid demigods who were born when gods mated with humans. These myths include some ideas hinted at in the Scriptures, about beings called nephilim, who were born through the sexual union of sons of elohim and daughters of men. The idea is referred to in Genesis 6, before the flood destroyed the nephilim, and in Numbers 13, when the fear-filled 10 spies either saw giants or imagined that they did, when they were sent by Moses to inspect the land where Canaan's descendants were living.

Elohim is a Hebrew plural noun that is used to identify spiritual beings. It is used of Yahweh Himself, of false gods, goddesses, judges, and angels. The word is in the Bible almost 2600 times. A familiar place is Psalm 8:5; "You have made [man] a little lower than the elohim." A world of super beings clearly exists. The early Roman mythology promoted the idea that the three sons of Cronus, a chief god, killed him. They then cast lots to decide how they would divide Cronus' property into thirds. One part was the seas, one was the sky, and one was the grave, or the underworld, in the earth. According to myth, Poseidon received the seas, Zeus the sky, and Hades the underworld.

Further, early Roman mythology explained that each year many deities rested in Hades' underworld, leaving the earth to sink into winter without their protection and provision. Spring equinox was the celebration of the shift from nights being longer than days to days being longer than nights: the equinox was the day during which the night and day were equal. Easter was originally a celebration of the equinox - named after Ishtar, which debatably was either "Dawn Goddess," or "Spring Goddess." It really still is that celebration, even though later Roman (Catholic) mythology tried to marry it to the Hebrew Passover celebration, and to the resurrection of Jesus after His Passover death.

Finally, the point of referencing all this mythology: the mythologians taught that there were several “Gates of Hades,” which were used by the gods, goddesses and demigods to enter Hades in the autumn and return from Hades in the spring. The gates were places where water flowed underground and then came out of the ground, or where there was a “bottomless” deep in a body of water. Water flows in these gates were not just the amount of flow that would come from a spring, but small river size, at least.

One of the gates was a cavern near the ancient town of Tenarus. Called Cape Matapan today, it still exists, and is still called a Gate of Hades. This is the most southern tip of Greece. It was through *this* gate that Heracles allegedly dragged Hades’ three-headed guard dog Cerberus out of Hades and Orpheus allegedly tried to bring Eurydice back to the world of the living. Another gate was near the Italian city of Naples, the volcanic Lake Avernus. Southwest of the Greek city of Corinth, south of the city of Argos, near a small town named Lerna, was supposedly the bottomless Alcyonian Lake - another gate. The current site of this lake is now a swampy area southwest of Corinth, Greece.

There were others. The one that has led me to drag you through all you just read was in Caesarea Philippi. At the southwest foot of Mount Hermon, and at a source of the Jordan river, there is a cave from which water flows. It flowed from the cave before Jesus was born. It was called a Gate of Hades before Jesus was born. The cliff face from which it erupts was called the “rock of the gods,” and the town the Romans renamed Caesarea Philippi was previously called “Panea,” because the major god who was worshiped there was Pan, the part-goat, part-man god. Before the Romans, Baal was worshiped there. It is near the ancient Hebrew city of Dan.

Caesarea Philippi was 120 miles north of Jerusalem, and 30 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. The “rock of the gods” was covered with many idol-housing shrine spaces carved into the cliff, and there were several temples and sacrificial areas in front of it and connected to it. It was not a Hebrew neighborhood. It is, however, a place where Jesus took His disciples one day for a lesson on His Kingdom.

The last location Matthew mentioned before stating that Jesus had led them to the region of Caesarea Philippi was on the west bank of the Sea of Galilee, in Magdala. It was maybe a 40 mile journey to then get to the Gate of Hades in the rock of the gods. No ministry was mentioned by Matthew being offered to the locals. I am convinced that the reason for the trip was to be able to point to the Gate in its physical pagan

environment of demon worship with the blood of animals and humans and declare that it had no power against the Kingdom of Heaven.

The story I intend to make many comments on was written where we mark Matthew's writings as chapter 16, verses 13 through 19. I am not skilled at translating grammar and phrasing from Greek to English. I do, however, have tools available to find definitions of words.

My emotions range from sadness to anger when I read these few paragraphs and realize what damage James the First of England did in his desire to control believers in his kingdom. His instructions to his employees whom he charged with creating an English version of the Scriptures that he could give to his bishops in his Anglican church (of which he considered himself to be the head) included clear direction to mistranslate "ekklesia" in this passage as "church" instead of "ruling counsel" or "authoritative gathering" or even simply transliterating it as "ekklesia" from "ἐκκλησία."

I have 28 English Bible translations. Four of them were not influenced by King James' attempt to usurp the Kingship of Jesus: in verse 18, Young's Literal Translation translated ekklesia as "assembly," Olive Tree's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible translated it "assembly," The Modern Literal Version translated it "congregation," and the Complete Jewish Bible translated it "Congregation." The other 24 substituted the word church. I looked at 8 Spanish translations of the passage. All of them transliterated ekklesia as "iglesia."

I am convinced that Jesus took His disciples to Caesarea Philippi so that they were standing in view of a Gate of Hades when He gave them a lesson on all the Gates of Hades. In verses 13 & 14, He asked them who people believed Him to be. He got a variety of answers, evidencing the confusion of the public regarding His identity.

In verses 15 & 16, He asked them who they believed Him to be, and Peter answered that He was Christ, and the Son of the Living God. Jesus responded by blessing Peter. He called him Simon, he referenced his father Jonah, and confirmed that His Father had revealed His identity to him.

In verse 18, I believe standing with His disciples in front of a huge rock face called the "rock of the gods," Jesus talked about rocks for a moment. Peter's name was Simon.

Peter was a nickname given to him by Jesus. Actually, it was “Petros” (G4074), a masculine noun meaning a small rock. When using the nickname in Aramaic, He called him “Kefas” (G2786). “And I also say that you are “Petros,” and on this “Petra” I will build my “ekklesia,” and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”

“Petra” (G4073) is a feminine noun meaning a massive rock. Think of the massive red rock temple compound called Petra. When Jesus said that anyone who heard His teachings and obeyed them was like a person who dug a deep foundation and built it on a rock, the word translated “rock” was *petra*. That doesn’t answer every question about what Jesus was talking about, but it should make it at least clear that when He said, “Petros,” He was talking about Peter, and when He said, “*petra*,” He wasn’t.

Ekklesia, as mentioned, is an authoritative group of people called out of a larger group of people to make decisions, or declarations, or fulfil any responsibility they might be charged with. Ekklesia is what Jesus said He was building on the *petra*. It’s power would be greater than the doors the false gods used to go to Hades in the autumn equinox and return in the spring equinox. Ekklesia would be gatherings of His Heavenly citizens in the earth, manifesting His Kingdom in the colonies of Heaven they brought the power, the values, and the culture of Heaven to.

The next Kingdom instruction was in verse 19. He gave them the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Keys lock and unlock. They provide access to those who possess them, and deny access to those who do not possess them. They indicate authority and responsibility. His ekklesia would bind in the Earth what is bound in Heaven, and release in the Earth what is released and allowed in Heaven. As His ekklesia, we pronounce, announce, and enforce the intentions of the King for the Earth.

Matthew 18

Jesus offered further instruction regarding His Kingdom in chapter 18 of Matthew’s account, and was again intentionally mis-quoted under the instruction of James of England to his hired translation team.

He made three points in verses 15 through 20. The first was instruction about His people governing their communities regarding evil behavior. Jesus described three steps of discipline to be followed regarding “If your brother sins against you...”

The steps of attempting to restore one who has sinned against you

The first step is that we should try to win our brother from the power of the sin by discussing it with him in private. If we succeed at influencing him, the work is done. If he won't listen to us, we should take a witness or two with us and try again. If the brother won't listen to the witnesses, we reach the point where His instructions to us are describing a manifestation of His government: in the third step, an ekklesia is called together who can make a judgment on the matter. They either agree with the accused or the accusers, or they point out the errors on both sides.

If the three steps of attempted reconciliation fail to convince the brother of his sin, he is to be treated like a traitor and an unbeliever. That, of course, implies that we should evangelize him.

Authority to bring Heavenly statutes to bear power in the earth

The second point, in verse 18, is the repeating of what He told them in verse 19 of chapter 16. They have the power to release things into the earth and to contain or stop things in the earth. He had instructed them already to pray that Father's Kingdom would manifest in the earth as His will is done in the earth just as it is done in heaven (Matthew 6:10).

In the covenant Yahweh used to make Israel's descendants a nation, He instructed them with laws. As He gave Moses the directives for the descendants of Israel's son Levi, He informed him that the Levites would have no tribal territory like the other tribes. Instead, they would have cities among all the other tribes as their inheritance of land. Their inheritance was a portion of each sacrifice they offered to Yahweh on behalf of the members of other tribes. Their responsibilities included teaching the rest of the Israelites what the law said. They were to proclaim and enforce the law.

That priestly / government function set is handed to all of the citizens of the Kingdom now. We are responsible for some level of announcement, proclamation, and/or enforcement of the laws and values of heaven. If something is bound from happening in heaven, we declare it to be bound in the earth.

Two or three in agreement

Unity is a harbor for great power. When Yahweh answered the ruckus at Babel, where humans were hard at work to do what they could of disobeying the Lord's instructions to Noah: "Spread over the earth; fill the earth; rule over every living creature in the earth; covenant with Me in the earth" (Genesis 1-17), He said of those absolutely disobedient people, "Because they have one mind and one language, there is nothing they could not do." (Genesis 11:6). What they were doing may look lame to us, but it was such a concern to our God that He broke it up so it wouldn't bear fruit.

Yahweh made them able to obey Him by changing their minds with different languages, so they spread apart and filled the earth. While they had one mind and one language, though, they could have done anything because of the power of their unity. Unity is a neutral power - neither good nor evil. Both good groups and evil groups can use it, though. When a group does use it, their power to do things or stop things multiplies.

Jesus told His followers that if two of them agreed about anything, they could ask for it and very surely receive it. I looked at 8 English translations of Matthew 18:19, and the only one that didn't translate Matthew as quoting Jesus to say "any" thing two believers asked for in prayer said instead "every" thing. Whatever two believers agree about in prayer, they will have it if they ask for it. Everything. So said Jesus.

Pretty extreme of our King. Unity brings authority and power to even the smallest ekklesia: two believers. Then, in what we mark as verse 20, He added that "...every time two or three gather in My name, I am among them." The "gather" word He used is the word that "synagogue" speaks of as a "place" for the gathering. Notice that the tenses of His statement don't match: "they are gathered" and "I am among them." It is like His statement, "Before Abraham was, I am." (John 8:58).

Small ekklesias are very powerful.

11 - Origen, "Against Celsus"

Origen was a leader among believers a couple of centuries after the birth of Jesus.

As a portion of a treatise he titled, "Against Celsus," (Origen Book III, 29-30) he wrote what I have quoted below. It is a contrast between the ekklesias that were local representations of the governments of men and the local ekklesias that represented the Kingdom of God. Clearly, the word "church" is not a reasonable substitution for either group, and clearly "ekklesia" is not a word that should today be mistranslated as the word "church," as James 1 of England commanded of the hirelings he employed to make an English translation of Scriptures.

"But the God who sent Jesus dissipated all the conspiracies of the demons, and made the Gospel of Jesus to prevail throughout the whole world for the conversion and reformation of men, and caused ekklesias to be everywhere established in opposition to those of superstitious and licentious and wicked men; for such is the character of the multitudes who constitute the citizens in the ekklesias of the various cities. Whereas the ekklesias of God which are instructed by Christ, when carefully contrasted with the ekklesias of the districts in which they are situated, are as beacons in the world; for who would not admit that even the inferior members of the ekklesias, and those who in comparison with the better are less worthy, are nevertheless more excellent than many of those who belong to the ekklesias in the different districts?"

"For the ekklesia of God, e.g., which is at Athens, is a meek and stable body, as being one which desires to please God, who is over all things; whereas the ekklesia of the Athenians is given to sedition, and is not at all to be compared to the ekklesia of God in that city. And you may say the same thing of the ekklesia of God at Corinth, and of the ekklesia of the Corinthian people; and also of the ekklesia of God at Alexandria, and of the ekklesia of the people of Alexandria. And if he who hears this be a candid man, and one who investigates things with a desire to ascertain the truth, he will be filled with admiration of Him who not only conceived the design, but also was able to secure in all places the establishment of ekklesias of God alongside of the ekklesias of the people in each city. In like manner, also, in comparing the council of the ekklesia of God with the ekklesia in any city, you would find that certain councilors of the ekklesia are worthy

to rule in the city of God, if there be any such city in the whole world; whereas the councilors in all other places exhibit in their characters no quality worthy of the conventional superiority which they appear to enjoy over their fellow-citizens. And so, too, you must compare the ruler of the ekklesia in each city with the ruler of the ekklesia of the city, in order to observe that even amongst those councilors and rulers of the ekklesia of God who come very far short of their duty, and who lead more indolent lives than others who are more energetic, it is nevertheless possible to discover a general superiority in what relates to the progress of virtue over the characters of the councilors and rulers in the various cities.”

12 - How we Got the Church -

Kingly Usurpers

Constantine

Ruling first as a Tetrarch in the Roman Empire, then as Emperor, Constantine considered himself to be in absolute authority over every aspect of life in every kingdom over which he could exert his power. These aspects of the lives of his subjects included economies, taxation, military defense and offense, local governments, social cultures, and any religion anyone practiced.

While still ruling only part of the empire, Constantine joined with a co-emperor named Licinius in writing a declaration regarding the religions in the entire empire. Written in 313 AD in or near the Italian city of Milan, the “Edict of Milan” (see two translations of this proclamation in Appendix D) pronounced religious liberty over all subjects of the empire. Followers of Jesus having been specifically persecuted by previous laws, this new liberty was particularly valuable to them.

It is useful to know, while studying Constantine or the leadership of believers during his lifetime, that historical/mythical records produced by the Roman Church and historical records produced by other writers conflict greatly with each other regarding Constantine’s character, whether he became a follower of Jesus, and what influence he had over people who did follow Jesus. Church of Rome documents declare him to be a great benefactor to them, and a convert to their religion. Non-church historians indicate that he was a pagan his whole life, continually building new temples to false gods, and that he was only baptized as a member of the Roman Church shortly before his apparently impending death, perhaps to appease his mother, who was an active member of the Church of Rome.

Some of his influences over believers included ruling over them in place of their rightful King by replacing their leaders with a professional “clergy,” who exercised their religious rituals in temples, where the lower spiritual class “laity” were relegated to the work of

being an audience. Prior gatherings that included descriptions of and instructions to entire congregations such as “you may all prophesy,” and “everyone has a psalm, a teaching, a tongue, an interpretation,” (1 Corinthians 14:31,26) were replaced by gatherings that a greater resemblance to the neighboring temples in which false gods were worshiped.

Because of this displacement of the King over His people, the leaders of the Church of Rome, who grew into being the lords of the “holy Roman Empire,” properly credit Constantine as the source of their power. They misquote the Edict of Milan as having endorsed their religion. What it really did was endorse every religion. According to Dana Carleton Munro, translating the Edict in his “The Early Christian Persecutions,” (1897 AD), Constantine and Licinius stated, “...we have given to those Christians free and unrestricted opportunity of religious worship...,” but also said, so that “any Divinity whatsoever in the seat of the heavens may be propitious and kindly disposed to us and all who are placed under our rule.”, “...we have also conceded to other religions the right of open and free observance of their worship for the sake of the peace of our times, that each one may have the free opportunity to worship as he pleases;” Any worship, of any “god,” was blessed, so that all the gods would be happy and cause the emperors and their empire to prosper.

James the First, King of England

As it was with Constantine, the source of information being either the people who were given power by someone or the people who are purporting to simply state facts, the records of the Church of King James, also called the Church of England, the Anglican Church, and the Episcopal Church, have a different narrative in some parts of the story from their non-religious counterparts. According to the translators James employed to make an English translation of the Scriptures to be used by the bishops he employed to be his governmental authorities through whom he ruled his church, he was, “that sanctified Person, who, under God, is the immediate Author of their true happiness.”, and one who was “caring for the Church, as a most tender and loving nursing Father.”

Other contemporary historians noted that, even though he wrote laws condemning sodomy, James had several male lovers. He is quoted as having said, “Kings are justly called gods for they exercise a manner or resemblance of divine power upon earth.” For a political ruler who was under the influence and authority of King Jesus, it would be

appropriate to describe that reign as being part of the Kingdom of Heaven. James was a usurper of the authority of Jesus, however, as indicated by one of his instructions to his employees about how they would translate the Greek word *ekklesia*, that described Jesus' direct access to His subjects as they manifested His authority and power in the earth.

15 Instructions to Translators

James issued 15 directives to his translators, giving instruction about their authority and the hierarchy through which his authority would control their translation. The third instruction was to mis-translate the Greek word *ekklesia* as "church."

As previously stated, *ekklesia* was used at least 114 times by writers of what has become the New Testament. In each but 3 of those times it appeared, the translators employed by King James dutifully substituted the word "church" when translating the phrases in which they found it. The 3 times they honestly translated it are all in chapter 19 of Luke's Acts of the Apostles. There, while Demetrius, a local idol maker, was busy inciting a riot as a public complaint against Paul's work of teaching people that idols were not gods, a local government official managed to calm the Ephesians enough to speak to them.

Please read verses 32 through 41, as they were translated by King James' men:

"Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together. And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people. But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter? Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly.

For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another.

But if ye inquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.

And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.”

In each appearance of the word *ekklesia*, the translators properly rendered it, “assembly.” The word was descriptive of a group of people called together out of a larger group, with the purpose of accomplishing some task. The task was typically related to either making a judgment, voting in a public election, or issuing a law or declaration. Local government frequently used gatherings called *ekklesias* as a council with authority in the settlement of issues. In the passage above, it was used to reference the riot, the group who was available to make public judgments in matters of disagreement, and the crowd after the riot was quieted.

13 - Church correctly in Scripture

It is also interesting that in this one place where James' translators could not possibly misuse the word "church" as a substitution for ekklesia, is the only proper use of the word church. Since "church" is derived from a word that meant, "belonging to the lord," and could be used to refer to any lord, it's use could include describing a building belonging to a lord. In chapter 19 of Acts, James' translators gave us "church robbers" in a phrase most English translations render as "temple robbers." That is a fair indication that they thought the word "church" was a bit of a synonym for "temple," including a pagan temple.

14 - Gathering, but not as Ekklesia

It is very clear from the comparison Origen made of ekklesias related to earthly governments to ekklesias related to the government of Jesus the King that he understood that the proper use of the word ekklesia was in governmental context. Since that is clear, it is also clear that what is commonly called, “the church” is completely unrelated to anything that could be properly implied by or inferred from the word ekklesia.

The Sunday and Wednesday meetings we have loved to call “having church” are simply modern synagogue meetings, flavored by the Roman meetings in the Roman buildings made popular in the years during and after the mis-influence of Constantine and his hired priests and bishops. Non-clerical lower caste citizens are led by the clerical spiritual caste to pray and praise and listen to opinions on the Scriptures.

Offerings are received as taxes on the common people, frequently with promises of the high-percentage interest being paid back to the givers - by the Lord, of course, not by the church; if you don't get yours, take it up with Him... Much of the revenue in the smaller congregations pays for the expenses of the building and the employees. Not much is spent on equipping every believer for the discovery and realization of their ministries.

It is a big business, with more spent on annual audits to find the thieves who have found their way into the financial management of the church than on foreign missions: \$810,000,000.00, in 2015, per World Evangelization Research Center.

15 - Gathering as Ekklesia

Gathered to Judge Sin

Jesus taught His disciples that they should trust an ekklesia to judge believers' behavior. If someone was found to be sinning, the person who discovered it was instructed by Jesus to confront the offender with the hope of seeing them set free and restored to life and freedom from the error.

If the person could not be convinced, the next level of help was to take one or more others to reason with the offender, with the hope of reconciliation. If the two or three could not convince them, they were to be taken to an ekklesia. The ekklesia, by definition, would be a group called out of a larger group with the responsibility of accomplishing a project. The project here would be to listen to the two sides of the disagreement, and exercise such authority as to declare that someone who would not listen to the judgment the ekklesia agreed on was to be considered an unbeliever or a traitor, like a tax-collector (Matthew 18:15-17).

This fact makes it clear why James 1 of England did not want lowly believers to get the idea that they had the authority to judge in matters of Heavenly law and life. His fear of this authority being in the hands of all believers bound him to the twisted instructions he gave his interpreters of mistranslating ekklesia using the English word that up til that time simply meant "the Lord's": church.

Gathered to Judge Angels and Believers

1 Corinthians 6:1-8. Please read that now.

If the only sport you know how to play is ice hockey, you don't know what someone is talking about when they describe how much time they spent in the bull pen getting ready for the second inning, because those terms and that preparation are for pitchers in baseball. If you read Paul's letter to the ekklesias in Corinth, and the only game you

know is American church, not much of what forms in your mind will resemble what he had in his mind.

Paul knew the Roman system of government, including its courts. He knew what an ekklesia was in that context. He therefore had a great understanding of what Jesus meant when He used the words apostle and ekklesia, in the context of the Kingdom of Heaven - His Kingdom. Paul did not spend the last days Luke recorded in Acts teaching about a church. He spent them teaching about the Kingdom.

Pretend that what I am suggesting is true: Paul wrote a letter; part of it ended up being called 1 Corinthians 6:1-8. He was thinking of the Kingdom of Heaven version of the system the Empire of Rome had of judging matters and exercising local government. Part of that system included gathering an ekklesia from the citizens in an area to make judgements or vote or declare new local laws. He knew that Jesus was building an ekklesia. The idea that Jesus was building anything that resembles what we call church today would not have entered his mind, because it does not resemble what Jesus said He was building. That would be like you telling me you are going to build a baseball stadium and I imagine an ice hockey arena instead.

If that is true, Paul had in mind that believers who constitute an ekklesia called together to make a judgement in a matter would be called to that duty based on their spiritual gifts and on their spiritual maturity, as measured by their manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit in their actions. Such people would have greater collective wisdom than Solomon on his best days. In contrast, we frequently promote people to leadership in church based on their abilities to run businesses or their positions in families or their financial strength or their abilities to influence people with witchcraft and manipulation.

The church has a long history of abuse of power and influence. To imagine the kind of righteousness in leadership that could produce a gathering for judging a matter that Paul described in chapter 6 of 1 Corinthians in the context of church is pretty ridiculous. That is why no one but cult leaders preach on this passage. Well, no one but me and Paul and cult leaders... But only Paul has it right - Jesus is building ekklesia, and one of its duties is to lead in judgments over matters of dispute.

Paul was rebuking the believers in Corinth for taking their matters to be judged by ekklesias of unbelievers instead of to ekklesias led by the Spirit of Wisdom.

Gathered by Demetrius to Judge Paul

Acts 19:23-41. Please read that now.

Demetrius the silversmith lived in Ephesus. He and other Ephesian silversmiths drew income from the business of creating items from silver. Because Ephesus was the location where a piece of wood was claimed to have fallen out of the sky that looked like Artemis, Ephesus became a promoter of small clay shrines for the goddess who they taught was born in the woods nearby. More expensive items for sale to worshipers included silver images of Artemis, who was also called Diana.

When Paul and his trainees taught people the foolishness of worshiping idols, it began to hurt the idol business in Ephesus. Demetrius grew angry because of this financial impact on his life, so he called together an ekklesia. He had no clear agenda for them to pursue beyond being very angry with Paul. The mob listened to his short speech declaring that Paul was a serious threat to their livelihood and responded with a shouting fit for a few hours. As Luke noted in verse 32, the ekklesia was in confusion.

The city clerk managed to quiet the crowd and speak to them eventually. He informed them of two things: there were legal ekklesias to whom they could take Paul if they wanted to press some charge against him (verse 39), and they were an illegal ekklesia, which he dismissed (verse 40).

God has Placed These in the Ekklesia:

1 Corinthians 12. Please read that now.

Now, about spiritual matters... Verse 7: the Spirit manifests in each person with some supernatural power. One Spirit gives all the gifts, and that same Spirit gives a gift to each member of the body of Jesus. Perhaps the main point there is unity in diversity.

In verses 4 through 27, Paul wrote about what he called “the body.” In verse 28, he shifted from writing about unity in the body to work and preeminence in the ekklesia. “Now God has placed these in the ekklesia:”

First, apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helping, administrating, speaking in tongues. He did not pause to explain why he mentioned those empowerments in that order. For anyone who says that they base their lives and ministries and theologies on the Bible, all of chapter 12 here was in present tense in Paul’s grammar, and he made no suggestion that people prepare for the absence of any of the gifts he listed. No other Scripture makes that suggestion, either. To declare that these gifts are no longer needed by the ekklesia to do Kingdom business, or to teach that they have ceased, is to create doctrine from doubt and from failure to manifest the Holy Spirit, not from Scripture.

He placed those gifts in the ekklesia. He still wants to place those gifts and others in the ekklesia. They will make us able to offer the earth a supernatural government, ruled over by the King of Heaven and Earth.

16 - Preaching, Therefore, the Kingdom

Should we be preaching the Kingdom?

What should we be instructing unbelievers and then new believers to believe? Should evangelists be instructing unbelievers regarding salvation and teachers be instructing believers regarding the Kingdom? Some theologians cannot see a difference between the Kingdom and the church. What would it mean we are to declare regarding the Kingdom of Heaven if they are right? What if they are wrong? A more important question is probably, what clarity is there in the Scriptures?

In the record of Luke, in chapter 9 verse 2, Jesus sent 12 disciples out to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick. In verse 6, their activities are called “preaching the gospel and healing.” That literally means “good news-ing” them and healing them. When they returned from the mission, Jesus took them into a deserted place near Bethsaida. Multitudes of people followed them there, and Jesus taught them about His Kingdom and He healed those who were sick among them.

In chapter 10, Luke wrote that Jesus soon sent out seventy more to go on a second campaign, authorizing them to spread peace, heal sick people, and instruct the people that what they were observing was the Kingdom of Heaven. The message clearly was not, “here is how you can go to Heaven.” It clearly was, “Here is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Who has preached it?

There is a tradition of ignoring the Kingdom that relieves itself from Kingdom responsibility by falsely declaring that people preached the Kingdom until the cross, and then started preaching salvation. This myth is easily dismissed by even a casual reading of the New Testament. The writers frequently preached and taught about the Kingdom of God. The last few verses of the Acts of the Apostles cite Paul as preaching the Kingdom.

What to preach?

What exactly should we even believe about the Kingdom of God, and to whom should we preach what? Many of the parables recorded in Matthew through Luke are introduced with a phrase identifying them as teachings about the Kingdom. Unbelievers who are taught only that Jesus is a Savior who paid for their sins will fit nicely into a system of religion dominated by a clergy caste. The clergy do the holy work in the holy building on the holy day and are the people with responsibility and authority.

When the story they are told is, instead, that Jesus is a King Who died to give them **life** so that they can be effective, purposeful citizens of His eternal Kingdom, they must ask Him what their purposes *are* when they become reborn. They have responsibility that must be discovered and taken up. “Laity” is a transliteration of a foreign word that means “the people.” If we preach responsibility belongs to every citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven, suddenly laity (the lower life under the clergy caste) would have to be called lazity if it continued to exist.

Children who become believers immediately become servants. They want to help everybody do everything. Adults who become believers may take on a servant mentality for a short time and may not. It seems to depend on their pride or fear being more dominant than their love for the newly received Savior. Either being too afraid to ask what they should be doing with regard to their new identities or being too proud to be servants. Children are always being told what to do by everyone, so the barriers to taking on responsibility are not quite so large.

When we try to teach new adult believers that they must become servants, their commitment level is usually only what it would be in any other social or service oriented club, such as Rotary or Optimists. Their work-related devotion seems to have little connection to Jesus, but much connection to church programs. No spiritual gift is required, no education is necessarily needed, unless the initiate senses “a call to the ministry.” In this case, extensive education is of course required as preparation and qualification for “clergy” status, according to church status quo.

As Paul wrote to the congregations in Ephesus, we were not saved *by* works, lest anyone should boast, but we were saved *for* works, and they have been laid out before us to walk in them. All of us (Ephesians 2:8-10). This entire concept should be

presented to unbelievers and repeated to new believers until they have entered into the Kingdom. By failing to teach them to enter in, we have been depriving them of being able to inherit.

The gospel of the Kingdom

The word “gospel” is a middle English word that was derived from an old English phrase, “gōd” (good) “spell” (tale). Just as the Greek word which it is usually translating, it simply means, “good news.” It is a generic word that could be used to refer to much more than the information related to how to go to heaven when we die. When I discover that the IRS doesn’t want to waste as much of my money as I thought, and I will be refunded my overpayment, it is good news. When I live through a surgical procedure, it is good news. When Jesus died to pay for my sin and make provision for me not only to escape paying for it myself in hell, but to also give me a new spirit that is born of God, that is exceptionally good news.

Movements of the Spirit of restoration or reformation usually create a resultant culture and perhaps a jargon that are recognizable. Examples would be hairdos and clothing of Mennonites or Pentecostal Holiness denominations or the uniforms of the Salvation Army. Cultural impacts hopefully include more than change of garments, though. Carrying Bibles, listening to Christian radio stations, praying in public and giving generously are culture changes that can come from being believers. Some of the less valuable impacts are speaking in clichés (“God is good!” “All the time!”; “Praise the Lord, hallelujah!”; “Well, glory!”; “The devil’s a liar!”), using religious jargon (“quiet time,” “standing in the gap,” “law of reciprocity,” “apostolic,” “gospel”) and dietary restrictions like avoiding pork or devil’s food cake.

“Gospel” has gained cultural value that has distorted its meaning. It means, “good news.” Its use in some people’s culture is limited to using it to mean, “information about how to go to Heaven when you die.” Several news items that are good news are mentioned in the New Testament as good news. One is the good news regarding peace (Ephesians 6:15). Mark introduced his writing as “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,” (Mark 1:1). I suggest that you consider that the entirety of his narrative is not “how to get saved.” Paul declared to some of his friends in Acts 20:24 that he testified “to the gospel of the grace of God.” In 2 Corinthians 4:4 he mentioned the “gospel of the glory of Christ.” In Galatians 3:8, he said that the gospel Yahweh

preached to Abraham was, “All the nations will be blessed in you,” (Genesis 12:3). A messenger John saw in mid-heaven had an “eternal gospel” to preach. What John quoted him as saying was, “Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgement has come; worship Him Who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of water.” (Revelation 14:6,7). That’s not exactly “Get saved by believing Jesus died for your sins!”

Controversy arises from this distorted use of the word when trying to interpret or apply the instruction given by Paul in his description of and warning against “another gospel” in 2 Corinthians 11:4 and Galatians 1:6-9. The subject of being reborn in spirit by faith and not by doing good works or by obeying the law of Moses is the core of the letter Paul wrote to Galatia. The good news he is concerned about being replaced with a false good news is that good news only. He is not worried about the good news of the Kingdom of God or the good news about peace replacing the good news about Jesus paying for their sin. How to become born of God is his concern.

There is no logical reason to assume that the “good news” he is mentioning is related to any subject other than the one he is writing about: salvation. It is illogical to think that he would mean, “I preached to you that Jesus died to pay for your sins. If you believe that He did, you can be born of God. If someone else comes along and preaches other good news, such as the good news that you can be healed by His stripes, let that man be cursed!”

His fear was that they would be deceived into believing that they could present themselves clean of sin before God by doing enough good deeds. Someone coming to them with that instruction would have been trying to replace Paul’s teaching regarding salvation. According to Acts 28:30 & 31, Paul preached the good news about the Kingdom and the good news about Jesus Christ in Rome. Using the foreign word, “gospel” to describe those subjects, he was preaching the gospel of the Kingdom *and* he was preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The gospel of the Kingdom is “If you obey the King, you will have great reward, both in this life as you enter His Kingdom, and in the next life as you inherit the Kingdom. It is also good news to know in advance that if you do not obey the King, you will suffer loss in this life as you refuse to enter His Kingdom, and therefore you will not inherit the

Kingdom in the next life. You will not just 'not get your pay,' you will suffer the loss of the things you thought you had gained" (Luke 19:11-27).

The gospel of Salvation

The good news about salvation is very simply, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you can be saved from your sins and born of God." (Acts 4:12). It is not, "If you get born of God by faith and then do enough good works, you will stay saved and can go to heaven." It is not, "If you believe that Jesus died for your sins and then are baptized by a Church of Christ minister you will be saved, and if you do enough good works to keep from being condemned for your bad works you will stay saved." It is purely faith in the sacrifice and love of Jesus, and it changes your nature and your identity. It has nothing to do with good works or obedience to any law, either in acquiring it or in keeping it.

The good news that we are now able to find the strength of the character of Jesus in us (Galatians 5:22,23) is the good news that makes us able to enter the Kingdom. The obedience issues we encounter as believers are related to the King giving us directions and commands and instructions, and our having the ability to obey them (Philippians 2:12,13). Obedience does not make us sons and daughters - faith does. He changes our nature by allowing the doomed-to-death spirit that we were born with to be replaced with a spirit that is born of Yahweh, and He does it in response to our faith, not our obedience or good works. "Responsibility" is the ability to *have a proper response*. When our God gives us new life, He invites us to live it with purpose. He has designed us for that purpose. He sets the members very purposefully in the body just as it pleases Him (1 Corinthians 12:18).

When we separate the good news of salvation in Jesus from the good news about His Kingdom and Lordship, many Scriptures that have been clouded by our having mixed works and salvation become clear. Failure to obey the King does not cost us our salvation, but it can cost us our inheritance. An eternal existence without purpose because I have shown myself to be unworthy of trust will be like living in the shadow of death forever. I would still no less be the son I was born of God to be, but I will have become unsuccessful in my privileged calling of bringing God glory by walking in the deeds that He laid out before me (Ephesians 2:8-10).

I have been told that “only those who are born-again do the will of God.” This is not true in two aspects. One aspect of the error is that Pharaoh and Cyrus and Judas did what they were instructed by God, but none of them was born-again (Romans 9:14-24; Isaiah 45:1-7; John 13:25-30). The other aspect is the implication that everyone who *is* born-again does do the will of God. Many will call Him Lord but fail to have Him as Lord, refusing to obey and properly relate to Him. They are distant when the time for entering the Kingdom is available to them, and therefore are kept at a distance when the time for inheriting the Kingdom would be available (Luke 13:22-30). These people were called “workers of iniquity.” They have gifts from the Spirit, and are doing works, but they are not closely related to the King for His leadership in those works. The judgement against them was solely based on their deeds, not their identities.

There is perhaps no clearer statement from Jesus on this issue than Matthew 7:21 - “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but *the one who does the will of My Father Who is in Heaven.*” There should be no doubt that Jesus cannot have been saying in that statement that we cannot “go to heaven when we die” unless we have done all of the Father’s will for our lives. Any failure to perform God’s instructions and desires perfectly would exclude us from heaven.

I have also been told that when Jesus was speaking to Nicodemus in John chapter 3, that what He told him in verse 3 was synonymous with what He said in verse 5. First, He said to him that he could not “see” the Kingdom without being born again. Next, He told him that he could not “enter” the Kingdom without being born of both water and Spirit. It is as irrational to suggest this as it would be to deduce that if I told you that you had to be on my property in order to see my house, and that you had to be on my property in order to walk through my front door, that seeing my house and entering it were synonymous.

“Entering the Kingdom” is not “going to Heaven,” no matter who preaches it to be so. “Ye must be born again,” has been preached as the prerequisite for getting out of hell for quite a while very popularly. Even though it is true that your name has to be written in the Lamb’s book of life to avoid being thrown in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15), and you must be born of God to have a nature that will enter heaven, that is not what Jesus said to Nicodemus in the beginning of John chapter 3. Entering the Kingdom is receiving the King’s authority over your life. Separating what we teach regarding salvation by faith from what we teach regarding inheriting the Kingdom by obedience

is really simple, and will bring great clarity to the Scriptures that threaten believers with cost or punishment for disobedience.

Truths about the Judgment Seat of Christ

There is a ditch on each side of the path of truth regarding judgments that will be faced by sons and daughters of Yahweh. On one side is the teaching that once I am born of God, no matter what evil I do before I die, I will not have to face a judgement for it, because Jesus was judged for it in place of me. The other ditch is the teaching that once I am born of God, if I sin again, I need to get saved again, or really get saved this time; that if I sin again, I will go to hell if I don't get saved again before I die. Many people are at the altar every Sunday getting saved again. The root of this is the Roman myth that the Pope's priests are offering the blood of Jesus on an altar for the sins of the people who gather with them, paying for their most recent sins. If I go to their ceremony and sin and die before the next ritual, I will go to be purged of the sin in purgatory or to hell to pay for the sin. The idea that the sacrifice of Jesus is not finished yet, and Roman priests are doing it now since Jesus didn't get it done is in direct opposition with Hebrews 10:11-12.

The truth is revealed in the Revelation of Jesus that John received, in the section that has been marked off as chapter 20. Please read that now.

John was shown two judgments. One will be based on many books, the other will be based on one book. The many books are the records of the deeds of every human. The one book is the Lamb's book of Life.

One judgment is based on actions. This judgment is related to the Kingdom. Every person will be gathered up to face the Judge Who gave them life, and will answer for the way that life was spent.

Though this study is not an appropriate place for a several page section on why all of the dead are "down" from where the living are, in Appendix E there is a list of statements made throughout the Bible that should make it easy to believe that every person who dies goes to sleep in the place of the dead, or the grave. In Hebrew, the grave is called sheol. In the Septuagint, hades was used to translate the Hebrew sheol into Greek. "Grave" is a transliteration, having more meanings than either hades or sheol, because

both of the foreign words were understood to be a place for the dead that is down in the earth.

The good are asleep in the grave along with the evil, or Samuel could not have been called “up” and disturbed from “rest” by the witch at Endor. As John stated in verse 4, the first resurrection from the dead will include only the people who refuse to worship the beast or his image, and do not take his mark on their heads or hands. The rest of the dead being raised up won’t happen until after the thousand-year long reign of Jesus with the beheaded saints. Until then, everyone who dies will be in the grave.

Anyone whose name is not found in the book of Life will be thrown in the lake of fire, without regard for their good works or lack of bad works. Anyone whose name is found in the book of Life won’t be thrown in the lake of fire, without regard for their bad works or lack of good works. This judgment is purely based on identity.

Every human, then, faces both the identity judgment and the Kingdom judgment. For the unbelievers, the judgments of their lives will be the prelude to their condemnation for not accepting the payment for their failures that was made by the Lamb of God. For believers, the judgments of their lives will explain why they will be in outer darkness instead of having access to the city that descends from Heaven, or what authority their responsibility is to be rewarded with in the city. An explanation can be understood from the parable of the virgins, which Jesus offered as an example of what the Kingdom is like. All the virgins had the same nature, but some were attentive to the needs of the King, and some were not. For the inattentive, darkness came and they were left to it.

The failure of the two ditches - “eternal security” with no penalty for refusing to obey the King after salvation, and “perseverance of the saints” with no recognition of the nature into which we are born of God, is that they cannot discern the fact that the Family of God and the Kingdom of God are not synonymous. The Family is judged on the finding of their names in the book of Life. The Kingdom judgment is made on whether the Family member obeyed the King.

When John wrote “anyone who is born of God cannot sin, because His seed remains in him,” (1 John 3:9) and Paul wrote “it is no longer I who sin, but sin lives in my flesh,” (Romans 7:17,20) they were seeing the same truth: we are born of Yahweh, Who is pure, perfect, righteous, holy, and eternal. His nature becomes the nature of the new

spirit each of us receives of Him when we are born of Him. Paul said sin lives in our flesh. He and John both saw that our spirits - who we truly are - are born of God, and cannot sin. Our flesh is where we are. Our spirits are who we are. We will answer for what we allow our flesh to waste our lives on, and be rewarded for what our spirits empower us to invest our lives in.

What effects will preaching the Kingdom have?

Preaching the gospel of Salvation more effective

Many people have been victims of well meaning evangelists or other church workers who gave them twisted versions of the “good news” that Jesus saves. Some were told that coming to a Roman Church priest so that he could offer a sacrifice of the blood of Jesus on their behalf could give them temporary safety from hell. Some were told that being baptized by a minister of the Church of Christ would get them saved initially, and that not failing again would keep them saved. Some heard that everyone is now saved because of the universal effect of the sacrifice of Jesus, and that we all now just need to learn to live in harmony and love. Another recipe for salvation has been repentance plus being baptized in the name of Jesus plus being filled with the Spirit plus speaking in tongues plus avoiding certain types of hairdos and clothing and food.

I have spoken to people in each of these categories of deception. Some, who were misinstructed in the last fashion mentioned, refused to be part of a local congregation. Their common reason given was that they could not live in a way that could please God so they had given up on being good enough to be a church member. Their inability to keep the laws invented by the denomination that related to hair length and clothing style and forbidden forms of entertainment had condemned them to hell, in their understanding of the “good news” of salvation. They further refused to be comforted with truth when I presented it, because the enslavement by the denomination caused fear of any “gospel” other than what they had been taught.

When we clearly teach the *path to* and *the effects of* being born of God, people will be able to stand again after falling. They will be able to fight doubts that arise regarding their salvation, simply taking God’s word that their faith has obtained His promises, because Jesus has become “Yes” and “Amen” to those promises on their behalf.

The Greek word that is usually translated “salvation” or “save” in the New Testament is “sozo,” which is sometimes translated in the Bible as “made whole” or “healed.” People with whom we share the gospel of salvation should gain access to more salvation and healing than simply hoping to avoid hell if we are giving them the truth that Jesus purchased our healing and our wholeness and our new spirit by His death and resurrection.

Ekklesia will be built by Jesus

Ekklesia doesn't resemble a local congregation in any way I have seen local congregations form or function. Usually, if a group of believers has formed or functioned in the way an ekklesia would by definition, it was called a “para-church organization” by leaders of denominations and congregations. Campus Crusade for Christ was called “para-church” by every denomination I know about.

Even though Campus Crusade (“Cru”) was obsessed with the activities of discipleship, leadership training, evangelism, fellowship with other believers, Scripture memorization and “quiet time,” all of which are disciplines the people of Jesus should be practicing, they were a threat to congregations, most of whom were involved in very little of said activities, and offered little leadership to their members regarding the value of or direction on the practice of them. The threats included loss of revenue. Cru servants who were looking for investments from believers had to conform to the congregational demands that they inform their supporters that “the tithe goes to the local congregation, and the gift goes to the missionary.”

It thrilled me to learn that Cru's international work began a decade or more ago to launch congregations when they were successful at evangelism and discipleship in an area. They do a better job of the work of building on the Foundation (1 Corinthians 3:10-15) than the “church” does, most of the time.

Most organizations who have traditionally called themselves “ministries” rather than “churches” have been much more likely to resemble what ekklesia has as design and purpose. In the centuries before and after the birth of Jesus, an ekklesia could be temporary, or called together for one event, or a standing group having an on-going responsibility for leadership in a certain area or a certain function of government, such as voting, judging, or managing a project.

Some congregations have groups of people who operate as ekklesias. Generally, if the person or group of leaders who call together the ekklesia they are involved with leave a congregation, the ekklesia (probably called a “ministry”) leaves with them, either with some of its members leaving also, or the leaders call together a new ekklesia wherever they go.

The idea that there should be a congregation is usually obligatory - that’s the way the “church” grows. The idea that there should be a ministry is more connected to a certain need or a certain vision in a leader’s heart or mind. The latter is much more subject to the call of the King to certain people to do a certain thing, calling a certain group of other people to help them than the former. If you are not part of a congregation, you are a “lone ranger,” who is dangerous. The ekklesia model is much more fluid, and free to see a project end and move on to the next call. If a congregation finds an end to its call, it is considered a failure, not a success.

I am convinced that when Jesus observes His body in the earth, the groups of believers He sees as systemic or structural or operational do not resemble the outlines of congregations often, if ever. It is easy to believe that He sees the connections as real relationships in which believers trust each other, love each other, serve each other, and listen to each other. Like Paul’s description in Ephesians 4, joints are places where two parts come together and enable work to occur.

Jesus announced that He would build His ekklesia. He has been doing it without our cooperation most of the time.

*People become servants
rather than just church members*

Separating the truths related to salvation and obedience gives opportunity to the Holy Spirit to more easily call every believer into service. A clear presentation of the good news that all believers are called to effective citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven can help erase the false ideas that there is a clergy class of believers who do the spiritual work and that only the smart or talented or spiritual are important enough or valuable enough to be called to “the ministry.” Preaching the gospel of the Kingdom will inform all believers of the privileges and responsibilities that are related to their new identities.

Clergy and false priesthods replaced by ministry of all the Saints

If all the answers we need were written in the Bible, we would just make a religion of it and never have to ask the Holy Spirit anything. Being a Genius at creating fellowship and relationship, He did not do things that way. He left many mysteries and designed our circumstances so that we need to speak to and listen to Him frequently. For a couple of centuries after Jesus rose first from the dead and then from the earth, believers met in homes or businesses, apparently. Slim glimpses of their meetings include ideas like “let everyone be ready with a psalm, or a teaching or a revelation,” “let two or three prophets speak and let the others judge what is said,” “you can all prophesy,” “each one has received a gift, so minister it to one another,” and “the Spirit works all these things, distributing to each individual what He desires.”

In Ephesians 4, Paul wrote that Jesus gave the gifts of apostle, prophet, pastor, teacher and evangelist to the ekklesia for the equipping of the saints for the works of ministry. The leaders were not given to do ministry. The leaders were given to work together with their spiritual gifts for the purpose of equipping all of the believers for their individual and corporate services to each other and to the earth.

There is no such thing in the Kingdom of Heaven as “secular work” in contrast to a thing called “religious” or “spiritual” work. If there is something that should be called secular work, it would be a job that we picked, instead of the one Jesus ordained us to and gifted us for. Believers should be the leaders in every category of useful and fruitful work in the earth. Just as Joseph had the answers his government needed, and Daniel had the answers his government needed, and Esther had the answers her government needed, we should have all the answers our government and our education system and our news systems and our business and economy systems and any other system that needs godly leadership should have advising them so they can prosper as the Kingdom of Heaven.

The saints need to be providing that leadership, though, not the “church.” Every time the church has presumed to offer leadership as a government, the result has been something that looks like the Holy Roman Empire or the Spanish Inquisition - murderers of those who disagree with them, persecutors of those who submit to the Kingdom of

Heaven in stead of them. Individual believers all have important ministries, and each of them requires a spiritual gift to be possible.

The refusal of the leadership of the church to become involved in earthly government, the refusal of the leadership of the church to equip the saints for their works, and the refusal of the leadership of the church to abandon the system of priests and temples they were forced to surrender to at the hands of ungodly leadership like Constantine has kept almost all believers from fulfilling their destinies as servants of the King.

The abandonment of government and other leadership in the earth to unbelievers has caused the kind of government that has offered more babies in sacrifices to gods of convenience and to the industries of selling body parts of living babies and worse to prosper instead of a government that could bring righteousness and life and freedom into the earth in the name of Jesus. The creation of laws that bless sexual perversion and judicial injustice and scores of other anti-Christ practices would be difficult if all believers had been equipped to lead their communities and states and nations.

Ekklesia under the influence of the King of Righteousness is desperately needed in every arena of business and government and society.

7 mountains:

anti-Christ leadership displaced by believers

In 1975, Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, and Loren Cunningham, founder of Youth With a Mission (“YWAM”), both international ministries committed to evangelism and discipleship, individually received revelation on a day before they were planning to meet for lunch. They each felt that they should share the idea they had received with the other.

The idea was that there are seven “mind molders” (Cunningham) or “world kingdoms” (Bright) which create cultures in the earth, and which need to be taken under the influence of Jesus in order to bring the harvest of nations to Him.

In 2000, Lance Wallnau heard the story from Loren Cunningham. He felt that the Spirit told him that the seven influential forces were “mountains” that should be invaded by

believers who are under the influence of the Spirit of Jesus, so that they influence the cultures of the earth with the power of His Kingdom. Those mountains could be categorized as Religion, Family, Education, Government, Media / Arts, Science / Technology, and Business.

Some enemies of Jesus our King have been playing a long game against Him for decades. Karl Marx was aware from his elder relatives that a concept called “the Kingdom of Heaven” existed in the Bible. As a humanist, he imagined that it would be a better place without the King ruling it. His disciples, Josef Stalin, Mao Tse-Tung and Vladimir Lenin each murdered more people than Adolph Hitler in their quests to bring humans a better existence. With the hope of eventually overthrowing all governments but one in the earth, these “leaders” have been systematically pursuing a set of agendas that were spelled out in the 1960's by some of their American students. First calling themselves the “Weathermen,” then “Weather Underground Organization,” shortened to “Weather Underground, their list of plans for displacing the American government was:

- destroy capitalism
- use systemic racism and police racism as a weapon
- identify the victim classes
- organize the victim classes
- engage in international solidarity with the global movement
- attack and dethrone god

Clearly, these agendas have been slowly and deliberately followed, including destroying family values and replacing them in each of the “mountains” of influence with sexual perversions being normalized, systematically removing fathers from households by rewarding single-parent structures with income and resources, and making millions of households dependent on government resources so they can be managed as voters.

Believers are beginning to play a long game, now. With more believers realizing their calls to lead in what was formerly dismissed as work too lowly for clergy members to do, such as government, education, news and other media, science and technology, these “mountains” are being invaded, and another set of generations intentionally prepared for subsequent invasions. When the King’s people, filled with the King’s Spirit, and working with Him in the King’s agenda, are leading the places they have influence over,

the Kingdom is manifesting in the earth. Those who are born of Yahweh will be able to see it.

New heaven & new earth

In Matthew 24, when Jesus was asked about the “end of the age,” He answered with descriptions of tribulation, and told them that the one who endured to the end would be saved. Then He said that the gospel of the Kingdom would be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end would come. “The end,” was not clearly explained or defined in the narrative. He did mention the passing away of Heaven and earth, but did not directly connect the timing of their passing with “the end.” He simply contrasted their temporal nature with the eternal nature of His words.

In Revelation 21, the appearance of a new Heaven and a new earth is described after unbelievers are thrown into the lake of fire. It is easy to guess that scene could be the end of an age. Literally, then, when the good news of His Kingdom has been preached in all the world, and the end can come, “the end” may be a transition of ages. What we are responsible for preaching has locked into it the timing of the ages. No matter how many signs of the tribulation appear and move on in how many ages, then, the timing of the end may be in our hands. The implication, however, is that it should be on our lips.

We have not preached the gospel about salvation to all the world yet. We have only begun in recent years to take up the abandoned practice of preaching the Kingdom. If we play around in any fashion that resembles how pitifully we have preached salvation, we could perhaps keep Jesus at bay from returning for many more decades or even centuries.

In Matthew 28, Jesus gave what is popularly called, “the Great Commission.” The language of His instruction in verses 18 through 20 is very oriented towards a Kingdom agenda. Because He has been given *all authority*, He wants us to make disciples of *all the nations*, baptizing them and teaching them *to obey Him*.

Appendix A -

The Kingdom revealed from Genesis to Revelation

Genesis 1:26-28

God gave man dominion over all the earth.

This is God's authority over the earth exercised through humanity

Deuteronomy 17:14-20

God prophesied that Israel would want a king like the nations around them had - a man. God gave instructions regarding the king's responsibilities

1 Samuel 8:1-22

Israel called to Samuel to appoint a king over them like the nations around them God revealed to Samuel that He intended to be King over Israel, but they rejected His rule

1 Samuel 12:1-25

Israel repents of asking for a king other than Yahweh

Ezra 1:1-4 Isaiah 45:1-7

A picture of the Kingdom of God is revealed through Cyrus, king of Persia

Psalms 10:16

God is a King forever

Psalms 24:7

God is the King of Glory

Psalms 47:2,7

God is a great King over all the earth

Psalms 74:12

God is King and Savior

Psalms 95:3

God is a King over all gods

Jeremiah 10:7

God is a King over the nations

Daniel 4:17

God gives kingdoms to whom He desires / His watchers have authority

Hosea 13:9-11

God still wants to reign over Israel

Zechariah 14:8,9

In the future, God will reign in the earth as King

Matthew 2:2

When the magi came to find Jesus, they were not looking for a Savior,
but a King

Matthew 3:2

John preached the gospel of the Kingdom

Mark 1:14,15 Acts 1:3

Jesus preached the gospel of the Kingdom

Matthew 10:1-15

The Twelve preached the Kingdom

Luke 10:1-24

The Seventy preached the Kingdom

Acts 8:12

Philip preached the Kingdom

Acts 28:30,31

Paul preached the Kingdom

Hebrews 12:28

The writer to the Hebrews declared that we are receiving a Kingdom

James 2:5

James wrote that we are receiving a Kingdom

2 Peter 1:5-11

Peter wrote that His Kingdom is eternal

Revelation 17:14

The Lamb is the King of kings and Lord of lords

Appendix B -

The Kingdom in Parables

Matthew 6:25-34

Seek His Kingdom First

If you let God be your King you will find His provision

Matthew 13:11

Why Speak in Parables -

To reveal the mysteries of the Kingdom to those chosen to know

Matthew 13:3,18

Sower & the Seed (Mark & Luke don't mention the Kingdom here)

How to avoid being unproductive in the Kingdom

Matthew 13:24,37

Wheat & Tares

Being productive when enemies of the King are in the way

Fire - different natures

Matthew 13:31

Mustard Seed

Small becoming great

Matthew 13:33

Leaven

Small becoming great

Matthew 13:44

Hidden Treasure

Hidden value of the Kingdom is great

Matthew 13:45

Pearl of Great Price

Sought-after value of the Kingdom is great

Matthew 13:47

Dragnet

Everything will be harvested

Fire - different natures

Matthew 13:52

Scribe/Householder
Knowing the Law AND understanding the Kingdom
is twice as valuable

Matthew 18:1

Greatest in the Kingdom
Entering the Kingdom through humility

Matthew 18:23

Unforgiving Servant
Responsibility of doing business as the Master does
Prison & torture - same nature, wrong behavior

Matthew 19:12

Eunuchs in the Kingdom
Giving up all rights & desires to serve the King

Matthew 19:13

Children in the Kingdom
Character of Kingdom citizens

Matthew 19:23

Rich Men in the Kingdom
Failing to enter the Kingdom due to wealth

Matthew 20:1

Laborers
Kingdom work - Kingdom wages

Matthew 20:20

Authority in the Kingdom
Gaining authority in the Kingdom by facing baptisms

Matthew 21:28

Two sons in the Vineyard
Entering the Kingdom through obedience

Matthew 21:33

Landowner
Bearing fruit in the Kingdom or being removed from authority in it

Matthew 22:1

Marriage Feast
Clothed properly for the Kingdom
Outer Darkness - same nature, lack of preparation

Matthew 25:1

Bridegroom and the Ten Virgins

Wisdom produces responsible behavior

Outer Darkness - same nature, lack of preparation

Matthew 25:14

The Talents

Responsibility rewarded with authority

Outer Darkness - same nature, lack of responsibility

Matthew 25:31

Judgement Seat of the King

Serving Jesus without glory - inheriting the Kingdom

Fire - different nature

Mark 4:26

Seeds Grow like the Kingdom

God produces harvest

Mark 9:47

Entering the Kingdom with one eye

Sin and judgement

Luke 7:28

John is not of the Kingdom

Kingdom citizenship is greater

than anything that has come to the earth

Luke 10:1

The Seventy Preach the Kingdom

Miracles accompany preaching the Kingdom good news

Luke 11:2

Calling Forth His Kingdom

God's will being done = God's dominion / Kingdom

Luke 11:17

Casting out demons in the Kingdom

The Kingdom has come to the earth, evidenced by authority over evil

Luke 12:32

The Flock Receives the Kingdom

Finding our treasure in following the King

Luke 13:22

The Narrow Gate to the Kingdom

Intimacy with the King AND good works are needed
for entering the Kingdom

Outside weeping - same nature, lack of intimacy

Luke 14:15

Eating in the Kingdom

Refusing to obey the King's invitations

Left out of the Banquet - following non-Kingdom agendas

Luke 17:20

The Kingdom is even in the Midst of the Pharisees

Where the King is obeyed, there is the Kingdom,
even though not visible

Luke 18:28

Kingdom Rewards for Sacrifice

Things given for the sake of the Kingdom multiply back to the giver

Luke 19:11

The Ten Minas

Responsibility rewarded with authority

Death - refusing to submit to Jesus as King

Luke 21:29

The Fig Tree

The Kingdom is near His people

even when the earth seems to be out of His control

Appendix C -

Some Common Doctrinal Errors

The Kingdom is a time in the future

Preaching from John 3:3 that “seeing” or “entering” the Kingdom is “going to Heaven” is one example of failure to recognize the presence of the Kingdom in and around us. Some teachers declare that His Kingdom has not come until it is present without resistance, but in the first chapter of the Revelation, He described Himself as ruler over all the kings of the earth.

The Kingdom is The Millennium

Several major denominations only mention the Kingdom in their statements of beliefs with regard to the millennial reign of Jesus on the earth, and describe it only as a time of universal peace. Some do not mention it at all. Many people’s minds only frame the Kingdom in millennial terms, or in life after death.

Who rules with the King during the Millennium

Songs and statements of faith declare that all the saints will be ruling together during the millennium. Revelation 20:4-6 states pretty plainly that the first general resurrection from the dead happens when the believers who refuse to worship the beast or his image, and refuse to take his mark on their hands or foreheads are raised from the grave. They are the only people reigning with Jesus for the thousand years. The rest of the dead stay dead until they are raised after the thousand years are over. Then they are raised to be judged.

The co-rulers for the rest of eternity are referred to in Luke 19:11-27. The servants who are responsible stewards of what they have had entrusted to them in this life will become rulers in the next life.

The Kingdom is The United States

The myth that the United States is a “Christian nation” is easily debunked by reading the constitution:

This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the

Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby, any Thing in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the Contrary notwithstanding.

The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.

According to this law, no law can supercede the authority of the laws created by the government of the United States, and people of any religious persuasion can be part of the government, including witches or muslims or atheists. This does not change the fact that believers in positions of authority in the government of the United States can write laws that are under the authority of Jesus as a King. The declaration that the constitution of the nation is its supreme authority, however, excludes the conscious submission of the nation to Jesus as its King.

The Kingdom is The Church

The submission of individuals to the authority of Jesus, consciously or not, constitutes the realization of His Kingdom. Believers and unbelievers who do the immediate will of the King are manifesting His rule in the earth. Believers and unbelievers who refuse to do His will are outside His rule in the earth, and therefore are outside the current manifestation of His Kingdom. The Church is His family, the Kingdom is His nation. Jesus told Peter that we are not subjects of the Kingdom, but sons (Matthew 17:24-27). We must still take responsibility if we expect to take inheritance. The fact that our identity justifies inheritance is not sufficient to demand inheritance. We are sons, and joint heirs with Christ, if we suffer with Him (Romans 8:16&17).

The Kingdom is A Figure of Speech

Some theologians are so at loss regarding the meaning of the Kingdom that they simply declare that there is no Kingdom. It is simply a figure of speech that describes people doing things the way Jesus likes doing them. Everyone is saved, and everyone is in the Kingdom, and we just need to learn to get along with each other and take care of each other.

Entering The Kingdom is Getting Saved or Born of God

Entering the Kingdom is receiving the King as our leader. Obedience to His desires constitutes the presence of the Kingdom of Heaven. I became “in Christ” by being born again. I became “in the Kingdom” by obeying His commands, not by being saved from sin and death.

Jesus is building a Church

Jesus is building a ruling council by calling His people together to function as His ruling family in the earth.

Believers won't be Judged in the Last Day

Unable to attain clarity between the clear promise of unearned eternal life and the clear promise of loss related to wasting time and other resources, theologians have fallen into the mistake of believing either that believers won't be judged for the mistakes they make after being born of Yahweh, or that everyone will be judged as if the cross did not pay for their sin. The smoke only clears on these matters when it becomes possible to see two judgments in the Revelation of Jesus received by John. One is based on identity. The other is based on obedience to the King.

In Revelation 20, John saw everyone judged for their works. After that judgment, anyone whose name was not written in the Book of Life will be thrown into the lake of fire, where satan, the beast, the false prophet, death and the grave have been thrown. The one criterium for avoiding the lake of fire will be to have life imparted by Yahweh: being born of Him. Good works won't keep me out of the lake and bad ones won't get me thrown in. Evil works will be judged, though. Jesus described the judgments as ranging from being rewarded with authority to being in outer darkness.

Believers who sin go to hell

The other side of the mistaken belief that it doesn't matter what evil I pursue after being born of Yahweh, it won't affect my eternal life is the mistake that I could be born of Him and then be thrown in the lake of fire. If my name is written in the Book of Life, I will not be in the lake. If my life is wasted, though, my eternity will be spent farther from His glory than the believers who spent their days here in obedience. Even doing good works is not necessarily being obedient. If His instructions are tearing down evil things, and I am instead building good things, I am not being obedient. His Kingdom is based on obedience. Doing good works, but not being

close enough to His work for Him to know me will cause Him to judge my works as failures and evil.

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews stated in chapter 6 that if I become enlightened, taste the Heavenly gift, become a partaker of the Holy Spirit, taste the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then fall away, it will not be possible for my mind to be renewed again. I will not be able to repent - to have my mind changed again to be enabled to see the Kingdom and know righteousness. It would be close to being cursed like useless land, which has its weeds burned off in the winter.

Paul wrote to the congregations in Corinth (1 Corinthians 3:10-15) that each one of us is building something on the foundation which is Jesus. A judgment is coming to test our works. If what we have built is made of gold, silver, and valuable stones, it will pass through the fire of judgment and we will be rewarded. If instead, what we build is simply made of wood, hay and straw, the fire of judgment will destroy it and it will be lost. We will pass through the fire and be judged, too, but we will escape with our lives.

Appendix D -

The Edict of Milan

Touted by the church of Rome as “Constantine’s declaration that the Empire of Rome was Christian,” the Edict of Milan was merely an approval by two emperors that any religion was acceptable. Following are two different versions of the Edict translated into English.

As translated in The Ante-Nicene Fathers

edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Vol. 7, p. 320 (1886):

When we, Constantine and Licinius, emperors, had an interview at Milan, and conferred together with respect to the good and security of the commonweal, it seemed to us that, amongst those things that are profitable to mankind in general, the reverence paid to the Divinity merited our first and chief attention, and that it was proper that the Christians and all others should have liberty to follow that mode of religion which to each of them appeared best; so that that God, who is seated in heaven, might be benign and propitious to us, and to every one under our government. And therefore we judged it a salutary measure, and one highly consonant to right reason, that no man should be denied leave of attaching himself to the rites of the Christians, or to whatever other religion his mind directed him, that thus the supreme Divinity, to whose worship we freely devote ourselves, might continue to vouchsafe His favour and beneficence to us. And accordingly we give you to know that, without regard to any provisos in our former orders to you concerning the Christians, all who choose that religion are to be permitted, freely and absolutely, to remain in it, and not to be disturbed any ways, or molested. And we thought fit to be thus special in the things committed to your charge, that you might understand that the indulgence which we have granted in matters of religion to the Christians is ample and unconditional; and perceive at the same time that the open and free exercise of their respective religions is granted to all others, as well as to the Christians. For it befits the well-ordered state and the tranquillity of our times that each individual be allowed, according to his own choice, to worship the Divinity; and we mean not to derogate aught from the honour due to any religion or its votaries.

As translated in The Early Christian Persecutions

by Dana Carleton Munro (1897):

When I, Constantine Augustus, as well as I Licinius Augustus fortunately met near Mediolanum [Milan], and were considering everything that pertained to the public welfare and security, we thought —, among other things which we saw would be for the good of many, those regulations pertaining to the reverence of the Divinity ought certainly to be made first, so that we might grant to the Christians and others full authority to observe that religion which each preferred; whence any Divinity whatsoever in the seat of the heavens may be propitious and kindly disposed to us and all who are placed under our rule. And thus by this wholesome counsel and most upright provision we thought to arrange that no one whatsoever should be denied the opportunity to give his heart to the observance of the Christian religion, or of that religion which he should think best for himself, so that the Supreme Deity, to whose worship we freely yield our hearts, may show in all things His usual favor and benevolence. Therefore, your Worship should know that it has pleased us to remove all conditions whatsoever, which were in the rescripts formerly given to you officially, concerning the Christians and now any one of these who wishes to observe Christian religion may do so freely and openly, without molestation. We thought it fit to commend these things most fully to your care that you may know that we have given to those Christians free and unrestricted opportunity of religious worship. When you see that this has been granted to them by us, your Worship will know that we have also conceded to other religions the right of open and free observance of their worship for the sake of the peace of our times, that each one may have the free opportunity to worship as he pleases; this regulation is made we that we may not seem to detract from any dignity or any religion.

Appendix E -

WHAT IS IT LIKE BEING DEAD?

Deuteronomy 31:16

Moses was told that he would "sleep" (some translations, "rest") with his ancestors.

1 Samuel 28:7-15

Samuel was apparently "disturbed" from rest by Saul, by a witch who called him "up" from the grave ("sheol").

Job 3:13

Job said that if he had died at birth, he would have gone to sleep.

Job 3:17-19

All of the dead seem to be asleep together.

Psalms 115:17

The dead do not praise God (there had been no general resurrection when this was written, and Revelation 20:5 says that the first resurrection is not until the beginning of the Millennium; Revelation 7 is a description of the dead having been raised to praise.)

Daniel 12:2

The dead who "sleep in the dust of the earth" will "awaken" - some to eternal death, some to eternal life (e.g. good and bad seem to be asleep together until the judgement).

John 11:1-11

Jesus said to His disciples that Lazarus was "sleeping," and that He was going to "awaken" Him. He made it clear then that Lazarus was truly dead, since the disciples could not understand death and sleep being equal.

Acts 7:60

Stephen "fell asleep".

Acts 13:36

David "fell asleep".

1 Corinthians 15:12-20

Dying was spoken of as "falling asleep".

1 Corinthians 15:50-51

Those who do not die before the second appearance of Jesus are not going to "sleep," but be transformed.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-15

Christians who die are "asleep in Christ."

WHERE ARE YOU AFTER YOU DIE?

1 Samuel 28:7-15

Samuel was brought "up" from the dead.

Luke 23:43

Jesus told the repentant thief on the cross beside Him that he would be with Him in Paradise that day, but:

John 20:17

When Jesus was talking to Mary on the day of His resurrection from the dead, (after having been in Paradise with the thief on the day of His crucifixion). He told her that He had "not yet ascended" to where His Father was. Paradise is not defined in Scripture, but this makes it clear that it is not a place to which one is "raised."

DON'T YOU GO STRAIGHT TO HEAVEN IF YOU ARE SAVED?

Psalms 148:4

There is more than one level of Heaven.

Paradise, (like "Sheol" in the Old Testament, and "the Grave" or "Hades" in the New Testament) could very well be a level of Heaven, but cannot be the place where the throne of Jesus is located, because Jesus was in the "lower places of the earth" (Ephesians 4:9,10) until He was "raised" from the dead.

Deuteronomy 10:14

There is a "highest Heaven," also called the "Heaven of Heavens."

1 Kings 8:27

The "Heaven of Heavens" is mentioned as a place that is just a place in the Heavens.

2 Corinthians 12:2

Paul knew someone who had been to the "third Heaven."

*DOESN'T PAUL SAY THAT IF HE DIED,
HE WOULD BE WITH CHRIST?*

Psalms 139:8

Even if I make my bed in sheol, God is there with me, so no matter where I go when I die, I am with God! (Note: KJV mistranslated sheol here as "hell" for some reason)

2 Corinthians 5:8

To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, but:

Philippians 1:21-23

Being alive now is being present with Christ, because:

1 Thessalonians 5:10

Whether I am dead or alive, "awake" or "asleep," I am with Christ.