

Church Planting Institute
Your Kingdom Come



Church Planting Institute

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Your Kingdom Come!

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INTRODUCTION:

The Good News of the Gospel promises much more than a “mansion in the sky after we die.” It is the glorious Good News that Jesus Christ is returning to earth to cast out Satan’s principalities and rule over the nations as King of kings and Lord of lords. It is also the prediction that His redeemed ones will reign together with Him. (Rev 11:15)

The Kingdom of God is the whole universal realm over which Almighty God rules by sovereign creative right! The premise of this booklet is the concept that in the not too far distant future, God will establish His physical presence and government on planet earth. He will rule this earth through the visible, personal presence of Jesus Christ as King over all kings and Lord over all lords. (Rev 11:15)

This represents a distinctly different view to that which is commonly held by many Christians, that our eternal destination is “in Heaven” millions of light years away from this earthly scene. This view has usually included a grandiose idea that each believer will occupy a heavenly “mansion” to spend eternity in semi-idle bliss, whilst wearing a golden crown. Such an existence lends an ethereal (unrelated to practical things and real life) air, as though heaven is a figment of an over active imagination and completely divorced from reality. The true reality is that heaven will come down to earth (Rev 21:1,2) and the saints of God will rule with Christ over the earth and those nations and people that remain here. (Rev 11:15)

What Is The Time?

I personally believe that we are now living in a period of time, referred to in the Bible as “the last days” somewhat prior to the most sensational event in human history. I refer to the imminent transition from all human government to direct Divine Rule. The events presently transpiring on earth, especially those relating to Jerusalem, will prepare the way for a heavenly invasion of earth and the conquest of humanism in all its forms. God is about to burst into this scene, wielding a rod of iron justice with which to order the events and lives of mankind. It is for this event that every Christian needs to urgently prepare themselves. We all need to reiterate and answer the question posed by the Apostle Peter in his second letter.

What kind of persons should we be ?

2 Peter 3:11-14

11. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved,

What manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

12. looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

13. Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

14. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; NKJV

Fasten Your Seatbelts, Turbulence Ahead!

In our air travels around the world, we have frequently heard the captain announce, “Please take your seats and fasten your seatbelts, we are about to encounter some turbulence.” As we enter the 21st century, there is a wide spread feeling of insecurity about the future of our planet and of the human race. There is a strong sense that a bumpy period of severe turbulence lies

immediately ahead for mankind. Indications that all is not well are clearly in evidence in every area of our world. From a human view-point the prognosis for mankind and his future is definitely not good. At a time when wealth, education and technology abound, the state of world affairs should be brighter and more promising than ever, but the reverse is true. Instead of using these powerful tools for the betterment of life, they are being employed to produce weapons of mass destruction more than capable of destroying the whole human race. Evidence that something is inherently and fundamentally wrong with our world reaches us from every part of the globe. Wherever we look there are pictures of gloom and despair. Whether we focus our attention on the famine ridden, AIDS plagued African continent, where millions are living and dying in a nightmare of despair, or in the Middle East, where the cauldron of potential nuclear conflagration is kept constantly close to boiling point, the indications are the same. Something is radically wrong in our world and unless it is soon rectified we face a frightening tragedy beyond human imagination. Whatever aspect of international affairs we consider, the scenario is the same. Mankind is set on a course of certain destruction. With all his inherent potential for good, something has gone horribly wrong and this world is facing fearful times of suffering, heartache and death. A twilight period has settled upon our world.

In international economics it is obvious to even the least informed, that the world economic system is in bad shape and heading for a total collapse. The powerful nations of the Western World, who virtually control the world's wealth, are obviously in serious crisis mode. Economic recession has suddenly hit the world with a vengeance. Unemployment figures are reaching record highs in England, Australia, U.S.A. and other powerful countries. Thousands of businesses small and large, are being forced into bankruptcy. Some of the largest, most powerful international companies are dismissing thousands of their employees. Thousands of families are losing their homes, and the spectre of poverty hangs over millions of lives even in the affluent Western World.

In the so-called Third World Nations, the scene is even more desperate. A combination of drought, economic inadequacy, political mismanagement, and political corruption have brought devastation and tragedy in their wake. To people who were promised independence with self-government, freedom and prosperity, the dream has become a nightmare. Instead of inheriting the Utopia that their political masters promised, they have found themselves the victims of dictator ridden empires of chaos, inflation, hunger and despair. Although some governments and agencies are making modest efforts to alleviate the tragedies, the task is so enormous and so complicated that the situation defies human solution. Despite the good intention and effort, millions of innocent people continue to face the fearful prospect of starvation, disease and death. Millions more face imprisonment, torture, humiliation and death at the hands of their cruel political masters.

International terrorism is a further frightening feature of our times that is placing millions of lives in jeopardy. Mindless, fanatical terrorists, using kidnapping, imprisonments, torture and bombings bring fear to millions unfortunate enough to become their targets. There appears to be no end or relief in sight to such mindless mayhem. In fact the indications are clear that this terrifying fanaticism will increase alarmingly in the present unsettled climate.

The collapse of the USSR that initially promised a new era of world peace, has disintegrated into factional fighting and ethnic turmoil that presently threatens peace in Eastern Europe and will soon spread south into the already complicated Middle Eastern area.

Muslim dominated countries are arming themselves with huge amounts of sophisticated modern weaponry and preparing for what they see as their ultimate

destiny, to wage a huge war that would annihilate Israel and restore the "Holy Land" to Islamic rule.

Their agenda is totally different to anything the Western World would understand. Their mind is set on a different purpose and they do not care how they attain it. Any one of these scenarios could bring disaster of unprecedented proportion. Combinations of them are capable of changing the face of human history to an unrecognisable degree.

Humanly speaking, there appears to be no prospect of a solution. Every form of human government, whether Capitalist, Communist, Dictatorships, Totalitarian or numerous other varied forms, have failed dismally. The dearth of human leadership with the capability of leading the nations out of their dilemma is clear for all to see. The stage is inevitably being set for supernatural intervention.

This vacuum will be filled initially by an internationally recognised personality that the Bible calls the **Anti-Christ**. After a promising initial period that will cause the nations to proclaim "Peace, Peace," the scene will suddenly degenerate to something far worse than before. His short reign will climax with a huge military build up against the nation of Israel. When all seems lost for this tiny embattled nation, the Lord God will come to fight on their behalf, overthrowing the combined military strength of the nations that come against them and sanctifying His Name throughout the whole world.

Following this spectacular intervention, (recorded in Zechariah 12) Messiah Jesus will be enthroned in Jerusalem and assume His prophetic destiny as **Ruler over all the earth and all the nations on it**. He will rule the world with righteousness, justice, truth and love. His benign dictatorship will provide the only style of leadership that will be capable of sustaining effective, altruistic rule over the nations. He will usher in the ultimate Utopia. A world as God has always intended it should be, in which the nations will live in peace and prosperity. The threat of poverty, hunger, war and human suffering will be ended forever. This glorious new world under the reign of Jesus Christ, will be an everlasting reign. Nothing will ever overthrow or destroy it. Satan's power will be utterly broken and humanity will finally be eternally free from his influence and dominion. This wonderful world of tomorrow is known as **THE KINGDOM OF GOD**, and it is this glorious theme that we will briefly examine in this article.

Chapter One

WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

Although the subject of the Kingdom of God is the basic underlying theme of the whole Bible there are many Christians who have little real knowledge or understanding of this important subject.

Many people have vague, subjective ideas about the Kingdom, others have no concept at all. Relatively few are truly anticipating the manifestation of it in the near future. The prayer that accompanies this booklet is that it will awaken many to the soon coming reality of the earthly manifestation of God's Sovereign Reign.

The underlying theme of the Kingdom of God is so implicit in the whole Bible that it is difficult to properly understand the Bible without a keen awareness of the subject. It is initially inferred in Genesis through the announcement that Almighty God Jehovah existed in eternity before the universe was ever formed. Further that He is the sole architect and creator of the universe and is therefore the supreme master or king of the entire universe. The vast universe is initially therefore the Kingdom of Jehovah God.

Human history commences within the universe on planet earth, the main focus point of the Bible. The tragic story of how the custodianship of the earth was hi-jacked from humanity by Satan, (Genesis 3) is followed by a promise and prediction that God would send a redeemer/deliverer to rescue planet earth from Satan's clutches and to restore God's direct rule through the mediatorship of His Messiah.

Gen 3:15

15And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head,

And you shall bruise His heel."

NKJV

When Jesus commenced His earthly ministry He did so with the announcement that "The Kingdom of God was (once again) near. (Mark 1:14,15) He also predicted that "in the last days" He would personally return to earth to establish God's government over mankind. (John 14:3)

I believe that we are presently living in the period of time of which Jesus predicted, ***"This Gospel of the Kingdom, shall be preached in all the world, for a witness to all nations."*** (Matt 24:14). It is therefore essential that we have a clear concept of what is meant by "The Kingdom of God." Without this we can never understand the significance of 'proclaiming the Kingdom to all nations.' You and I are part of the redeemed generation that are responsible to tell all nations on earth that

The King Is Arriving Soon!

As I look around the world I see many events that proclaim the imminence of God's Kingdom appearance. They appear like huge neon signs constantly beaming out the message, "Repent, the Kingdom of Almighty God is at hand."

A classic definition of kingdom is:-

**“The total realm or domain over which a supreme and ultimate authority reigns.”
Therefore the widest definition of the Kingdom of God is “The whole created universe over which Jehovah God, its creator and sustainer rules.”**

The Holy Bible, the most authentic and validated record of universal history, clearly states that in the very beginning, before any part of the vast universe existed, only Jehovah God lived. He existed outside of and beyond time in eternity. He was totally sufficient and complete in Himself, yet with a great plan to create the gigantic universe and every living thing within it. As its supreme architect and creator and the only original living being, He has total authority over the universe including planet earth, a comparatively tiny orb within it. The biblical concept of a 'Kingdom', is vastly different from the idea most people have in this modern age. Our understanding of the word has come mainly from our observations of so-called kingdoms in our modern context. This view suggests that a Kingdom is a nation, or group of people, who have a King as their titular head. Most examples of this in our world are of nations which are actually democracies. They are really ruled by governments elected by the will of the people. In such situations, the king or monarch, has largely become a figurehead. His actual authority has been greatly reduced until he is ruler in name only. The biblical view however, is an ancient one in which the authority of the King is total and absolute. His word is final. Life and death are in the hand of the King. He rules and His word is law. His power and authority are awesome and final. God is represented as such an awesome King. *"For the Lord most high is awesome, He is a great King over all the earth."* (Psa. 47:2)

In the biblical view, the word "Kingdom" refers firstly to the absolute, indisputable right to rule. God is continually represented in the Bible as just such a King.

God Is The King Of The Universe

The following are just a few of the many scriptures that show God to be a great king, a mighty ruler, with awesome authority and dominion. The scope of His rule encompasses the entire universe for all eternity. The biblical meaning of kingdom refers initially to this right of rule.

"The Lord is King, for ever and ever." (Psa 10:16) God is the eternal King!

"Who is this King of Glory? The Lord, strong and mighty." (Psa. 24:8)

"The Lord Sitteth (reigneth), King for ever." (Psa. 47:8)

"Thou art my King, O God." (Psa. 44:4)

"For the Lord most high is Awesome, He is a great King over all the earth." (Psa.47:2)

"For God is the King of all the Earth." (Psa. 47:7)

"Zion, the city of the great King." (Psa. 48:2)

"O Lord of hosts, my King and my God." (Psa. 84:3b)

"For the Lord is a great God, and a great King over all gods." (Psa. 95:3)

"Who shall not fear thee, O King of nations." (Jer. 10:7)

"But the Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting King."
(Jer 10:10)

God is the awesome ruler of the universe.
He created it by the power of His Word.
He literally spoke the universe into existence.
He ordained the paths of the sun, moon and stars.
He commanded them into their specific orbits.

He has the right to do this for He created them all.

The vast and complex universe in which our tiny planet earth has its existence, was originally conceived in the mind of God. It was planned and designed by His genius. It came into being when He spoke and commanded it to be. It continues to exist and function perfectly, **"by the Word of his power"**(Heb. 1:3)

"And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist."(Col. 1:17) Not only did He create all things, but those **"all things"** only continue to exist by the power of His Word also. The invisible cohesive power that holds the entire universe together beginning with the smallest microcosm to the greatest macrocosm, is the power of Almighty God.

God Rules By His Word Of Power

Col 1:17

17. He was before all else began and it is his power that holds everything together.

TLB

His Word holds all things together.

Scientists call this, the "Law of Cohesion."

The Bible says, "By HIM, all things consist."

Rotherham's translation says, ***"and they all, in Him, hold together."***

The whole universe is under the rule of God, because,

He created it and continues to hold it together by His Word of authority.

He rules the worlds, by the power of His Word. God is the highest authority.

He is THE King, above all kings.

He is THE Lord, above all lords.

He is the ultimate authority. There is none greater.

All mankind are as grass before His presence.

The whole universe is His domain.

God's Supreme Authority

The English word, 'authority', which means the power or right to enforce obedience, signifies, "authors-rights." The author or creator of something has complete rights and absolute authority over the thing he has created. For example, an author of a book, has complete rights over what he has written. He has created it. It belongs to him. He has the legal right to do with it whatever he wishes. God is the Author, the Architect and Creator of the universe. Therefore He has absolute authority over it. He brought it into being. He has absolute right to rule it, or do with it whatever He pleases.

When the Bible refers to the Kingdom of God, it is usually referring to God's sovereign right to reign, rather than the realm over which He exercises that rule. However, the Kingdom also includes the realm over which God reigns. It also includes a people, under the rule of a King. In the widest terms then, the Kingdom of God is the whole area over which God has rule and dominion. He rules the heavens. The sun, moon, stars, planets and all heavenly bodies, are subject to His rule. His throne is established in the heavens, from which seat of authority, He exercises absolute rule over the whole universe.

"The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom ruleth over all." (Psalm 103:19)

"But our God is in the heavens, He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased." (Psa 115:3)

This planet Earth is but a tiny part of a vast universe. It would be a very insignificant planet indeed were it not for the fact that it is the only planet upon which life is known to exist. God made this planet to mankind. *"The heavens are the Lord's, but the earth hath He given to the children of men."* (Psa. 115:16)

The Reason For Man's Existence

We begin to understand the real reason for man's existence when we first understand that God rules the universe. God is a ruler, so when we read that He created man 'after His own image and likeness', we understand that He also created man as a ruler. *"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion..." "And God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."* (Gen. 1:26-28)

The Hebrew word '*radah*' is translated 'dominion' in both these verses. It means 'to tread down', 'to rule over', 'to reign'. Its usage in the Bible in this particular form is very rare. One of the few other cases where it is employed is in the Psalm 72:8,11 where it is used to speak prophetically of Messiah and His reign. The Psalmist says, *"He shall have dominion (radah) from sea to sea, and from the river, unto the ends of the earth....Yea all kings shall fall down before Him, all nations shall serve Him."*

It is significant that the word that is used to describe Messiah's rule over the earth, is also used to describe the authority originally bestowed on Adam. Adam was created to rule over the earth. He was to accomplish this with God's blessing, through the authority delegated to him by God (Gen. 1:26).

God Is The Great Ruler

He is the ultimate authority over all the universe. Thus, Adam, created in God's image and after His likeness, was also designed to be a ruler. Christ is 'the express image' of the Father (Heb. 1:3). Jesus told Philip, *"He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father also."* (John 14:7,9)

Since Adam was made 'in the image of God' it follows that we can understand something of what Adam was like, if we compare him with the 'second Adam' - Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:45). Adam's dominion was "Over the fish of the sea, The birds of the air, over the animals, AND OVER ALL THE EARTH, over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." "God also gave him every herb bearing seed, every tree, and the fruit they bore, every beast, every fowl, every green herb." (Gen. 1:26-30).

In Psalm 8:5 we are told that Adam's position of authority was so great, that he was next to God in order of authority. David says of man, *"For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels."* The translation 'angels' is an unfortunate one for the word so translated is 'Elohim' which is generally translated "God." E.g Deut. 6:4 reads, *"The Lord, our God, (Elohim) is one Lord."*

David is actually saying of man, God made man a little lower than Himself. He was made second in authority to God. He was actually higher in rank and authority than the angels. This is why God appointed man to be ruler of earth. *"Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet."* (Psa. 8:6)

The 'all things' included this earth, and everything upon it. His rank and authority made him second only to God. He was delegated to rule over earth and everything upon it. It was only

after the tragic fall in Eden, that Adam was demoted, and became *"lower than the angels."* (Heb. 2:7) This lower station is only to be temporary. In order to redeem mankind from this enforced humiliation, Christ Himself became lower than the angels, for the suffering of death. (Heb. 2:9) Angels are immortal. Christ made Himself lower than the angels in order that He might die. Through His death He defeated Satan, delivered mankind from his tyranny, and restored him to the place that once he held in the Father's favour. This was gloriously accomplished when Christ rose from the dead and ascended to the Father. Paul prays *"that the eyes of our understanding might be opened that we might know what is the exceeding greatness of God's power to us who believe, according to the working of God's mighty power."* (Eph.1:17-19)

He speaks of the exaltation of Christ in this way. - God raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies. Far above all principality, power and might. Above dominions, and every name that is named, in this world and that which is to come. He put all things 'under His feet' - in subjection to Him. He has made Him to be the Head over all things. (Eph.1:17-23)

This glorious truth is made even more wonderful for the believers in the light of what Paul further tells us in Eph.2:5,6. *God has made us alive together with Christ. He has raised us up (into the heavenlies) together with Christ. He has made us sit together with Christ in the heavenlies. Since Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father, the place of authority and power, we are also seated there with Him, in Christ! Christ is no longer 'lower than the angels'. He took that place in order that He might die. Now God has raised Him from the dead, and He is no longer subject to death. "I am He that liveth, and was dead, and behold I AM ALIVE FOREVER MORE. AMEN."* (Rev.1:18)

<p>Because we are 'in Christ' God has raised us up as well. We are no longer 'lower than the angels'. God has restored us in Christ to our former place of authority. The last Adam (Christ) has restored to us all that the first Adam lost.</p>

We have seen that earth is part of God's eternal universal Kingdom. We have also seen that God created Adam in order that he might rule over the earth under God's authority. As such, the earth, and everything upon it, was under his rule. Now we begin to see the enormity of Adam's transgression. It was not merely that they ate a piece of forbidden fruit. Nor was it a simple matter of disobedience. It was the sin of rebellion against God's rule. Disobedience of the clear command of God. The overthrow of God's government on earth. It was an act of HIGH TREASON against the King of the universe.

Satan usurps the kingdom

Not only did Adam and Eve forfeit the glorious and idyllic life that God had given them, they mortgaged the Kingdom to Satan. By allowing themselves to be seduced by him, they surrendered to his rule. They took themselves and all humanity, out from under the covering of God's rule, and placed themselves under the rule of Satan, who became the *"god of this world."* (2 Cor.4:4)

Those things that God had delivered to Adam to rule over, were now under the control of Satan. When Satan defeated Adam, he took from him his title 'god of this world'. Jesus recognised the legal validity of what had transpired. When He was tested by Satan in the wilderness, (Matt.4:1-11) the devil offered Christ, 'all the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them'. Jesus did not refute his right to do this. He did not say "those kingdoms are not yours to give."

The answer Jesus gave shows His respect for the legal right of Satan to offer those kingdoms, since he was now god of this world. (2 Cor.4:4; Jn.8:44; 12:31; 14:30; Eph.2:13; 1 Jn 5:19) Jesus also knew that the kingdoms could not be regained in this manner. He knew that Satan

would have to be defeated. There was only one way this could be done and it involved the death of a righteous man. None of Adam's offspring were thus qualified. There was only one such man, Christ, the Son of God and Son of man.

In Adam, all die

Through Adam's transgression, all mankind were made sinners and subject to death. God's great problem was to provide salvation and restoration for mankind without condoning Adam's sin. Justice had passed sentence on Adam. It was the death sentence, and all mankind was under it.

"By one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom.5:12).

There was only one way this problem could be solved. It would have to be by substitution. A sinless man would have to suffer the penalty of sin. The only one who could qualify to do this was Christ. The substitute must be a man. ***"For since BYMAN came death, BYMAN came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive."*** (Rom.15:21,22)

He must also be sinless. Sinful man could never put away sin. ***"And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins, who knew no sin."*** (1 Jn.3:5) ***"For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."*** (2 Cor 5:21) The result was Jesus.

The eternal Son of God, became the sinless Son of man, that the sinful sons of men might become the beloved sons of God.

No other being could have accomplished this. No angel could have done it. No man could have done it. Only the God-man, Christ Jesus could fit the role. The death of Christ has a unique place in the Christian faith, which distinguishes Christianity from the many religions of this world. Christianity is the only faith that has the death and resurrection of its founder at the heart of its belief.

Christ The King

All the Biblical prophecies concerning the Messiah have in view his kingly office.

He was born as a king

Matt 2:1-2

2:1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 2 and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." NIV

He entered the world as a king

Luke 1:32-33

32. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,

33. and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

NIV

He was rejected as a king (Mark 15:12-13; Luke 19:14).

John 1:11

11. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. NIV

John 19:1-3

19:1. Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. 2The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe 3and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they struck him in the face.

He died as a king

Matt 27:35-38

35. When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

36. And sitting down, they kept watch over him there.

37. Above his head they placed the written charge against him: ***THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS*** NIV

He is coming again as the king

(Rev 19:16)

Christ will in the future occupy David's throne as David's heir (2 Sam 7:16; Psa 89:20-29; Isa 11:1; Jer 33:19-21)

Christ is never called "King of the church," although the term King is often used in the worship of Christ in the church. (1 Tim 1:17). He is "King of the Jews" (Matt 2:2) and "head over all things to the church" (Eph 1:22-23). At His second coming Christ will set up the Davidic kingdom and reign as King-Priest (Zech 6:11-13). His millennial reign will be mediatorial in the sense that God will reign through Christ. The kingdom will continue until all enemies, angelic and human, will be put down (1 Cor 15:25-28). However, Christ's kingly reign is eternal (2 Sam 7:16; Ps 89:36-37; Isa 9:6-7) inasmuch as Christ goes on reigning eternally by the same authority as the Father (1 Cor 15:28).

Israel's king was meant to be responsible to God alone. This king was God's servant and only the earthly representative of Jehovah who was Israel's true king. In that office he was expected to know and perform the Law of God (Deut 17:18-20). He was to be a proclaimer and teacher of the law and one who judged wisely and righteously (1 Kings 3:28; 2 Chron 17:7).

David was clearly God's choice to be king. (1 Sam 16:7,12-13). The hereditary kingship, therefore, began with him; from whom would descend Jesus Christ, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" (Rev 5:5). In the light of the Messiah's descent from David, the meaning of God's covenant with David becomes clear: "I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (2 Sam 7:13; also Ps 2; 110; Isa 11:1-4).

The Bible uses the title king not only of human rulers, but also of God as the Supreme Ruler of the universe (Ps 47:2,7; Matt 5:35). As its Creator it is His right to rule the universe. Only by His authority do earthly kings reign (Deut 10:17; Dan 4:17).

Christ, The Overcoming Victor

The whole life of Christ was a continual victory. His life was a victory over temptation and sin. His healing miracles were victories over sickness and disease. Every time He cast out demons it was a victory for the Kingdom of God. But His greatest victory was accomplished attained through His death and resurrection. ***"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil."*** (Heb.2:14) ***"And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them."*** (Col.2:15) Jesus inflicted a tremendous defeat on Satan at Calvary. He dealt him a mortal wound from which he would never recover. Another rendering of Col.2:15 says, ***"He disarmed the rulers and authorities."*** He defeated Satan at the Cross. Just as Satan had taken the title

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'god of this world' from Adam, Christ was able to regain that title. Satan WAS the god of this world, until his defeat at Calvary. In that great battle he lost his title. Jesus regained His legal right to the headship of this part of God's Kingdom. But He does not want to hold it for Himself. He wants to confer it again on mankind, as God originally purposed. He is preparing to do this now. He is establishing His Kingdom and rule of God amongst men. The redeemed creation are in training for the time when, once more, they will rule the earth in God's Name.

Chapter Two

ISRAEL -A THEOCRACY

The reason why so much of the Bible contains the detailed affairs of ancient Israel is not simply because the Bible is a profound history book. Rather because it is a remarkable book of prophecy.

Although great portions of the Bible are filled with the ancient national history of Israel, approximately one quarter of the Bible is actually prophetic, much of it dealing with the future of Israel. This is because the kingdom of God over Israel prophetically epitomises the coming Kingdom of God over the earth.

The kingdom of Israel was a shadow of a much greater kingdom to come, i.e. the kingdom of God. The national government of Israel under Jehovah God was intended to foreshadow the great prophetic kingdom yet to be manifested in the last days under God's Messiah. Thus the earthly kingdom of Jehovah's sovereignty over Israel, through a king of His choice, became a visible prophetic representation of His ultimate rule over all the nations.

The Hebrew word for king is melekh; "to be king." The word is apparently derived from the word mlkh which means "to possess," or "to reign," inasmuch as the possessor is also "lord" and "ruler". Among the Israelites the title king was first applied to the supreme head of the nation from about 1020-587 B.C.

Israel's Theocracy

A theocracy describes, "government by God directly, or indirectly through a Divinely appointed mediator/ruler." This was always God's intention for His covenant people Israel. It has always been recognized that Israel was a unique community. From the beginning of its existence as a nation it bore the characteristics of a religious and moral community, a theocratic commonwealth, having Jehovah God Himself as the head and ruler. It was never the intention of Jehovah to leave His people as sheep without a shepherd, but to set over them a man who should lead them. (Num 27:16-17) He therefore gave them Moses and Joshua and afterward judges from Othniel to Samuel. However, knowing that Israel would long for a king, God gave a promise to the patriarchs that "kings shall come forth from you" (Gen 17:6,16; 35:11); this promise was renewed by Moses (Deut 28:36), along with a law given relating to the king (17:14-20), whereby the earthly kingdom was incorporated in the theocracy. Israel's true theocracy was initiated under David.

David And His Kingdom, -A Foreshadowing Of Christ

It may be difficult to see King David as a true type of Christ, primarily because of his heinous sin involving Bathsheba and Uriah. However, his life and kingdom in many ways, do provide a foreshadowing of the Messianic Kingdom to come.

A type signifies a precisely correct impression as of something that has been cast in a mould. It accurately resembles that mould. In contrast a shadow implies an imprecise, less accurate picture.

Type

Rom 6:17-18

17. *But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form (Gk: tupos) of teaching to which you were entrusted. NIV*

A “type” (Greek: tupos = a die or mould making a direct copy or imprint) signifies a person or thing that prefigures another person or thing. In the scripture above, the implication is that a person is definitively formed in the shape of the teaching they imbibe. Therefore effective teaching on Christ-likeness, under the influence of the Spirit of Christ, will produce Christ-like believers.

Shadow

A shadow represents an imprecise impression or shape of the subject. E.g.

Col 2:16-17

16. *So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 17which are a shadow(Gk: skia) of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.*

NKJV

David’s Prophetic Connection To Christ

There are many interesting parallels between King David and Christ. Many points at which their lives coincide.

This suggestion is clearly made in,

Jer 23:5-6

5. *The days are coming, declares the LORD, **when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.***

6. *In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.*

NIV

Born In Bethlehem

1 Sam 17:12-15

12. *Now David was the son of an Ephrathite named Jesse, who was from Bethlehem in Judah. Jesse had eight sons, and in Saul's time he was old and well advanced in years.*

13. *Jesse's three oldest sons had followed Saul to the war: The firstborn was Eliab; the second, Abinadab; and the third, Shammah.*

14. *David was the youngest. The three oldest followed Saul,*

15. *but David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's sheep at Bethlehem.*

Divinely Chosen As King

1 Chron 28:4

4. Yet the LORD, the God of Israel, chose me from my whole family to be king over Israel forever. He chose Judah as leader, and from the house of Judah he chose my family, and from my father's sons he was pleased to make me king over all Israel.

NIV

A Shepherd/King

Many of God's greatest leaders were shepherds by background and experience. There are aspects intrinsic in the character of a good shepherd that are also essential to their functioning as a leader or king of God's people. David's role and experience as a shepherd in his earlier life was obviously important to his rule as Israel's king. E.g.

2 Sam 7:7-9

8. Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: ***"I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel.***

9. And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and have made you a great name, like the name of the great men who are on the earth. NKJV

A Period Of Preparation

Following his initial anointing in the house of his father, David returned to "minding the sheep." There followed a further period of time when David, whilst caring for his father's sheep, learned many lessons that helped prepare him to reign over Israel.

Anointed As God's Chosen King

God's anointing pertained to prophets, priests and kings to signify God's ownership of them. This was a kingly anointing. David was a King-Priest "after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb 7:17). David was actually anointed three times.

1. As a young man in his father's house

1 Sam 16:1

16:1 The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king." NIV

1 Sam 16:13

13. So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power. Samuel then went to Ramah.

NIV

2. Over Judah.

2 Sam 2:7

7. Now then, be strong and brave, for Saul your master is dead, and the house of Judah has ***anointed me king over them.***"

NIV

3. Over Israel.

2 Sam 5:1-3

5:1. All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "We are your own flesh and blood. 2. In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the LORD said to you, 'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.'"

3. When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a compact with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel.
NIV

In a similar manner, Christ carried three anointings of Prophet, Priest and King.

A Shared Humility

2 Sam 7:18-19

18. Then King David went in and sat before the LORD, and he said:

"Who am I, O Sovereign LORD, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?"

19. And as if this were not enough in your sight, O Sovereign LORD, you have also spoken about the future of the house of your servant. Is this your usual way of dealing with man, O Sovereign LORD?

NIV

Phil 2:8

8. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death -even death on a cross!

NIV

A Period Of Rejection

After his initial anointing, David experienced a very painful period of rejection when he was hunted like an animal and his life was in constant danger. During this time he often lived in caves and other places of refuge. During the period many important lessons were learned that evidently assisted him in his future role as Israel's king

Christ also was at certain times, an object of rejection.

Isa 53:3

3. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.

Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

NIV

A Great King

The history of David's life as king of Israel proved to be the highlight of their entire existence as a nation.

2 Sam 5:1-5

5:1. All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "We are your own flesh and blood. 2In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the LORD said to you, 'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.'"

3. When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a compact with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel.

4. David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years. 5In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.

NIV

A Glorious Kingdom

The reign of King David over Israel is still recognised as the commencement of the "golden era" of Jewish history. It has never been superseded.

2 Sam 5:11-12

11. Now Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, along with cedar logs and carpenters and stonemasons, and they built a palace for David.

12. And David knew that the LORD had established him as king over Israel and had **exalted his kingdom** for the sake of his people Israel.

NIV

An Everlasting Posterity, Throne And Kingdom

God did not only anoint David to be a king to succeed Saul, or to rule the nation of Israel for a few years. There was a mystical, prophetic element to the anointing that carried eternal implications.

2 Sam 7:12-16

13. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

14. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men.

15. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you.

16. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever."

The Authority Of The King

The king of Israel was not a constitutional monarch in the modern sense, nor was he an autocratic one in the oriental sense. He was responsible solely to Jehovah God, who had chosen him and whose vice-regent and servant he was. His kingship under Jehovah God, who was Israel's true king, implied that he was God's servant and His earthly substitute.

The Duties Of The King

In a very real manner the king was held responsible to God for all Israel as the Lord's people. His kingship was of an entirely spiritual nature and implied a unity of the heavenly and earthly rule over Israel through him who as Jehovah God's substitute sat "upon the throne of the kingdom of Jehovah God over Israel" (1 Chron 17:14; 28:5; 29:23). The king was "Jehovah God's anointed" (1 Sam 24:10; 26:9; 2 Sam 1:14), and also bore the title of "son of Jehovah God" and "the first-born," the same as Israel did. (Ex 4:22; Hos 11:1; 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 89:27; 2:7).

The Symbols Of Royal Dignity

One of the obvious indications of the king's royal dignity were his magnificent robes.

1 Kings 22:10

10. Dressed in their royal robes, the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were sitting on their thrones at the threshing floor by the entrance of the gate of Samaria, with all the prophets prophesying before them. *NIV*

Isa 33:17

17. Your eyes will see the king in his beauty and view a land that stretches afar. *NIV*

The Royal Throne

1 Kings 10:18-20

18. Then the king made a great throne inlaid with ivory and overlaid with fine gold.

19. *The throne had six steps, and its back had a rounded top. On both sides of the seat were armrests, with a lion standing beside each of them.*

20. *Twelve lions stood on the six steps, one at either end of each step. Nothing like it had ever been made for any other kingdom.*

NIV

A Golden Crown

2 Sam 12:29-30

29. *So David mustered the entire army and went to Rabbah, and attacked and captured it.*

30. *He took the crown from the head of their king; its weight was a talent of gold, and it was set with precious stones and it was placed on David's head. He took a great quantity of plunder from the city*

NIV

2 Kings 11:12

12. *Jehoiada brought out the king's son and put the crown on him; he presented him with a copy of the covenant and proclaimed him king. They anointed him, and the people clapped their hands and shouted, "Long live the king!"*

NIV

A Royal Sceptre

The sceptre was originally a long, straight staff, the primitive sign of dominion and authority (Gen 49:10; Num 24:17; Isa 14:5; Jer 48:17; Ps 2:9; 45:7).

It was a staff borne by a ruler as the badge of his authority. Sometimes sceptres were short like a mace, sometimes long and garnished with royal insignia. We know that in some cases the sceptre was a strong rod (Ezek 19:11, 14), about the height of a man, which ancient kings and chiefs bore as an insignia of honour. It is believed to originate in the shepherd's staff, since the first kings were mostly nomad princes (Mic 7:14; cf. Lev 27:32).

The references to the sceptre are all metaphorical and describe it simply as one of the insignias of supreme power (Gen 49:10; Num 24:17; Ps 45:6; Isa 14:5; Amos 1:5; Zech 10:11). The use of the staff as a symbol of authority was not confined to kings; it might be used by any leader. (cf. Judg 5:14, "staff of office"). E.g. the rod of Moses.

Gen 49:10

10. *The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.*

NIV

Num 24:17

17. *I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; sceptre will rise out of Israel.* NIV

The Maintenance Of The Throne

- a) According to the custom of the times, presents were expected of the subjects. (1 Sam 10:27; 16:20) and of foreigners (2 Sam 8:2; 1 Kings 5:1 ff; 10:25; 32:23), and these often took the form of an annual tribute.

- b) In time of war the king would lay claim to his share of the booty (2 Sam 8:11; 12:30; 1 Chron 26:27).
- c) Various forms of taxes were in vogue, as a part of the produce of the land. (1 Kings 9:11; 1 Sam 17:25), forced labour of the Canaanites (1 Kings 9:20; 2 Chron 2:16) and also of the Israelites (1 Kings 5:13; 11:28; 12:4), the first growth of the pasture lands (Amos 7:1), toll collected from caravans (1 Kings 10:15).
- d) Subdued nations had to pay a heavy tribute (2 Kings 3:4).
- e) The royal domain often comprised extensive possessions (1 Chron 27:25-31).

The Royal Courtiers

A king always had around him his royal courtiers who fulfilled a great variety of tasks. King David evidently chose and trained many of his government aides whilst in the caves of Adullam. As a committed community they grew together in unity, harmony and skills appropriate for government. In a similar manner, Christian leaders today are also being trained and prepared to assume roles of service and authority in the Coming Kingdom of God.

The highest office of that court was that of the princes (1 Kings 4:2), who were the king's advisers or counsellors. In 2 Kings 25:19 and Jer 52:25 they are called "they that saw the king's face"

The following officers of King David are also mentioned:

The captain of the host (commander-in-chief),

The captain of the bodyguard,

The recorder (chronicler and reminder),

The scribe (secretary of state),

The overseer of the labour force,

The chief ministers or priests.

Confidants of the king, who were usually selected from the royal family (2 Sam 8:16-18; 20:23-26).

The officer over the household (1 Kings 4:6; 18:3) (a steward, the head of the physical palace who had "the key" in his possession, Isa 22:22);

The king's friends (1 Kings 4:5; 1 Chron 27:33) is probably the same as the king's servant mentioned among the high. Officials as in 2 Kings 22:12. It is not stated what his duties were.

Minor officials are servants, cupbearers. (1 Kings 10:5),

The keeper of the king's wardrobe. (2 Kings 22:14; 10:22)

There are obviously many different roles to fill within the ranks of the King's aides and servants. God has been preparing certain of His servants to fulfil such roles in the soon coming Kingdom. God has been and is patiently working in the lives of many of His faithful servants throughout the years, training and preparing them to assume, under His authority, positions of delegated authority in His Kingdom. E.g.

Luke 19:17

17" Well done, my good servant!" his master replied. "Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities."

NIV

The Reality Of Christ's Kingship

It is quite obvious that Christ is represented in Scripture as a king. The very title Christ or "Messiah" suggests kingship, for though the priest is spoken of as "anointed," the full weight of the title as applied to Jesus must take account of His threefold office of prophet, priest and king, yet generally in the Old Testament it is the king to whom the epithet is applied.

The Old Testament Fore-shadowings

We may briefly note some of the Old Testament predictions of Christ as king. The first prediction which represents the Christ as having dominion is that of Jacob concerning the tribe Of Judah: "Until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be" (Gen 49:10) then kingly dignity and dominion are suggested by the star and sceptre in Balaam's prophecy (Num 24:15-17). As yet, however, Israel has no king but God, but when afterward a king is given and the people become familiar with the idea, the prophecies all have a regal tint, and the coming one is pre-eminently the coming king.

The Gospel Emphasis

All the Gospels present Christ as king. Matthew especially, tracing His genealogy, gives special prominence to His royal lineage as the son of David. He tells of the visit of the Magi who inquire for the newborn king of the Jews, and the scribes answer Herod's question by showing from Micah's prophecy that the Christ to be born in Bethlehem would be a "governor," and would rule, "be shepherd of my people Israel" (Mic 2:5-6). Luke's account of the nativity contains the angel's declaration that the child to be born and named Jesus would occupy the throne of David and reign over the house of Jacob forever (Luke 1:32-33). In John's account of the beginning of Christ's ministry, one of His early disciples, hails Him as "King of Israel" (John 1:49), and Jesus does not deny the title. If Mark has no such definite word, he nevertheless describes the message with which Jesus opens His ministry as the "gospel" of "the kingdom of God" (Mark 1:14-15). The people nurtured in the prophetic teaching expect the coming one to be a king, and when Jesus seems to be the answer to their ideal of the Messiah, they propose taking Him by force and making Him king. (John 6:15)

Christ's Claim To Be King

Christ Himself claimed to be king. In claiming to be the Messiah He tacitly claimed kingship, but there are specific indications of the claim besides. In all His teaching of the kingdom it is implied, for though He usually calls it the "kingdom of God" or "of heaven," yet it is plain that He is the ruler of its affairs. He assumes to Himself the highest place in it. Admission into the kingdom or exclusion from it depends upon men's attitude toward Him. In His explanation of the parable of the Tares, He distinctly speaks of His kingdom, identifying it with the kingdom of God. "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt 13:41-43). He speaks of some seeing "the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matt 16:28), of the regeneration, "when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory" (Matt 19:28), of Himself under the guise of a nobleman who goes "into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom," and does receive it (Luke 19:12-15).

Christ's Acceptance Of The Title

When the mother of John and James comes asking that her two sons may occupy the chief places of honour in His kingdom, He does not deny that He is a king and has a kingdom, while indicating that the places on His right and left hand are already determined by the appointment of the Father (Matt 20:21-23). He deliberately takes steps to fulfil the prediction of Zechariah: "Behold, thy king cometh," and He accepts, approves and justifies the hosannas and the homage of the multitude (Matt 21:1-16; Mark 11:1; Luke 19:1; John 12:1). In His great picture of the coming judgment (Matt 25), the Son of man sits upon the throne of His glory, and it is as "the king" that He blesses and condemns. The dying thief prays, "Remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom" (Luke 23:42), and Jesus gives His royal response which implies full acceptance of the position.

The Testimony Of The Gospels, Epistles And Revelation

The fact that Christ is king is everywhere implied and not infrequently asserted. E.g.

Matt 21:5

5. "Say to the Daughter of Zion, **See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.**"

Matt 25:34-35

34. Then the **King** will say to those on his right, *Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, **the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.***

1 Tim 1:17

17. Now to the **King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God**, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Tim 6:14-16

until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, **15**which God will bring about in his own time-God, **the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords,**

NIV

- (1) He is "Lord of both the dead and the living" (Rom 14:9).
- (2) He is risen "to rule over the Gentiles" (Rom 15:12). "He must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Cor 15:25).
- (3) He is at the right hand of God "above all rule, and authority," etc. (Eph 1:20-22). Evil men have no "inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God" (Eph 5:5), and believers are "translated into the kingdom of the Son of his love" (Col 1:13).
- (4) He has been given the name that is above every name "that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow," etc. (Phil 2:9-11).
- (5) Those who suffer with Christ are to "reign with him" (2 Tim 2:12), at "his appearing and his kingdom" (2 Tim 4:1), and He will save them "unto his heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim 4:18); "the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:11).
- (6) Of the Son it is said: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" (Heb 1:8), and He is a King-Priest "after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb 7:17).
- (7) In the book of Revelation, appropriately, the predominant aspect of Christ is that of a king. He is the "ruler of the kings of the earth" (Rev 1:5),
- (8) Rev 15:3. and they sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvellous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages."
- (9) Rev 17:14. 14. They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings-and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."

(10)Rev 19:16 16. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.**

Throughout the New Testament, spirituality appears as the prevailing characteristic of Christ's reign. Earthly kingdoms are based upon material power, the power of the sword, the power of wealth, etc., but the chief factor of Christ's kingdom is righteousness. (Matt 5:20; 6:33; Rom 14:17; Heb 1:8, etc.).

The Universal Kingdom

The Jewish idea of the Messiah's reign was a narrow national one. For them it meant the glorification of the sons of Abraham, the supremacy of Judaism over all forms of faith and all systems of philosophy; the subjection to Jewish sway of the haughty Roman, the cultured Greek and the rude barbarian. The Messiah was to be a greater king than David or Solomon, but still a king after the same sort; much as the limits of the kingdom might extend, it would be but an extension on Jewish lines; others might be admitted to a share in its privileges, but they would have to become naturalised Jews, or occupy a very subordinate place. The prophetic ideal, however, was a universal kingdom, and that was the conception endorsed and emphasised by Christ. (For the prophetic ideal such passages may be noted as Psa 2; 22; 72; Isa 11:10; Dan 7:13-14, etc.

The Great Commission

The terms of the commission are sufficient to show the universal sovereignty which Christ claims over men: "Go ye therefore," He says, as possessing all authority in heaven and on earth, "and make disciples of all the nations" (Matt 28:19), coupled with the royal assurance, "Ye shall be my witnesses unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The Book of Acts shows, in the carrying out of the commission, the actual widening of the borders of Christ's kingdom to include believers of all nations.

The Return Of The King

2 Sam 19:14-18

14. He won over the hearts of all the men of Judah as though they were one man. They sent word to the king, "Return, you and all your men." 15Then the king returned and went as far as the Jordan. Now the men of Judah had come to Gilgal to go out and meet the king and bring him across the Jordan. 16Shimei son of Gera, the Benjamite from Bahurim, hurried down with the men of Judah to meet King David. 17With him were a thousand Benjamites, along with Ziba, the steward of Saul's household, and his fifteen sons and twenty servants. They rushed to the Jordan, where the king was. 18They crossed at the ford to take the king's household over and to do whatever he wished.

NIV

The situation in Israel was crying out for the return of David to Jerusalem. However, initially he made no move in that direction. When questioned, David indicated that he was awaiting a call from his own tribe of Judah. Eventually, Amasa entreated the men of Judah to welcome King David. He persuaded all the men of Judah to welcome David as with one voice. Some of them also went across the Jordan river to bring back the king and escort him back to Jerusalem. He evidently returned in response to their welcome. Jesus also intimated that the citizens of Jerusalem would not see His face again until they welcomed Him with the familiar words, "Baruch Haba, B'Shem Adonai" - "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

Matt 23:39

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39. "For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" NIV

That face to face meeting will evidently occur when Messiah returns to earth to fight in defence of Judah and Jerusalem. After their deliverance they will look to him that delivered them and recognise Him as the one who was crucified in Jerusalem.

Zech 12:10

10. And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

NIV

Zech 13:6

6. If someone asks him, 'What are these wounds on your body?' he will answer, 'The wounds I was given at the house of my friends.'

Messiah Yeshua will then be enthroned in Jerusalem on the throne of David and representatives of all the nations that remain on earth will visit Jerusalem annually to worship the Messiah at the Feast of Tabernacles.

Zech 14:16

16. Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.

NIV

We may summarise by saying that Christ is king of truth, king of salvation (Matt 21:5; Zech 9:9); king of grace; king of peace (Luke 19:38; Heb 7:2); king of righteousness (Heb 1:8; 7:2); king of glory (Matt 25:31-34); king eternal; king of saints, king of the ages; king of kings (Rev 19:16). "Upon his head are many diadems" (Rev 19:12).

Isa 9:6-7

6. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this. NIV

Chapter Three

RE-ESTABLISHING THE KINGDOM

Through His plan of redemption, God has much more in mind than simply providing forgiveness, pardon, and a "home" in heaven. His purpose is to restore His reign over the earth.

God had originally intended that Adam and his descendants would rule the earth with Him, but Adam forfeited that privilege through his transgression. However God has never abandoned His first purpose. He has retained it, and one day it will be put into effect. Christ has now redeemed mankind from every effect of the curse. He has restored the redeemed creation to its former relationship with God. Spiritually, the New Creation is now seated in heavenly places in Christ (Eph.2:6) exalted to a place of great authority, far above the angels and all principalities and powers.

At this moment, we do not 'see' this rule in effect. ***"But now we see not yet all things put under him."***(Heb.2:8) For the present it is a spiritual rule, invisible to the natural man. It is a rule exercised in the 'heavenlies'. The new creation 'rules' in the earth, through his spiritual authority over Satan. He rules through Prayer. He rules by coming against Satan, in the authority of the Name of Jesus. He rules by enforcing the victory of Calvary. Satan has been paralysed by Christ. (Heb.2:14) The word 'destroy' as used here, does not mean 'to obliterate', but rather 'to paralyse or render helpless and ineffective'. Satan has no legal authority left. Jesus took that from him. All he has are tricks and devices. Thankfully God says we need not be ignorant of those devices. (2 Cor.2:11) There is no need for us to be deceived by them. Deception is the only weapon Satan has left. Lies, deceit and tricks are all he has with which to fight. Unfortunately many Christians are taken in by his lies. They believe he is powerful and he is able to exercise power over them. Believer, God has delivered you from the Kingdom of Satan. You have been freed from his authority and power. The Father has translated you into the Kingdom of His Dear Son (Col.1:13) God wants you to come out from the house of Satan's bondage and begin to live in the perfect liberty wherewith Christ has made you free. He also wants you to begin to use your God-given authority over Satan. He has raised you up to rule. He has ordained that you should one day rule this world with Christ. He wants you to begin taking your place of authority right now. Jesus commenced his public ministry with the announcement, ***"The Kingdom of God has arrived."***(Mark1:14)

When Christ began His ministry it was apparent immediately that the great theme of it was to be the Kingdom of God. Mark says, ***"Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Kingdom of God, and saying "Repent ye and believe the Gospel."***(Mark1:15) Notice, He preached the Kingdom and "the things concerning the Kingdom." The Christian message is often loosely referred to today as "The Gospel." Some have even affirmed that they preach "The Full Gospel," alluding to their emphasis on the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, speaking with tongues, the ministry of healing, or some other particular emphasis. Often there is no mention, in this Full Gospel emphasis, of the Kingdom of God! However, the true, Full Gospel, is "The Gospel of the Kingdom of God."

Christ's Emphasis On The Kingdom Of God

The importance of the kingdom, is seen in that the word is mentioned 80 times in NT. In contrast, "Church" mentioned 3 times.

Here is one of those occasions.

Matt 16:17-20

18. *And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.*

19. ***I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.***"

Please notice that Christ's stated purpose for His church was to possess the keys, i.e. the means of opening the door of His Kingdom.

Christ's first message.

Mark 1:14-15

14 *After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"*

NIV

To the Rich young ruler.

Mark 12:34

34 *When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.*

Luke 18:23-25

23 *When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth. 24 Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!*

25. *Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."*

NIV

The Continuing Message Of Jesus

Luke 4:42-44

43. *But he said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent."*

44. *And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.*

NIV

Jesus Commissioned His Disciples To Announce The Kingdom

Luke 9:1-2

2. *and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.*

Luke 9:11

11. *but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.*

NIV

Luke 10:9-10

9. *Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.'*

NIV

Teach us to pray

Luke 11:2

2. He said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name, ***your kingdom come.***"
NIV

Prioritise The Kingdom

Luke 12:30-31

31. But seek first his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.
NIV

The kingdom is within God's people

Luke 17:20-21

20. Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."
NIV

NIV

We must receive (submit to) it meekly as a child.

Luke 18:17

17. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."
NIV

"Born again" into God's kingdom

John 3:3

3. In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."
NIV

John 3:5

5. Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, ***no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.***"
NIV

NIV

Phillip preached the kingdom

Acts 8:12

12. But when they believed Philip ***as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God*** and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.
NIV

NIV

Paul preached and taught the kingdom.

Acts 28:23-24

23. They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.
NIV

NIV

Acts 28:30-31

30. For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him.
31 **Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.**
NIV

NIV

Transferred into God's kingdom.

Col 1:12-14

12. giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.
NIV

13. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,

14. in whom we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins.

NIV

Inheriting The Kingdom James 2:5

5. Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and **to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?** NIV

A kingdom of priests.

Rev 1:6. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has **made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father** to him be glory and power for ever and ever!

Amen.

NIV

Rev 5:9-10

and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

10. **You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."**

NIV

Rev 11:15

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

NIV

Rev 12:10

10. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ.

NIV

What Is The Gospel Of The Kingdom?

Let us clearly understand that the message Christ committed to us is "The Good News of the Kingdom of God." Certainly no message is complete without adequate emphasis on the Kingdom, and the things pertaining to it. The Gospel of the Kingdom, emphasises firstly God's sovereign right to rule. It exalts and magnifies the position of God, recognising Him as a great King over all the earth.

The root meaning of the Hebrew word "*Malkuth*," and the Greek word "*Basileia*," both of which are translated "Kingdom" is the "reign of One whose sovereign right it is to rule." Therefore if we proclaim the Kingdom of God, our first announcement concerns the sole right of God to rule the earth, the nations, and every individual on the earth. We proclaim God's right to rule.

Secondly we proclaim the close proximity of the Kingdom. Jesus announced "***The Kingdom of God is at hand.***" The rule of God has come to earth and its challenge confronts you right now. You are face to face with God's rule, therefore repent, change your mind and your ways, and receive the Kingdom rule into your life. Make way for the Kingdom in your hearts, thoughts and affections. No man can serve two masters. If you rule your own life, then the King is not ruling and the Kingdom is not within you.

Thirdly we announce the necessity to 'enter' the Kingdom. The right of entry is restricted to those who are 'born again'. Until this miracle of the new birth takes place, one cannot even 'see' the Kingdom. (John 3:3) We then enter the Kingdom by surrendering to the government and rule of God. Jesus said we must **"receive the kingdom of God, as little children"** (Mark 10:15). He meant we must accept God's rule in our life. We must submit to Him, and His way for our life. Submission to God's rule, here and now, prepares the way for our participation in His Kingdom when it becomes visible in power in the near future.

There Are Three Major Aspects Of God's Kingdom :

1. The Eternal Past

God's Kingdom has always existed. Before the creation of the universe, God existed. He existed before all things (Gen. 1:1; John 1:1; Col. 1:17a). Without Him was nothing made, that was made. (John 1:3) As the Author and Creator of all things, He had dominion and rule over them. Therefore His rule is from eternity to eternity, and is over all things. The earthly aspect of God's rule was mortgaged to Satan, by Adam. But God immediately launched His plan to recover that rule through Christ. (Gen. 3:15).

2. The Present Reality

Restoring God's Kingdom among men was Christ's primary task. (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:15). We understand that the Kingdom is that area over which a king rules.

To understand the PRESENT REALITY of God's Kingdom, let us consider a few of its characteristics.

- a. The Present Reality is not a visible Kingdom. ***"The Kingdom of God does not come visibly, because the Kingdom of God is within you."*** (Luke 17:20,21 NIV).
- b. The Present Reality is not a religion. ***"For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."*** (Rom. 14:17)
This teaches that the Kingdom does not consist of religious rules, but the condition of one's heart.
- c. The Present Reality is not a philosophy. ***"For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power."*** (1 Cor. 4:20 NIV) The Kingdom is not a collection of philosophical ideas and principles. It is the product of the power of the Holy Spirit.
- d. The Present Reality cannot be produced by man. ***"I tell you the truth unless a man is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God...unless a man is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of God...the Spirit gives birth to spirit."*** (John 3:3,5,6)
Becoming a part of the present reality depends upon being 'reborn' by an act of the Holy Spirit and then willingly submitting wholly to God's Will.
- e. Sharing in God's Kingdom requires a mighty move in spiritual terms. ***"For the Father has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of the Son He loves."*** (Col. 1:13)
- f. The Kingdom must be our number one priority. ***"Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness..."*** (Matt. 6:33)

g. The Kingdom is to be received with the simplicity of a child *"I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."*(Mark 10:15)

3. The Future Visible Manifestation

The presently invisible Kingdom of God, which is established in the hearts of God's people and cannot be seen by natural observation, (Luke 17:20) will soon be made gloriously manifest. The whole of creation is groaning in travail, as a woman in childbirth, waiting for the glorious manifestation of God's Kingdom. (Rom.8:22,23).

Daniel says *"And in the days of these kings, shall the God of heaven set up a Kingdom which shall never be destroyed...It shall consume other Kingdoms and it shall stand forever."*

Daniel saw *"One like the Son of Man, come with the clouds of heaven, and there was given Him, dominion and glory, and a Kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve Him; His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."* (Daniel 3:13,14)

"The saints of the most High shall take the Kingdom and possess the Kingdom forever, even forever and ever."(Daniel 7:18) *"And the time came that the saints possessed the Kingdom."* (Dan.7:22)

John received a prophetic foresight of this glorious Kingdom. *"And there were great voices in heaven saying, the Kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever."* (Rev. 11:15)

How May One Enter The Kingdom?

The Bible enumerates numerous requirements of those who would enter the Kingdom of God.

A. REPENTANCE is the first requirement. Gospel of Mark 1:15 *"Jesus came preaching and saying the Kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye and believe the gospel."* True repentance is to thoroughly renounce our present way of life and surrender wholly to the rule of God. It is our absolute submission to the government of God. True repentance represents a complete about-turn in one's allegiances and lifestyle. A complete circle of turning from oneself to wholly embrace God and His Kingdom purpose.

The original message of the early church involved receiving Jesus as BOTH Saviour AND LORD.

Acts 2:36

36"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

NKJV

B. We must be "BORN AGAIN" before we can either see or enter the Kingdom of God.

John 3:3

3. In reply Jesus declared, *"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."*

John 3:5

5. Jesus answered, *"I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit."*

NIV

Our spirit must be quickened (Eph.2:1) and we must be made alive in our spirit in order to even "see" the reality of the Kingdom of God. The natural man does not even realise that God has a Kingdom. He is blind to the reality of spiritual truth. After he has repented and been born again from above, he is able to see and becomes a candidate to enter the Kingdom. After he has been born both of the spirit and of the water of God's Word, he is then able to actually enter the Kingdom.

C. CONVERSIONAL OBEDIENCE

Complete surrender to God is also essential to entering the Kingdom. Paul says that through the mighty things that Christ did through him, ***"The Gentiles were made obedient to the Gospel."***(Rom. 15:8) Obedience is so important. It was disobedience on Eve's part that caused God to drive her and Adam from Eden. It was through disobedience that men were made sinners therefore it is through obedience that we live righteously. Peter asks, ***"What shall the end be of them that OBEY NOT the Gospel of Christ?"*** (1 Pet.4:17)

Once we are converted, obedience to God should become our rule of life.

D. SUBMISSION: We must make room for God's Kingdom in our lives. Jesus taught His disciples to pray ***"Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as in heaven."***(Matt.6:10). This prayer has deep personal applications. God's Kingdom and God's Will occur through our obedience and co-operation. This prayer is our daily surrender to God's rule. We must expect God to prove our sincerity and depth of commitment. We enthrone Jesus afresh in our hearts when we pray this prayer in sincerity. As we live under His Kingship, our manner of living must be transformed.

Luke 12:30-32

31. *But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. 32 Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*
NKJV

E. By entering the Kingdom through these steps, we receive a new heart and a right spirit. ***"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you ...and I will put my spirit within you and move you to follow my decrees."***(Ezek.36:26,27NIV). God puts His Spirit within us to give us the urge to walk in His ways. Jesus predicted that immediately before the end of the age the major theme of the Church would be the message of the Kingdom of God. ***"And this Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then will the end come."***(Matt.24:14NIV).

In other words, a great surge of missionary activity that proclaims the gospel of the Kingdom will take place in these last days of time.

Proclaiming The Kingdom

The proclamation will be world wide to all nations. It will not be simply preaching ABOUT the Kingdom. It is declaring the proximity of the Kingdom. ***"The Kingdom of God is here!"*** ***"The rule of God is within reach."*** Proclaiming the present reality of the Kingdom, is a key step to bringing it about in the lives of hearers. We must keep this message as central as the Scripture keeps it. God is presently setting up His Kingdom rule amongst us. ***"The Kingdoms of this world WILL BECOME the Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever."***(Rev. 11:15).

The prayer, "Thy Kingdom come on earth" is being fulfilled more and more each day as we grasp the significance of the Kingdom, as we enter it for ourselves, and as we proclaim it as present in the hearing of others. Now is the time that the prophets predicted. The time for the

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fulfilment of God's prophetic word. God will manifest His rule. He will establish His visible Kingdom. This is the only hope of the world. Human governments are proving to be totally inadequate. Millions are suffering because of the injustice of human governments. The leaders of the world have failed to produce a just and healthy society. As the solutions of man prove insufficient, now that their failure is manifest for all men to see, the God of heaven will set up a Kingdom that will stand forever. (Dan.2:44).

The Church will proclaim this fact to all the world and thus herald the glorious imminent reign of Christ. When Jesus came to earth, the Kingdom of God invaded the kingdom of men. The Kingdom came to earth because the KING was here. He began to establish the reign of God in the hearts of men. Initially He called twelve men to be His disciples. Once they had submitted their lives to Him, He began to establish His Kingdom in their hearts. He began to teach them the principles by which the Kingdom functioned.

The foundation stone of the Kingdom was *"surrender to the Lordship of Christ."* (Matt. 16:16-20) Upon that foundation He began to build His Kingdom within them. In Acts 2. the Holy Spirit initiated a working model of the Kingdom. A new society was born in the midst of the old one. The "New" Jerusalem was born in "old" Jerusalem. Amongst the religious pomp and ceremony of the old covenant, the New Covenant people came into being. A new race of humanity was born, the Christian race. A new nation came into being, the holy nation, the royal priesthood.

Jesus Himself was the firstborn of this new race. (Rom.8:29)

The firstborn of MANY brethren.

Jesus founded a new humanity

Twice-born men and women.

Born by the will of parents, and born by the Will of God.

They are the redeemed community.

They are new creations.

Old things are passed away. All things are made new.

They are the colony of heaven, living upon earth.

Citizens of heaven; they are now strangers to this world

They speak a new language. The language of Praise.

Their conversation announces the Lordship of Jesus over their lives.

In everything they give thanks to God. They worship with the fruit of their lips, even praise to God. (Heb.13:15)

They live by a new ethic. Jesus said *"You have heard, that it hath been said by them of old. But I say unto you...."* The law of the land compelled them to go one mile, but the new ethic of Jesus persuaded them to willingly go the second mile. (Matt.5:41) The new ethic did not break the law. Neither the law of God, nor the law of human government. It superseded it. It is a higher law. They adopted a new, higher law and life style.

Their old manner of life was now dead and buried by baptism. Now they lived in newness of life. Their new life style distinguished them as Christians. When they appeared in Antioch the disciples of Jesus were there named Christians, by the local people, because their lifestyle and character so beautifully manifested the life of Jesus. (Acts.11:26)

People took notice of them, recognising that *"they had been with Jesus"* (Acts.4:13).

These vital characteristics of Kingdom living require closer attention. As we live out Romans 14:17, we present a living example of the Kingdom of God.

"The Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Rom.14:17)

The Kingdom Of God Is :

1. RIGHTEOUSNESS. Righteousness is firstly and primarily the character and nature of God. It is also right standing with God and right living. Not the righteousness which is 'by the law'. But the righteousness which is by faith (Rom.4:13). A righteousness which is imputed by God in response to faith in Jesus Christ. (Gal.3:6). It was not only IMPUTED (put to our account) to us, it was also IMPARTED (given) to us. The principle and force of righteousness is established within us by faith. According to 2 Cor.5:21, when Christ was made sin for us, we were made the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. The right standing that has been established between God and ourselves enables us to form right relationships with others. As we firstly love God, with all our heart, mind and souls, we are then enabled to love our neighbour as ourselves also (Matt.22:37-40) This atmosphere and climate of righteousness pervades the Kingdom of God. Whenever the people of God live by the righteousness of God they experience His:

2. PEACE, which is the second attribute of the Kingdom. Once we enter into peace with God, through accepting the Lordship of Jesus Christ over our lives, we experience the peace of God that surpasses all understanding. It stands guard over our heart and mind (Phil.4:7) and keeps us in perfect peace (Isa.26:3). This inner peace is increased as God's government is allowed to increase within us (Isa.9:7). The Scripture says ***"of the increase of His government and peace, there shall be NO END."*** It is inexhaustible and eternal. There is no limitation on its quantity or quality.

So the Kingdom of God is demonstrated when God's people live peaceably together in love, fellowship and harmony. Now is the time for the people of God to be seen to be the people of God by the manifestation of their deep love for each other regardless of race, culture, denomination or any other factor that could possibly divide them.

3. JOY IN THE HOLY GHOST This joy in the Holy Ghost is the most superlative joy that it is possible to experience. It supersedes all human joy. It is an experience of Divine joy. The Bible says that joy finds its highest expression in the presence of God. (Psa.16:11). In God's presence there is fullness, completeness, total fulfilment of joy, and at His right hand, there are pleasures for evermore.

The Christian who truly surrenders to the King is filled with righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. The family that lives under the Lordship of Jesus is a family that enjoys righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. The community of people who live by the principles of the Kingdom of God experience righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. The Kingdom is HERE AND NOW. Surrender to the King. Let Him establish His throne in your heart. Receive His will into your life. He will fill you with righteousness, peace and Holy Ghost joy.

The new redeemed community that came into being on the Day of Pentecost began to demonstrate a radically new way of living. They lived HOLY unto God and WHOLLY FOR ONE ANOTHER. None of them selfishly kept his possessions solely for himself but they shared everything with one another. They loved one another, not in word only but in deed and truth. (1 John3:18) The Love of God, that caused Him to give the life of His only begotten Son, so filled their hearts that they also were willing to lay down their lives for their brethren. (1 John3:16)

The new born citizens of the Kingdom of God continued steadfastly in four vital areas of spiritual activity: (Acts 2:42)

1. THE APOSTLE'S DOCTRINE Their concept of "doctrine" was very different to that which many Christians have today. For many modern Christians the word doctrine relates to theology. It conjures up thoughts of study, concordances, commentaries, hermeneutics, homiletics and the like. "Doctrines" have probably been more responsible for dividing the Body of Christ than any other single factor.

In the context of the New Testament, the Apostles' doctrine referred to the Apostles' "manner of life." The way in which they conducted themselves. Their attitudes, relationships and character of life. For some three years Jesus had personally taught them how the Father wanted His children to live. He had not only informed their minds, He had formed their lives. He taught them by word and example. Luke spoke of all that Jesus *"began to DO and TEACH."* (Acts 1:1)

The disciples were encouraged to follow His example. To live as Jesus lived. Thus the Jesus life became the Apostles' manner of life also. Doctrine is not an academic, intellectual, philosophical thing. It is a practical, pragmatic, loving way of life. A lifestyle worthy of the name "Christian."

2. FELLOWSHIP When Luke says they all continued in the 'Apostles' fellowship', it does not merely mean in the company of the Apostles. The word "KOINONIA" which is translated 'fellowship' has a much deeper significance than that. It is a word that conveys the thought of partnership or "strong commitment to." The new disciples were WHOLLY COMMITTED to Jesus Christ, and they were also WHOLLY COMMITTED to each other. John says that our KOINONIA *"is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, and ALSO WITH ONE ANOTHER"* (1 John 1:3,7).

The same quality of relationship that had been established between God and themselves was also established with one another. When they were joined to God in Christ they were also joined to one another. When God became their Father, they became brothers and sisters in Christ. Our relationship with one another is just as real as our relationship to God. We cannot be truly related to God without being properly related to each other. We cannot be truly committed to God without being genuinely committed to each other.

He that says I love God and hates his brother is a liar. (1 John 4:20)

The members of the early church were totally committed to God and to each other. The depth and reality of these commitments birthed the Kingdom of God among them.

3. BREAKING OF BREAD

When they "broke bread" from house to house each day it does not necessarily mean that they celebrated the Eucharist. (Lord's Supper) It means that they shared meals and hospitality together, not as some symbolic gesture but often of necessity and mutual love. Many of them were in need and others chose to lovingly and generously meet that need. In this manner they came to know each other deeply and genuinely. People can usually discover more about each other from sharing a meal than from sitting in a church together. Many Christians have attended the same church for many years yet scarcely got to know each other well. How can you truly love a person if you do not get to know them properly? How can we ever lay down our lives for each other if we do not even share hospitality with one another?

However, those shared meals were also a sign of covenant relationship. They understood that the New Covenant which now bound them to God through faith in Christ, also bound them to each other. Their new covenant relationship was both perpendicular and horizontal. This glorious God/man relationship, when fully enacted, brings the ethos of the Kingdom into our midst.

4. UNITED PRAYER

The fourth thing in which they continued steadfastly was in united prayer. We need to get this sequence of events into correct order. It was only as they shared their lives on a very practical, realistic level that they were also able to petition God with ONE voice. Suppose we have fifty people praying in one room. Though they may all be Christians, they are not necessarily in a quality of unity that releases the tremendous power of genuine spiritual unity. However, when those same Christians are steadfastly living in the Apostles manner of living, in genuine mutual commitment, they express a unity that is clearly attested when they pray together. (Acts 4:24)

Demonstrating the Kingdom

The early believers were therefore demonstrators of the Kingdom. Wherever they were, the Kingdom was. The King was within them.

They each demonstrated the Kingdom in their INDIVIDUAL lives. Each one of them was an example of what a life can become when King Jesus is in control of it. Every Christian became an earthly ambassador of the Heavenly Kingdom. He represented the government of his master wherever he went. His behaviour, conversation, attitudes and life style announced the Kingdom of God to his community.

They also demonstrated the Kingdom of God DOMESTICALLY. When the reign of God is established in a man's life it also elevates the quality of his family life. Jesus teaches and assists a man to "so love his wife (in the same manner) as Christ loves His church." (Eph 5:25) Every Christian family should manifest the life of the kingdom to their neighbours. The husband loving his wife unselfishly. The wife reverencing her husband lovingly. Parents lovingly ruling their children, and children gratefully appreciating their parents.

The LOCAL CHURCH should also demonstrate the Kingdom of light to the surrounding world of darkness. That church is a microcosm (small example) of the Kingdom on earth. Let every local church demonstrate a quality of life that is superior in every way to that of the none Christian community around them. When the world sees the love and unity in the church that Jesus prayed for (John 17:21) they will believe that Jesus is truly God and that He lives in this earthly community. They will then confess that He is truly Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Thy Kingdom come!" Have you sincerely prayed that prayer? Are you truly willing for God's Will to conquer you? Will you surrender the government of your life to Christ? If you will, then His Kingdom WILL COME to earth and God's Will shall be done, as it is in heaven.

Chapter Four

REIGNING IN LIFE

Christ's real purpose in coming to earth was to deliver man from Satan's rule and to restore him to the rulership of the earth under God's delegated authority.

God always intended that Adam's descendants would fulfil this role. God had said, "***Let them exercise dominion***" (Gen 1:26) referring not only to Adam and Eve, but to all their descendants also. If Adam and Eve had not disobeyed God, they and all their descendants would have exercised rule and authority over the earth forever, under the government of God.

Because of Adam's transgression, God had to postpone His plan, but He never abandoned it. He gave Israel the opportunity to take up this role.

Ex 19:4-6

5. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine,

6. you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." NIV

Tragically they failed to walk in obedience too and forfeited their right to reign. Finally God determined to fulfil His purpose through the Church.

The mission of Christ was:

To overthrow the rule of Satan.

To deliver mankind from his bondage.

To recruit a new company of people.

Break the mastery of Satan over their lives.

Give them authority over all Satan's works.

Teach them to reign in life through their new authority.

To ultimately establish the rule of God once more on the earth.

This is the eternal purpose of God for earth and for mankind. It was conceived in God's mind in ages past. Long before the foundation of earth in its present form. It will always be His intention and He will never allow it to be frustrated.

Jesus Reigned In Life

The life of Jesus Christ was one of constant victory. He truly reigned over life, triumphant in every area.

A. HE REIGNED OVER SATAN

Immediately after Christ was baptised in Jordan and filled with the Spirit, He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the Devil. (Matt.4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). There He fasted for forty days and nights and became very weak physically. Satan took advantage of His weakened condition to test and try Him. If ever there would be a moment when it might be possible to successfully trap Christ, this was it. He was hungry, thirsty, tired and depleted.

Satan came against Him with every device he knew. He bombarded Christ with powerful temptations, but every time Jesus defeated him. He overcame him with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. The very same weapon that is at our disposal, with which we also are able to successfully overcome every attack of Satan upon our life.

B. HE REIGNED OVER TEMPTATION.

The issue of whether or not it was possible for Christ to sin has been debated for centuries. It is not our purpose to enter that debate. Nevertheless, we must state that the temptation of Christ was very real. He was really tested. Otherwise the whole episode in the wilderness (Matt.4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13), was a farce. The great comfort we have is to know that Christ, "***though tempted in all points, even as we are,***" (Heb.4:15) remained untainted by sin. Perhaps even more wonderful is the knowledge that, since He was tempted in all areas as we are, we have a High Priest who is acquainted with the reality of our testings. (Heb.4:15). "***For in that He himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.***" (Heb.2:18). There were obviously many more times in His life when Christ was sorely tempted and tested, but He came through them all triumphantly.

C. HE REIGNED OVER SIN.

The Christ who came to this earth, was the Lamb of God spotless and blameless, a perfect fulfilment of the Passover Lamb. Though subjected to a lifetime of testings that touched every area of His life, "***yet was He without sin.***" (Heb.4:15). When He approached the conclusion of His earthly life He said, "***The prince of this world (Satan) cometh, but hath nothing in me.***" (John 14:30). Despite every attack Satan had made on Christ, he had not been able to establish a beach-head. He had failed to discover a loop-hole, a breach in Christ's defences through which he could gain a victory. Christ was gloriously victorious over every temptation, never once falling into any sin, in thought, word or deed.

D. HE REIGNED OVER DEMONS.

Every time Jesus cast out a demon, He inflicted a defeat on Satan's kingdom. Satan controlled his kingdom through the army of demon spirits under his control. They are arrayed as an army in ranks of authority. (Eph.6:12). They are obedient and subservient to him, under his command and performing his will. In order to accomplish Satan's will on earth they must work through human beings, so they seek to possess people. Jesus was frequently confronted by persons oppressed or possessed by them.

Whenever this happened He manifested the superior authority of the Kingdom of God over the lesser power of Satan's kingdom. He demonstrated His supreme authority over all the powers of Satan by exercising dominion over Satan's demonic subjects. When confronted by demon controlled persons, Jesus never failed in one instance to take authority over the demons and command them to depart. He "***went about doing good and healing ALL who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.***" (Acts 10:38)

E. CHRIST REIGNED OVER NATURE.

Adam forfeited his God-given authority to rule over nature, but when the second Adam came, He (Christ) resumed that authority again. He exercised authority over the raging storm and turbulent sea, when He commanded the elements, "***Peace, be still.***" Even the wind and the waves obeyed His voice. (Mark 4:39).

He demonstrated His reign over nature when He turned the water into wine. (John 2:1-11). Someone has said, "The water blushed when it saw the face of its creator." The feeding of the multitude with just a handful of loaves and fishes was just another demonstration of His authority over natural elements.

F. HE REIGNED OVER CIRCUMSTANCES.

A beautiful example of this ability is found in the story told in Luke 4:28-30. Having spoken in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus was suddenly confronted by His listeners who were now 'filled with wrath'. Imagine this angry crowd converging upon Him from every angle, determined to vent their anger upon Him. They rose up as one man, to thrust Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill, intending to cast Him headlong over it. Then we read, "***But He, passing through the midst of them, went His way.***"

Consider the implication of that. The angry mob was bearing down on Him determined to destroy Him and He calmly made His way through the middle of the crowd and went on His way. Such glorious control over this circumstance that threatened to destroy Him! A similar situation occurred in John 8:57-59. In reply to the question "How old are you?," Jesus said "***Before Abraham was, I am.***" This time the mob took up stones to injure Him, but again He 'made His way through the midst of them, and so passed by.'

G. HE REIGNED OVER SICKNESS.

I am sure that Satan tried many times to afflict Christ with sickness, but he was never able to do so. Christ was immune to such attacks, for the law of sin and death was not operative in Him. It is only the "***soul that sinneth, that shall die,***" and Christ was wholly without sin. Therefore He was master over sickness in His own life. But He was also its master when it appeared in the lives of others.

Approximately two thirds of Christ's ministry seems to be concerned with healing the sick and casting out devils. In doing this He not only alleviated the suffering of those persons, revealing His rule and authority over sickness, but He also liberated those captives from the power of Satan, destroying the devil's rule over them. It is said of Jesus. He "***healed all manner of sickness and diseases.***" (Matt.4:23). His mastery and reign over sickness was absolute.

CALVARY WAS HIS GREATEST VICTORY

Just as Samson achieved his greatest victory at the end of his life when he destroyed the Temple and killed 3,000 Philistines, so Jesus also achieved His greatest triumph in what appeared to be the end of His life. Calvary was God's secret weapon. This was His greatest strategy. Jesus would take the death penalty passed upon all mankind, pay it in full, and then rise triumphant over death and the grave since neither had any legal power over His sinless life.

Robert Lowry, the famous hymn writer says:

***Death could not keep its prey, Jesus my Saviour,
He tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord.
Up from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes.
He arose a victor from the dark domain,
And He lives forever, with His saints to reign.
He arose, He arose, Hallelujah, Christ arose!"***

Christ's death and resurrection broke the lordship of Satan. From that moment Satan was ruined. Since that time he has been a pathetic defeated figure, spoiled and robbed of all his former power. Christ has triumphed over him through His cross. (Col.2:14,15). He has made an open spectacle of him, revealing the extent of his defeat to all the universe. All that Satan has left now are tricks and devices. (II Cor.2:11). He must resort to deception, he has to work in the darkness, in order to have any influence at all. If he came to the light his weakness and inability would be clearly evident to all and nobody would be influenced by him. This is

precisely why we Christians must always walk in the light, as Christ is in the light. (1 John 1:7). Satan hates the light and when we walk in it he will leave us alone.

We Are Meant To Reign In Life

The victories that Christ won were not for Himself, He won them for us. In the mind of God, we were already identified with Christ. When Jesus inflicted those great defeats on Satan, we were in Christ. His victories are ours too.

"They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ!" (Rom.5:17)

Notice that our reigning is not restricted to reigning with Christ in the millennium. It is not only a reign in the distant future, it is a dominion to be exercised in this life. Our authority to rule, through faith in Christ, begins when we first receive Christ and continues on into the eternal Kingdom. The exercise of such authority and rule in this life, prepares and equips us for our future eternal rule.

GOD CREATED MANKIND TO REIGN WITH HIM

Gen 1:26-28

26. *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."*

27. *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

28. *God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*

NIV

Ps 8:4-6

4. *what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?*

5. *You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honour.*

6. *You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet:*

NIV

Adam and Eve were given dominion over earth and everything in it. Gen 1:26-28; Psa 8:5.

They were made overseers (Shamar) over all the earth. Psa 121:5; Isa 62:5.

They were to multiply and fill the earth with rulers in God's image. Gen 1:28.

They had complete liberty with only one restriction. Gen 2:16,17.

THE FALL OF MANKIND

They were created sinless but with volition of choice. Gen 2:16,17.

Exposure to temptation tested their true loyalty to God.

Their disobedience was a voluntary act of their will.

It was the elevation of man's will against God's will. The origin of humanism.

DISOBEDIENCE RUINED EVERYTHING

Consider Adam's tremendous opportunities,

- a. Created in God's image and likeness
Therefore he had no adverse, negative attitudes, complexes, inhibitions. Completely positive in every thought and concept.
- b. They were God's highest and greatest creation. Second only to Him. Psa 8:5. (Elohim)

- c. They enjoyed perfect compatibility and communion with God.
- d. They lived in a perfect, idyllic environment. A utopian paradise.
- e. They enjoyed access to every good and pleasant thing
- f. They were Divinely delegated to rule their earth. To subdue and exercise dominion over it.
- g. They were privileged to people such a perfect place with glorious descendants.

Some Effects Of The Fall

- a. They experienced evil as well as good. Gen 2:17.
- b. They lost their innocence. Inherited guilt, condemnation, shame, inferiority complexes, and embarrassment.
- c. They became slaves to sin. Slaves to bad habits, spiritual, emotional, mental and physical bondages.
- d. They became fearful and afraid. Gen 3:10.
- e. They were continuously plagued by evil thoughts.
- f. They inherited domestic disharmony.
- g. They were sentenced to hard labour for their whole life. Gen 3:19; 17b -19.
- h. They were completely separated from God their source of life.
- i. They forfeited access to the tree of life, "Zoe" the life of God. They were condemned to "bios" , natural life. Living by their natural senses. Hence man's craving for spiritual and supernatural life that leads him into mysticism, occultism etc.

What Adam Lost Control Of Through The Fall

- a. His inner strength and integrity. He became "depraved" i.e. likely to break down at the weakest point. He lost his moral fibre, became weak and vacillating, using excuses, blaming others.
- b. His self esteem was completely undermined. He did not like or admire himself.
- c. He lost his positive anticipation of good. Adam was initially an innately positive, faith person until overcome by fear after the Fall.
- d. He forfeited his peace and harmony of mind.
- e. He forfeited sweet domestic bliss and harmony, inheriting broken relationships and families etc.
- f. He lost his innate ability to rule in life, exercising dominion and authority over his life and circumstances.
- g. He forfeited his destiny to rule the earth in God's authority.
- h. Satan became the god of this world.

Christ Became Our Substitute

- a. He became one with us through incarnation.
- b. He took our sins to His own account.
- c. He suffered and died in our place.
- d. He suffered spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically.
- e. He experienced physical death in His humanity.
- f. He was cut off from God's fellowship and communion.
- g. He went out, as a scape goat, from God's presence.

OUR IDENTIFICATION WITH HIM

Salvation comes through our identification with Him, His life, death and resurrection.

- a. We were crucified with Christ. Gal 2:2.
- b. We died with Him. Rom 6:7,8.

- c. We were buried with Him. Rom 6.
- d. We were resurrected with Him. "Quickened with Him" Eph 2:1,5.
- e. We ascended with Him to God's right hand.
- f. We are to reign with Him by faith and kingdom authority.

Rom 5:16-17

17. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. NIV

Our privilege to reign with Christ is available through

- a. God's abundant grace. Offered freely and plentifully but must be acknowledged and received.
- b. The gift of righteousness.
- c. Accomplished through Christ alone.

WE ARE TO REIGN OVER SIN

God has given the new creation dominion over sin. Dominion is the power to conquer, defeat, subjugate and rule over something. This is exactly what He has given us over sin. This is why Paul says, "***For sin shall not have dominion over you.***" (Rom.6:14). Sin shall not rule you, but you shall rule sin. "***Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lust thereof.***" (Rom.6:12). Sin is not to reign over us. We are to reign over sin. That is our right and privilege. Not only has our past been forgiven, God has given us the gift of righteousness to rule over sin. We are more than conquerors. The law of sin and death is still active in the world but the spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets us free from it and causes us to triumph over it. (Rom.8:2)

WE ARE TO REIGN OVER SELF

Many presentations of Christianity today are given to assure believers of the enhancement of their self life and ego. The promises are of success, popularity, prosperity and other self exalting benefits. However, the true Gospel, as Jesus originally presented it, demanded the denial of one's self life. He promised the God given ability to overcome such.

Matt 16:24-27

24. Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. 26What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? NIV

Gal 2:19-20

20. I (my ego and self life) have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

NKJV

The believer who truly places Christ and His kingdom into the first place in their thoughts, affections and ambitions, cannot possibly be a self seeking person. Self seeking and selfishness have no place in God's kingdom.

WE ARE TO REIGN OVER DEMONS.

Just as Christ exercised authority over demonic forces and all the principalities and powers of Satan, we have been given authority over them too. Once they were our masters, but now we are their masters. "***Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.***"

(1 John 4:4).

"Behold I give you authority, over all the power of the enemy, nothing shall be any means hurt you." (Luke 10:19). ***"In my Name ye shall cast our devils."*** (Mark 16:17)

The supernatural ministry that Jesus exercised in healing the sick and casting out demons, was all related to His role as God's king of the Kingdom. E.g.

Luke 11:19-20

19. Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. 20. But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.

NIV

Jesus was plundering the kingdom of Satan and defeating his authority by rescuing victims from the grip and power of demonic forces. In so doing He was manifesting His role as the restorer of God's rightful rule over mankind.

Acts 10:37-38

37. You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached. 38. how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

NIV

WE CAN REIGN OVER CIRCUMSTANCES.

We Christians are not victims of fate. We are not at the mercy of circumstances. Our lives are not ruled by chance, they are ordained by God. Satan would seek to hinder the fulfilment of God's purposes for us, but ultimately he has not the power to do so. Paul was often temporarily hindered from fulfilling God's purpose in his life, but he ultimately triumphed over Satan's devices and schemes. Life is not always an easy pathway. Many times there are problems and hindrances that would threaten to discourage and hinder us. But the power of the King within us is greater than every power that can ever oppose us. God wants you to rise up in faith and begin to take authority over your circumstances. The problems that confront you are opportunities for you to exercise your God-given authority to rule. Every time you conquer a situation you enhance your ability to rule. The whole of life is a challenge. Do not sit down in defeat and despair. Do not allow the enemy to whisper, "life is too much for you, you will never make it." Remember that you are ***"MORE than conquerors, through Him that loved you and gave Himself for you."*** (Rom.8:37). Rise up and reign, in Jesus Name!

WE CAN REIGN OVER SICKNESS

The incidence of sickness is so high today that many people, including Christians, resign themselves to the inevitability of it. This is a level far beneath where God wants you to live. Do not capitulate to sickness. Don't surrender to the inevitability of it saying, "Well I suppose everyone has to be sick sometime." Christ has borne your sickness, therefore you do not have to bear it. Take a position of positive faith. Make a stand against the threatened invasion of some sickness. Rebuke it in the Name of Jesus. Accept the challenge to rule over it instead of allowing it to rule over you.

WE ARE THE HEAD, AND NOT THE TAIL

"And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only and not beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them." (Deut.28:13)

This is a quaint biblical phrase that means that God has ordained His people to be victorious, not defeated.

In order to enjoy this victory, you must hear the Word of the Lord and walk in it, to do His commandments. The Word of God declares:

"The Lord is the strength of my life." (Psa.27:1)

"Greater is He that is in me, than he that is in the world." (1 John 4:4)

"God always causes me to triumph in Christ Jesus." (II Cor.2:14)

You see, God has made you the head and not the tail. You are fashioned for victory and not defeat. You are ordained to rule, not be ruled over.

How We Reign In Life

Our reign is established by certain principles to which we must adhere. The Bible sets forth those principles clearly so that we can walk in them. We reign in life through :-

THE WORD OF GOD

A right attitude towards God's Word is the key to our reigning in life. God's Word is the only truly reliable source of knowledge concerning our life and its real purpose. There are many philosophies that seek to explain the true purpose of life, - some of them contain elements of truth, but the Bible is the only book that contains the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

God established the universe by the power of His Word. Ten times in Genesis chapter one we read, "**and God said.**" Each time there was a specific result. God also continues to sustain the worlds by that same Word. (Col.1:17). When God created the universe, that creative act also established His Lordship over it. It is God's universe because He brought it into being and because it is wholly dependent on Him for its continuing existence.

God 'decreed' the various functions of everything He created. He set the stars on the appointed courses, from which they have never deviated. (Psa.8:3). He decreed the boundaries that the oceans must obey. (Prov.8:29). He rules the universe by His spoken Word. His sovereign authority is expressed through His spoken Word.

Jesus confirmed this principle. He also used the Word of God to rule. Christ said, "***The words that ye hear are not mine but the Father's that sent me.***" (John 14:24).

When confronted by Satan in the wilderness, Jesus defeated him by quoting the Word of God. The Word is the sword of the Spirit, our weapon of victory by which we overcome the authorities of darkness and establish the Kingdom of light.

We must also learn to rule by the authority of God's Word. The Bible is the only trustworthy source on how to reign in life. In it God presents the principles relating to every aspect of Kingdom living. We must feed upon the Word, meditating upon it day and night. It will govern our thoughts, attitudes and conversations and establish the rule of the Kingdom within us. It will teach us the principles on which the reigning life functions. It will release within us the power for Kingdom living.

DELEGATED AUTHORITY.

When Christ rose triumphant from the grave, He made this dramatic statement, "***All power (exousia) is given unto me in heaven and on earth.***" (Matt.28:18) Supreme authority was now His, over the heavens and the earth. How meaningful this statement is in the light of Christ's words in Luke 10:19. "***Behold I give you power (exousia-authority) over all the power of the***

enemy." The very same authority that the Father conferred on Christ, Jesus has given to His followers. It is an authority delegated to us by the spoken Word of God. It is also the same authority to which Satan referred in Luke 4:6. He offered to give this authority to Christ, but our Lord refused to receive it under those conditions. To do so He would have had to compromise Himself before Satan. Instead He defeated the devil legally at the Cross, stripping him of his title and authority. Now that power and authority belongs to Christ, and he has shared it with His joint-heirs (Rom.8:17) so they can also reign with Him.

OUR WORD OF AUTHORITY

In conferring this dynamic authority on the believer, Christ has made it possible for us to share His rule by allowing us to speak with the voice of His authority. Jesus spoke with the voice of authority, and He wants us to do the same. He commanded the fig tree to wither, (Mark 11:12-24) and it did. How sad that when the disciples saw the results the next day, they were amazed.

We are introduced to a unique and wonderful possibility in Job 22:21-30. Firstly Job encourages us to develop a deeper acquaintance with God, and then proceeds to enumerate the possibilities inherent in such an intimate relationship (vs. 23-3). One of those privileges is that of Spiritual Authority. "***Thou shalt decree a thing and it shall be established unto thee.***" (Job.21:28). A decree is a commandment or edict spoken by a person of great authority. This is the privilege God affords us, to command a certain thing in God's Name and authority, and it will be established for us. '***He shall have whatsoever he saith.***' (Mark 11:23).

Too many Christians equate 'confession', with the confession of sin, weakness and inadequacy. God wants us to discover the power of positive confession through which we are enabled to reign in life. One of the biblical words translated 'confession', is *homologeō*, which basically means, "to say the same thing." When we cause our confession to agree with what God has spoken, we release a tremendous force of authority. This is the expression of our delegated authority by which we reign in life with Christ. God has 'spoken upon us', every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus, (Eph.1) but we must 'speak the same thing' (*homologeō*) for those blessings to become operative and effective in our lives.

FAITH

"Without faith it is impossible to please God." (Heb.11:16)

"The just shall live by faith." (Heb. 10:38)

Without the exercise of faith, all that God has said about us in His Word is ineffectual. It lies dormant until we activate it by faith. We must not only speak words of faith that agree with what God has said, we must also act in faith in harmony with what God has spoken. Faith is that quality that accepts God's Word as final and absolute and therefore speaks and acts as though it is already accomplished.

Our assurance of ultimate victory is dependent on the exercise of faith. "***This is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith.***" (1 John 5:4). It is men and women of faith who reign in this life with Christ and it is men and women of faith who will reign in His manifest Kingdom when it is unveiled in the Kingdom Age.

WE WILL REIGN WITH CHRIST

"For as by one man's offence death reigned through that one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life through One, Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5 :17)

"Then the Kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom shall be an everlasting Kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him." (Dan. 7 : 27)

"And (He) has made us a Kingdom of priests to our God, and we shall reign on the earth." (Rev. 5 :10)

The reason why God has given authority and power to the saints now is to prepare us for that time when we shall reign with Messiah Jesus in the everlasting Kingdom that will one day rule the earth. All our Christian life is meant to be a period of preparation for eventually sharing, under Christ, the government of planet earth. It is intended that our character be prepared in every way possible to enable us to function effectively as God's servants in His government through which He will directly rule the nations.

The exercise of our faith and authority in this present time is to prepare us for our future eternal role in the government of God by which He will rule the nations on earth. This is also the reason why God is so interested in the development of our righteous character and spiritual maturity.

Learning With Christ Prepares Us To Reign With Him

"***For if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him.***" (2 Tim. 2 : 12) For many years this Scripture puzzled me. I could not understand how suffering with Christ would actually qualify one to reign with Him. I thought that perhaps it was some kind of compensation factor, that because someone had suffered with and for Christ, He would reward them by having them reign with Him. But still this did not seem to explain the matter. It remained something of a puzzle to me until one day I noticed another Scripture. I had read it many times previously but somehow had failed to see the significance. It was the verse in Heb. 5:8. - "***Though He were (the) Son, yet learned he obedience through the things which He suffered.***" Suddenly I felt that the Holy Spirit said, "this is the suffering spoken of in 2 Tim. 2 :12. - the suffering that teaches us obedience." Then I saw the principle. It is not the suffering that qualifies us to reign, it is the obedience we learn through suffering, because the Kingdom of God will be based on two principles:

- 1: God's absolute authority.**
- 2: Our absolute obedience.**

It was disobedience that caused Adam to forfeit his right to rule. It was Christ's obedience which enabled Him to conquer Satan and regain the kingdom, and it will be our obedience that will qualify us to reign with Christ in the coming Kingdom.

Chapter Five

THE CHARACTER OF KINGDOM PEOPLE

What kind of people will inherit the Kingdom? What will be the characteristics and disposition of those who actually participate in the government of God over the earth?

Righteousness, in a Biblical sense, is firstly and primarily a definition of the character attributes of God. It describes the fact that God is innately right in everything He says and does.

Gen 18:25

Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?" NIV

A paraphrase of this verse could be, "Will not Almighty God, the accuracy of whose judgements may be observed in all the universe, always do the right and absolutely correct thing?"

From a Biblical perspective, righteousness is a description of the character of God. All His character attributes constitute perfect righteousness.

All righteousness has its origin in God.

When God comes to live within us His righteousness is imputed to us.

In order to develop that righteousness we must walk in constant obedience to His every direction. Such a life is "walking in the Spirit." E.g.

Rom 8:1 *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*

Rom 8:6

6For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Rom 8:14

14For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.
NKJV

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus describes the righteousness required of those who are citizens of His Kingdom. ***"For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven."*** (Matt.5:20)

Such righteousness must be built into the character before it can be manifest in deeds. The righteousness of the Scribes was a pattern of religious behaviour fashioned from their intellectual study of the Scriptures. These men were professional theologians who gave their full time to the study of the scrolls. The Pharisees were their disciples who gave themselves wholeheartedly to fulfil the requirements described by the Scribes. Both of them specialised in trying to keep religious rules.

The righteousness of the Kingdom **MUST** exceed this, for the human heart, whilst unregenerate, can never attain the righteousness that God demands. The only way this

humanly impossible standard can be reached, is by receiving God's gift of righteousness, (Rom.3:23,24) and the Holy Spirit who is the Agent of Christ's Life in us (Rom.8:1-10,13). It is "*Christ in you, which is the (only) hope of glory.*"(Col.1:27). Christ begins to describe some of the aspects of character that will become evident as we allow His life to rule within us.

The great Apostle Paul, arguably the best informed, most mature, of Christ's messengers stated that his determined purpose was to grow in the experiential knowledge of Christ. Paul did not express this desire merely as a new believer in Christ but as a matured apostle.

The Amplified Bible expresses it in this manner.

Philippians 3:10.

For my determined purpose is that I may know Him (Christ) that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognising and understanding the wonders of His person more strongly and more clearly.

One of the main reasons why Paul was possessed by this determination was, Philippians 3:9.

And that I may be actually found and known as in Him, not having any (self achieved) righteousness that can be called my own, based on my obedience to the Law's demands, ritualistic uprightness and (supposed) right standing with God thus acquired but possessing that (genuine righteousness) which comes through faith in Christ, the Anointed One, the (truly) right standing with God which comes from God by (saving) faith alone.

<p>This righteousness, attained purely through faith in Christ and obedience to Him, is the righteousness required in those who shall rule with Christ.</p>
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In Matt.5:1-14, Jesus begins to teach the spiritual principles that mark the character of those who are allowing the King to 'conquer them'. These principles are the essence and foundation of Christ's teaching on Kingdom character. Frequently neglected, ignored and misunderstood, they are eminently worthy of our attention. Without these aspects of character, the King cannot adequately function through us to manifest the nature of His Kingdom. Only when they are present and working, are we truly the 'Light of the World', and the 'Salt of the Earth' (Matt.5:13,14). Let us consider briefly these weighty words of Christ, that are often referred to as "The Beatitudes."

TRUE HUMILITY.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." (Matt.5:3)

Notice it is the poor 'in spirit', not necessarily the poor in a material sense. Some poor people have a very proud spirit, whilst some wealthy people may possess a humble heart. True humility is the complete absence of spiritual pride and self righteousness. It is that genuine total dependence upon the Grace (unmerited favour) of God. This humility issues out of a true spirit of repentance. This is why the first word of the Kingdom message was, "repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." Not only do we need a genuine, deep initial repentance from sin - we need to continue our life in the Kingdom in a true spirit of repentance. Walking in genuine repentance becomes integral to the ongoing life style of a true believer.

This is the bliss of the man who has fully realised his own inadequacy and worthlessness and has put his whole trust and confidence in God alone. Jesus says of such persons, "theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." The spirit and attitude of the Kingdom is already within them. Without these we would never be fit to possess the Kingdom. The bliss of the Kingdom is already theirs. They are enjoying the blessing of the Kingdom here and now. Its atmosphere fills their life.

They will also inherit the future manifest Kingdom and play their part in the government of God on earth.

GODLY SORROW.

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." (Matt.5:4).

This is the attitude of sincere deep repentance, and true sorrow for sin. God loved this quality in King David. It is an inner attitude towards God. People who have this quality do not go around with a mournful spirit and sad faces. They are happy people, for they have been comforted by God. They have a soft, sensitive spirit towards God and walk quietly and respectfully before Him. There is a further aspect to this concept of "mourning," that goes beyond the spirit of the individual, and it is the idea of an attitude of mourning for the impoverished and needy people of the world.

God wants a people who are not introspective and self-centred, always concerned about their own lives and needs. He wants a people who are compassionately concerned with the needs of other people. As we look around our world today there are many situations that demand our empathy and compassion.

MEEKNESS, THE GOD CONTROLLED LIFE.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." (Matt.5:5)

Meekness is not weakness, rather it is a strength of character. It is the attitude of willingly being under God's control. Moses and Jesus are the two finest examples of meekness. Both were strong but superbly disciplined to keep under Divine control. It is firstly an attitude of willing submissiveness towards God. Secondly, it is an inner lamb-like spirit, that is gentle, modest and unassuming. Thirdly, it is a tolerant, tender attitude towards others. Meekness is an extremely important attitude of heart for a citizen of the Kingdom.

Quoting Psalm 37:11, Jesus says, ***"The meek shall inherit the earth."*** This is a direct reference to participating in the government of God that will be established in the earth (Isa 9:7). This government will be founded on two factors -God's authority, and the willing submission of His servants. So the development of meekness in the character is preparing us for an active role in the coming government of God on earth.

Paul says, ***"If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him."*** (2 Tim.2:12). This suffering is the kind mentioned in Hebrews 5:8, ***"though He were the Son, yet learned He obedience, by the things which he suffered."*** It is the suffering of those things that build meekness and obedience into one's spirit to which God is referring. One of the main characteristics that will typify the company of those who rule and reign with Christ, will be their intrinsic spirit of meekness.

At this time God is using all manner of things to inculcate this spirit into His people. An understanding of this fact and how important it is to the purposes of God, will help us to understand why God allows us to experience and go through certain circumstances. His purpose is to fashion us into His Image, and also into the quality and type of character befitting those chosen to help administer His rule over the nations.

God is not searching for brilliant people whose natural talents, personality and drive would be useful to His purpose. He is looking for those who have placed their whole dependency and trust in God. They have no self confidence, pride or independence but a true spirit of genuine meekness that comes from having learned obedience, trust and submission through the experiences through which they have come. They are joyfully and totally submitted to God and His purpose for their life, and meekness of spirit is the indicator that this is so.

SPIRITUAL HUNGER.

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."
(Matt.5:6).

To 'hunger and thirst' expresses the strongest desire. This is a passion for God and His righteousness. This thirst after God is what David experienced. ***"My soul thirsteth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is."***(Psa.63:1) ***"As the deer panteth after the water hole, so my soul panteth after Thee."***(Psa.42:1)

The particular blessing such people receive is their great capacity for righteousness. The more one hungers, the more they will eat! Such people are deeply satisfied by righteousness. The greater our spiritual hunger and thirst, the greater is our capacity for God. Hunger and thirst will drive a person to great lengths in order to satisfy those needs. God wants a people who are truly hungry and thirsty after Him, His life, His nature, Spirit and righteousness.

Again, as we mentioned in respect of "mourning," there is another way in which this idea should be understood. As we observe the many injustices that people are experiencing in various parts of the world today, God is wanting a redeemed people who will be "hungry and thirsty" to see God's righteousness manifest in the earth. People who will long, with all their being, for the time when God will directly intervene in the affairs of men and bring in His righteous rule.

This is the reason why He taught His disciples to pray ***"Your Kingdom come, your will be done ON EARTH, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive those who trespass against us."*** God wants us to long for His Kingdom to come on earth so that all injustice and discrimination will end. When God's Kingdom comes to earth it will bring to an end all bigotry, injustice and inequality. All men will be equal before God. There will no longer be "the haves" and "the have-nots." There will not be the wealthy minority on one hand and the majority of poor on the other.

COMPASSIONATE KINDNESS (MERCY).

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."(Matt.5:7)

Mercy is mentioned 267 times in the Bible, which indicates the importance that God attaches to it. The Hebrew word "chesed" is one of the loveliest words in the Bible. It is variously translated "loving kindness" or "tender mercy" and it basically describes the over riding feature of God's nature and character. Everything we have ever received from God is because of this quality. We could never deserve or merit His favour. We could never make ourselves worthy of it. God loves us, not because of anything we are or have, but because of His abounding mercy. It is solely because of His mercy that He has redeemed us. It is because of His mercy that we are able to continue as His children and enjoy His favour. It springs from a heart of compassion expressing itself in kindness, tenderness, understanding, forbearance and sympathetic action.

The teachings of Jesus revealed the Kingdom requirement, that they who receive mercy must in turn show mercy to others (Matt.18:23-25). The blessing they receive is in line with the Divine law of sowing and reaping. Whatever a man sows, he will eventually reap. If we sow mercy to others, we shall reap it in return, when we ourselves are in need of it. As God is a God of mercy, so He wants us to be a people who are merciful too. He requires of us that our attitudes towards others are always consistent with the principle of mercy.

INNER PURITY.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."(Matt.5:8).

For many people, religion is a set of rules that must be kept. The religious person must be seen to be "doing the right things." Great stress is laid upon the appearance of righteousness - purity of deed! Jesus is more concerned with INNER purity, the purity of heart and the inner man.

Later in the chapter He enlarges on this important theme, teaching that whereas the Law through Moses, forbade the act of adultery, the New Commandment goes even further and says that even if you commit adultery only in your mind, you are still guilty. The thought life must be pure, as well as the actions. Such inner moral purity does something for our vision.

Christ said, *"If your eye is single, your whole body shall be full of light."* (Matt.6:22). The body, 'full of light' speaks of inner purity, innocence and integrity. This is obtained from singleness of vision; looking always and only to Jesus. The single eye will have clear vision and 'see God'. This vision will reach consummation when Christ returns in the glory of His Kingdom.

THE PEACE MAKER.

"Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." (Matt.5:9) God loves peace. He is frequently called *"The God of Peace."* (e.g. Heb.13:20). Consequently He loves peacemakers and reserves for them a special blessing, the acknowledgement that they are His children! Peace, in Hebrew "shalom" is not a negative thing. It is not merely the absence or cessation of war. Shalom is 'everything that is necessary for your contentment, good, and well-being'.

SHALOM is one of the most intriguing themes in the Bible. It is such a multi-faceted word and is translated in a variety of different ways. All of them are positive and express so many of the wonderful blessings that God wants us to experience and enjoy.

If we tried to describe in one word the sublime circumstances of the garden of Eden in which God originally placed man, it would surely have to be the word "shalom," for this is the only word that could begin to describe the beauty and harmony of Eden.

In a similar manner, were we to try to describe the supreme bliss conveyed in Revelation 21 and 22, of the Coming Glorious Kingdom of our God and His Christ, again we would find that 'shalom' would have to be the word we would use. There is no other word that even comes close to it. So the Kingdom of God is epitomised by shalom. The purpose of Christ's coming, His death and resurrection, and His glorious soon return, is to establish on earth His Kingdom of Shalom.

There is a great need for peacemakers in the world today. This making of peace must commence within the Kingdom. True peacemakers are like their heavenly Father. They bear His image and likeness. He is proud of them and calls them His children. If we cannot achieve peace within the redeemed community we will certainly never accomplish it in the world at large. A peacemaker is much more than a peace lover. Some people want peace at any price. Not so the peacemaker. He is bold, truthful, honest, loving and fair, but will not compromise in order to have peace. He will establish it upon a proper and firm foundation.

Since the Father is the *"God of Peace"* (Heb.13:20) and Christ the *"Prince of Peace"* (Isa.9:6), so peacemakers in the Kingdom will be recognised as true sons of their Father and be specially honoured by His acknowledgement of them.

NOBLY BEARING PERSECUTION.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." (Matt.5:10-12). Persecution is inevitable, to some degree. *"All who will live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."* (2 Tim.3:12).

Jesus warned us that it would be so. *"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you."* (John 15:18).

We must be long-suffering and forgiving in the face of persecution, *"turning the other cheek, and going the second mile."*(Matt.5:41). We must also learn to rejoice, that we are counted worthy to suffer for His Name's sake, as the Apostles did (Acts 5:41). This will ensure a great reward in the manifest Kingdom.

Chapter Six

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE KINGDOM

Every Kingdom must have principles and laws by which it and its citizens are governed.

The basic principles that constitute a Kingdom are:-

- A. A King, or sovereign head.
- B. The people, or realm over which he rules.
- C. The principles, or laws, by which he rules.

The Kingdom of God also has its laws. To live by them is to enjoy Kingdom living. The laws of this Kingdom are not legalistically enforced with a death penalty to invoke for breaking them, as was the law of Moses. They are principles for living that the Word of God will build into every submissive citizen of the Kingdom.

Paul calls this 'walking in the Spirit', and says that if we do this we will not fulfil the desires of the flesh. (Gal.5:16). He further adds that walking in the Spirit will cause us to inherit the Kingdom (Gal.5:21). If we do not obey these laws, we suffer spiritually. We experience a loss of peace, joy and blessing in our daily walk with God. We therefore need to study the laws of the Kingdom to discover just how God would have us live. The law of the Lord, *"is perfect transforming the soul, and in the keeping of them there is great reward."*(Psa 19:7)

King Jesus announced the laws of the Kingdom in Matthew 5,6 and 7. May I suggest that you read these chapters again to familiarise yourself with them. We will not be giving a full examination of them here, but we shall look at them briefly.

1. THE LAW AGAINST UNJUSTIFIED ANGER. (Matt.5:21-26)

There is an anger which is justifiable. For example the Bible mentions several times that God was angry with various people. This kind of anger is often called righteous indignation. It is the controlled expression of annoyance or displeasure. That anger that the Kingdom law prohibits is that of enragement, fuming, bitterness, recrimination and vexation. The anger that is vented against someone with venom and nastiness. God is particularly displeased with anger that causes one to lose control of oneself.

2. THE LAW OF INNER PURITY. (Matt.5:27-32)

The law of Moses forbade the act of adultery. (Ex.20:24). The law of the Kingdom is a higher law. It does not break the law of Moses, it supersedes it. Jesus said, *"I say unto you whosoever looketh upon a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his*

heart." The cure for such a problem lies firstly in making a determined vow against all moral impurity and then fulfilling it with resolute action.

Jesus is not advocating the literal amputation of the hand, or the physical gouging out of the eye. Neither the hand nor the eye are the real source of the trouble. There is a motivation behind both the hand and the eye that needs to be dealt with. Christ is saying "Whatever is needful to keep your heart pure, DO IT, with determination, for if you play with sin it will destroy you."

3. THE LAW OF HONESTY AND INTEGRITY. (Matt.5:33-37)

The word integrity implies absolute honesty, utter truthfulness and complete reliability. Such must be the character of Kingdom citizens. They must be unfailingly faithful to their word. His yes must be yes, and his no must be no. He must be a man of his word so that people will learn to put confidence and trust in what he says. He must be reliable and consistent. This applies to such matters as keeping appointments and being on time for them. Keeping promises even when it becomes inconvenient to do so.

4. THE LAW OF NON-RETALIATION. (Matt.5:38-42)

The spirit of retaliation was part of our fallen nature, from which Christ has delivered us. Jesus set the supreme example. **"Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judged righteously."** (1 Peter 2:23). Christ encourages us not to try to justify ourselves, but allow God to do so. **"Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, I will repay."** (Rom.12:19) Our role is to love our enemies, do good to them, and allow God to deal with them. The Kingdom citizen never retaliates. He never goes to law against his neighbours. Always seeks how he may bless his enemies.

5. THE LAW OF PERFECT LOVE. (Matt.5:43-48)

The fulfilment of the law is expressed in one word - "love" (Rom.13:8-10). Kingdom love goes far beyond any human love. It triumphs where human love has expired. It enables one to **"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you"**(Matt.5:44). Love makes a man like God, for God is love (1 John 4:8).

6. THE LAW OF RIGHT MOTIVATION. (Matt.6:1-18)

Religion is concerned largely with right acts and deeds, but the King is interested in inner motive. What is the reason for my doing this? Is my motive pure? Am I doing it for the right reason? The Scribes and Pharisees specialised in religious acts. They did all the right things, but often with an imperfect motive. Our righteousness must exceed theirs (Matt.5:20). In the Kingdom of God we are to do the right thing, from a pure, right and just motive.

7. THE LAW OF RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP. (Matt.6:19-34)

As citizens of the Kingdom we have relinquished all our "rights" to the King. As His "love slaves," we no longer own anything. All we have and are, belongs to Christ. Now we are stewards of what we have, on behalf of the King. Verse 21 is a key to responsible stewardship. **"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."** What we invest our finance in reveals where our heart's affections really lie. If we invest in earthly things, moth, rust and thieves will destroy our investment. Treasures invested in the eternal Kingdom will produce eternal dividends.

8. THE LAW OF RIGHT PRIORITIES (Matt.6:24-34)

Successful Kingdom living depends largely on getting our priorities right - that is giving our attention to the most important things first. Jesus clearly defines our first priority. **"Seek ye**

FIRST the Kingdom of God, and all these "things," - food, drink, clothes etc., which the Gentiles seek after (strive for) will be added unto you. Give the Kingdom of God and righteousness the first place in your thoughts, desires and actions. Make it the number one priority in your life. Let everything else take second place to it. Love the King, more than anyone else. Serve His purposes with dedication and commitment. He will supply the needful things of life.

9. THE LAW OF TOLERANCE TOWARDS YOUR BROTHER. (Matt.7:16)

The worldly man judges and criticises others regardless of how great his own weaknesses and failings are. He often tries to remove a speck from the eye of another, when there is a log in his own eye. This is not so in the Kingdom. Jesus says we are not to criticise or condemn our brother. Moffatt's translation of Rom.14:13 says **..So let us stop criticising one another.**

This does not mean that we should be blind to, or ignore the faults of a brother. We are not to disregard such faults. It means that instead of criticising him or condemning him, we should minister to him in love, with compassion, seeking to help him overcome those weaknesses. Our action should be positive, not negative. How we treat such a person will determine how we ourselves are treated. **"For with what measure ye judge, ye shall be judged."** (Matt.7:2)

10. THE LAW OF DISCRIMINATE TEACHING. (Matt.7:6).

(The principle of pearls and pigs) The pearls, to which Jesus refers, are the truths of the Kingdom that are found in our lives, as a pearl formed in the oyster. These truths are sacred and precious. God has gone to great lengths to build these truths into you. They are holy things, sacred and personal. Do not go around sharing them indiscriminately, as one who would feed holy things to dogs, or pearls to swine. Treat such precious truths with respect. Treasure them in your heart. We are to share the message of the Kingdom with the whosoever. But the mysteries of the Kingdom, are for the committed. Do not try to impose mature truth on immature people. Let the Holy Spirit guide you about whom, when and how to share the deeper truth of the Kingdom. Remember that the unregenerate man cannot even 'see' the Kingdom. He does not even know that it exists.

11. THE PRINCIPLE OF PRAYER. (Matt.7:7-12)

There is a definite sequence and progression involved in the principle of prayer. Jesus outlined it like this:

- a. **"ASK," and it shall be given you.** This is the simplest form of prayer. Making our requests known to God, with thanksgiving.
- b. **"SEEK," and ye shall find.** Here is a deeper level of prayer, that goes far beyond making our requests of God. Seeking God is the earnest pursuit of God in prayer. **"Ye shall find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."** David called it **"Seeking the face of God"** (Psa.27:8). It demands more time, dedication, sacrifice than the simpler kind of prayer. It also results in greater rewards not simply in the attaining of things we may desire but the development of our deeper spiritual life.
- c. **"KNOCK and the door shall be opened."** This introduces a deeper level of maturity in spiritual things. This is not pounding upon the door, insisting that it shall be opened to you. It is not the frenzy of purpose that would almost break down the door. Rather, it is the gentle knocking of request, that understands that God will not willingly open the door to any situation that we are too immature to cope with. There is an aggressive faith which may insist on an answer that is harmful or injurious. For example, Israel insisted on having a king to rule them. God unwillingly gave them their requests but it brought leanness into their soul. How much wiser they would have been to "knock gently" and see how God would respond.

12. PRINCIPLE OF SOLID FOUNDATIONS. (Matt.7:24-27)

Jesus teaches the necessity of "living the word" rather than merely "hearing" it. Christ said that those who heard His sayings, but did not practice them, were like fools who built a house on sand. Without a firm foundation it would be destroyed by the storms of life. In complete contrast, those who "do" the words of Jesus, practice them and live by them, are wise, like those who build on a rock. The storms of life will fall on them also, but the structure of their life will withstand every storm. Too many Christians are content to "hear the sayings of Jesus." They store them in their mind and memory. They give intellectual assent to them but never practice the principles. It would be better to know one truth and practice it than know hundreds of truths and never put any of them into practice. Living by these principles of the Kingdom, builds a firm foundation for our Kingdom role. Through the practice of the principles, God is preparing us for our function in the coming manifestation of the Kingdom of God that will exercise its government over all the nations.

Chapter Seven

THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

"And Jesus said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but to others in parables." (Luke 8:10).

No matter how clearly we may presently understand the Kingdom of God there will still be mysteries involved that will only become clear in eternity.

The Gospel of Matthew gives special emphasis to the Kingly role of Jesus Christ. That is why Matthew devotes much of his gospel to the theme of the Kingdom of God. Much of this teaching is given in parables, natural stories that convey spiritual truth. Through these parables Jesus set forth the mystery of the Kingdom.

The biblical use of the word 'mystery' deserves some attention. In modern English the word means 'something hidden, inscrutable, deep, difficult to understand, obscure' etc. It is very different in the biblical usage. Here it refers to 'something that has been kept secret for a long time, but is now revealed.' The parables set forth truth about the Kingdom that has not been previously grasped or understood. In Matthew 13, there are seven such parables.

1. THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER. (Matt.13:1-23)

- A. The Sower is the Holy Spirit.
- B. The Seed is the Word of God
- C. The Soil is the human heart

The Four Kinds of Soil speak of the four distinct reactions to the seed sown.

The Wayside Hearer (Matt.13:4) represents those whose heart is hard. The seed cannot penetrate the hard ground. It lies on the surface. Birds come and devour it. The seed never takes root.

The Stony Ground (Matt.13:5) represents a shallow, superficial reception of the Word. He receives the Word emotionally, with joy (v.20) but it is not able to penetrate. When troubles come, this person turns from the Kingdom again.

The Thorny Ground (Matt.13:7) speaks of the heart that receives the Word of God but is over-occupied with the thoughts, cares and concerns of this life. The care of this life, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust for other things, are like thorns that spring up and choke the plant. Ananias and Sapphira were examples of this. (Acts 5:1-11)

The Good Ground, (Matt.13:8) is the good soil of the heart that is open, receptive, soft and will bring forth good fruit. Even in this good soil there will be some variation in response. Some will bring forth 30 fold, some 60 fold and some 100 fold. This is a lesson that it took me, as a Pastor, some considerable time to learn. The fact that in every congregation even amongst those who are represented as good soil, there will be some 30 fold, some 60 fold and some 100 fold Christians. Often a Pastor is frustrated because not everyone in the congregation is

bringing forth 100 fold. Jesus warned us that some would only bring 30, others 60. If you have a good proportion of '100' people, be very grateful for them.

This parable teaches that the Kingdom comes upon a man softly, like seed falling on the ground. It does not descend like a hammer or a thunderbolt. The Kingdom is not forced upon anyone. It can be resisted and refused. God does not want prisoners. He wants volunteers. He will never drive anyone into His Kingdom. Some people will give more attention to the concerns of this life, and the seeds of the Spirit will be strangled. They are the poorer for their folly.

2. THE WHEAT AND THE TARES. (Matt.13:24-30)

- A. The Sower is the Son of Man, Jesus. Vs. 37
- B. The Field is the whole world. Vs 38
- C. The Good Seed are the children of the Kingdom. Redeemed sons of God, sown in various parts of the world to gather a harvest for God.
- D. The Wheat represents those who obey the Gospel of the Kingdom
- E. The Tares are the children of the wicked one. Sown by the Devil.
- F. The Harvest is the end of the Age.

This present age is going to climax in a tremendous harvest.
Both wheat and tares are growing up together
God will gather the wheat into His barns, but the tares will be cast into hell.
There will be a time of reward for the righteous. ***"Then shall the children of the Kingdom, shine forth as the sun, in the Kingdom of the Father."*** (Matt.13:43)

This parable teaches that the Kingdom of God is a universal Kingdom.
The Field is the (whole) world.
The Kingdom of God is not the exclusive right of any people.
It is truly international, multi-national, multi-racial.
The Gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed to ALL NATIONS, for a witness to all the world. (Matt.24:14)

The last days of this Age will see the emergence of a great missionary program when Jesus will sow dedicated Christians all across the world. There will be much cross-fertilisation, as Christians of every ethnic origin go forth into all the world at Christ's command.

The revival of the last days will not be a 'neat and tidy' religious awakening. The tares are also growing up prolifically amongst the wheat. Satan will enjoy a revival as well. False Christs will abound. Strange sects will proliferate, deceiving many, but the end will climax with a tremendous manifestation of the Kingdom of our God. His rule will be firmly established in the earth. ***"The kingdoms of this world, will become the Kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ."*** (Rev.11:15).

3. THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED. (Matt.13:31,32)

- A. The Sower is the Lord Jesus.
- B. The Field is the world, that Christ purchased through His death.
- C. The Mustard Seed is amongst the tiniest of seeds, but it grew into a huge tree.

The mustard seed is almost insignificant, it is so small. The coming of the Kingdom, in the form of the tiny infant Christ, was also small in its beginnings. Even when He ascended into heaven, many believe only 500 people were present to see Him leave. The small group of 120, waiting in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, were an unimpressive, insignificant

company. Yet from that gathering the Gospel went to every part of the then known world. They were to be designated, "*they who have turned the world upside down.*" (Acts 17:6).

4. THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN. (Matt.13:33-35).

Some interpret this parable of the spreading influence of leaven as symbolic of the great prophetic spread of the Christian Faith. However, this interpretation contradicts the symbolism of leaven as it applies throughout the Scriptures. Biblically, leaven is always symbolic of evil. This parable is more difficult to interpret than that of the Mustard Seed. The woman here is obviously an opponent of Christ. The leaven is that of false doctrine. Three measures of meal are evidently a normal quantity used in baking. (Gen.18:6).

The woman is obviously infusing the Kingdom age with false doctrines. She is evidently the 'great harlot' of Revelation. The parable teaches the necessity to beware of false doctrines, that will abound at the climax of the Age. Even the very elect of God could be deceived if they do not exercise due care and discretion. Notice that this woman hid the leaven, typical of sin that loves darkness and abhors the light. We must ensure that we walk in the light at all times.

5. THE HIDDEN TREASURE. (Matt.13:44)

Though the Treasure is often seen to be Christ, the Gospel, the Kingdom, which in order to obtain it, a man will sell everything that he has, this view is inconsistent with the interpretation of the other parables. In this series of parables, the man always represents Christ, so the story may be understood as follows:-

- A. The Purchaser of the field is Christ.
- B. The Field is the world, that Christ buys back for God.
- C. The Hidden Treasure is the Kingdom of God in the form of a redeemed people, surrendered to the rule of God.
- D. The Purchaser sells all that he has in order to purchase it. Redemption cost Christ everything He had. He gave His life, His all.
- E. He did so joyfully, finding great satisfaction as He beholds the results of His travail (Isa.53:11).

6. THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE. (Matt.13:45,46)

- A. Again, the Merchant is Christ, seeking goodly pearls, the results of His travail (Isa.53:11)
- B. The 'Pearl of Great Price' is the redeemed community.
- C. The Price Paid for the pearl, is His own life.

The Merchant is Christ, who came seeking men and women (goodly pearls). Ultimately He gave all He had to purchase one great pearl, the great company of the redeemed, which He bought with His life's blood. The pearl is a beautiful symbol for the redeemed.

Life Is Involved In The Formation Of The Pearl

In contrast to precious jewels such as diamonds and emeralds that are formed by inorganic materials, pearls are formed by the activities of a living creature. So the life of Christ is essentially involved in the formation of the redeemed community.

Suffering Is Also Involved.

The pearl is formed by the entry of a grain of sand or similar substance, into the body of an oyster. An irritation occurs that makes the oyster bleed and emits a secretion with which to cover the irritating particle. As this builds layer on layer, the pearl is formed. The oyster gives its life for the formation of the pearl. Christ gave His life for the formation of the Church.

Polishing Beautifies The Pearl.

Pearls appear to be of little value until they are polished and then they are literally transformed. So with the Christians, who at first appear to be of little worth or beauty. God has His methods and processes for polishing the Christian. When the process is finally complete, they will shine with great beauty and radiance in the Kingdom of God.

Pearls Are Soft And Can Easily Be Scratched

by contact with hard gems such as diamonds. They should therefore be kept separately. Believers should not be unlawfully yoked with unbelievers.

Pearls Adorn And Beautify Their Owner.

They are worn to enhance the beauty of the wearer. One day, the pearl of great price will be displayed by God with great satisfaction. It will display to the world the manifest wisdom of God. (Eph.2:7 ; 3:10,11).

THE PARABLE OF THE DRAGNET.

A. The Net is the Gospel. Typical of the large type of net that is often left in the water for a long time. It depicts the Gospel, which was sent forth into all the world.

B. The Sea, symbolised the restless nations. (Luke 21:25; Dan.7:3,17). It typifies humanity.

C. The Net filled, speaks of the great ingathering at the close of the Age. Isaiah, speaking of this time said, "*The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee.*" (Isa.60:5)

D. The Good Fish are those who surrender to the rule of God. They are gathered into the vessels of the Lord.

E. The Bad Fish are cast away into judgement.

Chapter Eight

RECEIVING THE UNSHAKEABLE KINGDOM

The Kingdom of God is manifested in six stages,

1. It was initiated at creation when God became the owner and land-lord of the universe.
2. It was usurped by Satan through the Fall of mankind.
3. It was announced as PRESENT with the emergence of Jesus.
4. It was redeemed (bought back) from Satan through Christ redemptive work.

John the Baptist, having recognised Christ, began to declare "*The Kingdom of God is at hand.*" (Matt.3:2). As Jesus commenced His public ministry, He announced "*The Kingdom has arrived.*" (Matt.4:17 - literal translation). He immediately began to teach the principles of the Kingdom (Matt.5,6 & 7) and urged His hearers to build their lives on this foundation.

5. The Kingdom came with POWER at Pentecost, with the coming of the Holy Ghost (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor.4:20). Since that time it has existed invisibly in the hearts of men and women who have received its rule in their lives. The Kingdom is presently a spiritual, invisible Kingdom, established in the hearts of Christ's disciples.

6. It will soon be manifest with GLORY, at the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. It will then become a visible, physical Kingdom incorporating all the "*Kingdoms of this world,*" which will become the "*Kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ and over which He will rule forever and ever.*" (Rev.11:15). "*We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now*" (Rom.8:22,R.S.V.) - waiting for the unveiling of the Sons of God, and the glorious manifestation of God's Kingdom on Earth (Rom.8:19).

The Return Of Christ To Earth

Better known as the "Second Coming," the Return of Christ is the focal point of the Ages. It constitutes the precise moment in time when the Rule of God becomes manifest in the earth for all to see. It is the fulcrum on which the prophetic purpose of God swings. It ushers in the Rule of God over all the earth and all the nations that inhabit it.

John saw in a vision that this would happen. He heard great voices in heaven saying, "*The kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdom of our God and His Messiah, and He shall reign forever and forever.*" (Rev 11:15)

The truth of the Second Coming is probably the most controversial of all biblical subjects. There are so many interpretations of the relevant Scriptures. Every Bible scholar is convinced that he has the correct interpretation and that all others are wrong. In this article I will purposely avoid going into detail of what I personally believe to be the manner of Christ's return.

Exactly when and how this earth shaking event will happen has become the subject of much speculation and controversy, and I have no intention or desire to add to it. Nor is my purpose to support any one of the numerous positions held.

Some years ago I held very dogmatic opinions on this subject. I preached and taught them with great fervour and conviction. In more recent years I have recognised that I do not have a monopoly on truth. I began to realise that there are many minor issues about Christ's return that will remain uncertain until the event happens. I then stopped being dogmatic on what were basically side issues. I wanted to know what the main principles were and to major on those. Please allow me to share briefly on those basic issues that I feel to be the important ones.

1: JESUS WILL DEFINITELY RETURN TO THIS EARTH.

"I will come again, and receive you to Myself." (John 14: 3)

"This same Jesus, who is taken up from you unto heaven, shall come again in like manner as you have seen Him go." (Acts 1:11)

"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear a second time without sin unto salvation." (Heb 9:28)

"And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives which is before Jerusalem in the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof towards the east, and towards the west." (Zech 14:4)

2: NO ONE KNOWS EXACTLY WHEN THIS WILL HAPPEN.

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven, but My Father." (Matt. 24 : 36.)

"For in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man will come." (Matt. 24 : 44)

3: WE MUST BE CONSTANTLY PREPARED.

"Watch, therefore; for you know not what hour your Lord may come."
(Matt. 24:42)

"And every man that has this hope within him, purifies himself even as Christ is pure." (1 John 3:3)

Anticipating the return of the Lord should keep us spiritually alert. The element of uncertainty should keep us in a constant state of readiness. Whether He returns before the tribulation, in the middle, or at the close of it, the important thing is to be ready at all times. To use the biblical analogy, our lamps must be trimmed and burning, and we must have an adequate supply of oil. (Oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit, and our lamps depict the light of our witness before the world.) The lamps signify members of a wedding party who await the coming of the Bridegroom.

4: WE MUST BE ACTIVELY DOING THE WORK OF THE KINGDOM.

"A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, (each worth about three months salary) and said to them, Occupy till I come." (Luke 19:12, 13)

The word translated 'occupy' can also be translated "do business," or "trade." It is the Greek word 'pragmatazomai', from which we get the English word, pragmatism, or to be practical. So we need to recognise that God expects us to be going about the work of His Kingdom in a practical manner, as we anticipate His return.

5: IT WILL OCCUR IN TWO STAGES

It is clearly apparent that the return of Christ to earth will occur in two distinct stages.

The first is referred to as the **RAPTURE**. The second the **REVELATION**.

The Rapture is the Return of Christ FOR His saints.

1 Thess 4:15-18

*16. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will **be caught up together** with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage each other with these words. NIV*

The phrase, "caught up together" is translated from harpazo (pronounced har-pad'zo); meaning to catch (away, or up), pluck, pull, take (by force).

The Revelation, His Return to earth WITH His saints.

2 Thess 1:6-7

*6. God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is **revealed from heaven** in blazing fire with his powerful angels. NIV*

The word "revealed" is apokalupsis (pronounced ap-ok-al'-oop-sis); meaning in KJV-appearing, coming, manifestation, to be revealed, revelation.

Much speculation abounds amongst Bible students and scholars as to exactly when each of these events will happen and what may be the time span between them. Many believe that the rapture will occur before the Great Tribulation, whilst others believe it will occur in the middle of it. (i.e. after three and a half years of it) Still others expect it to occur immediately after the Great Tribulation. Whichever may be correct is yet to be seen but the important thing is that Christ **WILL** return to earth.

It does appear apparent however that God's saints shall experience extremely troubled times before Christ's return. E.g.

Matt 24:4-8

4 Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. 6 You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. 7 Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are the beginning of birth pains. (NIV)

6: HE WILL RULE OVER THE NATIONS ON EARTH.

"The kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdom of our God and of His messiah, and he shall reign forever and forever." (Rev 11:15)

The prayer that Jesus taught His disciples to pray will find ultimate fulfilment. *"Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven."* (Matt 6:10)

His Kingdom is already present here in the hearts of those who love, honour and serve Him. Those to whom He is truly Lord. But on His return, His reign and His Kingdom, will become visible for all to see and recognise. To all who positively and joyfully anticipate Christ's return

2 Peter 3:11-12

11. *Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,*

12. *looking for and hastening (eagerly awaiting) the coming of the day of God,*
NKJV

Christ will then be crowned King of kings, and Lord of lords, and all the nations on earth will submit to His sovereign rule.

"Every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." (Phil 2:11)

The return of Christ to earth will not be merely a brief visit to evacuate His Church. He is actually returning to earth to take the reins of government for eternity. This earth will then be restored to its former glory and nations will live upon it under the benign dictatorship of Christ.

A World In Travail

Travail speaks of the pains of labour (muscular contractions) experienced prior to birth. The whole of creation today is experiencing birth pains, prior to the "birthing" of the Kingdom of God in glory.

"Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction of the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt. And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; for they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth." (Isaiah 13:68)

Rom 8:18-23

18. *Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will give us later.*

19. *For all creation is waiting patiently and hopefully for that future day when God will resurrect his children.*

20. *For on that day thorns and thistles, sin, death, and decay -the things that overcame the world against its will at God's command-will all disappear, and the world around us will share in the glorious freedom from sin which God's children enjoy.*

22. *For we know that even the things of nature, like animals and plants, suffer in sickness and death as they await this great event.*

23. *And even we Christians, although we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, also groan to be released from pain and suffering.* TLB

All of creation animate and inanimate, is groaning together, longing for the time when God will manifest His rule over the world and the nations again.

The consternation of the nations today is part of God's plan for the unveiling of His Kingdom. Every government on earth is experiencing grave problems, many of which have no human solution. God did not initiate these problems, man has brought them on himself by ignoring and flouting God's law. Humanism is about to reveal its fatal flaws. Creation is soon to

witness the irrefutable proof that man cannot successfully run this world without God's Kingdom rule.

Multitudes In Confusion and Consternation

Joel 3:14

14. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!(consternation) For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. NKJV

Humanistic society is headed for disintegration and destruction. The world wide problems of economic inflation, political unrest, international terrorism and starvation will never be solved by politics, religion or diplomacy. Mankind is confronted with a myriad of problems for which there is no human solution. It is a situation that demands the intervention of Almighty God.

The Shaking Of ALL Things

"For thus saith the Lord of Hosts; yet once, for just a brief period, I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. And I will shake all nations and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts." (Haggai 2:6,7).

Here God speaks prophetically of His intention to shake all nations in the last days, before the coming of His Son. The phrase "yet once" signifies the uniqueness of this period in that its intensity will only occur once in history on such a scale. "For a little while" indicates that it will happen for a relatively short, not a prolonged period. Yet the intensity of it will be so great that it will affect all the nations on earth. It is a period of time that will culminate in the earthly advent of God's Messiah. So great will be the shaking that entire earthly kingdoms will be overthrown to clear the world stage for the establishment of God's great Kingdom. (Rev 11:15) The great shaking will be the necessary step to clear the stage entirely prior to the unveiling of God's visible presence and rule over the earth.

This predicted "shaking" has already begun and will spread and intensify progressively before the return of the Lord Messiah. The shaking will encompass every area of life throughout the whole earth. Every nation on our planet will experience the impact and intensity of it. The political structures, philosophies and false religious ideologies of men are about to be overthrown in preparation for the manifestation of God's Sovereign rule. This gigantic transition will not be accomplished without enormous stress. All the humanistic ideologies and societies of mankind will be broken in pieces and swept aside to clear the world stage for the appearance and presence of God's Messiah, as King of kings and Lord of lords. Every nation on earth will feel the after shocks of this unprecedented event. So, when we witness sweeping changes and the sudden overthrow of humanistic structures of politics and religions, those who are in Christ have no need to fear for all these things must happen before the return Christ's return to earth.

The Desire of All Nations

Many different interpretations have been given to this statement but careful reading of the Biblical prophecies will convince an open mind that it clearly refers to the Messiah. The events surrounding this verse are obviously a prelude to Messiah's Coming. When God speaks of "The Desire of all nations," (Haggai 2:7) we Christians know to whom He refers. He is obviously speaking of Christ the Messiah. But can we honestly say at this point in time, that Christ IS the desire of all nations? Is He truly the desire of the Communist nations? Is He the desire of the Islamic nations? Is He truly the desire of the capitalist Western World? The honest answer to these questions is NO. Christ is not presently the desire of these nations.

They are not looking for Him and longing for His appearance. This title, the "Desire of all Nations," must be understood in its context.

Let me try to paraphrase what I believe God is saying. "I am going to thoroughly shake all the nations on earth, and when I get through with shaking them, Christ will be the desire of those nations." For God will shake their confidence, their pride, their resources. They will be broken, and helpless. God will bring them face to face with reality of their ultimate inability to run this world. The pride of the United Nations Organisation will be in the dust. The strength of Godless Communism will be smashed. The fervency of militant Islam will be exhausted. The wealth of Babylon will be bankrupted. Every humanistic institution will be dissolved.

From the smouldering ruins of humanism, the Kingdom of God will arise with great authority and glory. God says,

"I will overthrow the throne of Kingdoms and I will destroy the strength of the Kingdoms of the Heathen" (Haggai 2:22)

God says ***"Yet once more will I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word 'yet once more' signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a Kingdom which cannot be moved (shaken) let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear."*** (Heb.12:26-28).

This is a direct reference to Haggai 2:6,7. It refers to the shaking of the kingdoms (nations). God is predicting a time when He will shake the earth so violently that every man-made thing (Heb.12:27) - as of things that are made will be smashed. The only things that will survive this testing are those things that are the "established by the Lord." Earthly kings, rulers, dictators, presidents and governments will be brought to the ground. All earthly rule will be smashed. Law and order will disintegrate. Anarchy will prevail. So fearful will be the result that men everywhere, will begin to cry out fervently for the government of God to come.

"And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth. To go into the cleft of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth." (Isaiah 2:19,21)

Christ, as the true King of the Universe, will become the Desire of ALL Nations (Haggai 2:7).

"Every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil.2:10,11).

"Many nations shall be joined unto the Lord in that day and shall be my people and I will dwell in the midst of them." (Zech.2:11).

"Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of Hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord" (Zech.8:22).

"The Lord is high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens" (Psa.113:4).

"Who shall not fear Thee, O King of the nations? The Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting King: at His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His indignation." (Jer.10:7A,10).

"And all men shall be blessed in Him: and all nations shall call Him blessed."(Psa.72:17)

The Kingdom Emerges In Much Tribulation

"That we must, through much tribulation enter the Kingdom of God."(Acts14:22).

In this statement Paul shares a principle of the Kingdom, that it is through much "testing" that we 'enter' the Kingdom. The implication of this statement is consistent throughout the Scriptures. The word that is most frequently translated tribulation is the Greek word "*thlipsis*." It occurs frequently in the Bible and is variously translated, testing, trial, tribulation. It usually refers to a time or condition of trial that becomes a test for God's people to reveal how they will act and respond under such adverse circumstances. It also refers to times of tribulation that serve to refine and purify God's people as they are pushed to seek Him more diligently and more fervently because of the difficult times in which they find themselves.

We Christians should not imagine that we shall escape the effects of this shaking. As God shakes the world, its institutions, politics, and the economy, millions of lives will be affected, including those of many Christians. The Church itself will experience many severe shakings too. It will seem as though everything in life is being shaken and tested. Our faith in God will be tested. Our perception of the Church will be tested. Our belief system, the doctrines we hold so dear, everything will be subjected to trial and testing. God is seeking to show us what is really in our hearts.

God would like His people to enter the Kingdom in the easy way. *"Fear not,"* He says, *"it is the Father's good pleasure to 'give' you the Kingdom."*(Luke 12:32) But the perversity of human nature usually refuses the opportunity to come the easy way and chooses instead to come the hard way, entering the Kingdom through much tribulation.

God wants to make the Kingdom a gift to His people. He wishes for them to receive it simply and easily by surrendering completely to His Will. Unfortunately we often make it difficult for Him to do so. I have often observed that we can come into the purposes of God in either of two ways:

Firstly, God seeks to bring us in the easy way. He seeks to DRAW us into His purpose. But if we will not allow Him to draw us into His plans, then He will allow circumstances to develop, that will DRIVE us into them. This is so often the case, that He says *"You will enter the Kingdom through times of great tribulation and testing."*(Acts 14:22). This is true of us individually and it is true of the Church collectively. This principle also pertains to the nations, that will ultimately come under His rule (Rev.11:15). They elect to come the hard way.

The Battle Of The Kingdoms

In Rev. 11:15 we read a very exciting statement, great voices in heaven saying *"The Kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever."*

In contrast to this, in Rev.13:7 is a chilling statement concerning Anti-Christ, *"and power was given him over all kindreds and tongues, and nations."*

Throughout the book of Revelation we witness the two greatest spiritual forces in the universe battling for control of the nations. On one hand, Satan gives power and authority to the Anti-Christ, that he might rule the world. On the other hand the statement of God's eternal purpose is again declared, that all the earthly Kingdoms are ultimately to become the Kingdoms of the Lord. These two great opposing forces are confronting each other today. The demonic forces of Satan are battling against the Army of the Lord.

Happily the outcome is already known. John saw it prophetically and wrote, "*These, (the earthly rulers) have one mind and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for He is the Lord of lords and the King of kings, and they that are with Him are called, and chosen and faithful.*" (Rev.17:13,14)

We are witnesses of this great battle today. The struggle for power, in evidence throughout the earth, is really the result of a gigantic battle that is being fought in the heavenlies. We are witnessing the effects of that battle here on earth. The real conflict today is not Communism versus Capitalism. It is not Black versus White. It is not ultimately political, social, economic or religious. Unregenerate man is merely a pawn or puppet in the hands of a greater, diabolical power. The wicked principalities that occupy strongholds in the heavens are waging their fiercest battle in order to delay the manifestation of God's righteous rule over the earth. A tremendous battle is being waged in the heavenly realms that is having fearful repercussions here on planet earth.

Isaac And Ishmael

The great spiritual battle that is presently taking place in the heavenly realms is the culmination of the brotherly feud that began in Genesis 16, the animosity between Ishmael and Isaac. Down through the centuries an invisible, spiritual battle has manifested itself in the prejudice incited against the Jews, Isaac's descendants, by the offspring of Ishmael. The book of Genesis holds the keys to all human history. Within its pages God pre-writes a prediction of history. As part of this scenario we discover clues in Gen 25 about the eventual climax of this family feud. After long years of acrimony and animosity Isaac and Ishmael eventually came together at the death of their mutual father Abraham.

Gen 25:7-11

8. Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people.

9. His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite,

10. the field Abraham had bought from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried with his wife Sarah.

11. After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, who then lived near Beer Lahai Roi.

NIV

Isaac and Ishmael were evidently reconciled at the death of their father standing together to bury him. Following the funeral Isaac dwelt in Israel where God blessed and increased him. Ishmael returned to the land of his own people. Gen 25:17.

A Modern Anti-Christ

About fourteen centuries ago (approximately 622 AD) a new religion which became known as Islam, sprang up in Arabia. It began in Mecca when Allah (the Muslim concept of God) is said to have revealed himself to a young man named Ubu'l Kassim who came to be known as Muhammad. Muslims believe that Allah revealed to Muhammad the sayings that were recorded in the Koran, which became the Muslim equivalent of the Holy Bible. The Koran proclaims that Islam is the same religion practised by Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus in their respective periods of history. Muhammad who was born in 570 A.D. is said to be a descendant of Abraham and Ishmael. Muslims are descendants of Ishmael and a major difference between the Koran and the Bible is that Ishmael is exalted and preferred above Isaac. Also, many of its stories about Jesus are said to have taken place in Arabia.

Belief in the prophets, an aspect of Islamic theology, involves all the prophets in the Koran and identifies them thus,

- a. Adam, was the chosen one of God
- b. Noah, was the prophet of God
- c. Abraham, was the friend of God.
- d. Ishmael, was the sacrifice of God.
- e. Moses, the converser with God.
- f. Jesus, was the word of God.
- g. Muhammad, is the final and greatest messenger of God.

The Koran claims that its message is none other than a repetition of the one contained in the “previous scriptures.” (a Muslim euphemism for the Holy Bible) It therefore claims that Islam is a new facet of Judaism and Christianity, but a later, superior, final revelation of God. It further claims that Muhammad and the Koran supersede Judaism and Christianity the followers of which are now infidels worthy only of death.

The Arab world into which Muhammad was born was polytheistic, housing some 360 shrines used to worship stone idols and spirits. (jinn’s) Although they acknowledged a deity whom they called Al-Ilah or Allah, as the supreme being, they did not worship him. They worshipped some 360 hand-made idols as Allah’s daughters. It was amongst these conditions that Muhammad is said to have been called by Allah to warn the Arabs around Mecca that they should worship Allah and his prophet Muhammad.

The city of Mecca, birth-place of Muhammad, became the main centre for Islamic pilgrimage and worship. The ka’bah (black stone) which is also called Beit Ullah (the house of God) is said to have been built by Abraham and Isaac. The Arabs used to worship this stone and even modern Muslims venerate it as a mark of respect to their ancestor Abraham.

From childhood Muhammad devoted much of his time to quiet meditation in pursuit of truth and guidance. At such times he often devoted himself so deeply to prayer and meditation that at times he would go into a trance and even into convulsions. He was initially reticent to accept the call to be Allah’s prophet, fearing that he may become mad or become possessed by an evil spirit. In such times of pressure he frequently considered committing suicide. The essence of the “revelations” he received was a strange combination of Jewish and Christian beliefs altered to serve Muhammad’s purpose. Muhammad regarded and proclaimed himself as the final and greatest of all the prophets. Some of his relatives, especially his wife Khadijah reassured him and convinced him to accept the task before him. Muhammad’s keen sense of vocation constantly drove him to spread his message far and wide throughout his homeland. He eventually died in 632 A.D. at the age of 62 by which time he had conquered most of Arabia. The small army of followers he had amassed continued his mission after his death and Islam began to spread throughout the earth. Today there are almost 1,000 million Muslims around the world and they constitute one of the world’s fastest growing religions. Throughout the history of Islam, since the death of Muhammad, eleven Imams have reigned over Islam. According to common Sunni tradition, when the 11th Imam died at a young age he is said to have left no heir. This dilemma threw Islam into great confusion and caused his followers to divide into numerous sects one of which was the Shi’ite tradition which today comprises the majority of the citizens of Iran. This sect claimed that the 11th Imam actually did have a son named Muhammad born in 869 A.D. who was hidden by his father. He is believed to still be somewhere on earth and will one day reappear to take his place at the head of Islam. Belief in the existence of the hidden twelfth imam and his future return became one of the distinguishing features of the Shi’ite sect. It is significant that his name was Muhammad because his prophetic task is to fulfil the work begun by his forefather of the same name.

The title of the hidden one is “al-Mahdi” or the “rightly guided one.” He is the Islamic equivalent of our Messiah, an anti-Christ, usurping the place of Christ and His coming Kingdom. According to a statement by the fifth Imam it is known what al-Mahdi will look like. “He is a young man of medium stature, with a handsome face and beautiful hair which flows to his shoulders. The hair of his beard and head are black. A light rises on his face.” (The similarities between he and Jesus Christ are obviously intentional.)

The present government of Iran is seen to be only temporary until the emergence of Al Mahdi who is recognised as the only legitimate ruler of all Muslims. He will one day return to “fill the earth with justice and establish universal Islamic rule over the nations.” His kingdom of justice is described as “paradise on earth.” “In his time injustice will be completely removed from the earth. No person of any religion other than Islam will remain without being shown the truth of Islam and confessing belief in it.” The concept that Muhammad al Mahdi will soon appear as the universal saviour and renewer of Islam is held throughout the entire Islamic world though it is the Shi’ites that have grasped this concept with the greatest fervour. They believe in the inevitable conquest of the world by Islam, largely through Jihad (holy war) and the return of al-Mahdi.

We can readily see that Muhammad al Mahdi is actually an anti-Christ, i.e. a substitute or replacement for the true Christ. One meaning of anti-Christ is “in place of Christ.” The Islamic rule that Mahdi is supposed to establish on earth would be an Islamic world rulership, usurping the role of the Kingdom of Jehovah God. It is also clear that the spiritual war raging today in heavenly places and causing the great fear and unrest that fills our world, is actually a battle between the spiritual armies of Jehovah God and the principalities and powers of darkness. In this great battle Jerusalem is the major prize and ultimately only Jehovah will be capable defending it and securing it for His people Israel.

Isa 31:4-6

4. This is what the LORD says to me: "As a lion grows, a great lion over his prey- and though a whole band of shepherds is called together against him, he is not frightened by their shouts or disturbed by their clamour-so the LORD Almighty will come down to do battle on Mount Zion and on its heights. 5 Like birds hovering overhead, the LORD Almighty will shield Jerusalem; he will shield it and deliver it, he will pass over it and will rescue it." NIV

The Shi’ite Muslims today constantly attract the attention of the world media because they are the most virulently anti-Western of all Muslims. They are also a particularly savage, brutal, war-like people. In addition to observing the five pillars of Islam, they add a sixth, -jihad or holy war. Their utmost purpose is to spread the Koran and Islamic law throughout the whole world whether through the tongue, the pen or the sword. Anything that opposes or threatens to hinder this purpose is fit only for destruction and annihilation. This includes Judaism and Christianity and all who hold those beliefs. The power of the Ayatollah’s today is such that one might wonder whether an Ayatollah may not be a future anti-Christ, especially since his rise to power is said to be from a nation adjacent to Israel. Daniel 8:9.

The Battle For Jerusalem

Although the spiritual battle is being manifested today in many places on earth such as Sudan, Kosovo, Chechnya, Ireland, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq etc, the fiercest and most prolonged aspect of this gigantic spiritual war is being played out in Israel and particularly with regard to Jerusalem. The city of Jerusalem will become the seat of God’s government on earth. God’s Messiah, Jesus, will be enthroned in Jerusalem upon the historic throne of David from where

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He will rule all the nations on earth. Jerusalem symbolises God's earthly eternal rule over the nations and Satan is making a final attempt to thwart God's prophetic plan by destroying Jerusalem and the Jewish nation.

It is not simply the physical city of Jerusalem that is the point of contention, it is what that site represents, the location of the coming "New Jerusalem." And the earthly throne of God. The New Jerusalem will be situated directly above the present Jerusalem. Hence the awesome battle in the heavenly realms, concerning this city and site.

Rev 21:1-4

2. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

4. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

This is precisely why every Christian should pray continually for the peace of Jerusalem.

Because when a permanent state of peace is established in Jerusalem it will also prevail throughout the remainder of the world.

Ps 122:6-123:1

6. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May those who love you be secure.

7. May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels."

8. For the sake of my brothers and friends, I will say, "Peace be within you."

9. For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your prosperity.

This great spiritual battle is already engaged and no solution will be found for it until the emergence of the Messiah who will personally and physically intervene. The repercussions of this powerful battle will impact upon the whole world. Zechariah predicts that Jerusalem will become THE centre of world attention as all the Gentile nations eventually combine against her.

Zech 12:3

And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.
NKJV

When all the nations, probably by lateral agreement through the United Nations Organisation, unite their efforts against Israel and her capital city, Jerusalem, the Messiah will suddenly return to earth to defend and rescue her.

Zech 12:8-9

8. In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of the LORD before them.

9. It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. NKJV

The Lord Himself will defend and deliver the inhabitants of Jerusalem after which He will reveal Himself to the House of Israel as their long awaited Messiah Deliverer.

Zech 12:10

10. And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.

NKJV

Immediately after the tremendous victory that God will give His people in Israel, He will reveal Himself to them as the One who was pierced, i.e. the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, who was wounded and died for the sins of the whole world. He will then make that cleansing available to His Beloved people Israel.

Zech 13:1

13:1 In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. NKJV

The Conflict of the Ages is now upon us. Satan is making his final desperate bid to keep control of the world. God is about to overthrow him, and establish His own government once again.

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation and strength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him, by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony and they loved not their lives unto the death." (Rev.12:10,11).

How we long for the ultimate conclusion, when the voice of the great multitude, as the voice of many waters, and mighty thunderings will announce, ***"ALLELUIA, FOR THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH!"***

Hastening (Accelerating) The Coming Of The Kingdom

Matt 6:9-10

9. *In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.*

10. *Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. NKJV*

When Jesus commanded His disciples to pray in this manner, He clearly confirmed that it is eminently possible to us to influence and hasten the emergence of His glorious Kingdom on earth. This is not a nice little poem to be recited. It is a powerful intercession that God will answer if we will faithfully make it. We people of God, through earnest prayer with intercession, can actually hasten the return of Christ to this earth.

Every Christian on earth needs to become persuaded about this truth and to give themselves positively and sacrificially to earnest prayer and intercession to the end that God's perfect Will may be performed in this earth even as it is already in Heaven.

Chapter Nine

THE GLORIOUS MANIFEST KINGDOM

The underlying theme of all the Scriptures is the ultimate manifestation of the universal Kingdom of God. From Genesis, where God manifested His Kingdom in the garden of Eden, to the book of Revelation, where its complete restoration is gloriously consummated, the Kingdom of God is the consistent theme throughout the Bible.

The Prophets predicted it. The Psalmists sang about it. Jesus proclaimed it, and the Apostles expounded it. How strange and tragic it is there is so little mention of it in the churches today! **If we do not grasp the purpose of God in respect to the consummation of His Kingdom, we will never properly understand the ways of God or His dealings with men and nations.** Behind God's acts lie His eternal purpose to establish His rule on earth. The present activity of God within His Church, will not be properly understood, till seen with the background of God's Kingdom intention.

We are living at that crucial, transitional period that Paul calls, the *"ends of the Ages"* (1 Cor.10:11). The dispensation of Grace, which is the Church Age, is almost complete, and the Kingdom Age is about to be ushered in. If these periods could be depicted as circles, we would see that they do not merely touch at the outer extremes of their circumference. They actually overlap somewhat. The area of overlap is the 'ends of the Ages.'" The end of one dispensation, and the beginning of the next. There is a transitional period between them. That is where the world is poised now, in the transition period between the end of the Gospel Age and the emergence of the Kingdom Age. You can therefore understand why there is such a crisis in the earth. The great, eternal purposes of God for the earth are about to reach their climax.

In Ephesians, Paul refers to it as, *"The Fullness (pleroma) of times."* (Eph.1:10) It is that moment in history towards which everything has been moving steadily since the beginning of history. We are the people, on whom the ends of the ages have come.

Very soon now all history will find its fulfilment. Everything will come to a dramatic climax when God will *"gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth."* (Eph.1:10). The Kingdom of God will then be established on this earth, and Christ will reign upon the Throne of David. Let us consider briefly, some of the features of this great Kingdom.

It will be:

1. THEOCRATIC.

Theocracy, means "Government by God, directly, or through a Priestly company." This was God's desire and intention from the beginning. He purposed to rule the earth through a delegated authority.

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Lucifer was the first being to rule the earth under God's authority. (See Ezek 28:11-19 and Isaiah 14:12-21) These biblical narratives tell the remarkable story of the reign, and subsequent Fall of Lucifer, during his pre-history reign on planet earth. Jeremiah 4:23-27 tells the story of God's judgement of the earth following Lucifer's rebellion.

Adam and Eve were then created and appointed by God to rule the restored planet earth. Sadly they too failed to keep God's requirements and lost their God delegated right to rule the planet. But before the Lord banished them from Eden, He gave a remarkable prophetic promise about a Redeemer who would come to break Satan's tyranny, regain the rule of earth, and delegate it to a redeemed company of humans. (Gen. 3:15. and Rom. 16:20.)

Gen 3:15

15And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. KJV

Rom 16:19-20

20And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. NKJV

The Church is that redeemed company, and God is presently preparing His covenant people to exercise His rule in the earth. It will be established by the will and authority of God and not that of mortal man. Theocracy means "Government by God" directly, or through an intermediary company. This is in contrast to a Democracy which is government by the will of the people. Democracies have failed miserably, as have every human form of government.

Every form of humanistic government will be overthrown, including Dictatorships, Democracies, Totalitarianism, Marxism, National Socialism, Capitalism, and all forms of humanistic government. There will be no more elections, referendums, revolutions, or political coups. Styles of government, will never be determined or imposed by man again. In the "last days" when Almighty God shakes all the nations on earth, He will overthrow human governments of every variety, from the extreme right to the extreme left and everything between. The events of this period and the complete inability of every human style of government to cope with the immense problems, will finally convince mankind that he does NOT have what it takes to rule this planet. It is then that Christ, the Messiah, will become the only one whose government will be desired. There will be no earthly political parties, policies, personalities or dictators.

The future world government will be established and maintained by God and the whole earth will benefit. ***"In the days of those kings, SHALL THE GOD OF HEAVEN SET UP A KINGDOM, which shall never be moved."*** (Dan.2:44).

"And I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head was like the pure wool, His throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire." (Dan.7:9).

"I saw in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages, should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (Dan.7:13,14).

"And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him." (Dan.7:27).

God's Righteous Government Will Be Imposed

HIS RIGHTEOUS RULER WILL REIGN. Isa. 9 : 6,7. 11 : 1-5.

Isa 9:6-7

6. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, NIV

HIS RIGHTEOUS LAW WILL BE ADMINISTERED.

Isa. 2: 1-5.

Micah. 4 :1-4.

Isa 2:2-4

2. In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.

3. Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

4. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples.

They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

NIV

HIS RIGHTEOUS SAINTS WILL REIGN WITH HIM Daniel 7:18, 22, 27.

Dan 7:18

18. But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever-yes, for ever and ever.'

Dan 7:22

22. until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favour of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.

Dan 7:26-27

27. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.' NIV

In the Kingdom of God, Christ will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords, from His throne in Jerusalem. This is the 'throne of David' and Christ's enthronement upon it, a fulfilment of the 'sure mercies of David' - the eternal promise made to David and his descendants. God had told David, "***And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee; thy throne shall be established forever.***"(2 Sam.7:16) This promise was reiterated in 1 Chron.17:12,14.

2. A LITERAL, PHYSICAL KINGDOM.

The present reign of God in the earth is not a territorial or geographic one. It is a spiritual, invisible Kingdom, within the lives of His subjects. But this will all be changed when the

Kingdom is established in its fullness. Christ will then rule over this physical planet. The kingdoms of this earth will become the Kingdoms of our Lord (Rev.11:15).

The Kingdom of God, in its future, eternal form, will be established on this planet upon which we live. It will not be an "airy-fairy, will of the wisp kingdom." It will be a solid, physical, earthly Kingdom.

WHAT ABOUT THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH?

The Bible does frequently mention New heavens and a New earth, and this has given many people the impression that is another earth, a new one, therefore a different one. There are several Greek words that are translated "New." The two most frequently used are "Neos," and "Kainos." Although in English both are translated "New," they really have completely different meaning one from the other.

Neos, means new in the sense of just made. For example a new motor vehicle, right off the assembly line, would be "Neos" new.

However, "kainos" means something that has been restored to its original as new condition. An example of this might be an old motor car which has been lovingly restored and is now in as good condition as when it was originally made.

When the Scriptures speak of "new heavens and a new earth," it is the word "kainos" that is used. Therefore the Scriptures are speaking of heavens and earth that have been lovingly restored to their original glorious condition. In other words, God has not bought a new car, He has restored the original one to its previous, glorious condition.

So it is this very planet, earth, upon which we now live, that will become the scene of God's government. After the Fall of Adam and Eve, our planet came under a curse of God. Everything lost its original lustre and glory. The heavenly bodies, the sun, moon and stars were dimmed. They lost their brilliance and original beauty. The sun does not shine with its original strength, and the moon, whose light is merely a reflection of the sun's, does not shine with its original glory either.

All of nature upon this planet is under the curse too. Originally there were no weeds, no poisonous plants. No negative, destructive factors in nature. Everything was positive, and constructive. Everything complemented everything else. When one considers how beautiful the earth is even under the curse, can you imagine what it will be like when eventually the curse is lifted and everything restored to its original unspoilt glory?

The Bible tells us that after the Fall, "All nature was subjected to futility, or condemned to frustration." (Rom 8:20) It was delivered into the bondage of corruption (V.21) The Bible is telling us that the whole universe lost its original purpose, and was sentenced to a term of corruption, futility, frustration, and decay, because of Man's sin. But God did not condemn nature and leave it without any hope. (Rom8:20b) He has made all nature aware that one day there will be a glorious restoration and the original purpose for which God created the universe, (that it would glorify Him and give Him pleasure) will be marvellously restored. In that restoration the universe will be re-endowed with its original, pristine glory. The entire universe will be renovated, and restored to its condition at the time of creation. The sun, moon, and stars, will not only shine with greater radiance than we have ever seen or imagined. They will also tell forth a great story. They will depict the story of creation, rebellion, redemption, and ultimate restoration. (Psa 19:1-6) And throughout this story, the Name, character, and reputation of Jehovah, will be extolled and exalted.

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In the meanwhile, all creation is groaning and travailing together, waiting for the predicted moment in time when that restoration will happen. (Read Rom 8:18-25)

All nature, animate, and inanimate, groans in anticipation of that great day. Nature is like a woman on whom have come the labour pains. In a sense nature is waiting to be birthed once again. ***"For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs until now."*** (V.22.)

Romans. 8 : 19. (AMP.) says, *"For even the whole creation, (all nature) waits expectantly and longs earnestly for the sons of God to be made known (revealed). Because creation was subjected to futility, (condemned to frustration) not because of some intentional fault on its own part, but by the will of Him who subjected it, yet with the hope that creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and corruption, and gain and entrance into the same glorious liberty as the sons of God."*

Notice that this triumphant moment is synonymous with the revealing, or unveiling of the "Sons of God." At the time that God brings His redeemed out of their present anonymity, and reveals them to the world for what they truly are, the whole of nature will be restored too. It will regain its original unsullied magnificence.

All creation and nature,

The heavens, the sun, moon, stars, planets, and constellations.

The earth, the rivers, mountains, and plains.

The whole creation, animate and inanimate, birds, beasts, flora and fauna. has been in mourning, unwillingly condemned to futility, frustration, corruption and decay. Yet with the hope that one day it shall all be restored to its original pristine glory and purpose. It will one day burst into a rhapsody of song, magnifying and glorifying its great Creator and His redemptive triumph.

So many Christians have a vague, abstract concept of the Kingdom. They mentally visualise castles situated amongst the clouds. Many believe that the Kingdom is restricted to heaven. This is possibly because Matthew referred to it so many times as the Kingdom of heaven. This does not mean the Kingdom is only in heaven. The seat of its authority is the throne of God in heaven, but its rule reaches the farthest corners of the universe. Certainly it encompasses this earth.

One of the reasons why Matthew referred to the Kingdom of heaven so often was because the name of God (Jehovah), that high and holy name of God, was treated with such extreme reverence by strict Jews. They are extremely reticent to even mention or write His Name that Matthew chose to speak of the Kingdom of heaven, rather than the Kingdom of God. Even today observant Jews refer to God as *"Ha Shem,"* i.e. *"The Name."*

The rule of God will be established on earth. There will be eternal generations of mankind upon the earth, both Jews and Gentiles and they will live under the rule of Jehovah God. ***"Of the increase of His government and peace, there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgement and with justice, from henceforth even forever."*** (Isa.9:7).

"Behold the day of the Lord cometh.....And the Lord shall be King over all the earth: in that day there shall be one Lord and His name one. And men shall dwell in it."(the earth)
(Zech.14:1,9,11)

"And it shall come to pass that everyone that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles." (Zech.14:16).

God will establish His earthly throne at Jerusalem. John saw this prophetically in the revelation that Jesus gave him. He saw the ***"New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride for her husband."*** (Rev.21:2)

THE KINGDOM IS UNIVERSAL

The rule or government of God exists throughout the entire universe. However, the seat, or centre of God's authority and rule, is presently located in the New Jerusalem, a city on the planet Heaven which is in the northerly aspect of the universe. (Ps 75:6-7)

6. *For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south.*

7. *But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.* KJV

Heaven and the New Jerusalem is millions of light years away from Earth. But one of the amazing things that the Apostle John saw in his sensational prophetic vision, was that one day the holy city, New Jerusalem, would come down out of Heaven, and God would then dwell amongst men. ***"Behold the tabernacle (dwelling place) of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God."*** (Rev. 21:1-3)

The government of God will have its earthly headquarters in or above Jerusalem, but the reign of God will extend to the four corners of the earth. All the nations living on earth will be subject to the rule of God. God has promised Israel that they will be an earthly people forever. ***"For as the new heavens and the new earth which I shall make shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain."*** (Isa.66:22).

Jerusalem will be the Eternal Capital of God's Universal Kingdom, from which He will rule over, and administer the affairs of all nations and the entire earth. Speaking of Jerusalem, God says in Ezekiel 48 : 35. ***"And the name of the city from that day shall be Jehovah Shammah, - THE LORD IS THERE!"***

John further tells us, ***"The throne of God, and of the Lamb, shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. And they shall reign forever and ever."*** (Rev. 22:3,5b)

God also mentions in Isa.66:23 that ***"All flesh shall come to worship before me, saith the Lord."*** The men and nations mentioned in Rev.21:24 are natural men from the nations that will inhabit the earth eternally. This earth was created as an eternal dwelling place for man. These people do not have eternal life, as do the glorified saints, but they will be blessed with longevity, and a man of 100 years will be counted as a child (Isa.65:20). Men will live as long as trees (Isa.66:22).

The nations that will inhabit the earth are the 'sheep' nations of Matthew 25:31-34. ***"And before Him shall be gathered all nations, and He shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."*** (Matt.25:31-34).

The 'sheep nations' are those nations that have been as a shepherd to Israel, and to the Church. They have sought to help and bless the people of God and the nation of Israel and they will inherit the reward promised to Abraham. ***"I will bless them that bless thee."*** (Gen.12:3) The

goat nations are the ones which have treated Jehovah's people as goats, rather than sheep. They are the nations of whom God said also, *"I will curse him that curseth thee."* (Gen.12:3).

4. THE KINGDOM IS INDESTRUCTIBLE AND INVINCIBLE.

"The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which SHALL NEVER BE DESTROYED and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." (Dan.2:44).

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom WHICH CANNOT BE MOVED, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with Godly fear." (Heb.12:28)

5. THE KINGDOM IS ETERNAL.

Throughout the Bible, the reign of God over the earth is consistently referred to as and Everlasting Kingdom that will know no end. E.g.

2 Sam.7:13 says, *"And I will establish the throne of His Kingdom forever...."* V.16 says *"Thy kingdom shall be established forever before Thee, thy throne shall be established forever."* Daniel 4:3 says, *"His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom."* Many other scriptures clearly refer to the fact that the Kingdom is NOT for 1,000 years, but forever.

WHAT THEN IS THE MILLENNIAL REIGN?

There is a lot of misunderstanding in many Christian circles in respect to the reign of Jesus being for 1,000 years duration. This view has been called, The Millennial Reign and has its roots in Revelation 20. where reference is made five times to a period of 1,000 years. (The word millennium comes from the Latin "mille" = one thousand, and annus, meaning year.)

Now we must understand that the primary subject under consideration at this point is not the reign of Christ per se, but rather the binding of Satan. In the initial stages of the earthly Kingdom, Satan will be bound, imprisoned, and put out of commission for 1,000 years. This fact is referred to 5 times in Rev. 20. in verses 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. After which he is loosed again for a brief season, and endeavours to seduce the nations. Now, it is to this binding of Satan that the term 1,000 years applies. **The reign of Christ is eternal.** Once it is manifest, it will continue forever, and will know no end. So the reign of Christ is **NOT** a Millennial Reign, it is an everlasting reign. This portion in Rev. 20. is the only place in the Bible where the 1,000 years is mentioned. All other references to God's Kingdom refer to it as an *everlasting* Kingdom.

"For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the EVERLASTING KINGDOM of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (1 Pet.1:11).

"The kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever." (Rev.11:15)

"The God of all grace who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus ... to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." (1 Pet.5:10,11).

"And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1:33).

"The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, it shall consume all other kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." Dan. 2 :44.

"And there was given to Him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Dan. 7 : 14.

"But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, even for ever and ever." Dan. 7 : 18.

"And the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him." Dan. 7 : 27.

6. THE SAINTS WILL RULE WITH CHRIST.

One of the most remarkable features of God's eternal Kingdom is that His redeemed saints are going to reign with Him. They will assist in various aspects of His rule over the nations on earth, and over the far reaches of the universe. Those saints are presently serving their apprenticeships. God is working in them, preparing them to share with Him the responsibility and privilege of administering the righteous rule of God.

Isaiah says, *"Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness; and princes will rule with justice."* (Isa 32:1)

Daniel says, *"And the greatness of the Kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the most high."* (Dan.7:27). Three times in Daniel 7, we are told that the saints of the most high will rule over the nations and kingdoms of this world. All earthly kingdoms will be brought into subjection to the rule of Christ and His saints.

The glorious new song sung by the saints in Rev.5:9,10 praises God for this high and wonderful privilege. *"And has made us a Kingdom of Priests, and we shall reign on the earth."* *"And he that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron."* (Rev.2:26,27).

What a glorious future the saints of the Lord have! We shall be reinstated to that privileged position that Adam held and lost. The saints will have dominion over the earth and everything upon it.

They will share the throne of Christ. *"Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? Know you not that we shall judge angels?"* (1 Cor.6:2,3)

It seems obvious that in such a righteous Kingdom, Messiah, the righteous judge and king will make the ultimate judgements. However, some of His saints will be seated with Him to assess and concur with His judgements and add their consensus to His. They will assent to and approve His righteous judgements.

It would seem that righteous Jews will rule over the twelve tribes of Israel.

Matt 19:28-30

28 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. NIV

Whereas Paul states clearly that “the (Gentile) saints shall judge the world” meaning the nations of the world. Who will those peoples be? The Bible reveals that some Gentile nations will remain on earth during the everlasting Kingdom rule. These will undoubtedly be the “sheep nations” who have helped to shepherd and show favour to God’s covenant people Israel. Generations of mankind will inhabit the earth and be ruled by Messiah and His Saints. Natural men will live on earth in idyllic circumstances as God intended from the very beginning. They will still be mortal men but will enjoy great longevity.

Where Will Those Nations Live?

It may be assumed that the various nations remaining will largely reside within their historic national boundaries.

Acts 17:26-27

26. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.

NIV

However, there will also be new areas of land available for settlement upon the new earth. These areas will become available because the huge areas of ocean that presently exist will be evaporated by the “fervent heat” when the earth is renovated. This will make vast new areas of land available for habitation. Also the huge deserts of our present earth will be reclaimed for habitation by reason of the copious rains that will occur over them in the transformed situation. It seems highly possible that there may be a re-assignment of territory to some degree. Perhaps some territories will be restored to their original inhabitants and the people who had colonised those lands may assigned new lands resumed from the ocean or desert areas.

7. IT WILL BE AN AGE OF PEACE

The "God of Peace," (Jehovah Shalom) is one of the numerous names ascribed to God (Heb.13:20). When He finally manifests His Kingdom, universal peace will be one of the outstanding features of it. The Hebrew word for peace - "Shalom," is one of the most wonderful words in the Bible. Although its basic meaning is peace, it has a far wider significance than what is usually understood by peace.

Shalom means much more than the cessation or absence of war. It is an extremely positive word, filled with wonderful significance and meaning. It is probably the richest, yet least understood theme in the Bible. Shalom occurs 250 times in the Old Testament, and its Greek equivalent - "Eireine," occurs 90 times in the New Testament.

Shalom has a wealth of meaning and is various translated :- peace, health, well being, prosperity, favour, safety, rest, quietness, harmony, fulfilment, justice, maturity, completion, security, tranquillity, serenity, community, relationship, covenant, and partnership. The word has become a standard greeting in Israel, but in that usage it means much more than "peace." It means, "I wish you everything necessary for your peace, harmony, health and well being."

If one word could describe the idyllic atmosphere and environment of Eden prior to the Fall, it would surely have to be the word 'shalom'. Likewise, if one word were used to describe the glorious scenario in Revelation 20.- 22. that word would have to be 'shalom'. It describes perfectly the wonderful environment in which God intended mankind to live. Unfortunately

sin intervened. But now Jesus has conquered Satan, Death, and Hell and will soon restore His Kingdom in the earth.

Isaiah says of Christ, ***"He shall be called the prince of peace."*** (Isa.9:6). He is speaking particularly of Christ in His role as ruler of this world. He says, ***"Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end"*** (Isa.9:7).

Christ will establish His rule on the sound principles of justice and judgement, that will be the foundation for universal peace on earth. ***"He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."*** (Isa.2:4).

This is a picture of the peace that earth will enjoy when the final rebellion of Satan has been crushed. Weapons of war will no longer be manufactured and those that remain, relics of the wars of mankind, will be melted down and recast as agricultural implements. Ploughs and tractors will be made from scrap steel of obsolete weapons. Military training will cease and the strategies of war will no longer be taught. Men will not learn how to kill each other, but how to live in peace and harmony. Micah also refers to this. (Micah 4:3).

Isaiah presents another picture of the peaceful conditions that will prevail. ***"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."*** (Isa.11:6,7,9).

Military academies will be a thing of the past. They will be outlawed, obsolete and unnecessary. Instead of these there will be a Divinely ordained universal education system through which men will learn those things that promote peace, harmony and prosperity. From all nations they will come to Jerusalem to the mountain of the Lord. They will say to each other, ***"Let us go to the mountain of the Lord, for He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths, and they will beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."*** (Isa.2:2,3).

Through the facility of this new and wonderful education system God will teach agricultural concepts and methods that together with dramatic topographical and weather changes, will enable men to enormously increase food productivity levels so that there will be more than sufficient for every person in the world. No one will ever suffer the pangs of hunger or starvation again. None will die from malnutrition. The spectre of millions starving and dying prematurely will never again occur.

During this period God will ordain a universal language to facilitate clear international communication. The curse of Babel, when God confused the languages of the nations, (Gen.11) will be lifted, and nations will be able to work and co-operation together for the mutual good of mankind. I personally believe that the language will be Hebrew, for God says, in Jer 31:23.

"Thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, they shall again use this speech in the land of Judah, and in its cities when I bring back their captivity."

The speech or language which is used today in Israel is Hebrew, a language revived after almost 2,000 years. That same language will be used universally in the Kingdom reign of the Messiah. All the nations that dwell on the earth will be literate in the new language that God will give to them.

He further says in Zechariah 3:9, *"For I will return to the people a pure language that they may call upon the Name of the Lord and serve Him with one consent."*

God will institute a Universal Education Program that will cause *"The earth to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."* (Isa 11:9)

8. AN AGE OF PROSPERITY FOR ALL.

When the curse is lifted, earth will be restored to its previous prolific productivity. It will be a time of universal prosperity and abundance in which all will share. Amazing changes will take place throughout the earth that will result in a fantastic increase of agricultural productivity. Isaiah outlines seven features that will produce that abundance (Isa.30:23-26).

"He will also send you rain for the seed you sow in the ground, and the food which comes from the land will be rich and plentiful. In that day your cattle will graze in broad meadows. The oxen and the donkeys that work the soil will eat fodder and mash, spread out with fork and shovel. In the day of great slaughter, when the towers fall, streams of water will flow on every high mountain and every lofty hill. The moon will shine like the sun, and the sunlight will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven full days, when the Lord binds up the bruises of His people and heals the wounds He inflicted."

Here are the features God outlines:-

1. There will be abundant and plentiful rains. V.23.
2. There will be rivers and streams on every mountain and hill. V.26.
3. The life giving strength of the sun will increase seven fold. Every day will be like a week of sunshine. V.26.
4. Men will possess plenty of seed to sow. V.23.
5. Plenty of grazing country for the cattle. V.23.
6. Excellent fodder for their cattle. V.24.
7. An abundance of cattle. V.24.

Messiah will cause men to inherit and restore the formerly waste places of earth and make them habitable and prosperous (Isa. 49:8). *"For the Lord shall comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord, joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody."* (Isa.51:3).

"Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem, for the Lord hath comforted His people."(Isa.52:9)

"Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree."(Isa.55:13).

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plow man shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes, him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt, and they shall plant vineyards and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens and eat the fruit of them"(Amos 9:13,14).

This prophecy indicates the rapid and prolific growth that will be experienced. Owing to ample rainfall and increased sunlight, there will obviously be several harvests each year. Crops will grow so rapidly that the reapers will overtake the sowers. There will be plenty of food for every family and none will go hungry. God will also institute a universal land reclamation program.

He tells us that *"The desert and the parched land will be glad: the wilderness shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."* (Isa.35:1).

The Prophet Isaiah also says, *"I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys.*

I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs." (Isa.41:18).

I believe that God will reshape the face of the earth to a large degree. Mountains will be laid low and valleys will be lifted up. It will happen partly through earthquakes. *"Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake."* (Rev.16:18).

In some cases land will be reclaimed from beneath the sea. *"The Lord will dry up the gulf of the Egyptian sea; with a scorching wind He will sweep His hand over the Euphrates river. He will break it into seven streams so that men can cross over in sandals."* (Isa.11:15).

"And there was no more sea." (Rev 21:1) Much of earth's greatest riches presently lie beneath the sea bed. Huge deposits of oil, gas, and other commodities lie there and will all become accessible and available through God's great reclamation program.

A UNIVERSAL HEALTH SCHEME

I believe that there will also be a universal health scheme for the nations of mortal men who will be living on earth. In the Genesis scenario, prior to the Fall, God provided herbs for man's use. Not only was this a form of food. The herbs undoubtedly had medicinal value too. When God restores the fortunes of earth He will again provide natural medications to ensure good health and the prolongation of life. The Apostle John speaks about the tree of life in heaven that yields fruit every month and the leaves from it were for the healing of the nations. (Rev 22:2)

Isaiah. 33: 24. tells us *"and the inhabitants will no longer say 'I am sick', for the people who dwell in the earth will be forgiven their iniquity."*

Isaiah says, *"Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing."* (Isaiah 35:5,6)

A NEW ECONOMIC SYSTEM

God will also institute a new economic system based on the principles of the Year of Jubilee, as outlined in Lev. 25.

This was a system with inbuilt safety factors that insured against total losses incurred through misfortune. Under the Jubilee system an economic amnesty was declared every fifty years, when the fortunes of everyone would be restored. Every fifty years:

- a: All debts would be cancelled.
- b: All forfeited properties would be restored to their original owners.
- c: All slaves would be set free.

OTHER FEATURES OF THE NEW ECONOMIC SYSTEM

- a: No interest to be charged on loans. God forbade His people to exact usury from others.

In the Bible usury is understood to be any interest charges on a loan. The Law of God prohibits the imposition of usury or the charging of interest fees without respect to the financial circumstances of the borrower. The Hebrews were commanded, in Exodus 22:25 not to receive interest for any monies that were borrowed out of necessity.

b: No Stock Exchanges by which the wealthy can manipulate the economy of the world, taking unfair advantage of poor persons or poor nations.

c: No gambling, nor making of money at the expense of others.

d: There will be an equability of the distribution of wealth, and factors that will balance and maintain this.

e: Jerusalem will be the finance capital of the world and all international resources and monies will be governed from there.

f: A fixed monetary value will be established and maintained.

g: God will require tithes to be paid into His Kingdom. "And all the tithes of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S. It is holy to the Lord.

h: The wealth of the Nations will be 'converted' to the Kingdom. (Isa 60:5b)

9. EQUATABILITY IN THE KINGDOM.

One of the happiest features of Kingdom abundance will be that everyone will share in it. In today's world there are great inequalities. There is a tremendous and tragic gap between the wealthy and the poor. A minority enjoy tremendous wealth, but a great proportion of mankind live in poverty. This inequality will be banished in the Kingdom. Micah says that every man will sit under his own vine, and under his own fig tree. (Micah 4:4). There will be equal distribution of opportunity for prosperity. *"In that day, saith the Lord of Hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree."* (Zech.3:10). Here is a beautiful picture of good neighbourliness, calling each to share a meal. Every man is able to offer hospitality from his own source of abundance and prosperity.

10. THE UNIVERSAL WORSHIP OF GOD.

"The Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Lord, and His Name one. And it shall come to pass that everyone that is left of all the nations, which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the king, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles." (Zech.14:9,16).

Jerusalem will be the centre of the world in the manifest Kingdom. The throne of God will be established there with Christ upon it and David as His vice-regent (Jer.30:9; Ezek.37:24,25).

ALL MANKIND WILL WORSHIP THE TRUE AND LIVING GOD

Isa 2:2-5

2. *In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.*

3. *Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths."*

The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

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4. *He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.*

NIV

a: The great Principalities and Powers, who rule the false religious systems of our world, will bow the knee before the name of Jesus and confess that He is LORD, to the glory of God.

b: The false religions of the world will all be crushed and overthrown, and their devotees will be released from their spiritual bondage and be free to seek the One true God, Jehovah.

c: Messiah Jesus, will be enthroned in Jerusalem. All the nations will send their representatives to worship Him there. This will be particularly true during the annual Feast of Tabernacles. (Zech 14:16) Any nation that does not come to worship Him at that time will be denied rain on their land. (Zech 14:17 -19)

d: The Feasts of the Lord will be held once more. Celebrations like Christmas, and Easter, that have no biblical foundation, but have in fact strong indications of pagan influence, will no longer be recognised.

e: Jesus Christ will consummate, and be the sum total of everything. He shall be all, and in all. (Eph 1:10)

f: Jesus will become the centre of universal attention. Through Him, God will be revered and worshipped by every living being on earth and in heaven. The whole earth will be filled with continuous praise to the Almighty God.

"But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and the people shall flow into it. And many nations shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths for the law shall go forth out of Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Micah 4:1,2).

"In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD... Yea every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord." (Zech. 14:20,21)

WHY IS THE CHURCH SILENT?

Recent events, particularly the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on September 11th 2001, are a warning and a wake up call to the church that the King and His Kingdom is close at hand. Why then does the church still have so little to say about the Coming of the King and the manifestation of His Kingdom?

Let's look at a situation in the Old Testament that is a "shadow" of things to come and an illustration of what may hasten and precipitate the return of our King.

God had chosen, anointed and appointed King David as the King of Israel. He was not only to be king over the nation for a relatively brief period of time but also in an everlasting role.

2 Sam 7:12-13

12When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. NIV

2 Sam 7:15-16

16Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever. NIV

When God spoke of him in Acts of Apostles, He still spoke of a future kingly role.

Acts 13:21-22

22. After removing Saul, God made David their king. He testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; **he will do everything I want him to do.**' NIV

Despite David's manifest failure, God did not disqualify him from fulfilling His prophetic future. God did not speak of him in the past tense. E.g. He did not say David did everything I wanted him to do, (past tense) but he will (future) do it.

However, he went into exile when Absalom usurped from him the throne. (2 Sam 15:10) Absalom later died in battle and the way became clear for David to return as King to Jerusalem. All Israel, save Judah, spoke urgently of his return to reign. Israel desperately needed the presence of King David in Jerusalem but he delayed his return, waiting for his own tribe Judah, to welcome him back. The question was asked,

"Why are you silent about bringing back the king?"

2 Sam 19:10-12

10"However, Absalom, whom we anointed over us, has died in battle. Now then, **why are you silent about bringing the king back?"**

11Then King David sent to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, saying, "Speak to the elders of Judah, saying, **"Why are you the last to bring the king back to his house,** since the word of all Israel has come to the king, even to his house?"

Many were speaking of the need for King David to return. However, David wanted Judah to welcome his return.

12. *You (Judah) are my brothers; you are my bone and my flesh. Why then should you be the last to bring back the king? NASU*

This incident is a “shadow” of things to come, i.e. a prophetic foreshadowing of the time when God’s Messiah would return to earth to take up His throne. In a similar manner Jesus rebuked and warned the citizens of Jerusalem that because they had rejected His loving overtures they would not see Him again until they raised their voices in welcome.

Matt 23:37-39

37. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!*

38. *See! Your house is left to you desolate;*

39. *for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' "* NKJV

The same question must be asked of the church today. Why are we virtually silent about the return of Christ **and the emergence of His earthly reign?** The modern church has little to say about the Kingship of Christ and Kingdom of God through Christ. The church which is the bride of Christ, bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh, is spiritually of the house of Judah. Messiah awaits her welcome. The return of Christ to earth is rarely preached or taught today and when it is the teaching usually focuses on the rapture and the catching away of the church to heaven, millions of light years away from planet earth. There appears to be little mention from pulpits of the Second Coming and very little anticipation of it happening. The Apostle John clearly intimates that part of the role of the church in the last days is to synchronise its voice to that of God’s Spirit and cry “Come” to the heavenly bridegroom.

Rev 22:17

17. *And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. NKJV*

It is spiritual Judah who is to release Messiah’s return.

When Jesus responded to the request, “Lord teach us to pray.” He taught His disciples to pray:-

Matt 6:9-10

1. *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. NIV*

Jesus did not teach His disciples a brief poem to recite, He taught them a powerful prayer to pray which commences with the plea for His Kingdom to come to this earth that God’s Will may be performed on earth as it is in heaven.

• **Unfortunately, The church still has a fixation with the concept of Jesus in His humble role as the Son of man and the suffering servant, whereas He is now the KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.** (Rev 1:5-8; 11:15) This powerful truth was given to the Apostle John on the isles of Patmos. He saw Christ in His glorified body and that sight struck John to the ground as though he were dead. The whole church today needs a new revelation of Christ in His present Kingly form.

Rev 1:13-17

13. *and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. 14His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. 15His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. 16In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.*

17. *When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. NIV*

• **The Church Is Very Introspective** and mainly concerned with individual salvation and personal “blessings.” Much of the Western World church is engrossed in sharing a gospel that focuses mainly on this present earthly life and places little or no real emphasis on the eternal kingdom that is soon to come. Much modern church focus in on the individual and how that person may prosper and succeed in this life.

• **It Is Rapture Focussed**

Titus 2:13-14

13. *while we wait for the blessed hope-the glorious appearing (Epiphania:manifestation) of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, NIV*

The Rapture (Parousia) is not the Blessed Hope. The (Epiphany: appearance, manifestation) personal, physical return of Christ to earth and the subsequent establishment of His glorious kingdom is the Blessed Hope of humanity.

• **Most Christians are Heaven oriented.** More concerned with golden crowns and mansions in the sky than with the righteous rule of Christ over the earth and its remaining inhabitants.

• **The church is concerned about being politically correct** rather than being faithful to the Bible. This is particularly true in respect to its attitude towards Israel. It is largely influenced by the media rather than the Bible.

• **The church to a large extent has embraced a replacement theology** in which it becomes the new Israel and supersedes the nation of Israel in God’s plans and purposes.

• **Such a position is manifestly incorrect** God chose Jerusalem as the eternal capital city of His people Israel. End times scriptures clearly reveal that Israel and Jerusalem to feature centrally in God’s redemptive purpose for our earth.

Zech 14:16-17

16. *Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.*

17. *If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, they will have no rain. NIV*

The ultimate Biblical word on “Heaven” (or New Jerusalem as it is more specifically named) was that John saw it “descending from God, out of heaven coming down to earth.”

Rev 21:2-3

2. *Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

3. *And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. NKJV*

- **The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Messiah** and He will reign (on the earth) forever and forever. Rev 11:15.

Radical Militant Islam Is A Modern Anti-Christ

Anti-Christ is firstly an anti-God/Christ spirit that has and does indwell many people.

1 John 4:1-3

*2This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. **This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.***

NIV

The Koran recognises both Moses and Jesus as prophets. It also holds that as Christ replaced Moses, so Mohammed has replaced Christ. Muhammad is said to be God's latest and final prophet. Radical Islam is now committed to world domination under Islamic (Sharia) law. The conquest and possession of Jerusalem is their main aim, from which purpose they will not be deterred until Messiah returns to defend it.

Zech 14:16-17

16.Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.

17.If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, they will have no rain. NIV

Zech 12:2-5

3On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves.

4. On that day I will strike every horse with panic and its rider with madness," declares the LORD. "I will keep a watchful eye over the house of Judah, but I will blind all the horses of the nations.

5. Then the leaders of Judah will say in their hearts, 'The people of Jerusalem are strong, because the LORD Almighty is their God.' NIV

Zech 12:7-10

8. On that day the LORD will shield those who live in Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the Angel of the LORD going before them. 9On that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem.

10"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

NIV

Current World Conditions Cry Out For Divine Intervention

Hag 2:6-7

6"This is what the LORD Almighty says: In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land.

7. I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD Almighty. NIV

Heb 12:25-29

25. See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven?
26. At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens."
27. The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain.
28. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,
29. for our "God is a consuming fire." NIV

Considering these two scriptures together we can clearly see several things.

- God is going to shake this universe. Everything of man that can be shaken will be shaken.
- He will severely shake ALL nations on this earth. The whole world will be affected.
- Every institution of man will be severely shaken. Humanism in all its forms will be severely shaken.
- The shaking will be so severe that all nations will cry out for peace. Insecurity and war will be so wide spread.
- God will be revealed as a consuming fire.
Deut 4:24; Isa 30:33.
- A heavenly Kingdom will emerge that cannot be shaken. Heb 12:27.
- God will fill the earth with His glory.
Num 14:21; Isa 6:3, 40:5.

There are numerous humanly insoluble problems affecting every nation, including wars, international terrorism, AIDS, poverty, famine, hunger, cruel despots. Our world is headed for disaster, endemic diseases, a proliferation of nuclear and biological weapons. There is a desperate cry for righteousness, justice, equality and peace. This can never come without the presence of the Prince of Peace. The Kingly Messiah will not return in response to world need but in response to Judah's longing.

Judah, and the Bride of Christ will activate Messiah's return.

Judah Is :-

- The People Of Israel.
- The King's tribe. Jesus is the Lion of tribe of Judah. (Rev 5:5)
- The Church that Christ has purchased with His blood is spiritually Judah.
- The prophetic vanguard (leader, fore runner) of God's people. Numbers 10:14.
- A people of praise. Psalm 149.

The people under and wielding the sceptre. (surrendered to His Lordship)

Gen 49:10

The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his. NIV

• **A people in unity. 2 Sam 19:14.**

The One new man. Eph 2:15;

The One Body. Eph 4:4-6.

Those united as God is united. John 17:21.

- Longing for and accelerating His appearing. 2 Pet 3:12,13; Heb 9:28.

The Future Of Planet Earth

2 Peter 3:11-13

11. *Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives*

12. *as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.*

13. *But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. NIV*

Rev 21:1-4

21:1 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.*

2. *I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.*

3. *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.*

4. *He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." NIV*

The Role of the Contemporary Church

- The church today is to be like the sons of Issachar, who "understand the times and know what to do." (1 Chron 12:32)

- We are to eagerly anticipate, welcome and even hasten Christ's Coming. (2 Pet 3:12,13)

- To "occupy" (fulfill the business of the Kingdom) until He comes. (Lk 19:12,13)

- To be Watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem. (Isa 62:6) Israel and particularly Jerusalem is the focal point and target of the powers of darkness. The people of Israel are rejected and hated by many (anti-Christ) nations and we Christians must take a strong stand of support alongside her. We must clearly identify with her, since God's great plan of the Ages specifically includes her.

- To intercede according to God's Will. We need to find out what God is currently doing in the earth and align ourselves in prayer, faith confession and action to harmonise with His great purposes.

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- To announce, proclaim and demonstrate the Kingdom of God. The church must not only begin to emphasise the Kingdom in her preaching and teaching, she must literally herald the rapid approach of it, calling out to an unsaved world around that God is about to personally intervene in world affairs.

- To reign on the earth with Messiah.

God is preparing His people to reign with Christ. This is very serious business and we must give ourselves fully and completely to the work that God is seeking to accomplish in us.

Rev 11:15-17

15. Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

16. And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God,

17. saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.

Dan 7:13-14

13 In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. 14He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Daniel 7:18

18. But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever-yes, for ever and ever.

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