

# Thy Kingdom Come

## Introduction

Most Christians are familiar with the “Lord’s Prayer”. This is often repeated as a tradition in many Christian denominations. The prayer was given by Jesus in response to a request that one of the disciples made to be taught how to pray. Much can be learned from studying this example that Jesus gave.

*And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. - Luke 11:2-4*

In particular, the word “kingdom” is *basileia* in the Greek and means royalty, realm, or kingdom.

Note: some translations delete “Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.” This is because a modern Greek New Testament was compiled a little over 100 years ago from two manuscripts purported to be older and therefore more “accurate”. There is reason to suspect that they are neither older nor more “accurate”.

One can see in the now frequently missing subsequent line “Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.” an expansion of the meaning of God’s kingdom coming. There is much suffering in the world that is a result of rebellion (both angelic and human) against God. The commonly omitted line is an expression of hope that the coming kingdom would quell the rebellion that has produced so much misery.

This example of prayer was requested by a disciple seeking instruction similar to what the disciples of John the Baptist had already received from him. Since the request was made “teach us to pray” and the answer included the words “ye” and “our”, it would indicate a plural that would apply at least to the other disciples. Here we need to consider an important discipline of bible study and that is to resist the temptation to jump to conclusions.

It is tempting to assume that the instruction Jesus gave to the disciples is to be applied to the entire nation of Israel and even to gentile Christians. However, this is not clearly established in the text. Praying that the kingdom would come and that God’s will would be done would seem to not have any restriction of application. Even the request for “daily bread” could also be seen as not limited to a particular group. However, forgiveness, leading, and deliverance may not have universal application.

The possibility that aspects of the kingdom may not have universal application can be seen with the instruction Jesus gives his disciples.

*And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: - Mark 4:11*

It is the intention of this book to make a careful examination of the biblical references to the kingdom of God. From these it is hoped that a more clear understanding can be obtained regarding what was promised, offered, rejected, and will be established in regard to the kingdom of God.

## Chapter 1. The King

The kingdom in the bible is called “the kingdom of God”. Matthew frequently calls it “the kingdom of heaven”. In Ephesians it is also called “the kingdom of Christ and God”. The nation of Israel had been promised a king (Messiah) for hundreds of years.

*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 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 judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. - Isaiah 9:6-7*

The prophet Daniel had been given a time in which to expect the arrival of the Messiah.

*Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. - Daniel 9:25*

Here the English translation “weeks” for the Hebrew word “shâbûa’ “ can be misleading. The word actually means “sevens”. While frequently used to describe a seven day week, it can also mean a group of seven years. This highlights the additional need for deliberative caution when seeking to draw from the bible an understanding. Precision and thoroughness are often neglected because they can seem tedious. However, the path of truth has value worth any price.

Another difficulty in understanding the “king” of the kingdom lies in understanding the relationship between Jesus (God the Son) and God the father. Some people are surprised to see God mentioned as a plurality at creation.

*And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. - Genesis 1:26*

This opens the difficulty in considering the doctrine of the trinity (God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). It was difficult for the disciples as well.

*Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. - John 14:10*

While the trinity is united in purpose, there is distinction in function.

*For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: - John 5:22*

There are numerous prophecies regarding a future king. Sometimes these are in reference to a local ruler. However, references to the whole earth and “all” nations tend to limit these descriptions to a future king.

*In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him. - Psalm 72:7-11*

That this king is Jesus seems to be firmly established in the bible.

*And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. - Luke 1:31-33*

Jesus often referred to himself as the “Son of Man” (a title applied to the Messiah)

*Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom. - Matthew 16:28*

A glimpse of the kingdom was given to three of the disciples.

*And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. - Matthew 17:1-3*

## Chapter 2 - The Kingdom Promised

God established a nation from the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob had his name changed to Israel and this was to be the name of the nation that God would use for his purposes. The main purpose was to be the foundation from which salvation could be offered to all the nations.

*But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. ... Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. - Isaiah 43:1&10*

It was intended that Israel would record the word of God.

*What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. - Romans 3:1-2*

It was also promised that from this nation (in particular a descendant of the second king of Israel, David, the son of Jesse) the Messiah would come.

*And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; - Isaiah 11:1-2*

*And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust. - Romans 15:12*

It was intended from before creation that Christ would be the means of redemption.

*Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, - 1 Peter 1:18-20*

The promise of a king for Israel was central to the view of the Messiah.

*And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD. - Jeremiah 23:3-4*

*And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven 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 for ever. - Daniel 2:44*

### Chapter 3 - The False Start Kingdom

There is an example of the nation of Israel being out of step with God when God was leading them out of Egypt and into the land that had been promised to them. Even though they had observed the many demonstrations of God's power, they were fearful to trust in him for battle. They saw in their own thinking a better plan.

*And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? - Numbers 14:1-3*

God's anger was appeased by the pleading of Moses such that the rebellious people were not slain. However, God declared that they would wander in the wilderness for forty years because of their reluctance to trust God. The people then decided that they would now invade still disregarding what God had declared. They still could not bring themselves to trust God.

*And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised: for we have sinned. And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the LORD? but it shall not prosper. Go not up, for the LORD is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the LORD, therefore the LORD will not be with you. - Numbers 14:40-43*

In a way, Israel is a picture of how often we disregard God and seek to advance our own plans. Several years later the people of Israel became dissatisfied with the Judges God raised up for them. They saw

other countries had a king and demanded from Samuel that he give them a king. It was intended that the Messiah would be Israel's king. However, still unwilling to wait upon God, in a desire to be like other nations, Israel demanded a king of their own.

*And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. - 1 Samuel 8:5-7*

The nation of Israel was given king Saul, then David, and then Solomon. After Solomon, the nation was divided into two parts. Each part had a succession of kings but the nation descended into idolatry and pagan practices so deeply that God had the northern kingdom (called Israel) invaded and destroyed. The southern kingdom (Judah) was taken captive to Babylon for 70 years after which they finally abandoned idolatry.

After the return of Judah (which also included refugees from the other tribes), they lived at the sufferance of and paid tribute alternatively to the Ptolemaic and Seleucid empires. The result of these political, cultural, and military Greek influences was to create a widespread secular perspective. Such that by the time Jesus was born, there were only two people looking for him at the temple, Anna and Simeon. Those who gave any thought at all to the future of the nation may have thought of it less in terms of the promises of God, and more in terms of an alternative to Roman rule.

*The Zealots were a political movement in 1st-century Second Temple Judaism, which sought to incite the people of Judea Province to rebel against the Roman Empire and expel it from the Holy Land by force of arms. - Wikipedia*

One might understand that any thoughts of a future kingdom might be shaped by stories of the glory of Israel's past such as the rule of Solomon. Jesus even uses the common understanding of the grandeur of the past as an illustration.

*Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. - Luke 12:27*

One might see how stories of the past might have grown to mythic proportions in the minds of most Israelites. This would have been reflective of a mindset that saw a future kingdom in terms of contemporary human possibility more than what God had promised.

#### Chapter 4 - The Kingdom Expected

There were two significant aspects to prophecy that were either disregarded or not understood. The first was that the Messiah would suffer.

*For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and*

*carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. - Isaiah 53:2-5*

Even Daniel prophesied that the Messiah would be “cut off”.

*And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. - Daniel 9:26*

The second major element that was not fully understood was that just as the nation was initially founded by a covenant (testament or contract) with God at Mt. Sinai, the nation was in need of a new “covenant”.

*Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. - Jeremiah 31:31-34*

The disciples were even expecting a kingdom in the mold of the historical grandeur ascribed to David and Solomon. This can be seen from the use of the word “restore”.

*When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? - Acts 1:6*

At a meal one man (probably giving a familiar toast) declared what was commonly expected about the kingdom.

*And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. - Luke 14:15*

The response to this was for Jesus to tell about a man who gave a feast and after his friends reject the invitation, compelled strangers and wayfarers to come to his feast. The implication was that people should not expect automatic inclusion in the kingdom. It was to be offered as an invitation.

## Chapter 5 - Kingdom Characteristics

There are several Old Testament descriptions of conditions in the kingdom that may not have been fully appreciated. That there would be no war would be of particular interest.

*And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. - Isaiah 2:4*

In addition to universal peace, there is an indication of vastly extended life.

*There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. - Isaiah 65:20*

The work of the Holy Spirit would produce powerful results.

*And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. - Joel 2:28-29*

The Jew would be sought out instead of persecuted.

*Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you. - Zechariah 8:23*

Even nature would be made less hostile.

*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. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. - Isaiah 11:6-8*

The nation of Israel was supposed to be the means by which the knowledge of the Lord would be spread to the whole world.

*For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. - Habakkuk 2:14*

There will be a penalty for those who refuse to send representatives to Jerusalem to worship Jesus.

*And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. - Zechariah 14:17*

We can begin to get a picture of life in the kingdom. We do not know what level of technology may be available. It may be that information will have to be acquired directly (person to person) rather than through newspapers, radio, TV, or the Internet. The reference to “families” may indicate a stronger association of relationships over the political association of nations.

## Chapter 6 - The Kingdom Offered

When John the Baptist began his preaching, it had been almost 400 years since a prophet had been sent to the nation of Israel. Since that time Alexander the Great had come and gone and even the revolt of

the Maccabees had been over 100 years earlier.

*In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. - Matthew 3:1-6*

John the Baptist announced the kingdom, however, it was Jesus (the king) who could offer it. Jesus gives a parable that describes the kingdom offer.

*And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them. Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. - Matthew 13:10-23*

It is interesting to note that the kingdom does not come in the usual way such as with an invasion by another kingdom or rebellion from within. The kingdom is offered by “word”. It requires a response from those to whom it is offered.

## Chapter 7 - The Kingdom and Covenant

Most of the people of Israel considered the establishment of their nation by God at Mt. Sinai when they were given the law.

*Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD*

*hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD. - Exodus 19:5-8*

Even though the prophet Jeremiah told them that there would be a “new covenant”, most were either disinterested or unable to see in this promise anything of practical value. Perhaps they unconsciously understood that a new covenant would indicate something insufficient or incomplete with the first one.

*But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. - Jeremiah 31:33*

Paul would later explain in his letter to the Romans;

*For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. - Romans 8:3-4*

Here we can see the relationship between the flesh and the law in contrast with the work of the Holy Spirit.

The solution to the problem of the limitation of the law was to receive the Spirit of God by which we can have the life of Christ in us. For the nation of Israel this was to be accomplished when God would “pour out his Spirit”.

*And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. - Zechariah 12:10*

The first covenant with Israel proved inadequate to achieve the redemption of man. However, it was a gift to Israel and will not be done away with.

*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. - Matthew 5:17-18*

The new covenant (testament or contract) was to be with Israel in addition to the old one of the law.

*Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. - Luke 22:20*

## Chapter 8 - Salvation and Kingdom

For many people the relationship with God consists of learning what has to be done to secure a place in heaven. While the relationship God desires to have with man is so much more, it can be helpful to examine the means by which eternal life is achieved.

In a word, it is by faith. This is not the same as simply “believing”. The Greek word *pistis* carries with

it an understanding of trust that is somewhat lacking in the English word "believe". One illustration that has been used to highlight this difference is a description from the 1920s of a man who sets up a daredevil act to push a wheelbarrow over a tightrope stretched across Niagara Falls. A bystander is asked if he believes that the man can be successful. The man answers that he believes it can be done. He is then asked if he wishes to ride in the wheelbarrow.

We are told that Abraham was considered righteous because of his faith (trust).

*Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. - Galatians 3:6*

This was hundreds of years before the law was given to his descendants. One problem with the law was that it was easy for some to think that by keeping the law, they had made themselves righteous.

*And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: - Luke 18:9*

Jesus appears to say that one can earn salvation;

*And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. - Matthew 19:17*

Here we might see that the "keeping" of the commandments is the expression of a trust in and reliance on the promises of God. There was an emphasis on works for the nation of Israel, not to achieve salvation, but to demonstrate ones faith. This was described by James in his letter to the twelve tribes.

*Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. - James 2:18*

John the Baptist also indicated that works had an ability to verify faith.

*But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: - Matthew 3:7-11*

For those who were faithful in life, there was a reward of eternal life to be obtained at the resurrection of the just.

*And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. - Daniel 12:2-3*

This was what could be expected for having one's faith in God lived out according to the law. However, there was to be a change brought about by a new covenant for Israel. In speaking of the Old Testament (covenant) saints, the writer of Hebrews indicates that they had not received what would be now made

available.

*They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. - Hebrews 11:37-40*

The “better” thing that was made available was to receive salvation immediately. By the grace of God faith can result in a “regeneration” of that which was lost at the first sin. Jesus told Nicodemus that one needed to be “born again” to enter the kingdom. For most of Jewish history regeneration was seen as something that would happen at the resurrection of the just. Jesus describes immediate regeneration and salvation available through trust in him.

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. - John 5:24*

This introduced two paths of salvation, although both are based on faith. The first path was primarily for the nation of Israel. It was a faith demonstrated through the keeping of the law. Salvation would be obtained at the first resurrection.

*It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. - Lamentations 3:26*

The second path was to obtain salvation immediately upon trusting in Jesus.

*In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, - Ephesians 1:13*

Entrance to the kingdom required one to be regenerated. This could be obtained at the first resurrection or immediately upon trusting in Jesus. However, until the kingdom was accepted and received by the nation of Israel, kingdom existence would be limited to the internal.

*And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. - Luke 17:20-21*

## Chapter 9 - The Kingdom Described

Jesus told Nicodemus that entrance to the kingdom required that he be “born again”

*Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. - John 3:5-6*

Our natural physical birth (born of water) is insufficient to enter the kingdom. There is something inside of us that is “dead” and requires being made alive for one to be “born again”. This may be what

died when Adam and Eve sinned.

*But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. - Genesis 2:17*

*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. - 1 Corinthians 15:22*

Jesus used several ways to illustrate the character of the kingdom.

#### Tares and Wheat

*Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. - Matthew 13:24-30*

This illustration shows that the objective of the kingdom (to obtain a harvest of wheat) is frustrated by an enemy who infiltrates the kingdom with false or counterfeit members such that only later, at harvest, can the kingdom be populated in purity. The enemy is often thought to be Satan. However, we are told that anyone who is a friend of the world is an enemy of God.

*Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. - James 4:4*

Even if Satan is restrained during the kingdom period, and even if all who enter the kingdom are regenerated believers, their children may not follow after the Lord and some may become “tares”.

#### The Mustard Seed

*Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. - Matthew 13:31-32*

This comparison is used to illustrate that the kingdom might seem insignificant (it was introduced by “word” not conquest), but that it would grow to much larger proportions. The reference to lodging implies a suitable habitation.

#### The Leaven

*Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. - Matthew 13:22*

Here the pervasive character of the kingdom is highlighted. Sometimes leaven (yeast) is used to show the pervasiveness of evil. Here it is used to illustrate that the kingdom will persist and cannot be hindered and like yeast, cannot be stopped.

#### The Field and Pearl

*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. - Matthew 13:44-46*

Here we read of the true value of the kingdom. The idea of selling “all” to obtain the kingdom reveals a value that is not at first apparent.

#### The Kingdom as a Net

*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. - Matthew 13:47-50*

Here the idea of adulteration is given similar to the wheat and tares. However, an additional element is introduced. The kingdom is pictured as the means by which people are gathered for judgment.

#### The Kingdom as a Householder

*For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen. - Matthew 20:1-16*

This parable describes how those in the kingdom are there because of an invitation and a dispensation of grace. Individual merit and achievement are not taken into consideration. The only factor that bears upon this is the goodness of God.

## The Kingdom and an Invitation to a Marriage Feast

*And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen. - Matthew 22:1-14*

In this illustration, a more particular point is made of the nation of Israel not responding to the offer of the Kingdom. Those who are not interested or unwilling to respond will find that others will be given what they did not value. The invitation to both the good and bad may indicate that the grace of God is offered to all. The ejection of the man without a wedding garment may reflect that those who have failed to clothe themselves in Christ have no access to the kingdom.

*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. - Galatians 3:26-27*

## Chapter 10 - The Kingdom - Consequences for Refusing

Jesus associated his announcement of the kingdom with a call for national repentance.

*From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. - Matthew 4:17*

There were two Hebrew words both translated “repent”. One meant more a sort of regret and the other meant more of making a change. The Greek word translated as repent means to change ones mind. All have bearing on this call of Jesus. The entire nation was established to be a kingdom of priests through whom the knowledge of God could be spread throughout the whole world. Instead, people had largely lost interest in God and were seeking after their own interests.

Jesus gives a significant warning as to what the nation could expect if they persist in ignoring the offer of the kingdom.

*There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had*

*mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. - Luke 13:1-5*

The use of the word “likewise” for these two examples is important. In the first warning, the government will act to kill them. In the second warning large stones will crush them to death. Following these two warnings Jesus gave an illustration.

*He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down. - Luke 13:6-9*

Rome decided to pacify the Jewish rebellion of 66 AD. After three years of siege, there was a year of respite as political adjustments were made in Rome, then in 70 AD Jerusalem was conquered and the Jewish diaspora began. At the end of the siege, catapults hurled large stones into the city of Jerusalem. That Jesus gave this illustration after the two warnings and that it included the specific timing testifies to the earnestness of the appeal to repent.

The bible often describes a “hardening” of hearts often associated with those who have made wrong choices. It is a sort of “compounding” of a bad decision.

*And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go. - Exodus 4:21*

*Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, - Romans 1:21-22*

*What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them: Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway. - Romans 11:7-10*

It is natural for us to think that this is “unfair”. However, a sovereign God is completely just to withdraw mercy from whomsoever he chooses. Those who reject him themselves become rejected.

## Chapter 11 - The Kingdom, Almost

One might see a window of opportunity for the nation of Israel to receive the king and kingdom from the announcement of the birth of Jesus by the angels until the destruction of the temple 70 years later. The peak of popular support was probably on Palm Sunday when Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey

(which was also prophesied).

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. - Zechariah 9:9*

A week later the religious leaders conspired to have him put to death (this might instill some cautious skepticism of religious leaders).

The Apostolic period from the ascension of Jesus until the destruction of the temple represents a potential of Israel to receive the kingdom. Paul wrote that it was his hope that the extension of salvation to the gentiles would provoke the nation to action by reason of jealousy.

*I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. - Romans 11:11*

Many try to pinpoint the moment Israel stopped and “the church” started. Often Acts chapter two is cited as the moment. Sometimes a time at the middle or end of Acts is cited. However, it may be more accurate to consider an overlap period in which the possibility of the nation to receive the kingdom slowly becomes a fading possibility.

Some consider the letter to the Hebrews to be a last ditch attempt to persuade the nation of Israel to recognize that Jesus was their Messiah. However, even Paul seems less hopeful towards the end of his ministry.

*For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. - Acts 28:27-28*

## Chapter 12 - The Kingdom Authenticated

A key element of the kingdom was to be the work of the Holy Spirit. This work would be in ‘power’ and a convincing sign that God was establishing the kingdom. There were two main periods in the history of Israel where there was an abundance of miraculous signs, the exodus from Egypt and ministry of Elijah. With Jesus we also see an abundance of miraculous works.

*Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. - Luke 7:22*

*And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: - John 20:30*

Jesus had given his disciples the ability to do miraculous signs as well.

*Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. - Luke 9:1-2*

The disciples had grown so confident in this powerful ability that they saw in it the same power that Elijah wielded.

*And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? - Luke 9:54*

Jesus in describing the work of the Holy Spirit to the disciples explained that the Spirit “dwelleth” (present tense) with them, but would be “in” them (future tense). This describes two general manifestations of the Holy Spirit. The first is for the working of signs and miracles which authenticate that God is at work. The second is a vital “abiding presence” of God the Holy Spirit.

*Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. - John 14:17*

When Jesus addresses the disciples just before he ascends into heaven, he tells them to wait for a few days because they will be “baptized” with the Holy Spirit. (Note: it is unfortunate that the translators chose to transliterate the Greek word baptizo as baptize rather than translate it as “immerse”. The word in Greek was used for dyeing wool, washing dishes, and ships that sunk)

*To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. - Acts 1:3-5*

Ten days after the ascension of Jesus was the annual celebration of Pentecost. Pentecost was the memorial of the law being given to the nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai. It is interesting to note that on the same day the new covenant was established and authenticated by the work of the Holy Spirit.

*And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. - Acts 2:3-4*

*But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: - Acts 2:14-18*

The Apostles demonstrated the continuance of signs and miracles authenticating the ministry of Jesus and the continuing offer of the kingdom.

*Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus*

*Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. - Acts 3:6-7*

Paul was called primarily as an apostle to the gentiles. However, he also would declare Jesus to the Jews.

*For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. - Romans 15:18-19*

*And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: - 1 Corinthians 2:4*

The writer of Hebrews mentions that the Hebrews had 'tasted of the power of the world to come'.

*For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, - Hebrews 6:4-5*

The supernatural 'gifts' were referred to by Paul.

*Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: - 1 Corinthians 12:4-10*

These supernatural gifts were also given to gentile believers as can be seen with Cornelius and occasioned a debate in Jerusalem as to whether the gentile believers should be compelled to observe the law.

*And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. - Acts 10:45*

It is difficult to imagine what else could have been done to demonstrate to Israel that God was real and offering to have his kingdom established. However, the human ability to disregard important matters was described by Jesus using the illustration of the rich man and Lazarus.

*Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. - Luke 16:29-31*

Chapter 13 - Kingdom Citizenship

As the Jews waiting in Jerusalem demonstrated, one can be a citizen of a kingdom that has not yet arrived. It might be seen as comparable with being ambassadors of a foreign country. This does not make the kingdom any less real.

*Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. - John 18:36*

Jesus told Nicodemus that one had to be ‘born again’ to enter the kingdom and that ‘which is born of the Spirit’ is able to have this life.

*Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. - John 3:5-6*

Entrance into the kingdom was by faith. However, it had to be as sincere and complete as the faith a child has who trusts his parents.

*And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. - Matthew 18:3*

It is by faith that we receive new and eternal life in Christ, we are placed into his ‘body’, and are translated into the kingdom.

*Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: - Colossians 1:12-14*

However, when the actual kingdom is to be established on earth an even more radical change needs to occur to enter this kingdom

*Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. - 1 Corinthians 15:50-53*

The arrival of the kingdom of God will be a monumental event unparalleled in the history of the world. Those who have been placed into the kingdom but still live in this world in anticipation of the future establishment of the kingdom are somewhat like Abraham.

*By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. - Hebrews 11:9-10*

For the last 2,000 years there has been no nation of Israel or kingdom of God on earth. Many orthodox Jews resisted the establishment of the political entity of the nation of Israel in 1948 because they felt that only the Messiah should do so. Today even those who live in the nation of Israel would acknowledge that they are not the promised kingdom of God.

There are a number of promises and prophecies for Israel that have not yet been fulfilled. Even the war described in Ezekiel 38 has not yet taken place. Some attempt to resolve this with a doctrine that says that all has been fulfilled in Christ. While succinct, it fails to explain the specific nature of many of the promises and the restoration of a remnant of Israel described in the bible.

The prayer, “thy kingdom come” implies that there is a kingdom, that it is elsewhere, and that it is possible that it can come here. We know that Jesus is the king, that he is not on earth at present, and that he will come.

## Chapter 15 - The future events surrounding the establishment of the kingdom

Considering the disinterest of the nation of Israel to the first offer of the kingdom, it might be difficult to imagine circumstances that would arise where there would be a situation where ‘all’ Israel would be saved.

*For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: - Romans 11:25-26*

The bible describes a future difficulty for the nation of Israel.

*Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. - Jeremiah 30:7*

We see that there will be future circumstances of difficulty for the nation of Israel such that they will be more enthusiastic about the arrival of their Messiah.

*And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. - Zechariah 12:10*

*Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. - Isaiah 66:8*

*Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. - Jeremiah 30:7*

*For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no,*

*nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. - Matthew 24:21-22*

There seems to be a trigger event that starts the time of difficulty for Israel.

*Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. - 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4*

This character seems to be a human front man for Satan.

*Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. - 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10*

It seems that most in the world are vulnerable to the deceptions of this character because they received not a love of the truth. He will sign a peace treaty with Israel and may be mistakenly thought of as the Messiah by some. It is interesting to note that the prophecy of Daniel would be true regardless of whether Israel received the kingdom 2,000 years ago or will eventually receive it in the future.

*And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. - Daniel 9:26-27*

The key event for Israel to observe was described by Daniel, but also reiterated by Jesus.

*When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. - Matthew 24:15-18*

Around the time of this activity there will be two “witnesses” in Jerusalem who testify of God and have supernatural powers to resist anyone who tries to stop them from speaking. God will finally allow them to be killed. Their bodies will lie dead in the streets for three days as the world celebrates their death.

*And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven. - Revelation 11:11-13*

It may be that this event and the abomination of desolation occur close in time. Regardless, it seems that there will be a believing remnant of Jews fleeing to the wilderness to be supernaturally protected by God for three and a half years. At the end of the three and a half years, Jesus will return to establish

the kingdom and the remnant of Jews will welcome his arrival with greater enthusiasm than he was welcomed 2,000 years ago.

*When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: 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: - Matthew 25:31-34*

## Chapter 16 - The Kingdom and the Time of the Gentiles

Salvation had been for Israel for those who trusted in the promises of God and demonstrated their trust through their works. Eternal life was to be obtained at the resurrection of the just. Jesus announced that this was to change in that those who trusted (had faith) in him would obtain immediate salvation.

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. - John 5:24*

*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. - John 3:14-15*

This was called a “mystery” in that it had not been specifically revealed before by God. Another “mystery” that was revealed was that gentiles would also have the opportunity to receive eternal life through faith in Jesus.

*If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: - Ephesians 3:2-6*

While salvation by grace through faith was being dispensed to the nation of Israel in anticipation of the kingdom, Paul was also called to dispense this grace to the gentiles.

*But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. - Galatians 2:7-9*

There were those among the Jews that sought to impose the law (most notably circumcision) on gentile believers because they were unable to see a different condition for the gentiles.

*But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. - Acts 15:5*

James responded to this with the exercise of the power of “binding and loosing” that Jesus gave to the disciples. (what you “bind” on earth shall have already been bound in heaven, Mat 16). James declared what were requirements for gentile sojourners described in Leviticus.

*Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. - Acts 15:19-20*

The entire letter to the Galatians concerned correcting the influence some Jews had gained directing them to follow the law and become circumcised. Even today there are those who would direct gentile Christians into the realm of law keeping. Gentile Christians have access to the kingdom the same way as Jewish believers, through the regeneration of being “born again” in Christ.

*Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: - Colossians 1:13*

Our citizenship in the kingdom with the Jews is somewhat difficult to apprehend as distinctions dissolve and Christ is magnified.

*And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. - Colossians 3:10-11*

We do not have a detailed understanding of what our relationship to the kingdom will be, but we do know that we are already part of the “body of Christ”.

*For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. - Ephesians 5:30*

We do have an indication that in the future we shall have a better understanding.

*For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. - 1 Corinthians 13:12*

*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. - 1 John 3:2*

Today those who believe in Christ are mostly gentile believers. As a group, we have been influenced often by the ideas of men to divide ourselves into denominations and follow the doctrines of men.

Some look to follow the laws given to the nation of Israel. Some seek to bring in the kingdom by making disciples of all nations. Others make lists of rules to follow to insure good conduct. However, rather than seek a basis of action, it may be better to consider what the bible gives gentile believers as an expectation or requirement.

*For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience*

*and longsuffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: - Colossians 1:9-12*

1. ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding
2. ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing
3. being fruitful in every good work
4. increasing in the knowledge of God
5. Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness
6. Giving thanks unto the Father

The gentile church is not given a list of tasks to accomplish. Most of the activity cited is to bring us to maturity as individuals. From this we might deduce that the purpose of the gentile church is to facilitate the growth of its members into maturity, which is Christ-likeness.

*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: - Ephesians 4:11-13*

## Chapter 17 - Thy Kingdom Come

When a faithful remnant of Israel has been prepared and made willing to receive the kingdom, the wrath of God poured out on the earth with the tribulation will end and his kingdom will be established. Satan will be bound for a thousand years and the earth will suffer only the individual effects of sin.

While the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, not everyone will seek the things of the Lord. It is in human nature to forget God and seek after its own interests.

*And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. - Judges 2:10*

When Satan is set loose, he will find many that he can draw into a war against God.

*And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. - Revelation 20:7-10*

What might be drawn from the entire history of man on earth is that anything done apart from God is a disaster. Every form of human government is a failure. Without God, we tend towards vanity, selfishness, cruelty, and self-destruction.

Even when Jesus rules on earth, we will still demonstrate our defective nature. The panoply of history

conclusively demonstrates that our intrinsic selfishness (the opposite of love) and the rejection of truth in favor of that which makes us feel good are so toxic that it is only through the gift of salvation by trusting in Jesus that we have any hope to escape our fallen state.

In the bible the first two chapters and the last two describe a state without the effects of man's sin. After the thousand year rule of Christ on earth and Satan's last effort, sin no longer plagues us. We might consider what is often called "the eternal state" as the true eternal kingdom.

*And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven 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 for ever. - Daniel 2:44*

*And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. - Revelation 21:3-7*

Many have asked over the years if there really is a God, how can he allow evil to exist. However, if God eliminated all evil, we would all die. God, who is rich in mercy, forbears our sin so that we would have the opportunity to respond to his grace.

*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. - Ephesians 2:1-9*

Those who have a part in God's eternal kingdom will have no doubt about his mercy and our complete dependence upon him.

*And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. - Revelation 21:23-26*

*And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the*

*Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever. - Revelation 22:1-5*