

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

An Outline Bible Study

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This Bible study was first presented
in a simple two-page edition in 1964.
It was enlarged in 1975, 1992, 1997
and now in 2006.

I pray that you will benefit from it.

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INTRODUCTION

I would like to say at the beginning of this study that I am deeply indebted to, and very grateful for, the ministry of Maurice M. Johnson on the subject of the Kingdom of God. Not only did he emphasize in his ministry the clear distinction between the Church and the Messianic Kingdom but he also personally assisted me, as a younger Bible student, over a basic area of confusion in my own mind on the subject. Brother Johnson encouraged me to realize that a proper understanding of the different aspects of the Kingdom of God would be foundational for understanding many other doctrines that are either apropos or not apropos for this present Church Age. One cannot properly understand the ministry of Christ, as recorded in the four Gospels, unless he understands and appreciates the realism and vitality of the prophesied Messianic Kingdom promised to the nation of Israel. Also, to have a right understanding on the subject of the Kingdom of God is absolutely necessary as a good foundation for knowing how to apply all future prophecy, both that which applies to the Church Age and that which applies to the Messianic reign. Therefore, a proper understanding of the Kingdom of God subject is foundational for the “workman who...handles accurately the word of truth” (II Tim.2:15) in order to rightly apply the basic areas of Biblical truth, especially for this present Age of Grace.

MAN’S DOMINION

When God refurbished the heavens and the earth in six days, as described in Genesis the first chapter, He designed it primarily for man’s habitation. In addition, God ordained that man should have “*dominion*” over every living thing that He had created (Gen. 1:26,28; Psalm 8:3-8). It thus becomes evident from the beginning pages of the Scriptures that God is a God of order and rule in the operation of this physical world system.

Unfortunately, man compromised his dominion by succumbing to Satan’s temptation and lies. Through the use of an intermediary serpent, Satan infected into man a resistance to the explicit will of God. When man accepted Satan’s “will,” Satan became the spiritual ruler of this world system. Satan actually usurped his rule over that of mankind. From that time on a “curse” was placed upon man and upon the whole world in which man lived. Death now became a reality upon both man and the animals. The physical world itself in which man lived became tainted with the curse. God did not want man to live forever in such a fallen state by taking of the tree of life. Therefore, after the expulsion from the garden, God provided a redemption plan for mankind that would liberate him and the whole physical world as well (see Rom. 8:18-22). Man’s “dominion” was compromised and weakened by suffering and death as he struggled through life in the present world system under the overall and yet conditional rulership of Satan. In the long interim, between man’s fall and the final redemption of all things, God has ordained a series of “Kingdoms” under which that redemption program would operate and become finalized. The investigation of these successive “Kingdoms,” and their application to specific designated generations, is the purpose of the following Bible study.

THE KINGDOM OF DARKNESS

It is necessary to first briefly explore the rule and Kingdom of Satan. This is actually the Kingdom under which we and all the progeny of the first Adam have been born throughout history. There are many things that we are not immediately told at the outset as one reads the book of Genesis. Later revelation does supply us with more information about this spirit intelligence named Satan or Lucifer. We find in Ezekiel 28:12-19 and Isaiah 14:12-17 that Satan as an awesome, mighty, created cherub was the first to oppose the manifest *will* of almighty God. Satan asserted his own “will” above that of God. Satan had said,

“I will ascend into heaven,
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;
I will also sit on the mount of the congregation...
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,
I will be like the Most High” (Isa. 14:12-14).

Because of Satan’s initial rebellion against God’s will, the primordial earth (Gen. 1:1), in which Satan ruled as a perfect creature, came to be in a condition of “wasteness and emptiness” (Gen. 1:2). It was also submerged in “waters” and enveloped in total and intense “darkness.” This was God’s final discipline upon Satan’s original world rulership, which no doubt went through many ages and catastrophes, as the bone-cluttered, geologically-scarred earth bears the evidence of a succession of judgments.

When God refurbished the earth in six successive days by the Holy Spirit (Gen 1:2 & Psalm 104:30), He then set Adam in the place of having “dominion” over this renewed earth and all the animal world occupants. No doubt, Lucifer was quick in his desire to regain his own rulership of which he had temporarily been deprived. By yielding to Satan’s clever arguments, the man and woman simply capitulated to Satan’s control and will. For God’s own purpose, He allowed this usurpation of power by Satan. Thus all mankind was placed under the rule of Satan and became members of the “Kingdom of Darkness.”

However, in God’s redemptive program, He reversed this procedure and provided deliverance from Satan’s grasp. The apostle Paul was inspired to speak of that initial darkness that enshrouded the earth as an object lesson of the Satanic spiritual darkness which presently “blinds the minds” of the unbeliever. See II Corinthians 4:1-6. In a similar way, the “light” that God ordered to explode upon that chaotic earth on the first day of the week of renewal, is likened to the “Light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.” Every sincere heart that receives this good news is ordained to become a “new creation in Christ” (II Cor. 5:17). God has therefore “delivered us from the power (or kingdom) of darkness and conveyed us into the Kingdom of the Son of His love” (Colossians 1:13).

Here we have but briefly touched upon the career of Satan who, as a condemned and defeated foe, bears upon himself the sentence of final destruction to be executed in God’s prearranged time. In this present age God stills allows Satan to influence man to rebel against the “will” of God’s rule. It behooves all to soberly consider the consequences of rebellion against the revealed rule of God.

THE PATRIARCHAL RULE

God did not abandon mankind to be hopelessly and helplessly entangled in a wilderness of spiritual confusion. On the contrary, God has left mankind with clear guidelines to be administered through the *heads of households* (the Patriarchs [fathers]) and, in addition, God gave many evidences of Himself and His will.

The first of these evidences is in the **physical creation** itself. *“Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse”* (Rom. 1:19,20). See also such passages as Acts 14:17 and Psalm 19:1-6, etc.

In addition God implanted in mankind the **consciousness** of right and wrong and the moral Law of God. *“For when the Gentiles, who do not have the Law, do by nature the things contained in the Law, these, although not having the Law, are a Law to themselves, who show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thought accusing or else excusing them”* (Rom. 2:14,15). See also such passages as Acts 17:28 and John 1:4,9.

After the flood God added to mankind’s guidance the authority of **human government**. *“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves”* (Rom. 13:1-7). See also such passages as Gen. 9:6 & I Tim. 2:2.

Thus for some twenty-five hundred years, until the nation of Israel became the vehicle of God’s theocratic rule, God primarily directed the **heads of households** to administer the moral and ethical revelations. The fathers likewise served as priests and teachers to their families. This whole time period is commonly called the *“Patriarchal Age”* simply because the one thing it had in common was the rulership of the heads of households as primarily responsible for instilling the religious, moral, sacrificial and teaching directives from God to their families. Thus, the stories in the book of Genesis, about such men as Adam, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Shem, Ham, Japheth, Terah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his twelve sons, all tell us of the *“Patriarchal Age”* when the fathers took full and primary priestly responsibility in administering the guidelines set by God.

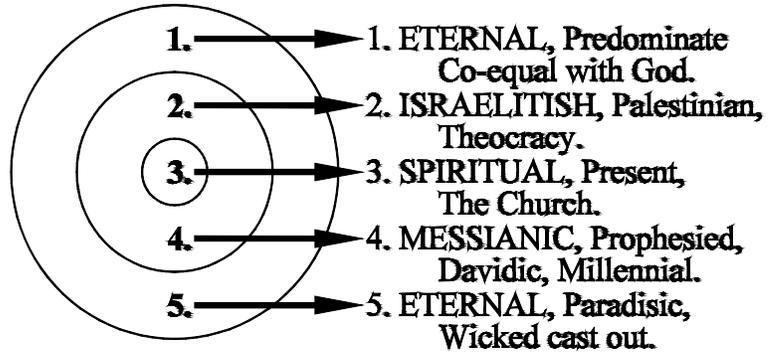
THE DIAGRAM OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD SUBJECT

It was actually Maurice Johnson’s suggestion to illustrate the subject of the Kingdom of God by three circles, each inside the other. He would entitle them: 1) The Eternal Kingdom of God, 2) The Messianic Kingdom of God, and 3) the present Spiritual phase of the Kingdom of God. His interest was primarily in distinguishing these three phases. As you will see, I have enlarged upon this basis two other aspects of God’s Kingdom as used in the Scriptures. This arrangement will also show association and continuity. In this arrangement the *Overall Eternal Kingdom of God* has a future phase wherein all

wickedness and evil will be finally segregated into the Lake of Fire. This arrangement will also show the prophetic relationship of the *Messianic Kingdom* to Israel's earlier *Theocratic Kingdom*, especially under the reign of King David. In addition, one will see the actual sequence of each Kingdom.

Diagram illustrating the Kingdom of God

The term "Kingdom of God" (or Kingdom of Heaven) does not always refer to the same thing when used in the Bible. There are at least five major uses of this expression as one looks at the whole panorama of the Scriptural ages. We will illustrate this by three circles, each inside the other.



THE ETERNAL KINGDOM OF GOD—No. 1 & No. 5

No. 1 In its broadest aspect the Kingdom of God is co-equal with God.

It had no beginning and will have no ending. It is eternal and all-inclusive. Please read the following references that demonstrate this: Jer. 10:10; Lam. 5:19; Dan. 2:19-21; Dan. 4:3,17,34-37; Ps. 10:16; 29:10; 74:12; 95:3; 103:19; 145:11-13; 1Sam. 12:12; 1 Chron. 29:11,12; Isa. 43:15, etc.

Even hell is under God's control—Amos 9:2; Isa. 28:15-18; Deut. 32:22; Ps. 139:7-10. Satan and all the rebellious world are limited by God's decree. God prepares the boundary for the nations. He often overrules the world rulers. They operate only within the Divine prerogative. Because of Satan's rebellion against God's rule and order, they are bound by God's limitations.

No. 5 There is also a future view of this Kingdom.

With the final "New Heavens and Earth," the Kingdom of God will be the permanent residence of all the righteous for all eternity with God in a paradisiac world which has been cleansed of all the rebellious and sinful, the wicked being segregated into the Lake of Fire. See such passages as: Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5; I Cor. 6:9, 10; II Pet. 1:11; & Rev. 21:1-8.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD—No. 2

No. 2 The Israelitish, Palestinian Theocracy.

The “LAW” of God which was delivered through Moses was to be the code of rule over the nation of Israel. God’s ultimate design was to make Israel a “Kingdom of Priests” (Exo. 19:6). This is the first time the word or idea of God’s earthly “Kingdom” was used in the Bible. Israel was to have a model Moral, Ceremonial and Civil Law. This Law was the expression of God’s rule for this collective congregation of people. This theocratic Kingdom of God was implemented over Israel in four distinct phases:

- A.) God’s mediatorial rule was first established for the nation of Israel in the person of **Moses** and later **Joshua**. See Exo. 3:10-12; 19:4-6; Acts 7:35; Deut. 34:9-12.
- B.) After Joshua, God gave His authority into the hands of **Judges** who presided over Israel. The Lord “raised them up” and was “with the Judge.” See Judges 2:16-18.
- C.) When the people of Israel wanted a “**king**” like the nations around them, it was explained to them that God alone was to choose the kings who were to rule and God’s Word was to be the basis of that rule. That there would be kings was actually predicted by Moses in the Law. See Deut. 17:14-20. Thus, we have Scriptures that illustrate the execution of that plan under King Saul: I Sam. 8:9; 9:17,25; 13:13,14; 14:47; 15:28; 24:20; 28:17. King Saul failed to keep God’s commands to him, leading to his rejection by God. Then the young man, David, was anointed to be king.
- D.) The Kingdom under **David and his posterity** became the highlight of Israel’s historic greatness. This is specifically called “*The Kingdom of the Lord over Israel*” in I Chron. 28:5 and “*The Kingdom of the Lord in the hands of the sons of David*” in II Chron. 13:8. In I Chron. 29:23 it says that Solomon “*sat upon the throne of the Lord.*” See also such passages as 11 Sam. 7:23-26; 1 Chron. 14:2; 29:10-12; 1 Kings 9:5, etc. “*Thine is the Kingdom*” were appropriate words to describe this rule of God through the sons of David, the kings of Judah.

When the nation of Israel turned from the Law of Moses to fraternize with idolatry, their Kingdom was divided. The northern part was called “*Israel*” and the southern part was called “*Judah*.” As they continued in apostasy their two Kingdoms were greatly diminished. Then the northern ten tribes were dispersed by the Assyrians. Finally, the Kingdom of Judah and the city of Jerusalem were destroyed by the Babylonians. Then began the time of Gentile dominion over Israel. After the Captivity and the rebuilding of the Temple, they were only allowed to have appointed *governors* in the land.

There is also a future view of the Davidic Kingdom as being—

The GREAT MESSIANIC KINGDOM—No. 4

No. 4. (A) AS PROMISED AND PROPHESED TO ISRAEL.

The Israelitish Kingdom was to eventually become the great MESSIANIC Kingdom which was to rule over the whole earth. The future descendent of King David was to establish Heaven's rule on earth. This Son of David was also the Divine Son of God. He was designated as "The Anointed [*Messiah*—Hebrew, *Christ*—Greek] of God." He would rule directly on the earth over God's kingdom.

THE KING—*The "Son of David."* II Sam. 7:12-17; Ps. 89:20-37; Isa. 9:6,7; Jer. 33:20,21; Luke 1:32,33,69; 2:11; Matt. 12:23; Acts 2:29-32, etc.

THE SPHERE—*The "Earth."* Dan. 2:3 5,44; Jer. 23:5; 33:14-16; Ps. 2:6,8; 72:8, 11; Zeph. 3:14-20; Zech. 2:10-13; 9: 10; 14:9; Luke 2:11-13, etc.

THE THRONE—*"Zion."* Ps. 2:6; Isa. 9:6,7; 2:1-4; 24:23; Jer. 3:17; Micah 4:7; Zech. 8:3; Zech. 8:22,23, etc.

THE ESTABLISHMENT—*"With Power and Destruction."* Dan. 2:44,45; 1 Sam. 2:10; Ps. 2; Ps. 110; Isa. 42:13,14; Rev. 19:11-16, etc.

THE MANNER OF RULE—*"With a Rod of Iron."* Rev. 19:15; Isa. 40:9-11; 11:4,5; Ezek. 20:33-38, etc.

THE RESULTS—*"Time of Restoration of all things."* Isa. 2:2-4; 9:6,7; 11:1-9; 35:1-10; Jer. 31:31-34; Acts 3:19-21; Ps. 102:16, etc.

WHEN ???—*At the Second Coming of Jesus Christ "in great power and glory."* Ps. 102:16; Isa. 24:23; 40:10; Matt. 25:31; I Tim. 6:14,15; Rev. 19:11-21, etc.

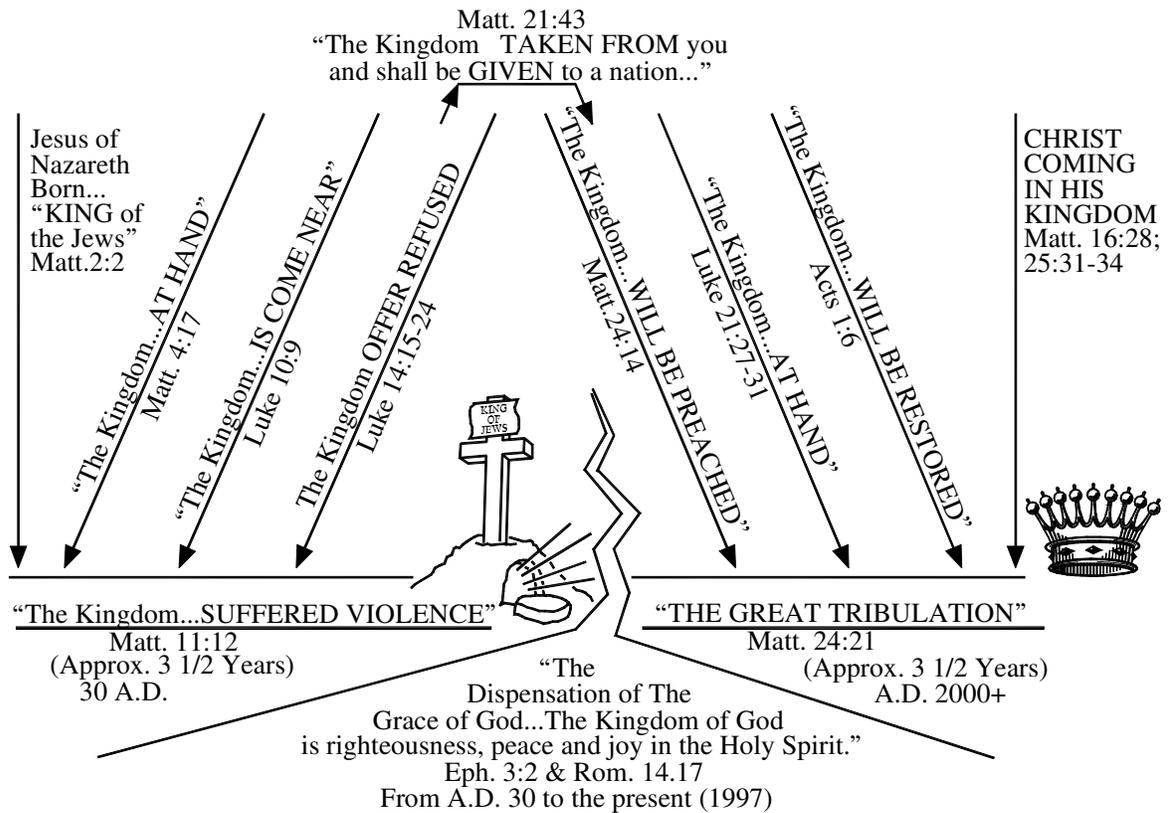
All the above passages are only token verses from the midst of a multitude of passages giving these great truths. It is of utmost importance to remember that these prophecies are not fulfilled, either physically or spiritually, during this present Church Dispensation. There are many false teachers who crudely try to spiritualize all these prophecies in order to make them apply to the Church. Such manipulation of Scripture only leads to confusion.

No. 4. (B) The OFFER OF THIS KINGDOM TO ISRAEL

The Promised Messianic Kingdom of God was OFFERED TO ISRAEL in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ at His first coming over 1900 years ago. The miracles Christ

performed were the credentials of the King. He proved He could reign over every sphere where man was defeated. He exposed men’s religious hypocrisy and asked for the throne room of their hearts. To this they would not acquiesce. According to the four Gospel accounts, both the King and the Kingdom were rejected by the nation of Israel. At least four different parables were given by Christ to illustrate the offer and rejection of the Kingdom by the nation of Israel: (1) The Parable of the Vineyard—Matt. 21:33-45; (2) The Parable of the Wedding Invitation—Matt. 22:1-14; (3) The Parable of the great Banquet Invitation—Luke 14:15-24; and (4) The Parable of the Nobleman—Luke 19:11-27.

Thus, the Kingdom was said to be “taken from them,” and will be “restored” in the times of Christ’s glorious Second Advent to rule and reign in great power and glory. At the Second Advent the “Kingdom will be given to a nation [regathered Israel] who will bring forth the fruits thereof” (Matt. 21:43). In between the first and second comings of Christ is the present “Dispensation of the Grace of God” (Eph. 3:2). The rule (or Kingdom) of God during this age is called “the Kingdom of God’s dear Son” (Col. 1: 13), and is mediated to us by the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth today. See II Cor. 3:8 and Rom. 14:17. It is within the hearts and lives of believers only. The following chart is designed to illustrate the truth of the Offer, Rejection and Postponement of the Messianic Kingdom until after the present Church Age.



Three Witnesses

Thus there was, indeed, an offer of the Kingdom made to the nation of Israel during the ministry of Christ. That offer was rejected by the nation. Therefore, the Messianic Kingdom was postponed till the later time of the second coming of Christ. Again, some false teachers have ridiculed the doctrine of the Offer and Postponement of the Messianic Kingdom to the nation of Israel. Now, in order to testify to the emphatic truthfulness of this understanding, I will call before you three witnesses. These witnesses are not highly rated theologians of this persuasion, but rather Biblical characters who are themselves universally recognized by both Jewish and Christian teachers as the God-ordained types of the Messiah—especially in their *twofold* approach to ruling over Israel.

These three men are Joseph, Moses and David. Their very lives spell out the doctrine of the Offer, Rejection and Postponement of the Messianic kingdom. Both Joseph and David were so surely understood as types of the Messiah that even Jewish teachers have historically referred to the Messiah as either “Messiah Ben Joseph” or “Messiah Ben David.” (“Ben” simply means “son of.”) Likewise, Moses was universally recognized as being a figure of the Messiah due to his own prophecy recorded in Deut. 18:15-19,

“Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, LIKE UNTO ME; unto Him shall ye harken ... and I [Jehovah] will put My words in His mouth ... and it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto My words which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him.”

Now, what happened to these three men in their lives was ordained of God to prefigure what would happen to the Messiah when He was to come. Each does so with breath-taking clarity in *two clear stages*. I will simply give a very brief outline of their lives as witnesses of the Offer, Rejection and Postponement of the Kingdom.

Witness Number ONE—Joseph

Joseph was the favored son of his father, Jacob. He was given the coat of many colors which was like a princely garment. His brothers became envious of Joseph’s favored position. Joseph faithfully exposed the sins of his brethren. This brought further animosity toward him. Then Joseph dreamed of ruling over his brothers and even over his own parents. To this they briskly responded — “Shalt thou indeed rule over us?” (Genesis 37:8). His brethren rejected him, conspired to kill him, cast him into a pit, and then sold him to the Gentiles. His princely coat was dipped in blood and returned to Jacob as evidence of his death.

A gap of some twenty years transpired in Israel’s history. In the midst of a great famine Jacob’s sons came to Egypt for help. At first they did not recognize the great ruler they bowed down to. Then at last Joseph shockingly revealed himself to his brethren and did, indeed, rule over them in great blessing and safety. (See also Acts 7:9-14).

Witness Number TWO—Moses

When Moses first rose up to deliver his brethren from bondage, they refused to accept his leadership even though he did good towards them. “Who made you a prince and a judge over us?” his own people shouted! (Exodus 2:14). Moses’ life was threatened by exposure to the authorities and so he fled to the wilderness, eventually taking a Gentile bride. (See also Acts 7:20-36).

After a gap of some 40 years, Moses returned in great power and delivered Israel from bondage. Then, indeed, he became a great prince and ruler over the nation of Israel.

Witness Number THREE—David

After being anointed by the prophet Samuel to be king over Israel (I Sam. 16: 1), he was chided by his brethren (I Sam. 17:28,29). Later King Saul in envy tried to kill him, thinking David would assume the kingdom (I Sam. 18:8,9). David had to flee the nation as a potential king in exile. He even went so far as to join himself to the Gentiles — Israel’s enemies. After a gap of many years, David returned in great power and strength to rule over the nation and bring them to the highlight of their national history.

A fundamental factor in judgment is the following Biblical principle: “...at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses shall a matter be established” (Deut. 19:15).

Postponement of Entering the Promised land

Another famous event in the history of the nation of Israel stands as a vivid illustration of the principle of the “Offer, Rejection and Postponement of the Messianic Kingdom.” This is recorded for us in the 13th and 14th chapters of the book of Numbers. It is the story of the twelve spies and Israel’s failure to go into the Promised Land immediately after deliverance from Egypt and receiving the Law Covenant. I will also briefly recount that event because it is very pertinent.

After receiving the Law covenant which was to rule the nation, Israel was told to send twelve spies to spy out the land which God had promised to them. The spies returned with a glowing report of the beauty and prosperity of the land. They even brought back a giant cluster of grapes as evidence. However, out of fear and unbelief they reported that the land was also occupied with physical giants which made the men of Israel look like “grasshoppers.” Therefore, they reported that there was no way these giants could be conquered. The hearts of the people were stricken with terror and full-scale rebellion took place.

Even though Moses made intercession for the nation, God postponed their entrance into the Land of Promise and allowed that whole generation (with the exception of Caleb and Joshua) to waste away in the wilderness. Their carcasses were said to literally “fill the desert” until another generation of Israel would arise and go into the Land. Their total time

in the desert wilderness was forty years until a new generation grew and did, in fact, enter into the Promised Land.

All these positive illustrations from the Hebrew Scriptures make it abundantly clear that the Offer, Rejection and Postponement of the Messianic Kingdom, as presented in the four Gospel accounts, was not only consistent with revealed truth, but was to be expected.

MYSTERY PARABLES

No. 4. (C) The “MYSTERY PARABLES of the KINGDOM of HEAVEN”

Matthew Chapter 13.

Though most interpreters will make these parables applicable to this present Church age, we will find that the first and primary interpretation is to the future restoration of the Kingdom, which will take place at the second coming of Christ. Immediately prior to the second coming of Christ will be the great evangelism, which is the proclamation of the gospel of the Kingdom throughout the whole world during the Great Tribulation.

Like the truths that are exemplified within the final time period indicated in the chart on page 8, so are the truths regarding these “mystery parables of the Kingdom.” The “Kingdom of Heaven” takes on a “mystery” form only in light of Israel’s national rejection of the King and His ministry. These are, therefore, mysteries of what will happen at the time of the future restoration of that Kingdom. These mysteries actually cover that time period that is revealed in the Gospel accounts themselves. The parables will be fulfilled during the future Great Tribulation, wherein the Gospel of the Kingdom will again be preached, this time to all the world, and then the Kingdom will come — Matthew 24:14. Therefore, if one were to simply superimpose these parables upon the time period of the last 3½ years designated as the “Great Tribulation” (Matt. 24:21), then the literal fulfillment of these parables can be understood. It is during this time period that the Gospel of the Kingdom will again be preached, followed by the glorious Second Coming of Christ and the actual setting up of the Kingdom.

There are seven (7) parables:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1. The Parable of the Sower | <i>The message of the Kingdom—4 kinds of hearers.</i> |
| 2. The Parable of the Tares | <i>Furnishing the Kingdom, casting out the unbelievers.</i> |
| 3. The Parable of the Mustard Seed | <i>The spectacular growth of the Kingdom.</i> |
| 4. The Parable of the Leaven | <i>Again, the spectacular growth of the Kingdom.</i> |
| 5. The Parable of the Treasure | <i>The field, the world — Israel, God’s special treasure.</i> |
| 6. The Parable of the Pearl | <i>Illustrating the same as the above truth.</i> |
| 7. The Parable of the Net | <i>The same as number 2.</i> |

The first two parables are actually interpreted for us by Christ, Himself. If we follow His direction explicitly, we can understand all of them. Therefore, notice the interpretation of the Parable of the Tares by Christ (Matt 13:36-43):

Object

1. The Sower of good seed
2. The field
3. The good seed
4. The tares
5. The enemy sower
6. The harvest
7. The reapers
8. Gathered to be burned
9. Gathered into barns

Represented

- The Son of Man
The world
The children who will go into the Kingdom
The children of the wicked one
The Devil
The end of the age (Great Tribulation)
The angels
The wicked into hell fire
The righteous into the Kingdom

Under 9, “the righteous [are gathered] into the Kingdom.” Since this is said to be done at the “end of the Age,” it means that the Kingdom in view is not the Church, but rather the future Messianic Kingdom which will be set up at the end of the Age.

We can also note obvious similarities between the 3rd and 4th parables, the 5th and 6th parables, and also between the 2nd and 7th parables. In addition, the first four parables are given to the multitudes. These four parables illustrate the response of nations to the message and the greatness of the Kingdom to encompass the whole world.

The explanations of the parable of the tares and then the last three parables are given to the disciples privately. The first two of these more surely illustrate Israel’s place in the Kingdom. The last one is similar to the parable of the tares.

Remember that Christ specifically asked the apostles if they now understood these parables (Matt. 13:51). They answered, in light of Christ’s explanation, that they did understand them. On the other hand, Christ told the apostles shortly before He died that He “had yet many things to say to them, but they could not bear [understand] them now” (John 16:12). The apostles at that time knew nothing whatsoever about “the mystery” Church Dispensation which was to be uniquely revealed through Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles (Eph. 3:1-7). Consequently, when the apostles understood these parables they were not thinking of the present Church Age. If, therefore, they are to be applied to this Age, it should be done in a careful manner, and as a secondary application only. Of course we should also realize that these parables speak of some spiritual realities that can have an application to any believer in any age.

KINGDOM To Be RESTORED

No. 4. (D) Just prior to Christ’s ascension up into heaven, the apostles asked Him if He would “at this time, **restore the Kingdom to Israel**” (Acts 1:6). Many false teachers in Christendom think that the apostles were very carnal in their thinking to even ask this question. These teachers say that the apostles were still thinking of the Kingdom of God in terms of a physical, material Kingdom to be set up on earth, instead of a spiritual Kingdom. These false teachers want to supplant the prophesied Messianic Kingdom with the present Spiritual Kingdom.

The apostles were actually very perceptive on this subject. They understood Christ's teaching on the issue. They were not, as some claim, just "carnal, materialistic and earthly" in their thinking. They knew more about the subject than these present-day false teachers. Christ spent "forty days" going over the subject of the "Kingdom of God" with the apostles (Acts 1:3). This teaching from Christ is what precipitated their question. Their question was perfectly legitimate. It was based upon the known fact that the nation of Israel had a physical Kingdom given to them by God. However, after Israel's departure from God's Word they went into captivity, and even now were under the severe Roman rule. Yet the prophets clearly prophesied of a restoration of that Kingdom to come through the Messiah.

The great fruition of the Davidic Kingdom into the prophesied Messianic Kingdom had been preached to the nation of Israel under the dynamic ministry of John the Baptist and of the Messiah, Himself. The apostles had also participated in this ministry. Though this ministry had been rejected by the nation of Israel, yet there was no mistaking that this One Who was rejected and crucified had also been gloriously resurrected from the dead. Now the natural question arises, "*Will You at this time restore the Kingdom [in its Messianic form] to Israel?*"

Christ does not rebuke them for the question. On the contrary, He acknowledges the legitimacy of the question. However, He knows that the apostles will not live to see that Kingdom established. Christ also knows that a parenthetical age is about to unfold prior to the time of the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel. Therefore, His answer is direct and to the point. Christ said (Acts 1:7), they were not to "know (exactly when it would come) the times and the seasons (of that future restoration of the Kingdom to Israel)." "The Father has put (the answer to that question) in His own authority." However, Christ continues telling them, they were not to idly wait for that Kingdom which they greatly anticipated. Instead, they were to briefly "wait" in Jerusalem "until they are endued with power from on high, "and then they were to go from Jerusalem and Judaea to Samaria and then to the whole world with the proclamation of the gospel of the saving grace of God.

A Qualified Re-offer of the Kingdom in Acts

During the last week before Christ's death He gave an important parable illustrating the offer of the Kingdom to the nation of Israel—**Matt.22:1-7**. A great king makes a marriage feast for his son. It is notable that at first two distinct invitations are given to that marriage feast by the servants of the king. The first invitation corresponds to Christ sending out his apostles and disciples to preach that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand (Matt. 10:1-15 & Luke 10:1-9). This was exclusively to the people of Israel and it was officially rejected as indicated in the parable (verse 3). But then there was a second call by the servants of the king that the great dinner was actually "prepared" and "all things are ready" (verse 4). This corresponds as a reference to the finished works of Christ in redemption so that everything is prepared for the redemption of the nation. On this occasion the nation does not merely ignore the invitation; they begin to persecute and even kill the servants (verse 6). This corresponds perfectly with what is going to happen in the book of Acts. The Apostles and

messengers will now be persecuted and even killed as they give the invitation. And it is notable that in response at this time the king will send his armies to destroy that nation— (verse 7). This obviously corresponds with the Romans coming and destroying the nation of Israel and Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The rest of the parable is a parallel to the final ministry of the Kingdom during the future tribulation period. Then the invitation will go all over the world and multitudes will go into the feast with the unbelievers cast out (verses 8-14, see also Matt. 24:14). (Another important parable that depicts this ministry to Israel in two phases is found in Luke 13:6-9.)

That the apostles to the circumcision (Gal. 2:7-9) still spoke of the possibility of the establishment of Israel's Messianic Kingdom is clearly demonstrated in the passage of **Acts 3:19-21**. This was a qualified re-offer (it was no longer said to be "at hand") of the Kingdom to the people of Israel, on the resurrection side of the cross. But it became evident that the hearts of the leaders of Israel had not changed. Their hardness only brought severe persecution to the Jewish Christians. In addition, it should be understood that the common sharing of goods and the communal living of the early Christian community of believing Jews (**Acts 4:32-37**) was in direct obedience to Christ's instruction during His earthly ministry in preparation for that Kingdom—see Luke 12:32,33 and 18:22 and Matt. 5:40-42; 6:19, 25, 31-34; and 10:9.

By the time of Acts 15 at the council of the Church in Jerusalem, it becomes understood that "after this" time of "the calling out from the Gentiles a people for His Name," the Messiah "will return and build again the tabernacle of David." (See Acts 15:13-18). It is primarily through the distinctive revelations given to the Apostle Paul that this whole Church Age unfolds. This Age was a "mystery" not known in past ages (Eph. 3:1-7). It stands, therefore, as being parenthetical in nature prior to the return of Christ to "restore the Kingdom to Israel."

The PRESENT SPIRITUAL KINGDOM—No. 3

No. 3 That there is a Present SPIRITUAL Rule of God on earth today in the midst of His people, The Church which is Christ's body, is made clear from the Gospel of John, the writings of Luke and the epistles of Paul.

It has long been noted by Bible teachers that, of the four Gospel accounts, the Gospel of John stands in a class by itself. John gives beautiful truths from the ministry of Christ which are preparatory to the coming Dispensation of the Grace of God. John said, "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1: 17), which is the keynote of the Gospel of John. Therefore, in John we find: 1.) at least eight contrasts between Christ and Moses; 2.) distinctive truths directly applicable to the Age of Grace; 3.) clear indications of dispensational changes; 4.) emphasis upon the coming work of the Holy Spirit; 5.) personal belief and regeneration; 6.) Christ as the Savior of the World; 7.) the absolute Deity of Christ and Fatherhood of God; 8.) and last of all, that Christ's Kingdom is unworldly and only to be entered by the new birth. Thus, in John, the

Kingdom is only mentioned twice, but each context should be read carefully in order to see that He is talking about a present spiritual Kingdom of God.

A) John 3:1-21. “Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” This could be applicable to the future Millennial Kingdom only at its inception or beginning. Though it is true that only saved (born again) people will initially be allowed entrance into that Kingdom (Matt. 25:34), yet multitudes born during that Kingdom period will not be “born again” (Rev. 20:7-10), and yet will “see the Kingdom.” Consequently, in the strict and literal sense, this Kingdom that Christ spoke of must have reference to the present “Kingdom of God” (Rom. 14:17 & Col. 1:13), because the present Kingdom is exclusively composed of those who are “born again.” There absolutely are no exceptions. We believe that Nicodemus was converted, and shortly thereafter experienced “the Kingdom of God” when the Church was created.

Additional evidence that Christ was talking to Nicodemus about a Spiritual Kingdom is demonstrated by the fact that in the very next chapter Christ tells the woman at the well of a spiritual worship that is soon to come. “But the hour is coming, and now is [near], when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23,24). Christ gave these words in distinction from the system of worship “in Jerusalem.”

B) John 18:33-38. “My Kingdom is not of this world: if My Kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight ... but now is My Kingdom not from hence ... thou sayest that I am a king. To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth My voice.”

After reading the whole context of these words it becomes clear that Christ does not deny that He is, indeed, a King. However Christ makes it plain to Pilate that His kingly rule would be no threat to the Roman political power. Obviously, therefore, this could not be the Millennial Kingdom, because that Kingdom would physically demolish all earthly kingdoms — including the Roman kingdom of the future, and Christ’s servants will fight at that time. “But NOW,” indicates a change. Christ’s Kingdom “now” will be a Kingdom whose chief characterization will be the proclamation of “truth,” and the subjects of His rule will be all those who submissively “hear His voice.” Remember John 1:17 says, “but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ.”

C) Luke 17:20,21. This changed emphasis upon the Kingdom subject is also reflected in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 17, verses 20 & 21. In answer to the question by the religious rulers as to when the Kingdom will appear, Christ responded, “The Kingdom of God does not come with [outward] observation: neither shall they say, ‘Lo here!’ or ‘Lo there!’ for behold, the Kingdom of God is within you.” It is quite obvious to even the casual reader of the Hebrew Prophets that the prophesied Kingdom of Messiah will come with great outward physical manifestations to be observed by everybody on earth. Whereas, this Kingdom of which He now speaks will have no such manifestations. Obviously, Christ is not saying the Kingdom of God would be within the hearts of the unbelieving religious

leaders. On the contrary, by saying that “the Kingdom of God is within you,” Christ is saying **the Kingdom of God in principle will be inward and personal to those who accept it.** “Within you” is actually the most accurate translation of the Greek *enthos*—“inside,” (see Strong # 1787, Thayer or Arndt & Gingrich). The only other time the word is used is in Matt. 23:26 — correctly translated “within the cup.”

D) Acts. This same Kingdom is no doubt in view in Luke’s record of the last half of the book of Acts-19:8; 20:25 & 28:31 (28:23 probably includes both phases of the Kingdom).

E) Paul’s Epistles. From the writings of the Apostle Paul it is abundantly clear that Christ has “risen to REIGN over the Gentiles”—**Rom. 15:12.** Therefore, he makes references to a present “Kingdom of God,” sometimes with clear dispensational distinctives.

I Thess. 2:12	The Saints were presently “called” into this Kingdom.
II Thess. 1:5	The Saints were presently “suffering” for this Kingdom.
I Cor. 4:20	Paul presently demonstrates the “power” of this Kingdom.
Rom. 14:17	The characteristics of this Kingdom are “righteousness, peace and joy, in the Holy Spirit.”
Col. 1:13	Saints are presently “translated” into this Kingdom.
Col. 4:11	Ministers presently “labor” in this Kingdom.

Romans 14:17 is a key passage that expresses for us the characteristics of the present Kingdom of God. This Kingdom could not be what was true in the past Israelitish Kingdom nor in the future Millennium—because they have regulations on kosher food. Nor could it be the all-inclusive *Eternal Kingdom (No. 1)* because all mankind alike are in that Kingdom — whereas, this Kingdom is exclusive. “Righteousness, peace and joy, in the Holy Spirit,” is the present emphasis for this Age. The present age is the “ministry of the Spirit” (II Cor. 3:8). In the book of Acts the Holy Spirit is directing in this Age.

Colossians 1:13 is another important passage to establish this truth. Here believers are told that they are presently “translated into the Kingdom of the Son of His [God’s] love.” Since the Son is now in heaven “seated at the right hand of the Father,” therefore the administrator of that Kingdom is the person of the Holy Spirit who has been sent to earth to indwell believers. This is consistent with Romans 14:17. The Holy Spirit is mediating this Kingdom on earth in the Church. Since the Holy Spirit is Christ’s representative, He does not speak of Himself, but rather magnifies Christ (John 15:13-15). In contrast to the Law ministration, the “ministration of the Spirit is rather glorious” (II Cor. 3:7-11). “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes us free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2).

Notice the following outline and observe its contrast with the similar outline on the future Prophesied Millennial Kingdom (pg.7).

AS GIVEN TO THE CHURCH—*the Kingdom of God is Spiritual.* Rom. 14:17;
Col. 1:13; John 4:23,24; II Cor. 3:4-18; etc.

THE ADMINISTRATOR—is *the HOLY SPIRIT of God* in residence upon the earth in believers. II Cor. 3:8; Philip. 3:3; John 14:17 & 18:37; Acts 13:2; Rom. 8:1,2; & Eph. 1:3.

THE SPHERE—*on earth in the people of God.* John 14:17; Eph. 2:21,22; and yet spiritually we are “*seated with Christ in heavenly places*” Eph. 1:3; 2:6.

THE ESTABLISHMENT—*by the “baptism of the Holy Spirit.”* Acts 1: 5; 2:1-4; I Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:2,3, 27,28; Rom. 6:3,4; etc.

THE MANNER—“*Grace is now reigning through righteousness.*” Rom. 5:21; Acts 20:24; Rom. 5:2; 6:14,15; Gal. 1:6; Eph. 3:2; II Tim. 2:1; etc.

THE RESULTS—“*all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours...*” (I Cor. 3:21-23); “*...who can be against us?*” (Rom. 8:31-34); “*Who can separate us...? ... we are more than conquerors...*” (Rom. 8:35-39).

WHEN ???—Upon the departure of Christ into the heavens and *upon the descent of the Holy Spirit to earth.* John 16:7; Acts 1:5; 2:1-4, 33; etc.

The Church of Jesus Christ is referred to in different ways. It is often described as a “body” and Christ as its “Head.” There is also a ***Spiritual Rule in effect today.*** A rule of God in His congregation constitutes a Kingdom. It is fundamental to observe that where you have: 1.) A Ruler with adequate authority (the resurrected and ascended Christ); 2.) A Realm of subjects to be ruled over—the Church who hears the truth; and 3.) A Rulership, the actual functioning of rule—the “administration of the Spirit”; then you have a Kingdom, in effect. This is most certainly true in this particular Age. That Kingdom is spiritual in nature.

To say that the present Kingdom of Christ is spiritual in nature does not mean for one second that it has no tangible leaders to guide and direct believers, and to whom believers are called to give attention, because it most certainly does. There are clear exhortations to the members of the church to recognize and follow qualified leadership—I Thess. 5:12-14; II Thess. 3:7; I Cor. 12:28; II Cor. 10:8; Gal. 6:1; Eph. 4:11; Philip. 2:19,20; Col. 4:7,8; Heb. 13:7,17; I Pet. 5:1-4; James 3:1; etc.

In addition, there is an abundance of directives for dealing with problem members who walk divisively and disorderly against the fundamental principles of Christ—II Thess. 3:6, 14, 15; I Cor. 5:1-13; II Cor. 2:6-11; 6:14-18; Rom. 16:17,18; Eph. 5:3-7, 11-14; I Tim. 1:20; 5:20; 6:3-5; II Tim. 2:19-21; 3:5; Titus 3:9-11; etc., etc.

As to some type of “*Final Authority*,” let it be understood that God has NOT ordained that final authority be deposited into the hands of—(No. 1) “Human Tradition,” no matter how rich and deep is that tradition; nor into the hands of—(No. 2) “the authority of Good Men,” no matter how good those men are: whether they be self-proclaimed apostles, or even an “angel from heaven;” nor into the hands of—(No. 3) “the private Revelation” of any individual, no matter what affirmations of proof they may offer.

It should always be clear that **the *final authority*** that God has ordained, for all the members of the church to look to, in order for proper judgment, and for discretion in doctrine, and in order to know when to follow leadership, is *the inspired Word of God*. The Scriptures have been completed, deposited and made available for all the congregations to be guided by. The apostle Paul warned that sometimes leadership itself will spawn divisive and erroneous teaching for self-serving interests—Acts 20:28-32. In this text Paul makes it clear that *the Word of God* is the refuge, for preserving our hearts and minds in the correct truths of God, and the proper action to follow. In addition, *the Scriptures* are always held out as the governing document to base all conclusions and actions upon in our walk and conduct—Acts 17:11; John 8:47; Isa. 8:20; I Thess. 2:13; I Tim. 6:3; II Tim. 3:16,17; 4:2-4; Heb. 13:7: etc., etc.

IN CONCLUSION

Though Jesus Christ appeared to be ignominiously defeated as He hung upon the cross, nevertheless, in His death He conquered him that had the power of death (Heb. 2:14), liberated those righteous in the prison of sheol (Eph. 4:8), and ascended over them on high. He openly humiliated the principalities and powers of Satan (Col. 2:15), and God highly exalted Him (Philip. 2:9-11) and made all spiritual powers subject to Him (Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1: 19-23; 1 Pet. 3:22). Christ now became “Lord, both of the dead and living” (Rom. 14:9).

The full physical aspects of this victory will not be realized worldwide until the glorious visible return and physical rule of the King directly on the earth. However, right now here on earth, all the subjects of His rule can be “more than conquerors” (Rom. 8:37), and “sin shall not have dominion over them” (Rom. 6:14), and they can “reign in life” (Rom. 5:17). In addition, Christ in the believer “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Eph. 3:20).

Note: Though the Church (the Spiritual “Kingdom”) and the Messianic “Kingdom” are vastly different and not to be confused, yet all who in this day and age “suffer with Christ” – “shall also reign with Him” in the glorious future (see II Tim. 2:12 & 4:18).

The End