



Exploring the Kingdom of Our Lord and God

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Your Kingdom is an Everlasting Kingdom

Psalm 145:11

Introduction

Though there are those who would split hairs and contend that there is some doctrinal difference between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven, this is seen to be wrong in the many parallels within the synoptic Gospels wherein the term is used interchangeably: "...if you compare the synoptic gospels -- Matthew, Mark and Luke, you will find that Matthew's "kingdom of heaven" exactly parallels Mark's and Luke's "kingdom of God." So there is no doubt that they are different terms describing the same thing. The "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" are synonymous (Kapusta)." We also have Jesus using the terms interchangeably in Matthew: And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. "Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God (Mt. 19:23, 24)." Thus, because it is not within the scope of this paper to discuss the difference, though there are some who would differ, this author will use the terms interchangeably and treat them as though Scripture agrees with this view.

Not only are they interchangeable, but they embody principles that should have been understandable to every Israelite who was learned in Scripture; for as Jesus admonished Nicodemus when speaking to him of the kingdom: Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things (Jn. 3:10)?" This author would also contend that the understanding of the kingdom is important enough that it should be so thoroughly preached and taught that all New Covenant believers in Jesus as the Christ of God would also fully understand the nuances of the kingdom.

Jesus thought it extremely important that we understand what the kingdom of God is; as noted above He chided Nicodemus for not understanding the conception, though he was a teacher of Israel and as we will see, the kingdom of heaven or God was something He continually taught His disciples about and they in turn preached and taught kingdom principles to others. As Jesus said, But He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose (Lk. 4:43)." This 'kingdom' was also what Jesus taught His disciples about after His resurrection; "To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over *a period of forty days* and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God (Ac. 1:3)." And Scripture states that it is God the Father who gladly gives to men this kingdom, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom (Lk 12:32)." One might wonder why this precept is somewhat lacking in the teachings of our modern churches; perhaps as we explore the kingdom of our God we might see why some would want to omit the teaching of it.

"Regardless of whether it is taught or not, we who are fully committed to Jesus Christ do need to come to grips with the knowledge of the kingdom of heaven so that we might make an informed choice as to whether to seek it or not; as Jesus taught, we must count the cost of service (see Luke 14:25-34). And, as we shall see, Jesus and His disciples taught that entrance into the kingdom is available

now, though the full measure of His kingdom is not yet made manifest. “Jesus also illustrated that while the Kingdom is a future event, it is also available to enter now. It became such a prominent part of His ministry that it was impossible to separate Christ from the Kingdom. He began His ministry by announcing that the Kingdom of God was available for all to participate in (Mark 1:14-15). He then continued to teach about it throughout His three years of ministry. Finally, He concluded His time on earth by spending forty days with His apostles, teaching them about the Kingdom (Acts 1:3). The Kingdom of God was central to all Christ taught and did (Home-Kingdom of God).”

Though the precepts of the kingdom of God have been taught since the beginning of time it was only through the advent of the Holy Spirit filling men and women and the fulfilling of the command of Jesus to take His Gospel to the entire world (i.e. the inclusion of Gentiles into the kingdom) that His kingdom truly began to come into its own. To begin to understand this, we must look at some alternate or sub meanings for ‘kingdom’. Encarta offers this as their secondary meaning: a realm or area of activity in which a particular thing is thought to dominate (Encarta). And from Webster’s third and fourth notations we have: **b**: the realm in which God’s will is fulfilled **4 a**: a realm or region in which something is dominant **b**: an area or sphere in which one holds a preeminent position (Merriam-Webster). Thus, we can state that the kingdom of God is an area wherein His will is being done, where He holds the preeminent position and where He is the dominant personality (i.e. the ruler). Though this can be seen as being wherever His throne in heaven is; we can also see that it was always meant to include the earth as well. We have His first command to Adam, to do as He said and not to partake of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil; God asserts here that He is the ruler. We see the precept throughout the teachings of the Law of Moses, throughout the prophetic writing and we see the promise of a deeper fulfillment in our time and in a time yet to come. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. “They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more (Je. 31:33, 34).” Hebrews tells us that this passage speaks of the New Covenant that God instituted through the death of Jesus, but as most Christian scholars would agree, this covenant has as its seal, the Holy Spirit which God gifted mankind with on the first Pentecost after His Son’s death; and as we read that this promise is to the Israelites, we can accept that the final fulfillment is yet to come. Is it any wonder Jesus chastised Nicodemus?

We also see this precept of obedience to God the Father as the preeminent One who rules over all throughout what we call the New Testament writings, though none state it so clear as Jesus Himself. And He said to him, “Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is *only* One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.” *Then* he said to Him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER; YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY; YOU SHALL NOT STEAL; YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS; HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER; and YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF (Mt. 19:17-19).” Clearly Jesus was not attempting to abrogate His Father’s rule and neither should we. This idea can be further seen in His teaching the disciples to pray (this also shows Jesus’ understanding that the kingdom should be a part of our lives here and now): “Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven (Mt. 6:10).”

Thesis Statement

As we shall see, though the understanding of the kingdom was there for the Israelites to see both before the first coming of Jesus Christ and taught during His ministry; we must come to acknowledge that the true explosion of understanding and inclusion of the multitudes of believers in the kingdom of God did not come about until after Jesus died and His Holy Spirit came upon all believers to empower them to live the life of a dweller within the kingdom of God as this event also empowered them to become effective witnesses so as to bring others in. This understanding is clearly noted by Luke as he sought to educate Theophilus with the writing of the Acts of the Apostles. "...but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth (Ac. 1:8). In Jerusalem/Israel: "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls (Ac 2:39-41)." "But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand (Ac. 4:4)." "And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to *their number* (Ac. 5:14)." In Samaria: "Philip went down to the city of Samaria and *began* proclaiming Christ to them. The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing (Ac. 8:5, 6)." As to the rest of Judea and to the ends of the earth, we have Peter taking the Gospel of Jesus to the Gentiles in Acts 10 and Paul's teaching of the kingdom of God from Damascus (Acts 9:19, 20), through much of the known world (Acts 13-28) and especially in Rome itself; "And he (Paul) stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered (Ac. 28:30, 31)."

Thus, it is the author's contention that this paper will prove: **Most do not see or comprehend that the Holy Spirit is: 1) The mark (seal) God gives us to show we are part of His kingdom now and will inherit, with Jesus, all the eternal benefits promised when His kingdom is fully manifested – 2) He is also the One who brings all the tools necessary for us to operate according to the rules of God's Kingdom here and now. In effect, He is the One who escorts us through the door, which is Jesus, and empowers us to live the perfection demanded by our Father. And we shall also come to see that the Godhead has instituted, ordained and administered this kingdom upon man and for man.** This will be done by investigating what Scripture says about the kingdom of God and/or the kingdom of heaven, much as an investigative reporter might and seeing how this might relate to the Holy Spirit's person, His job and His gifts.

Description of the Holy Spirit and His Relation the Kingdom

Who is the Holy Spirit? Scripture offers a great deal of information detailing who the Holy Spirit is and though many would pick and choose between passages in order to make Him fit within their doctrinal beliefs, we must force ourselves to see what all of Scripture says about Him and if it differs from what we have been taught, then we must agree to change what we see Him to be so that we agree with what God wrote.

- That He was known to be God by the apostles and early church is seen when Peter confronts Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter 5. But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? While it remained *unsold*, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God (Ac. 5:3, 4).” See also Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Hebrews 9:14; Luke 1:35; 1 Corinthians 2:10, 11; Psalms 139:7-13; 1 Corinthians 12:6, 11; John 3:3, 8; and Matthew 12:31, 32 for other references to His deity (Gleaned from Nelson’s).
- Many of His titles also point to His being God: i.e. The Spirit of... The Lord God (Isaiah 61:1), Your Father (Matthew 10:20), Holiness (Romans 1:4), Life (Romans 8:2), His Son (Galatians 4:6), My (God’s) Spirit (Genesis 6:3) and the Eternal Spirit (Hebrews 9:14) (Gleaned from Nelson’s)
- That He was present before man was created and was instrumental in the creation of the world can be seen in the second verse of Genesis, chapter one. “The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters (Ge. 1:2).”
- He is the breath of life that awakened mankind to live: “Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being (Ge. 2:7).” “Then He said to me, “Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life.” ’ ” So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army (Eze. 37:9, 10).” - “I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it,” declares the LORD (Eze. 37:14).’ ”
- Job tells us that it is He who creates and gives life: “The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life (Job 33:4).”

As far as the job description assigned Him in Scripture it is threefold in the New Covenant life of believers, according to Jesus. “And He (the Holy Spirit), when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged (Jn. 16:8-11).” All the other work He does, and the list is long, is related to one of these three primary principles.

- He appoints and commissions ministers (Isaiah 48:16; Acts 13:2; 20:28).
- He directs ministers where to preach (Acts 8:29; 10:19, 20).
- He directs ministers where not to preach (Acts 16:6, 7).

- He instructs ministers what to preach (1 Corinthians 2:13).
- He spoke in, and by, the prophets (Acts 1:16; 1 Peter 1:11, 12; 2 Peter 1:21).
- He strives with sinners (Genesis 6:3).
- He reproves (John 16:8).
- He comforts (Acts 9:31).
- He helps our infirmities (Romans 8:26)
- He teaches (John 14:26; 1 Corinthians 12:3).
- He guides (John 16:13).
- He sanctifies (Romans 15:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11).
- He testifies of Christ (John 15:26).
- He glorifies Christ (John 16:14).
- He has a power of His own (Romans 15:13).
- He searches all things (Romans 11:33, 34; 1 Corinthians 2:10, 11).
- He works according to His own will (1 Corinthians 12:11).
- He dwells with saints (John 14:17). (Gleaned from Torrey, et al)

As to His work of ministry among believers, He:

- Regenerates (John 3:3, 5)
- Indwells (Romans 8:11)
- Anoints (1 John 2:20, 27)
- Baptizes (Acts 2:17-41)
- Guides (John 16:13)
- Empowers (Micah 3:8)
- Sanctifies (Romans 15:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:13)
- Bears witness (Romans 8:16; Hebrews 10:15)
- Helps (John 14:16-26)
- Gives joy (Romans 14:17)
- Gives discernment (1 Corinthians 2:10-16; 1 John 4:1-6)
- Bears fruit (Galatians 5:22, 23)
- Gives gifts (1 Corinthians 12:3-11) (Gleaned from Nelsons')

The Holy Spirit also:

- Appoints officers ((Acts 20:17, 28)
- Sends out and directs missionaries (Acts 13:2, 4; Acts 8:9).
- Caused Mary to conceive the Christ Child (Luke 1:35).
- Is credited with miracles (Matthew 12:28).
- Christ was anointed by Him (Matthew (3:16).
- Christ was supported by Him (Luke 4:1, 17, 18).
- Christ was filled by Him (Luke 4:1).
- Christ was offered to God by Him (Hebrews 9:14).
- Christ was raised by Him (Romans 1:4).
- Christ was justified by Him (1 Timothy 3:16). (Gleaned from Nelson's)

And He is said to be the One who knows the mind of God and reveals that mind to those who believe: "For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the

things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words* (1 Co. 2:11-13).” Because of this, some say He is the wisdom Solomon says was with God from the beginning (see especially 8:22, 23).

Finally, it is He who was given us to seal us as part of the Kingdom of God and who is our down payment, given to pledge that the promises are true. “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave *us* the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge (2 Co. 1:21, 22).” - “What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. “He who has received His testimony has set his seal to *this*, that God is true. “For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure (Jn. 3:32-34).”” “ They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads (Re. 9:4).” “The LORD said to him, “Go through the midst of the city, *even* through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst (Eze. 9:4).””

Clearly we see, in all that He is, that the Holy Spirit has a ministry entirely wrapped up in the revealing, the sustaining and the populating of God’s kingdom. As we see Him as God, we might note that this kingdom is God’s for indeed He is Lord of all. As we see the Holy Spirit active in creation and in giving life to mankind, we can know that it is upon this earth where God has always intended His kingdom to exist and it was ever to be populated by men and women who have sacrificed and committed all into His care, living according to faith in our Lord and God; giving up the free will He gave to commit ourselves to obeying His will. As we see He convicts the world of sin because they did not believe in Christ Jesus, we note that He directs His attention to both the regenerated and the unregenerate to draw us deeper into belief in Christ Jesus who is the only Way of entrance into the kingdom of Heaven; He strives with sinners, He regenerates and cleanses those who are repentant, he reproves us as we wonder from the correct pathways and He brings the gifts and the fruit of the Spirit which God uses to show that He is real, to draw unbelievers into covenant relationship and to feed both believers and unbelievers with righteous fruit. As we see that He convicts the world of righteousness because Jesus has ascended unto heaven, we understand that because of Jesus’ ascension we can now be filled with the Spirit, becoming good witnesses of Jesus Christ; we testify to and of Jesus, we bring glory to Christ by our righteous actions and we offer comfort through the power of God’s Spirit within as He (through supernatural means) makes us aware of the needs of those He would have us minister unto – that is He indwells, brings comfort to us so that we might bring comfort to others, He helps us so that we will use our position and our knowledge to help others, He gives us both natural and spiritual discernment to use in helping and comforting, He causes us to bear the fruit that brings nourishment to both the church and others we encounter, he leads us down the paths of God’s righteousness and He guides us (by bringing all Jesus said to remembrance) into the whole truth, which is Christ Jesus. And it is as we take notice of the Holy Spirit as He who convicts or convinces the world of judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged through the death of Jesus Christ, that we can note Him as One who anoints preachers and teachers to bring forth the Word of God, who baptizes us to be witnesses for Jesus, who empowers us to defeat sin in our lives, drive out demons who would oppress us or possess others, who (as mentioned above) teaches us all truth and guides us on the path of righteousness, the One who sanctifies us, gives us the joy that comes from the knowledge that our God wins this war and provides all we need to edify and otherwise help the Church to overcome all the

wiles of the devil – all this and more brings absolute proof of the overcoming power of the kingdom of God is that which is made available to us through the indwelling of God’s Holy Spirit and is that which will destroy all the works of the devil.

As to how He reveals the kingdom to us and through us comes by knowing the mind of God and then walking in it; one author offers this:

“Man, Paul is saying, could never know God on his own. However, God has chosen to make Himself known through His Word and through His Spirit so that the things of God might be recorded as a part of the Bible. Here is a crucial difference between the apostles and the false apostles. The apostles claimed to speak for God, and they did. False apostles claimed to speak for God, and they did not. To reject the apostles and their teaching as the “wisdom of God” is to reject God, for they are the only ones through whom God has chosen to disclose Himself. To reject the apostles’ teaching is thus to reject the God who disclosed Himself to men through them.

The work of God the Spirit in the lives of Christians in general is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 2:14-16.

God has disclosed Himself to men through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit knows the intimate things of God and, by inspiring the apostles, has translated spiritual thoughts about God into spiritual words, the New Testament. In the Old Testament period, God revealed His Word through the prophets. In the New Testament times, this revelation came through the apostles. Yet the unbeliever seems blinded to the truth contained in God’s Word. How can this be? How can some find in the Bible a rich source of revelation that enables them to know God more intimately, while others find the Scriptures a senseless mixture of writings that cannot even be understood, why are some drawn to the Scriptures and others are not? The difference is the presence or the absence of the Holy Spirit. We see in verses 10-13 that Paul speaks of the Spirit’s work in conveying God’s thoughts to men by inspiring the apostles to convey spiritual thoughts through spiritual words, the words of the New Testament. Now, in verses 14-16, Paul writes of the work of the Spirit, enabling men and women to understand the Scriptures and thus to know the mind of God.

Previously, Paul divided humanity into two groups: (1) those that trust in the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary for their eternal salvation and (2) those that do not. Another way of viewing these two groups would be: (1) those that do not possess the Holy Spirit, who cannot understand the wisdom of God as revealed in the Scriptures, and (2) those that do possess the Holy Spirit, who therefore have the capacity to understand the Scriptures.

The first group Paul refers to as “the natural man” (verse 14). The “natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God.” The natural man, who is not indwelt by the Holy Spirit, cannot understand “the things of the Spirit of God,” “These are the ones who cause divisions” (Jude 19).

The second group are called “spiritual (verse 15) by Paul. Most often, we understand the term “spiritual” to refer to those who are mature, who manifest the fruit of the Spirit in their lives. Paul seems to use it here to refer to those who possess the Spirit, who live in the realm of the Holy Spirit because they have trusted in Jesus Christ. The one who possesses the Holy Spirit is able to grasp and

to appraise both temporal and eternal matters.

While the Christian, “he who is spiritual,” is able to appraise all things and thus to understand the beliefs and the behavior of the unsaved, the “natural man,” the unsaved man is unable to understand the Christian, “He who is spiritual.” No wonder Christians are misunderstood, persecuted, and considered foolish and weak. This is the best the natural man can do.

In verse 16, Paul closes chapter 2 with the words of Isaiah 40:13: “For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him?” Paul told the Corinthians, “But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16). These words sum up the difference between the non-Christian and the Christian. God has revealed Himself to all men in the person of Christ and in the Scriptures. The Scriptures make no sense to the unbeliever. This is because it is impossible for the unbeliever to understand the things of God apart from the Spirit of God. Who can know the mind of the Lord? No one can, apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Note that the words of verse 16 indicate not only the natural man’s ignorance but also his arrogance. Who would think that any man could instruct God? But this is precisely what the unbeliever does think. This is why they think the Christian is foolish and weak.

This final statement sums up the vast difference of opinion that exists between Christians and unbelievers over “wisdom.” The unbeliever is incapable of understanding God’s wisdom because the wisdom of the natural man is a limited, distorted temporal wisdom. The Christian has the means for knowing the mind of God and thus has access to the wisdom of God. This is why the reaction of the unbeliever to the preaching of the gospel surprise Christians. In addition, the Christian should not forsake the vast wisdom God has made available to us in order to pursue the wisdom that the world seeks (George).”

As Mr. George explains, the true depths of what God would have us to know of Him are only recognized and understood by those indwelt by His Holy Spirit; and thus we again see that this indwelling Spirit is integral to understanding and appropriating the truth of the kingdom of our God. For one could say that the kingdom of God is His mind, His will; as we noted above in the secondary understanding of what a kingdom is (Thus, we can state that the kingdom of God is an area wherein His will is being done, where He holds the preeminent position and where He is the dominant personality (i.e. the ruler).). We must keep in mind that the kingdom of God is not something physical or material as the kingdoms of this earth are; for as Jesus explained to Pilate: ‘Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm (Jn.18:36).”’ And thus this spiritual kingdom must be discerned through the aid of the Holy Spirit; “But a natural man (or an unspiritual man) does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised (examined or discerned) (1 Co. 2:14).”

The final precept we must make note of, before delving into the nuances of God’s kingdom, is that God has put a mark on us that has always been placed upon godly men and women so that they might be differentiated from those who are ungodly; God always makes a separation between those who are His and those who are not. We first hear of a mark as it appeared upon Cain; as most walked the way of God in those days, Cain’s mark was to show that he was ungodly, but not to be harmed: “Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is too great to bear!

“Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.” So the LORD said to him, “Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold.” And the LORD APPOINTED a sign for Cain (lit. ‘set a mark on him’), so that no one finding him would slay him (Ge. 4:13-15).” Nearly every other time we read of a mark being placed upon people it is the mark of one who is of the godly remnant; we are thus marked so as to show that there is a difference between us and the ungodly multitudes.

When we understand that the mark or seal of our God upon us is none other than His Holy Spirit dwelling within us – “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge (or a down payment) of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God’s own* possession, to the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:13, 14).” – then, the true understanding of His mark can be most clearly seen in Moses’ prayer after Israel’s great sin with the golden calf: “Then he (Moses) said to Him, “If Your presence does not go *with us*, do not lead us up from here. “For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the *other* people who are upon the face of the earth (Ex. 33:15, 16)?””

Quite clearly it is seen that the Holy Spirit’s personality and His job description show that He is the One who not only leads us to the door who is Jesus; but He also meets us on the other side of that door and escorts us into the very presence of our heavenly Father and causes us to become a part of the kingdom of our Lord and God. As it is His job to prepare a bride for our Lord Jesus, this author contends that it is also His job to cause us to become uniquely not only subjects of the kingdom of our God, but also ambassadors to the unredeemed: “. . .and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are **ambassadors** for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2 Co. 5:19, 20).”

As we understand this precept, we can now look at the teachings on God’s kingdom and see how not only the Holy Spirit, but the triune Godhead is seen to be originator, proprietor and the power that causes this kingdom to be possible. As noted above, we will look at the kingdom somewhat as a reporter might investigate something; telling the who, what, where, etc. of the kingdom of heaven. And as we look at the kingdom in this way, we will also look to see how the Holy Spirit can be seen to operate within the kingdom.

What is the kingdom of God?

In Matthew 13, the parallels in the other synoptic Gospels and in other places, Jesus offers several parables that tell us what the kingdom of God is. It is through these we can again easily see that it is God's Holy Spirit who is the mark/seal on us, declaring that we are a part of this kingdom, that it is He who brings the tools necessary to enter into kingdom living now and that He is God who will usher us into eternity filled with God's Spirit so that we will ever be with God as part of His eternal kingdom.

One of the first things we must note concerning what this kingdom is what Jesus told the Pharisees that it was not; but to fully understand this we must first look at what Jesus told them when they claimed He cast out demons by the ruler (or king) of demons. Herein Jesus not only declares this kingdom to be among them now (yet unseen or unrecognizable), He also declares the kingdom to be in Him and that because of the indwelling Holy Spirit Whom John declares came upon Jesus without measure. From Matthew's account of the incident we read: "If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? For this reason they will be your judges. "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you (Mt. 12:27, 28)." And from Luke's similar account: "And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? So they will be your judges. "But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you (Lk. 11:19, 20)." As we understand that this kingdom resided in Jesus because the Holy Spirit indwelt Him, we can then more fully understand what was meant when Jesus spoke plainly to the Pharisees about the kingdom of God: "Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here *it is!*' or, 'There *it is!*' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst (possibly 'among you' or 'within you') (Lk.: 17:20, 21)."" This author believes that just as Jesus was telling them in the casting out demons accounts, so He is telling them here, that the kingdom of God resides within Him and this is what brings the kingdom among them (the Holy Spirit was not within these Pharisees). When we compare the accounts from both Matthew and Luke, noting that in Matthew's gospel Jesus notes that He casts out demons by the Spirit of God (Whom He refers to as 'the finger of God' in Luke's account) and it is that (He, the Spirit) who is the One who brings the kingdom into their midst. Here we must note again that one of the sub-meanings of 'kingdom' refers to the realm where the will of the king is being accomplished; thus the finger of God who is the Spirit of God becomes the instrument through which His will, His kingdom, is made manifest.

Though we will use Mark's version of the Parable of the Sower as it adds some detail needed to fully understand it, Jesus uses this parable to begin His discourse on what the kingdom of heaven/God can be likened to through parabolic utterance and interpretation in Matthew 13; this same parable and interpretation can also be found in Luke 8. "And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching, "Listen *to this!* Behold, the sower went out to sow; as he was sowing, some *seed* fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up. "Other *seed* fell on the rocky *ground* where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. "And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. "Other *seed* fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. "Other *seeds* fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." And He was

saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear (Mk. 4:2-9)."' "And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables? "The sower sows the word. "These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them. "In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky *places*, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; and they have no *firm* root in themselves, but are *only* temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away (are caused to stumble). "And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. "And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." And He was saying to them, "A lamp is not brought to be put under a basket, is it, or under a bed? Is it not *brought* to be put on the lampstand? "For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has *anything* been secret, but that it would come to light. "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." And He was saying to them, "Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides. "For whoever has, to him *more* shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him (Mk. 4:13-25)."'

The first thing Jesus says in interpreting this parable is that those who don't understand this parable will have a difficult time discerning what other parables mean; showing us that there are points in this parable that are universal to the parables Jesus offered and it is as we perceive these universal points that we can more easily interpret His other stories.

Jesus then goes on to say that what the sower sows is the word (the Word of God). He then explains how there are four different types of people or hearts that hear the word. In Matthew Jesus refers to this word as 'the word of the kingdom' (see Matthew 13:19) and as every other parable in this passage deals with the kingdom of our God, we must understand that this parable is both introductory to these others and that which all the other parables about the kingdom must be interpreted through.

Ray Stedman offers us some interesting insight and personal understanding concerning this parable that may shed further light on the above ideas: When Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear," he made it evident that this is much more than just a story. It was not meant merely to entertain them. That phrase is like a sign which says **THINK**. But evidently they did not understand him. Even the twelve gathered afterward and said, "Explain the parable to us." So Jesus went on to explain the parable to the twelve, and to us, because, you remember, he said, "To you it is given to know the secret of the kingdom of heaven." And as he gave them the explanation, he said this amazing thing, Verse 13:

And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?" {Mark 4:13 RSV}

That is a very, very important sentence, because he is telling us that this parable of the sower is the key to interpreting all the parables. Otherwise these words are without meaning. It is very important that we notice this. If we do not, we will make the mistake of many commentators, who simply make these parables mean whatever they want them to mean. This is what many of the commentators on the parables have done. They have ignored this clear statement of Jesus that the

parable of the sower is the key to interpreting all the parables. In fact, many of the commentators make up their own rules of interpretation as they go along. I want to share with you a typical example of this, so you can see what I mean, and beware of what you read. Here is a man who is widely read among evangelicals. This is what he says about this parable of the sower:

The parables must never be treated as allegories. In an allegory, every part and action and detail of the story has an inner meaning and significance. Pilgrim's Progress and The Faerie Queen are allegories. In them, every event and person and detail has a symbolic meaning. But, if that be so, clearly an allegory is something to be read and studied and examined and investigated. But a parable is something which was heard once, and once only.

He is suggesting that we do not need to spend a lot of time with the details of these parables, that we are merely to get the point and move on, because a parable is not to be taken in detail and treated as an allegory. This despite the fact that Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" -- an invitation to examine and investigate and study carefully. This commentator goes on:

Therefore, what we must look for in a parable is not a situation in which every detail stands for something; we must look for a situation in which one great idea leaps out and shines like a flash of lightning. It is always wrong to attempt to make every detail of a parable mean something. It is always right to say, "What one idea would flash into a man's mind when he heard this story for the first time?"

Now listen to the way Jesus interprets this parable, beginning with Verse 14:

"The sower sows the word. And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown; when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word which is sown in them. [Satan is represented by the birds that came and ate the seed.] And these in like manner are the ones sown upon rocky ground, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; and they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. And others are the ones sown among thorns; they are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world, and the delight in riches, and the desire for other things, enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. But those that were sown upon the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty-fold and sixty-fold and a hundred-fold."
{Mark 4:13-20 RSV}

Please notice that Jesus treats it exactly as the commentator says he must not do! He treats it as an allegory. He says every detail means something. And he says, furthermore, that this is the way to handle all the parables. This is the key to understanding parables. Parables are allegories in which every detail applies, has its own import to the whole. From that, I think we can deduce a very practical exhortation: as the song says, "Read your Bible. The words inside are true and reliable." And they throw a great deal of light on the commentaries!

Let us look at this story of the sower and see the first of these secrets of the kingdom -- how the kingdom of God comes to us. Jesus says, first, the sower goes out and sows, and the Word is what he sows. That is how the kingdom arrives in human hearts. The Word of God is sown by means of preaching or teaching or reading or studying or witnessing, or in some other way. The Word is dropped into hearts like seeds into soil. That Word is the life-giving element which can change the whole situation and bring enrichment and harvest into a life. Therefore the moment of the sowing of the Word is a magic hour. It is a time when the opportunity to be changed is present.

I used to read this story as though these various soils were four different kinds of people, who remained the same all through their lifetimes -- some were permanently hard-hearted, like the first example given; some were impulsive, like the second; some were full of concerns, like the third, etc. But I have come to see that what our Lord is describing here is not types of persons, so much, but conditions of heart at any given moment, i.e., conditions which are present when the Word is being sown. Whenever the Word is being sown, people are in one condition or another, just as they are described to us here. We have all been callous, at times, when we have heard the Word. We have all been impulsive in our reaction -- emotional shallow. We have all been overly concerned about other matters. And we have all had times of being open and responsive to the Word. What is your heart like now? You are in one of these four condition is. Which one? That is the question.

Let us look at them:

First, there is what we can call the callous heart. The seed is sown upon the beaten, trodden-down pathway. This represents people whose hearts are busy, who are not open, who have been beaten down so many times they have grown cynical, hardhearted, callous to truth. When the seed hits them, the birds come and gather it up immediately. (Perhaps there are people like that here this morning. You are here not because you wanted to hear the Word but because coming to church is the "right" thing to do. Your hearts are callous and unresponsive, and the Word falls on them as on asphalt.) What does Jesus say about that kind of a life? He says it is strictly for the birds! The seed will be snatched away by Satan before you even have a chance to hear it.

C S. Lewis, in his *Screwtape Letters*, describes a man who goes into a library to read and meditate. His mind is suddenly opened to deep thoughts of God. Confronted with his own standing before God, he starts thinking in terms of his eternal welfare. Then, Lewis says, the demons that are assigned to keep him from discovering truth call his attention to the sounds on the street, to the newsboy calling out the latest news, and to the fact that he is hungry, ready for lunch. And that is all it takes. All thoughts of God disappear, and he is involved in the mundane affairs of life. And, from the point of view of the satanic emissaries, he is delivered from this danger of thinking about God. That is what happens to the callous mind and heart.

Then there are the impulsive hearts. The seed falls upon them and they immediately respond with joy. The seed takes root and grows up quickly. The trouble is, they respond like this to everything -- food fads, new books, political leaders, whatever popular movement happens to be abroad at the time. As a result, their lives are so shallow that the seed of the life-giving Word cannot take deep root and change them. Consequently, the life which apparently is there withers away and dies. Jesus says that this kind of life is shallow; it cannot stand the heat. When persecution and tribulation come, immediately it is withered. They turn away and lose interest, and cannot abide.

The third condition of heart is represented by the thorns. These are those who hear the Word, but thorns spring up and choke it. This is what we could call the over-involved heart. There are three things Jesus details here which are thorns that

choke the life-giving Word:

First, there are cares, i.e., worries concerns. These are people who are concerned all the time over what is going to happen next, worried about the situation they are facing -- fretful, anxious, troubled people who do not know how to rest, how to leave things in God's hands but are constantly trying to work it all out themselves. These people Jesus says, are losing truth. The seed has fallen upon their hearts, but it does not take root because it is choked by the thorns, and they soon lose it. Second, there are those who delight in riches, who are caught up in the pursuit of wealth, in the Playboy philosophy -- constantly planning for their own amusement and pleasure. That is all that their life consists of. The life-giving Word, which could make a real man or woman out of them, is hitting them, but it cannot find root and grow up. There is no place left in their hearts.

Then there is what Jesus calls "desire for other things," or what we might call "restlessness." These are people who are always shifting from one thing to another. James Michener wrote a book, *The Drifters*, in which he describes this kind of people, especially young people, who cannot stay in one place long enough to put down roots, but drift from one experience to another. Jesus says they are losing the truth of the delivering Word. They are choked by life. But then there is the receptive heart, the one ready to receive -- open and responsive immediately.

I talked this week with a prominent businessman who was passing through this area. He told me about how he became a Christian. He had been raised with no church background at all, and had four different sets of foster parents before he was eighteen. He had tried various philosophies, seeking some answers to the riddle of life. Among them were transcendental meditation and the Eastern religions. None of this satisfied him.

One day a friend invited him to go to church, and he went -- for the first time in his life. The pastor spoke about Christ. Afterward he met the pastor and said to him, "Sir, if I understand you correctly, Christianity is saying that up here is God; down here is man; and in between is Jesus Christ, and that he is the key for man to reach God. Is that right?" The pastor said, "Yes, that's right. In fact, you've accurately described a verse in Scripture which says: 'For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,'" (1 Tim. 2:5). This man said, "Well, that makes sense to me."

The pastor said, "I've got a book here I'd like you to take home and read. And next week, if you come back and have read it, we'll sit down and talk about it together." The man said to the pastor, "Well, I appreciate that. But tell me: If it is true that Jesus really is the way to God, then why do I have to wait till next week? Why can't I come to him now? If it really works, it will work now; if it doesn't work, it never will." The pastor said, "You're exactly right." So they bowed their heads, and the man received Christ, became a Christian immediately. He received the Word, has grown in grace ever since, and has become a strong testimony for Christ.

That is the responsive heart which is ready to act. It is true not only at the initial stages of Christianity, but whenever the Word falls on us, that the seed is being sown. And areas of our life are either ready to respond, or, like any of the other

kinds of soil, reject the truth. This is the way the kingdom of God, the rule of God, comes into our hearts. The great question, then, is: Examine your heart when the Word is being sown. What is it like? What is it like right now (Stedman)?

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Many, as Mr. Stedman, would cut off from the interpretation that Jesus offers, verses 21-25, but the understanding of this is essential to understanding not only this parable, but also those parables that follow, in which Jesus tells of the kingdom in great detail. This is where Mark really offers detail that is lacking in the other two accounts of this parable; though Luke does offer a partial understanding of this additional interpretation by Jesus.

Backing up to the first part of the interpretation and using the understanding of the ‘word’ being related to the kingdom we see that it is through the understanding or acceptance of the word that one enters into the kingdom of God; when we then think back to the understanding of it being the Holy Spirit who gives us the understanding of God’s Word, as His thoughts are spiritually discerned, we see that Jesus is telling us Who it is who brings us entrance into God’s kingdom (note also Romans 10:17 in this context).

Jesus then brings this parable and the next one, which only Mark offers, into conjunction with the other parables of Matthew 13 with this passage in verses 21-25. Here Mark takes us from the idea of an unknown sower and shows us that all believers are to be sowers; they are to be inviting others into the kingdom as they themselves live in willing subjugation to the kingdom way. We are not to be only believers, but we are to also be ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20); or as James tells us, we are not to be merely hearers of this word, but we must become doers of the word so we both help and influence others. Jesus tells us here in Mark that this word is not to be hidden away, but it to be put on display so all the world will take note of it; it is to be a light, a beacon which shines into the souls of all who come near – it is also that which illuminates the kingdom in us so that others take notice of it and are drawn to it. And who is the golden lamp and the oil which gives light to mankind; the Holy Spirit – Who also bears witness to Jesus and gives us the capability to be effective witnesses to Him, thus drawing mankind to Jesus.

Jesus continues this discourse by showing that if we don’t share the news of the kingdom it dies within us and everyone loses; but if we freely give what has been given to us, then everyone gains. We receive to the same degree we give; if we have given and thus received much, even more understanding comes our way and we are thus able to teach even more.

Jesus uses this further interpretation to segue into the next parable Mark offers in his passage of kingdom parables, moving this idea of sharing the kingdom closer to home. Now He moves from an anonymous sower to a man; any man who sows.

“And He was saying, “The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know. “The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. “But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come (Mk. 4:26-29).”” Only Mark offers us this understanding concerning the kingdom of heaven; about this one author states:

We want to find the one central truth taught by our Lord in this parable. I think He is saying that the Kingdom of God will occur, not in some cataclysmic way, but

secretly over time (secretly in the sense that although we see the consequence we do not understand or observe the process), brought about by God once man has sown the seed.

So once again, we have a parable which utilizes the realm of agriculture to illustrate God's kingdom. Again there is the sowing of seed; then there is the resulting growth; then there is a harvest.

Commenting on this parable, one commentator writes: "It sets before us the history of the work of grace in an individual soul." I disagree! I don't see this parable as picturing growth in an individual believer but the corporate growth of the Kingdom of God to its consummated state of full maturity. I think this because of the harvest. The idea of harvest in the parables is eschatological. This parable tells us what the kingdom is like, not when it arrives in its fullness, but during its traditional growth period. The kingdom arrives in its fullness at the harvest.

This parable is talking about the growing process between planting and harvesting; which is referring to the beginning of the church and the end of the age when the church is established. This shows a transition period (Curtis).

Though this author agrees that this parable discusses a transitional period, Mr. Stedman seems to have it more correct as he indicates it deals with an individual, not the Church.

This is a secret of the kingdom of God, and to me it is one of the most encouraging of all the parables Jesus ever uttered. He is speaking of how this rule of God increases, how it grows in a life. He explains it as a coming to harvest by a patient expectation that God will work. The key of this whole passage is, "... the seed grows, he knows not how. The earth bears fruit of itself ..." That is, there are forces at work which will be faithful to perform their work -- whether a man stewes and frets about it or not. He does what he can do, what is expected of him. But then God must work. And God will work. And in the confidence of that, this man rests secure.

As Jesus draws the picture, this farmer goes out to sow. It is hard work as he sows the field, but this is what he can do. But then he goes home and goes to bed. He does not sit up all night biting his fingernails, wondering if the seed fell in the right places, or whether it will take root. Nor does he rise the next morning and go out and dig it up to see whether or not it has sprouted yet. He rests secure in the fact that God is at work, that he has a part in this process, and he must do it; no one can do it for him. But he will faithfully perform it. So the farmer rests secure, knowing that as the seed grows there are stages which are observable: "... first the blade, then the ear then the full grain in the ear." It is only as the grain is ripe that he is called into action again. When the harvest is ready, then he is to act once more.

This is exactly what Paul describes for us in that passage in First Corinthians 3: "For we are laborers together with God:" {1 Cor 3:6a KJV}. This is the way we ought to expect him to work. It involves a witness first, perhaps a word of teaching or exhortation to someone -- or to ourselves. And then an inevitable process begins, one which takes time and patience, and allows God to work. One of the most destructive forces at work in the church today is our insistent demand for instant results. We want to have immediate conversions, immediate responses,

immediate dedications every time we speak. We tend not to allow time for the Word to take root and grow and come to harvest. But our Lord is teaching us the great truth that we ought to.

I have been watching a boy in the PBC congregation growing up since grade school. I watched him come into adolescence and enter into a period of deep and bitter rebellion against God. I watched his parents, hurt and crushed by his attitudes, yet nevertheless praying for him -- saying what they could to him -- but above all holding him up in prayer. I watched the whole process as the seed which had been sown in his heart took root and began to grow. There were tiny observable signs of change occurring. Gradually he came back to the Lord, and opened up to the Christian family. Just this past week he asked me to fill out a reference for him to go to seminary. That is the Word growing secretly. The sower knows not how it happens, but he can rest secure in this. Our Lord is teaching us the fantastic truth that God is at work. It does not all depend on us! Once we have done what has been given us to do, then we are to rest in the fact that God will work (Stedman).

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Through these first two parables, Jesus opens our minds to begin to understand the nuances of the kingdom of God. As both Mr. Stedman and Mr. Curtis say, these parables offer central truths, guidance needed in order to understand the other parables; especially these other parables Jesus offers to help us understand the kingdom of God. It is as we accept that it is by understanding what these two parables say that we can then gain better understanding of the other parables that we can move on. However, we must first accept the basic principles in these two interpretations: 1) It is through understanding these parables that we understand the kingdom of God (Mark 4:11); 2) Anytime the word is presented, in any form, we will respond to it in one of the four ways Jesus describes – the way we respond is up to us, it depends upon our depth in the Spirit of God and our desire to know Jesus; 3) As we come to know about the kingdom, we must both live it and share it with others or it will dry up and wither away within us – but if we share it, use it, even more knowledge will be given to us; 4) We may not understand how the kingdom (the Spirit) grows in us or others until it comes to full maturity, we must trust God for that, but we can't neglect to plant the seeds; and 5) We must be ready to harvest all mature seeds, regardless of who planted them (John 4:35-38).

Understanding these basics will help us to not only see what the kingdom is, but will help us to see the role of the Holy Spirit both in the kingdom and in preparing us to live according to kingdom precepts now and also to be ready to enter God's eternal kingdom. Jesus uses seven more parables in Matthew 13 to describe the kingdom of heaven; let us look at them one at a time.

The Tares

“Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. “But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares (darnel, a weed that resembles wheat) among the wheat, and went away. “But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. “The slaves of the

landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ ‘And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ The slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’ ‘But he said, ‘No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. ‘Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn (Mt. 13:24-30).’ ’ ’ ’

Jesus later explains this parable also: “Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.” And He said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; and *as for* the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil *one*; and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. “So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. “The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks (everything that is offensive), and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. “Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear (Mt. 13:36-43).” ’ ’ ’

Here again, Jesus brings the understanding of the kingdom to a more personal level, but He also adds details of understanding that shed further light on God’s kingdom as it manifests on earth. He declares that He is the one who sows the word. It is always Jesus, the Word incarnate who originates the sowing of His seed into every man, woman and child.

From the beginning of the parable, we easily note that Jesus brought the living word to the world; He sowed the seed. He goes on to tell us that the good seed He sowed results in or is the sons of the kingdom. However, into this perfection of God’s kingdom among men enters the evil one; a fly in the ointment. He comes and sows bad seed, seed that although it looks and somewhat acts like good seed, produces no crop, nothing that will sustain life; it is worthless. This seed, Jesus tells us, are the sons of the evil one; they are children of the devil (for further understanding of their ways see John 8:31-59). As He proceeds with His interpretation, Jesus tells us that the bad growth can’t be immediately removed or there will be a good chance of causing damage to the good growth; so the two seeds must grow together until the harvest time when the two mature plants may be easily recognizable and separated – one for destruction and one for good use.

Of special note here is that the slaves of the Master recognized the difference between the good and the bad plants as soon as the wheat sprouted and bore grain - “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. “You will know (or recognize) them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn *bushes* nor figs from thistles, are they? “So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. “A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. “So then, you will know (or recognize) them by their fruits (Mt. 7:15-20).” “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: (sexual) immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions (or heresies), envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law (Ga. 5:19-23).”

We might also take note that in the passage from Galatians Paul makes it clear, as Jesus does, that those whose fruit is not of the Spirit will not inherit God's kingdom and by inference, those who bear the fruit of the Spirit will be accepted into God's kingdom – thus, once again we can see how the Holy Spirit plays a major role in kingdom living.

The Mustard Seed

“He presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all *other* seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES (Mt. 13:31, 32).””

Jesus now moves on to talk of what the kingdom is to an individual and; though many who comment on this suggest the parable concerns the whole Church – this interpretation does not fit with what Jesus has already stated. The seed is the Word (or the Spirit who makes the Word real in our hearts), Jesus is the One who does the sowing and the place wherein it is sown is a man's heart. How could this garden represent the entire earth if the only place the seed of the Word can grow to maturity is within an individual's heart? Instead this parable explains what happens when that One who is the kingdom of God within us comes upon us. He shows us that the Holy Spirit enters us as a small thing; He has little control at first, but as the mustard seed grows to maturity and becomes larger than all garden plants, so too does the Spirit (if we feed and water with the teaching of the Word and the actions that should follow that teaching). Not only does He and the kingdom He brings become of greater importance than all other things in our lives, but He also brings benefit to other creatures as He matures us.

“As with most stories or parables, there are two sides, stories or meanings within. There is the positive story or the good spirits, and there is the negative story or the evil spirits. I will put all 3 gospel stories in this document and try to give you both perspectives, as well as the overall meaning of this story.

Matt.13:31-32 - Another parable put he (Jesus) forth unto them saying, **The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed**, which a man took, and sowed his field: ⁽³²⁾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.

Mark 4:30-32 - And he (Jesus) said, **Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?** ⁽³¹⁾[It is] like a grain of mustard seed, which when sown, in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: ⁽³²⁾But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

Luke 13:18-19 - Then said he (Jesus), **Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it?** ⁽¹⁹⁾**It is like a grain of mustard seed**, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it **grew**, and waxed **a great tree**; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.

Birds and/or fowl are "spirits," - they can be 'good spirits' or 'evil spirits.'

Let me give you the definitions for a few of the words and/or phrases found in the above parable so that you will have a better understanding. All definitions are from the Strong's Concordance –

birds and/or fowl #4071 - N.T. - from a derivative of #4072 - AV - fowl, birds -

1) flying, winged, 2) flying or winged animals, birds, **2a) the birds of the heaven, i.e. flying in the heaven (air)** - found in - Matt.6:26; 8:20; 13:4, 32; Mark 4:4, 32; Luke 8:5; 9:58; 12:24; 13:9; Acts 10:12; 11:6; Rom.1:23; James 3:7
from a derivative of #4072 - middle voice of a primary verb - AV - fly, flying - 1) to fly - found 5 times in Revelation 4:7; 8:13; 12:14; 14:6; 19:17;
of the air #3772 - N.T. - perhaps from the same as 3735 (through the idea of elevation); the sky - AV - heaven, air, sky, heavenly + 1537; - 1) the vaulted expansion of the sky with all things visible in it; 1a) the universe, the world; 1b) the aerial heavens or sky, the region where the clouds and the tempests gather, and where thunder and lightning are produced; 1c) the sidereal or starry heavens;
2) the region above the sidereal heavens, the seat of order of things eternal and consummately perfect where God dwells and other heavenly beings - this number can be found 284 times
#1537 + heavenly - from #3772 (see above) - AV - 1)heavenly- 1a) heavenly; **dwelling in heaven; 1b) coming from heaven;** - found 6 times - Matt.6:14, 26, 32; 15:13; Luke 2:13; Acts 26:19
#2032 heavenly + #1537 above - from #1909 and #3772 - AV - heavenly, celestial, in heaven, high; - 1) existing in heaven; **1a) things that take place in heaven;** 1b) the heavenly regions; 1b1) heaven itself, the abode of God and angels; 1b2) the lower heavens, of the stars; 1b3) the heavens, of the clouds; 1c) the heavenly temple or sanctuary; 2) of heavenly origin or nature; - found 21 times
heavenly #3770 - AV - heavenly; - 1) heavenly; **1a) dwelling in heaven;** 1b) coming from heaven; - found 6 times
lodged #2681 - N.T. - from #2596 and #4637 - AV - **lodge**, rest - 1) to pitch one's tent, to fix one's abode, **to dwell;** - found in - Matt.13:32; Mark 4:32; Luke 13:19; Acts 2:26
from #2596 - a primary particle; prep - AV - according to; after; against; **in;** by; daily + 2250; as; - 1) down from, through out; 2) according to, toward, along - this number can be found 282 times
and from #4637 - from #4636 - AV - dwell; - 1) to fix one's tabernacle, have one's tabernacle, abide (or live) in a tabernacle (or tent), tabernacle; **2) to dwell;** - found in - John 1:14; Rev.7:15; 12:12; 13:6; 21:3
from #4636 - from #4633 - AV - tabernacle; - 1) a tabernacle, a tent; **2) metaph. of the human body, in which the soul dwells as in a tent, and which is taken down at death;** found in - II Cor.5:1, 4 - {- perhaps, the end of the world (or, the end of time)}??

please look up for your #4633 for yourself

Now from the definitions of the words and/or phrases above, we can see that the birds/fowl of the air which lodge in the branches, are spirits (good and/or evil) in the heavens which dwell in the branches. And looking at the Parable of the Fruit--Tree of Life, we see that trees in the Bible are referred to as people. If we also look at The True Vine, we see that the branches are people which produce qualities and characteristics - the good ones we are to cultivate, and the bad ones we are to cast out.

As with most parables, you are going to have to go from spiritual, to reality, and

back to spiritual again to understand what Jesus is referring to. For the most part, it is a spiritual story.

You are also going to have a good understanding of the Parable of the Sower; The Parable of the Seed; Tares; Parable of the Tares of the Field; the Parable of the Net, as well as The True Vine...

The very first line in each of the gospel versions says, **...The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed,....** - Matt.13:31; **...Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God?** - Mark4:30; **Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and where unto shall I (Jesus) resemble it?** Luke 13:18

Jesus is trying to explain **what the kingdom of heaven or God is like or resembles, or what can he compare it with.** In fact if you change the words around a bit in the Luke version and say, 'What shall I resemble the kingdom of heaven to.' Jesus is trying to compare what the kingdom of heaven starts out like and how it develops. So, in other words, the kingdom of heaven starts out very small - very, very tiny, and as it grows, and develops, it is able to hold more. Now this is more a spiritual story, which takes place in your mind, rather than a reality story, which is something that you can see, touch or feel, like a table or chair, etc.- these things you can see, touch.

Now before we can move on, we must ask ourselves a few questions.

1. What is the seed?
2. Where is the seed planted?
3. Where is the kingdom of heaven that Jesus is referring?

In order to answer these questions, we must incorporate the Parable of the Sower and the Parable of the Seed in with this parable, as it is just a continuation (for example, from one parable into the next in Matthew chapter 13, however, I will use all three versions of the above two parables, to help you see what Jesus is referring to.)

So let us look at these questions –

#1 - What is the seed - The "seed" is the word of God. - Luke 8:11. The Bible tells us what the seed is.

#2 - Where is the seed planted? Think about this for a minute, if you said, in the ground, then I ask you, what good will it do to plant the word of God in the ground. Where is the only place the **"word of God"** will do you and me any good, since it is "the word of God" that Jesus came to tell us about, and Jesus is the sower. **Again, let us look at the parable of the sower - Matt.13:19 - ...the word of the kingdom...was sown in his heart (or, mind); also in Mark 4:15 - ...the word that was sown in their hearts, (or, mind). So, the "word of God" is planted or sown in your mind.**

#3 - Where is the kingdom of heaven Jesus is referring to? This may be a bit more difficult for you to grasp, but not really, if you understand the two concepts above and **REMEMBER - we are talking about the spiritual aspect of the story.** If the "seed" is "the word of God" and it is "planted or sown in your mind," - then, where is the kingdom of heaven (that Jesus is referring to) - the only place it can be - **in your mind.** It cannot be in the ground and it cannot be *in your pants (From the footnotes: The reference to "in your pants," above - some

people are teaching that the "seed" in the Parable of the Sower is - 2) the semen virile, 2a) the product of his semen, seed, children, offspring, progeny - (all definitions are from the Strong's concordance.) And that the serpent impregnated the woman.), however, Satan would like you to believe either one.

There are several scriptures that say - "**the kingdom of heaven is at hand,**" John the Baptist said it first in Matt.3:2, Jesus said it in Matt.4:17, Jesus told his disciples to go out and preach this in Matt.10:7, and sometimes it may use the phrase, "the kingdom of God is nigh at hand," Luke 21:31, but the meaning will be the same.

Let me give you the definition for the phrase –

the kingdom #932 - N.T. - from #935 - AV - kingdom (of God), kingdom (of heaven), kingdom (general or evil), (Thy or Thine) kingdom, His kingdom, the kingdom, (My) kingdom - **1) royal power, kingship, dominion, rule, 1a)** not to be confused with an actual kingdom but rather the right or authority to rule over a kingdom, **1b)** of the royal power of Jesus as the triumphant Messiah, **1c)** of the royal power and dignity conferred on Christians in the Messiah's kingdom, **2)** a kingdom, the territory subject to the rule of a king, **3) used in the N.T. to refer to the reign of the Messiah.** This number can be found 162 times.

from #935 - probably from #939 (through the notion of a foundation of power) - AV - king, King (of Jews), **King (God or Christ)**, King (of Israel - **1)** leader of the people, prince, commander, lord of the land, king. This number can be found 118 times

probably from #939 (through the notion of a foundation of power) - from baino (to walk) - AV - foot (sole of) - **1) a stepping, walking, 2)** that with which one steps, the foot. This number can be found only once - Acts 3:7

Now let me give you the definition for –

is at hand #1448 - N.T. - from #1451 - AV - draw nigh, be at hand, come nigh, come near, draw near - **1) to bring near, to join one thing to another, 2)** to draw or come near to, to approach. - This number can be found 43 times

from #1451 - from a primary verb agcho (to squeeze or throttle; akin to the base of 43) - AV - nigh, at hand, nigh at hand, near, from 1, nigh unto 1, ready - **1) near, of place and position, 1a) near, 1b) those who are near access to God 1b2)** The Rabbis used the term "to make nigh" as equivalent to "to make a proselyte", **2)** of time, 2a) of times imminent and soon to come pass. This number can be found 30 times

"The kingdom of heaven is at hand," is for you and me, right now, today, it is repenting and living your life the correct way - walking with God - following the commandments of God...

II Cor.12:2 - I (Paul) knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one **caught up to the third heaven.**

caught up to the third heaven - II Cor.12:2

Acts 22:17 - And it came to pass, that, when I (Saul/Paul) was come again into Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, **I was in a trance...**

So we can see from II Cor.12:2, that there are 3 levels of heaven, and the one that Jesus is referring to in the Parable of the Mustard Seed - this particular kingdom

of heaven - is in your mind. This is also where the kingdom of heaven is in the Parable of the Sower; the Parable of the Seed; the Parable of the Good Seed in his Field, but while men **slept**, his enemy (the devil, (or evil spirits)) came and sowed tares among the wheat (see - Matt.13:24-30); then comes the story, or Parable of the Mustard Seed; the next parable is about leaven - **but all the parables in Matt.13, are about the kingdom of heaven**, so it is important to know and understand **where the kingdom of heaven is**.

Continuing in Matt.13:35, Jesus sends the multitude away, and the disciples ask Jesus to, ...Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field, Matt.13:36. So Jesus begins by telling them who the sower is - ⁽³⁷⁾He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man, ⁽³⁸⁾The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

Okay, let us examine verse 38 for a moment - The field is the world....

REMEMBER - we are talking about the spiritual aspect, which is in the essence of your mind, not the reality aspect, which you can see, touch or feel.

It says, "the field is the world," but in the spiritual aspect, the field is your mind, that is where things get sown or planted, that is where the spiritual things grow and develop, and that is where the spiritual messages (both good and evil) become lodged - in your mind.

Okay, so now we can get back to the Parable of the Mustard Seed for a while - it should be much easier for you to see and understand this parable now, as I have explained many of the different words and phrases above.

So we know the kingdom of heaven is in your mind and that it is like a grain of mustard "seed," (the word of God), which a man (Jesus) took and sowed his field (sowed the word of God in his/your mind.)("Parable...Mustard Seed")

Once again we can note that as we understand and apply the basic principles mentioned above: "...the basic principles in these two interpretations: 1) It is through understanding these parables that we understand the kingdom of God (Mark 4:11); 2) Anytime the word is presented, in any form, we will respond to it in one of the four ways Jesus describes – the way we respond is up to us, it depends upon our depth in the Spirit of God and our desire to know Jesus; 3) As we come to know about the kingdom, we must both live it and share it with others or it will dry up and wither away within us – but if we share it, use it, even more knowledge will be given to us; 4) We may not understand how the kingdom (the Spirit) grows in us or others until it comes to full maturity, we must trust God for that, but we can't neglect to plant the seeds; and 5) We must be ready to harvest all mature seeds, regardless of who planted them..." – as we understand these principles, we can again see the working of the Holy Spirit is paramount to our entrance and development in the kingdom of God.

The Leaven

"He spoke another parable to them, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened (Mt. 13:33)."

Here Jesus continues to build upon how powerful this Word (Spirit) is, as only a small amount is needed to bring to bear great influence in one's life. "So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it (Is. 55:11)." "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and

spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do (Heb. 4:12, 13).”

“The parable of the leaven is preserved by the Evangelists Matthew (13:33-35) and Luke (13:20-21). This brief parable is set forth by the the Evangelist Matthew thus:

The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

In this parable, as in the preceding parable (of the mustard seed), Christ is comparing the Kingdom of Heaven not with leaven itself, but with the ultimate process of its action on flour and dough. The Lord chooses for the parable that which occurs in nature, in order to show that His word is just as immutable as the laws of nature are immutable. Christ is reminding us that an insignificant amount of leaven (yeast), placed in a large volume of dough, imparts to it its properties and stimulates fermentation in it.

Magnificent in its historical breadth and psychological depth, the parable of the leaven depicts the inner, hidden action of the Gospel preaching not only on the whole world, but also on individual persons. The Lord develops the idea, expressed by Him in the parable of the mustard seed, of the future of the Kingdom of God the Church founded by Him on earth.

During the life of Jesus Christ, the Church, the Kingdom of God on earth consisted of a handful of illiterate disciples. Who among Christ's contemporaries could have imagined that the Church, with such an initial, seemingly pitiful, composition, would spread throughout the whole world? But none the less, this happened. The new faith, preached by Christ and His Apostles, produced something similar to that which yeast produces in dough. The Apostle Paul writes: *Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?* (I Corinthians 5:6). Indeed, leaven, no matter how small, imparts its property acidity to the whole mixture of flour. So also the new faith, which seemed in the beginning completely limited in its activities, like fermentation from yeast produced a revolution in the minds and hearts of millions of people.

The meaning of the figurative comparison of the Kingdom of God with dough, raised by the action of yeast, is that in both instances a living, creative beginning is at work. The heavenly leaven the grace of the Divine Spirit, placed by the Saviour in the human souls which compose His Church the Kingdom of God on earth , determines the growth of their inner, spiritual life. And as the leavened dough rises until the leaven is mixed with it completely, so also the process of establishing the Kingdom of God will continue until all its true children enter into it.

On the historical plane of establishing the Kingdom of God, the "three measures" of the parable signify, according to the explanation of the Serbian bishop, Nicholas of Ochrid, the three branches of the human race the Semites, Japhites and Hamites, and they point to the bringing of the heavenly leaven grace by the Saviour to earth, to all mankind without any limitation. On the individual plane, the faith of Christ, like leaven, is capable of transfiguring the whole of human nature, introducing into it a new, Divine life. According to the interpretation of

Blessed Augustine, the "three measures" of flour signify the three main powers of the human soul—mind, heart and will; that is, the power of thought, the power of feeling and the power of operation—which are gradually sanctified by the grace of the Holy Spirit. The grace of God penetrates and sanctifies further the spirit, soul and body of a man. Armed with the power of grace, a man enters into a life completely different from the ordinary. The mind of such a man becomes the mind of Christ; that is, the understanding of a transfigured man is in full obedience to faith; he is capable of attaining the mystery of salvation. The desire and actions of a man leavened by the grace of God are elevated to full agreement with the will of the Lord. In the hearts of men reborn and cleansed by grace the peace of good reigns. The body of a reborn man itself becomes the pure vessel of pure faith. In this way, the life-creating leaven penetrates the whole being of a man till the whole [is] leavened, i.e., until he attains perfection in Christ and becomes a new creature.

The Fathers of the Church emphasize the extremely important detail, essential for a proper understanding of the parable: the heavenly leaven, the grace of God, acts on dough made from unspoiled flour. Stale, spoiled flour will not sour, will not rise, will not yield to the action of yeast. The grace of God does not act in a negligent soul. In order that the Divine leaven would do its work, we must through repentance and spiritual struggle with all the vices prepare the dough of our soul and body in patience. Success in the struggle with one's sinful "I", with one's "old man" is not attained easily or quickly. And yeast does not suddenly leaven dough, but gradually. It is impossible to be confirmed immediately in struggles for piety and virtue. It is necessary every minute, every day, to exercise oneself in them continually, to struggle continually with temptations and weaknesses, in order to be confirmed in a truly spiritual life—to try to live as the Lord wishes.

Every attempt always begins with something small. In this is contained all the science of Christian life: try to live in accordance with the will of Christ, beginning always with the small. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. A little mustard seed in time becomes a great tree.

In order to begin this little work, strength, which will help us to fulfill the commandments of Christ, is essential. This strength we receive in Christ's Church. The closer and more sincerely we will unite with Christ in this mystery, the more spiritual strength we shall receive in order to fulfill His commandments (Potapov)."

And again, as this brother attests, though it is the work of God, through His Word that brings about this change; the primary motivator seems to be the Holy Spirit.

The Treasure and the Pearl

"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid *again*; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field (Mt. 13:44)."

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it (Mt. 13:45, 46)."

Here again, Jesus switches the allegory used in two parables to better illustrate an aspect of the kingdom of heaven; but again, we must continue to use the foundation He laid in the first two

parables (with explanations) to understand all the others. Herein we see the kingdom, which is the Spirit of the Word; for it is the Spirit who brings or gives life: Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death (Ro. 8:1, 2).” “...not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but **the Spirit gives life** (2 Co. 3:6b).” We see the kingdom as being something of great value and something that is so recognizable as being of immense worth that when one recognizes it, they are willing to part with all else to obtain it. And again, herein we can clearly see the working of the Holy Spirit within the three foundational precepts of His job description as given by Jesus in John; for who but He can cause us to recognize the tremendous value of the spiritual kingdom of God.

“The mustard seed is paired with the leaven and the hidden treasure is paired with the costly pearl. Paired parables share a common theme while at the same time offering significant differences, as we shall shortly see. Taken together, paired parables provide reinforcement and emphasis that reinforce the central teaching, making it more unforgettable.

The Hidden Treasure: central point and meaning of the parable.

The parable reveals to us the superlative worth of the kingdom of Heaven. The treasure is worth every sacrifice necessary to secure it, and once secured to maintain it. Moreover, there is a consummate joy in discovering the value of the kingdom of heaven. “. . . and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field” (Matthew 13:44).

The moral responsibility of the finder.

The parable is not dealing with the legality or morality of the man’s acquisition of the field. The emphasis is not on the field, his actions or himself. The parable clearly is dealing with the single topic of the incredible worth and value of the treasure, the kingdom of heaven. But modern readers are sometimes troubled by the actions of the man who finds the treasure. After all, if we found some money wouldn’t we seek the proper owner? And if we found a treasure buried in a field, would we not properly consider it the property of the owner of that field and our duty to inform him? But the point of the parable is not to give instruction on what we should do when finding a buried treasure. Indeed, how often might that occur in our life times? The instruction given here tells us how to respond to the discovery of the immense value of the kingdom of heaven.

Zeroing in on the Hidden Treasure.

Why would a treasure be hidden in a field? Some commentators assert that the treasure is a silver or gold mine, or perhaps of a vein of valuable ore discovered by the man. If this were indeed the case then a subsequent difficulty follows immediately: The wording of the parable, “. . . which a man found and hid again. . .” (Matt 13:44), definitely conveys the sense that a treasure, such as a treasure chest or clay jar with gold coins, is discovered and then hidden once more. Those who advocate a vein of rich ore offer that the man “hid” the treasure by keeping quiet about his find.

A better explanation is that the treasure was indeed a treasure chest or volume of perhaps gold coins contained in a clay jar. Since there were no bank vaults or other safe repositories for wealth, burying one’s gold and silver was not an unreasonable idea. However if the owner died or was killed, it is quite possible

that the treasure would remain buried indefinitely. Such treasure jars are discovered even today. Doubtless we have not found them all. They were hidden by their owners so that conquering kingdoms or marauders would not be able to take hard-earned savings away from the subjugated owner.

A wonderful example of a coin hoard was uncovered at Tel Malot in 1998. Some 26,000 bronze coins were discovered in a single large jar, subsequent to excavations by a company laying a pipeline. These particular coins dated to the fourth-fifth centuries AD, although several coins were found to be of earlier minting, dating to the Hellenistic period (fourth-first centuries BC).

Finding such a treasure would indeed be rare, probably a once-in-a-life-time occurrence, but the idea would not be unheard-of or far-fetched. Finding an exposed vein of precious ore, on the other hand—well, a great deal of credulity would be required even to imagine that if someone casually encountered such an outcropping he would realize what it is or even have the savvy to know how deep it might go and the value it might yield if mined.

The great bargain.

Whatever the treasure Jesus had in mind when He spoke the parable, we can be much more certain about the main point: When the man buys the field he purchases for himself a huge bargain. The comparison is drawn between the huge value of that treasure and the kingdom of heaven. Once he catches a glimpse of this most beautiful and extensive treasure (the kingdom of heaven), the man who finds it joyfully abandons all else to secure it. Any costs to himself (in this case the cost of discipleship) are greatly outweighed by the bargain. Not that I wish to minimize the cost of being a disciple. “Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple” Jesus said (Luke 14:27). Certainly the cost of discipleship should be counted carefully and never underestimated. However, in comparison to the value of the kingdom of heaven, there can be no question as to the ultimate worth of this transaction being in the favor of the man who buys the field. What we receive greatly overwhelms any sacrifice we may be called on to make. Indeed, the parable itself tells us that “from joy over it” the finder sells all he has and buys that field. The joy of the find should not be overlooked by the reader today. Even when preaching and teaching on the responsibilities and duties of the kingdom, we should not overlook the immense joy that it is to discover the kingdom of heaven and the wonderful impact it has upon us when we embrace it.

Are we the treasure?

A grossly invalid interpretation of the parable of the Treasure Hidden in the Field holds that we ourselves are the treasure and that the finder is Jesus. Once seeing us, in the field as it were, He with joy goes to the cross, in effect selling all He has and buys us with His precious blood. But a simple reading of the parable reveals the unacceptability of this interpretation: “*The kingdom of heaven is like . . .*” are the opening words of the parable (emphasis mine). The kingdom is likened to a treasure. The “we are the treasure” interpretation requires a double comparison: The kingdom is like a treasure is like a person. Obviously such a position requires us to insert words that are not there. The parable does not say or even imply, “The kingdom of heaven is like a person . . .”

The Pearl of Great Price: central point and meaning of the parable. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls . . .”

Once again we see that the point is the supreme worth of the kingdom. This passage is linked to verse 44 by the word “again,” a sure indication that we are dealing with the same subject in paired parables.

Distinctions and differences:

Though the parables are one in message, the distinctions are interesting. One man has found a hidden treasure within a few minutes, perhaps walking across or working in a field. The other man finds a valuable treasure (the pearl) after a lifetime of searching. In the first case the find was happenstance. In the second case, the find was the consummation of the life’s work of a diligent man. In the first case the man’s business was not seeking buried treasures (we may safely assume), but in the second case the man’s business was seeking fine pearls, and we may safely assume he knew those which were valuable and those which were common. Derrett summarizes it well: “One wins eternal life after a struggle of years, another finds it in one hour (J.D.M. DERRETT, *Law in the New Testament* (London 1970), p. 15.)”

It would not be difficult to expand upon this distinction of one finding salvation quite by happenstance and another by long searching. In fact, such happenings do indeed occur. However, since this point is not really the teaching of either parable, I will leave this trail for exploration on another day.

Paying full price:

Knowing the proclivity of middle-eastern merchants to bargain, we might have expected the pearl merchant to do a bit of negotiating. But without making any pretenses about the value of what he has found, a man who was accustomed to bargaining apparently pays full price. This single find so surpasses anything else he has seen that he considers it more than fair to himself to give *everything he owns* in exchange for this single pearl. What a poignant lesson in how valuable the kingdom is. The merchant knows that he is getting the better end of the bargain. A lifetime of searching has taught him that there is no finer pearl than this. Just so, a man who may have spent his entire life searching for the answer to life’s puzzle, upon finding the kingdom of heaven through our Lord Jesus Christ, is wise to sell out all and buy it. The person who understands the worth of the Kingdom of God gladly exchanges all his old life and gains eternal life.

One final note: the parable does not imply that works of righteousness are what procures the kingdom’s benefits. Jesus is not and never has been interested in our religious efforts and what they will buy. Once a person grasps this truth he can be truly liberated. We exchange our old life for the new and eternal life of the kingdom. What a great bargain for us. What joy this should give us as we ponder upon it. Jim Elliott, martyred missionary to the Auca Indians of South America, said it best: “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” (Dubler)”

As brother Dubler states in the beginning of this message, Jesus often uses pairs in comparisons in order to give greater emphasis to the lesson He wants to teach. In this passage from Matthew, Jesus uses three sets of parable pairings to illustrate three major aspects of the kingdom of God. In the first pair (the parable of the sower and the parable of the tares), both of which He explains,

Jesus not only lays the foundational truths which are discussed above, but He also pairs them to show that the heart growth is dependent upon outside influences and the level of commitment found in the one in whom the seed is sown and He gives us a rather clear understanding of how one enters into the kingdom, what is necessary. In the second pairing (the mustard seed and the leaven) Jesus shows that unseen and perhaps un-noticed things can influence the growth – for the mustard seed to grow the soil must be correctly worked and as one commentator put it, spoiled or bad flour will not react to leaven; Jesus also shows through this pairing how this explosion of growth can, and often does, take over one’s entire being or outlook on life. In this third pairing of the treasure and the pearl, Jesus is obviously showing that the kingdom of God is of inestimable value and one would sell or give all to possess it. Jesus finishes this passage of parables in Matthew 13 with a final parable to further illustrate what the kingdom of heaven is like unto.

The Dragnet

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering *fish* of every kind; and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good *fish* into containers, but the bad they threw away. “So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out (or separate) the wicked from among the righteous, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 13:47-50).”

We have now seen how to enter into the kingdom in the first two parables, how growth happens and is influenced in the second two and how valuable the kingdom is recognized as being in the third and final pairing; now in this final parable, Jesus brings this teaching on the kingdom to a climax.

Jesus now offers a very clear and concise portrait of how things will be when the kingdom comes into being; whether this is during His Millennial Reign or after the Great White Throne Judgment is not stated, no time-frame is given. What we do know is that everyone will be together before the Lord to be judged. As the good fish are saved because they are useful, so will the righteous be saved at this time; set aside for good works; however the bad fish, like the wicked, are cast out as unusable; they are destroyed. There is a telling that says the fishermen would actually toss the unusable fish behind them onto the beach where they would bake in the sand and eventually die; if this is true, the correlation with Jesus’ words “. . .and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” is easily understood.

John MacArthur offers this:

“I. THE PICTURE (vv. 47-48)

A. The Catch Collected (v. 47)

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind"

The imagery Jesus gave in the parable helps us to understand what He is teaching. Fishing was a common enterprise in our Lord's time. Some of the disciples were fishermen, so they clearly understood what Jesus was speaking about. Basically, there were three ways to fish at that time. Fishermen still use those methods in Israel today at the Sea of Galilee. The first way to fish was with...

1. THE USE OF A LINE WITH A HOOK

In Matthew 17, when Jesus asked Peter to pay taxes for the two of them, He said, "...go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up. And when thou hast opened its mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take, and give unto them for me and thee" (v. 27). In that incident, the line and hook method of fishing was used.

The second way to fish was by...

2. THE USE OF A CASTING NET

When the Lord came upon Peter and Andrew in Matthew 4, verse 18 says that they were "casting a net into the sea." A casting net (Gk. amphiblestron) was a very special net. It was circular and had weights on its perimeter. A fisherman would drape the net over his shoulder, walk up to the shore, and throw the net. The net would hit the water as a large, open circle, and the weights on the outside edges would bring the net down over any fish that were in the area. Then the fisherman would pull a cord attached to his wrist that closed the net into a sack, and bring his catch up onto the shore.

The Lord had that net in mind when he called the disciples to be fishers of men (Mt. 4:19). He wanted the disciples to throw out their nets, and catch men for Christ.

The third method of fishing, which the Lord referred to in Matthew 13:47, involved...

3. THE USE OF A DRAGNET

This is a completely different net, as indicated by the use of the Greek word sagene. The dragnet is also known as a seine net or trawl net. It is a very large net. Bible commentator R. C. H. Lenski said that some of those nets covered one-half of a mile. Because of their large size, they could not be used by a man alone. When used, one end of the net was attached to the shoreline, and the other end was attached to a boat. The boat would then go out on the water and stretch open the net. After the net was opened, the boat would begin to move in a circle. Because the top edge of the net had floats and the bottom edge had weights, it moved through the sea like a vertical wall. As the circle was being completed and the boat made its way back to where the net was attached to the shoreline, all the sea life that was inside the circle the boat made was caught inside the walls of that net.

When the Lord spoke of a casting net, He referred to it in a positive way: He used it as a picture of the disciples catching men for Christ (Mt. 4:19). When He spoke of the dragnet, He was talking about the gathering of men for judgment.

The Lord emphasized two important things in verse 47: the size of the net was immense, and the catch was all-inclusive. The dragnet swept up living and dead creatures, as well as seaweed and other things from the bottom. It caught every form of life in the area that the net encircled.

That brings us to verse 48:

B. The Catch Categorized (v. 48)

"Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away."

That was a very common scene in that day. The fishermen sorting the catch put the good things into vessels. If they were going to transport something, they would keep it alive in a vessel containing water. They threw away the bad things. Now that we understand the picture, let's look at...

II. THE PRINCIPLE (v. 49)

"So shall it be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth, and separate the wicked from among the righteous"

A. The Focus Of The Parable

There are many things we could say about the parable, but the Lord is focusing on one element of it: the separating process that the fishermen went through on the shore. He emphasized that that aspect of the parable is a picture of the angels separating the good from the bad at judgment.

During this era in which good and evil exist together, God will tolerate evil. But there is coming a time when He will separate those who are subjects of the King from those who are not. Little by little, imperceptibly and silently, God's net is moving through the seas of time and bringing all men onto the shores of eternity for that inevitable separation. The net draws in all kinds of fish; it is indiscriminating. So, as verse 47 says, the Kingdom of heaven is like a net that moves silently through the sea of life. By the time people awaken to what God is doing, they will have already been brought to the shore to be separated.

The only spiritual application the Lord makes from the parable is from the separation process on the shore. He does not comment on anything else. I think we too ought to focus on that one thing, and learn from the parable what the Lord intended to teach.

1. THE TIME OF THE SEPARATION

Verse 49 says that the separation will "be at the end of the age." The judgment of man will occur when Jesus returns to earth to set up His glorious Kingdom. Jesus was not trying to pinpoint chronologically every element of judgment when He said that. He didn't specify whether He meant the Great White Throne Judgment, the separation of the sheep and the goats, or the bema Judgment (when believers are rewarded after the Rapture). He was just making a general statement that, ultimately, all of the people in the world will be caught in the net of judgment.

2. THE AGENTS OF THE SEPARATION

Notice that verse 49 says that angels are the ones that will separate the good from the evil. They were also mentioned as the separators in the parable of the wheat and the tares (Mt. 13:41). The Bible makes it clear that angels will be the agents of God's judgment (Mt. 24:31; 25:31; Rev. 14:18-19).

God will tolerate good and evil growing together in His Kingdom for now, but the time of separation is moving closer every day. Jesus also spoke of the separation of believers and unbelievers in Matthew 25, where He said, "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 the nations; and He shall separate them one from another, as a sheperd divideth his sheep from the goats....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....Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me,

ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (vv. 31-32, 34, 41). In John 5:25-29, Jesus said there was coming a resurrection of all men: some "unto the resurrection of life," and some "unto the resurrection of damnation." At that final separation, God will determine an eternal destiny for every soul that has ever lived.

B. The Functions Of The Parable

Some people wonder why Jesus taught the parable of the dragnet, which talks about the separation of good and evil, when He already talked about that separation in the parable of the wheat and the tares. One reason He taught it was because the parable of the wheat and the tares emphasizes the coexistence of good and evil, not the separation of good and evil. Another reason Jesus had for teaching the parable of the dragnet was because of His compassion for men. He wanted to warn them about hell. He said, "Watch, therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of man cometh" (Mt. 25:13; cf. Mk. 13:35). Jesus cautioned people not to take their sins lightly because inevitably they would be accountable before God. He said that there would come a time when men would live as they did in the days of Noah, and that judgment would follow soon after (Lk. 17:26-27). Through His prophet John the Baptist, He said that He would come to burn the lost "with unquenchable fire" (Mt. 3:12).

When Jesus looked at the people around Him in Matthew 9:35-38, He saw a harvest moving toward judgment. His heart was filled with compassion for people on the way to damnation. Jesus showed His compassionate heart for men by warning them of the inevitable separation in the parable of the dragnet.

God does not take pleasure in seeing the wicked die. He is "not willing that any should perish" (2 Pet. 3:9). First Timothy 2:3-4 says that God, our Savior, "will have all men to be saved." Jesus wept over Jerusalem and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them who are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Mt. 23:37). He also said to the Jewish people, "...ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life" (Jn. 5:40). Jesus warns men because He loves them.

The Kingdom of heaven is like a net. That net moves through the world unseen. When the net touches the back of a fish, the creature simply swims a little further ahead of it, enjoying what appears to be permanent freedom. Men move about in this world imagining themselves to be free, fulfilling their own desires, with little knowledge that the net of judgment is coming closer and closer. Each time men are touched by the net, they move a little further along. Eventually they will find themselves hitting the part of the net in front of them. They will make a wild dash to escape, yet find themselves totally surrounded by the net. Finally, they will be dragged onto the shore, flailing as they enter death.

Men may not see God moving in the world, but He is moving. When they are touched by the gospel of Jesus Christ, or become scared by the threat of judgment, they dart away into the freedom they think is ahead of them. But sooner or later, they will find they are still caught in the net that is moving them toward judgment. The Kingdom will ultimately engulf all men, and God will separate them with His angels.

III. THE PERIL (v. 50)

"And shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

That is a horrifying verse. If there were any doctrine in the Bible that could be wished away, it would be the doctrine of hell. But hell cannot be eliminated from the Bible. The wicked will be cast "into the furnace of fire"--those are terrifying words from our Lord. He spoke of hell more than anyone else in the Bible, and for a good reason. People probably wouldn't listen if anybody else tried to teach about hell. Christ had to be the one who taught about hell. We cannot conceive of eternal damnation. Christ emphasized hell in His preaching. If you don't think that is true, then you haven't paid attention to His ministry (MacArthur)."

After affirming that they understood His teaching on this, Jesus makes one final rather enigmatic statement concerning the kingdom of God: "And Jesus said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out of his treasure things new and old (Mt. 13:52)."

MacArthur says this about it: "Jesus had instructed the disciples about the Kingdom of heaven. He said to them, "You are now disciples, biblical scholars." That is what a scribe was: a student and interpreter of the Scripture, a theologian, lawyer, and preacher. Some were members of the Sanhedrin. A scribe was an authority on the Old Testament and tradition, and called "rabbi." They were influential. Jesus is saying here that just as the Jewish leaders trained their scribes, He had trained the disciples to become biblical scholars."

John Carter gives this understanding:

"It is usual to speak of the seven parables of Matthew 13; yet, although it does not appear to be generally recognized, the one-verse parable, about the scribe, which closes the conversation of Jesus and the disciples is as much a parable as the story of the pearl merchant. Finishing the parable of the Net, Jesus asked his hearers if they had understood what he had told them. They answered, "Yea, Lord" - an answer which in view of the discussion on the meaning of the parables which has since taken place in every generation, appears to have been given rather light-heartedly. The answer, however, does suggest that they felt they had received some clear idea of what Jesus meant to tell them, and this further shows that some of the prophetic and fanciful interpretations since devised could not have been intended as the primary meaning of the seven parables Jesus had spoken.

Jesus answered them: "Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old" (verse 52). "The scribes were a class of learned Jews who devoted themselves to a scientific study of the Law, and made its exposition their professional occupation." The word used by the gospel writers has to do with "letters", but just as that word in English is used not only of everyday correspondence but of a cultured knowledge of literature, so the scribe was an instructed, learned man. Ezra was a scribe of the law, a worthy pattern for all others to follow. That the Scribes of Christ's day, like the Pharisees, had fallen much below the original ideals of their class, is evident; but the function of the Scribes was such that Jesus could refer to them for the basis of his lesson. A traditional saying of the "Men of the Great Synagogue" laid down three rules for scribes: "Be careful in pronouncing judgment, bring up many pupils, and make a

fence about the law". The professional employment of the Scribes, therefore, consisted of the study of the law, teaching it to their pupils, and its administration. Some of the methods and practices which had developed in the pursuit of these aims led to sharp clashes with Jesus, whose teaching contrasted so emphatically with the traditions they had built up.

Jesus spoke of "a scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven". That involved a different kind of schooling from that which the Jewish scribes received. The instruction given to the scribes was academic; they were learned in all the lore of the teachers of their nation, and their exposition of Scripture consisted of citing a text and then quoting the opinions of the Rabbis. The scribe of the kingdom is versed in the Word, and his method of teaching consists of reasoning out of the Scriptures and explaining Scripture by Scripture. Jesus compares such a scribe with a householder. The word is the same as is elsewhere translated "goodman of the house" and "master of the house". In the parable of the Tares the Son of Man is the householder, and the use of the word of the instructed disciple in the same context suggests that some parallel was intended between the Lord and the disciple.

The instructed scribe of Christ's own household has a duty towards his fellow-members of the house. That duty is to "bring forth out of his treasure things new and old". The qualified scribe has his "treasure" - the knowledge of God's Word, and to the extent that he has prayerfully studied it, seeking to divide it rightly as a good workman (2 Tim. 2:15), so he is a good scribe. Such is the quality of the "treasure" that its full beauties are never fully comprehended, and the most diligent students know how unsearchable are the riches of God's revelation. Hence there is a never failing interest in the "food" the scribe provides, things ever "new" while "old". Without any deviation from first principles of God's word there is a continued freshness in its presentation.

It is probable that the reference to "new and old" had a connection with the disciples' assurance that they had understood the parables the Lord had spoken. They had comprehended in a general way their meaning, but passing time would show them "new" significances not then perceived. Experience would show how the tares were sown, how men reacted to their message, how very different kinds of men responded to their preaching of the gospel.

The short parable is an encouragement to men of every age to follow the Lord as teachers, to be like him students of God's word, like him to present in full loyalty to the Scriptures the unfailing wonder of the grace of God as it is revealed in the many-sided presentation of the oracles of God (Carter)."

Here in Matthew 13, Jesus has given His disciples and us a very good understanding of what the kingdom of God is. If we compare this understanding with Jesus' three-fold description of the Holy Spirit's work within the world (John 16:8-11), we can easily see that it is surely He who is both the mark or seal God gives to show we are part of the kingdom and that He is the One who brings the tools necessary to operate according to the rules of God's kingdom. And as we briefly look at other places where the kingdom is described, we will continue to see this to hold true:

- "Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O LORD, and You exalt Yourself as head over all. "Both riches and honor *come* from You,

and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone (1 Ch. 29:11, 12).” Here we see that David understood that God was the ultimate ruler and the One who rewarded man. This would coincide with the 2nd and 3rd items in the Holy Spirit’s working: righteousness because Jesus had gone back to the Father and judgment because the ruler of this world stands judged.

- “Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD before the new court, and he said, “O LORD, the God of our fathers, are You not God in the heavens? And are You not ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Your hand so that no one can stand against You (2 Ch. 20:5, 6).”” Here we can note the same references to the job of the Holy Spirit as are above concerning David’s and Jehoshaphat’s understanding of God and His kingdom.
- “The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty (or kingdom) rules over all (i.e. the universe) (Ps. 103:19).” Here again David is seen to accept the absolute sovereignty of God as being everywhere.
- “O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, who is enthroned *above* the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth (Is. 37:16).” Here in Hezekiah’s prayer he too recognizes God as sovereign over all because He made it all.
- “In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and *that* kingdom will not be left for (or passed on to) another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. “Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy (Da. 2:44, 45).” Here Daniel shows that this coming kingdom will start small, yet grow to annihilate all other kingdoms and again we see the correlation between the workings of the Holy Spirit and what God’s kingdom is said to be like.
- ““But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom *endures* from generation to generation. “All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and *among* the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off (lit. ‘strike against’) His hand or say to Him, ‘What have You done (Da. 4:34, 35)?”” In this passage Daniel shows us that even King Nebuchadnezzar came to recognize God’s power and might and His authority to rule over the lands of all men. This not only shows us that God’s kingdom extends to earth and all its inhabitants, but it again showcases the working of the Holy Spirit as Jesus foretold of what He would do for mankind. See also Daniel 5:21 in this regard.
- ““He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints (lit. ‘holy ones’) of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they (the saints) will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. ‘But the court will sit *for judgment*, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. ‘Then the sovereignty (or kingdom), the dominion and the greatness of *all* the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints (holy ones) of the Highest One; His kingdom *will be* an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will

serve and obey Him (Da. 7:25-27).” Here Daniel is shown a vision and given understanding of what the kingdom of God is and how it can be seen in his own time and life, in the future after the advent of the Holy Spirit and even to its complete fulfillment when Jesus returns and all the earth is made subject to Him. Here we also see all the three-fold job description given by Jesus concerning the Holy Spirit’s operation among man.

- ““For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. “When he had begun to settle *them*, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. “But since he did not have *the means* to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. “So the slave fell *to the ground* and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’ “And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. “But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and *began* to choke *him*, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ “So his fellow slave fell *to the ground* and *began* to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’ “But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. “So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. “Then summoning him, his lord said to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ‘Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’ “And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. “My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart (Mt. 18:23-35).”” Here again Jesus in describing the kingdom shows the righteousness of the Holy Spirit must live and work out in the lives of believers if they are to be a part of the kingdom of God here and now or in its final fulfillment. He also shows that compassion is a major part of walking in the precepts of this kingdom.
- ““For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. “When he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard. “And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market place; and to those he said, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.’ And *so* they went. “Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did the same thing. “And about the eleventh *hour* he went out and found others standing *around*; and he said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day long?’ “They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’ “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last *group* to the first.’ “When those *hired* about the eleventh hour came, each one received a denarius. “When those *hired* first came, they thought that they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. “When they received it, they grumbled at the landowner, saying, ‘These last men have worked *only* one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the scorching heat of the day.’ “But he answered and said to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? ‘Take what is yours and go, but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. ‘Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is

your eye envious (lit. 'evil') because I am generous (lit. 'good')?" "So the last shall be first, and the first last (Mt. 20:1-16)."" In this passage Jesus once again offers us a precept of kingdom living that is totally in line with the workings of God's Holy Spirit among mankind. He shows us that we must never begrudge our brothers and sisters the gifts God gives as they labor in His fields and we must never be envious, evilly thinking that we deserve more than we get. As Pastor Jack Hayford relates, God does not begin to truly bless us until we can pray for (and offer aid) to other believers who may not worship in the exact same manner as we do; this is something we must all come to learn so that we don't hear Jesus telling us to depart as He doesn't recognize as His those who practice evil.

- ""The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. "And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. "Again he sent out other slaves saying, 'Tell those who have been invited, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are *all* butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast." ' "But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. "But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire. "Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 'Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find *there*, invite to the wedding feast.' "Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests. "But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And the man was speechless. "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' "For many are called (or invited), but few *are* chosen (Mt. 22:2-14)."" Here Jesus shows us what the kingdom is while showing who will be a part of it and who will not. As in the parable before this, many of those called first tend to think there is something special about them and they also seem to have this tendency to go against the will of the ruler; this of course excludes them from the kingdom. However as Paul tells us in Romans 11, by excluding these, God opened wide the door for others; but they too must adhere to kingdom living principles or they too will be cut off – for as Jesus says in ending this parable, "Many are invited, but few are chosen." And here again, we see the inner workings of the Holy Spirit drawing, comforting, reproving and preparing us to become full-fledged ambassadors in the kingdom of our God.
- ""For *it* (the kingdom) *is* just like a man *about* to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. "To one he gave five talents (a talent was about 15 years wages for a laborer), to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. "Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. "In the same manner the one who *had received* the two *talents* gained two more. "But he who received the one *talent* went away, and dug a *hole* in the ground and hid his master's money. "Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. "The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.'

“His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’
 “Also the one who *had received* the two talents came up and said, ‘Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.’ “His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ “And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no *seed*. ‘And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.’ “But his master answered and said to him, ‘You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no *seed*. ‘Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my *money* back with interest. ‘Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.’
 “For to everyone who has, *more* shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. “Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 25:14-30).”” Clearly we can see through this parable that hard work is both expected from kingdom dwellers and it is rewarded. Jesus also again shows that though many are invited in, there are those who will not accept His invitation and there are those who will misuse His generosity, believing that they can count on the love and grace of God to gain entrance – but there is a cut-off point that we must all be aware of.

- “Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil (lit. blasphemed); for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Ro. 14:16, 17).” Again, we see the inclusion of our God and His Holy Spirit as being the instrument of that which would bring us to a holy lifestyle in His kingdom.
- “For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power (1 Co. 4:20).”
- “*I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all (Eph. 1:18-23).” Though this passage doesn’t mention the kingdom of God specifically, we can still clearly see that all rule has been given to Jesus by our heavenly Father, who is the One who owns all. Thus, we see that the triune Godhead rules not only in the kingdom of man, but He also rules over all else; it is all His kingdom. God is the initiator and possessor of all the heaven and the earth!
- “Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:27, 28).” Here the author of the book to the Hebrews tells us that we are to serve God with gratitude for the kingdom which He has given us and we are to do this by living holy.”

- “Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night (Re. 12:10).” Finally, in The Revelation of Jesus Christ, John relates that announcement which will bring joy both in heaven and upon the earth in the hearts of those who have given themselves to be ambassadors in the kingdom of our God.

As we have looked closely at what Scripture describes the kingdom of God as being, we begin to clearly see that indeed: **Most do not see or comprehend that the Holy Spirit is: 1) The mark (seal) God gives us to show we are part of His kingdom now and will inherit, with Jesus, all the eternal benefits promised when His kingdom is fully manifested – 2) He is also the One who brings all the tools necessary for us to operate according to the rules of God’s Kingdom here and now. In effect, He is the One who escorts us through the door which is Jesus and empowers us to live the perfection demanded by our Father. And we also see that the Godhead has instituted, ordained and administered this kingdom upon man and for man.** Throughout this understanding of who the Holy Spirit is and what the kingdom is we can see that they are so intertwined so as not to be separated; not only is the Holy Spirit completely wrapped up in the kingdom but the triune Godhead is the originator and He who empowers, sustains and rules in this kingdom which He has ordained for man to live in. One could say that the kingdom is our God!

Where is the kingdom of God to be found?

In the section concerning 'what' the kingdom of God is, we have also seen some of the 'where' it is as all these precepts tend to overlap somewhat. From this we can state that the kingdom had its founding when God created mankind and showed us His sovereignty and right to rule. We can also state that as time moved on and God taught about His kingdom, He showed through the prophets and other writers that though all the world is His (note Daniel's speaking of Nebuchadnezzar), there was a special distinction for Israel that made them uniquely His. We see in the New Covenant that this special dispensation of sonship has been given to Gentile believers in Christ Jesus as well. Thus in viewing the 'where' of the kingdom, we will focus mainly on the New Covenant to see where we find these writers placing the kingdom of God. Through the Old Testament writers, we see God as ruling over all the earth, but having that special relationship with Israel. Basically the New Testament writings show us the kingdom as being in the here and now, manifested in Jesus Christ and seen in man through the lives of His disciples; and they also depict the kingdom as having a more total future fulfillment in Jesus as He makes the earth completely subject to Him and then hands it over to His Father.

“Is the kingdom of God a future reality to be hoped for or a present reality to experience now? That's today's question. The answer is that it is partly present and partly future. Many of its blessings are here to be enjoyed now; but many of them are not yet here. Some of its power is available now but not all of it. Some of the curse and misery of this old age can be overcome now by the presence of the kingdom. But some of it cannot be. The decisive battle against sin and Satan and sickness and death has been fought and won by the King in his death and resurrection, but the war is not over. Sin must be fought, Satan must be resisted, sickness must be prayed over and groaned under (Romans 8:23), and death must be endured until the second coming of the King and the consummation of the kingdom (Piper).”

Though we will view many passages which speak to one or the other of these places and times, none show the two together and yet as being separate as well as in Hebrews:

“For He did not subject to angels the world to come (lit. 'the inhabited world'), concerning which we are speaking.

But one has testified somewhere, saying,

“WHAT IS MAN, THAT YOU REMEMBER HIM?

OR THE SON OF MAN, THAT YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT HIM?

“YOU HAVE MADE HIM FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS;

YOU HAVE CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOR,

AND HAVE APPOINTED HIM OVER THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS;

YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET.”

For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him (Heb. 2:5-8).”

And as we do view these passages of Scripture which show the kingdom to be present now and

yet to have this greater fulfillment in our Lord sometime in the future – we can also note that our God continues to show His sovereignty and His total commitment to His kingdom being manifest to mankind and in those who choose to serve His ways. Let us begin with those which indicate that the kingdom had its first fulfillment in Messiah:

- ““Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven (Mt. 6:10)”” also found in Luke 11:2. Here Jesus is teaching His disciples to pray for God’s kingdom to be manifest, but He does it in such a way so as to show that it may well be somewhat available now.
- “Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching (or proclaiming) the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel (Mk. 1:14, 15).” Here, as He begins His earthly ministry, Jesus tells His audience that the time is fulfilled or it is ‘now’ and the kingdom of God is at hand, or here; this clearly shows that Jesus knew the kingdom to be a present reality in His lifetime.
- “And Jesus was saying to them, “Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power (Mk. 9:1).”” In this verse and in the passage which follows, describing the happenings on the Mount of Transfiguration, we see that Jesus not only accepted that the kingdom was present in His earthly life, but that it was to be seen in Him, He was the literal fulfillment of the God ruled kingdom which Israel was to have been; He was the perfect Israel, He who completely and fully submitted His will to that of God the Father (see Hebrews 10:4-10). This is made even clearer by Peter in his second epistle: “For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased”— and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain (2 Pe: 1:16-18).” Surely Peter accepted that the kingdom and the power came to earth in the Person of Jesus; that He embodied the kingdom of God.
- ““But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off *in protest* against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near (Lk. 10:10, 11).”” If the kingdom was coming near to these people, then it stands to reason that the kingdom was brought by the disciples through the teaching and preaching they had received from Jesus Christ.
- “But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you (Lk. 11:20).” Here again we find Jesus strongly indicating that the kingdom of God is in Him as it would be through Jesus that the kingdom of God had come upon those who would claim that He cast out demons by the power of the head of demons.
- “The Law and the Prophets *were proclaimed* until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it (Lk. 16:16).” In this passage Jesus tells us that the kingdom of God has already been preached, but He had also told Nicodemus the same basic thing in John 3; that the understanding of the kingdom had been available from the learning of the Old Covenant, which Nicodemus should have possessed as a teacher of Israel – the difference however is that here Jesus indicates that men are forcing their way into the kingdom; thus it had to be available then

and now for them to do this. From Strong's: **971 βιάζω** [*biazo* /bee·ad·zo/] verb From 979; TDNT (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament) 1:609; GK (Goodrick-Kohlenberger) 1041; Two occurrences; AV (Authorized Version) translates as "suffer violence" once, and "press" once. **1** to use force, to apply force. **2** to force, inflict violence on (Strong).

- "Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here *it is!*' or, 'There *it is!*' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst (Lk. 17:20, 21)."" Here Luke tells us that Jesus knew the kingdom to be in the midst or among those He was speaking to since He in fact embodied the kingdom. Further evidence of this can be seen in John 6 where Jesus tells His listeners that it is He who is the true bread of life come down from heaven and that life can only be found in Him; indeed He is the kingdom. "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day (Jn. 6:54)." And also in Jesus' response to Thomas in John 14: "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me (Jn. 14:6)."
- We might also see this clearly stated by the author of Hebrews: "But of the Son *He says*, "YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS (OR YOUR) KINGDOM (Heb. 1:8).""

Now we will look to see the Scripture which tells us this kingdom will also have a future fulfillment in Christ Jesus:

- "I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline *at the table* with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 8:11, 12)."" In this section Jesus not only shows us that there is a time of future fulfillment in Him, but also that this kingdom was to have been embodied in Israel, but many of those called to be in the kingdom gave up their place through unbelief.
- In the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) and in the discussion of His judgment which immediately follows this parable, Jesus again shows us that the kingdom will have this future fulfillment.
- And again we see the kingdom has a future fulfillment: "And He said to them, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. "Truly I say to you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God (Mk. 14:24, 25)."" See also Luke 22:16, 18.
- In this passage, continuing through verse 27, Jesus tries to explain to those who thought His kingdom was going to come into being immediately that there was a waiting period before the kingdom has the greater fulfillment: "While they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately (Lk. 19:11)."
- In Luke 21:25-38 when discussing His return Jesus again shows that there is a future fulfillment of the coming of the kingdom and that the kingdom is surely embodied in Him.
- Paul also shows us that the kingdom is seen in the coming of Jesus and that He is the kingdom: "I solemnly charge *you* in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom... (2 Ti. 4:1)."
- In these final passages we see that there is an even further fulfillment that brings God's

eternal kingdom to earth: “But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming, then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet (1 Co. 15:23-25).” - “Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become *the kingdom* of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever (Re. 11:15).”” - “And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. “And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death (Re. 12:9-11).

As brother Piper said, we can easily see that the kingdom place is both now, to a limited degree, and future, to a greater degree, until that time when our heavenly Father comes to earth to tabernacle with His children and set up His kingdom forever. And though the Spirit of God is not specifically mentioned here in these verses, we must remember that during His earthly life, it was the Spirit who empowered Jesus to fulfill the works His Father had given Him and thus made the kingdom come alive in Him. We might also understand that this same Holy Spirit causes the kingdom to live on in the lives of the disciples of Jesus Christ. Thus here again, we can see that the Godhead is completely involved in the kingdom and that God’s kingdom can clearly be seen as “...an area wherein His will is being done, where He holds the preeminent position and where He is the dominant personality (i.e. the ruler).”

How Has His Kingdom Been Made Manifest to us?

As we have viewed what Scripture tells us about the Holy Spirit, compared that with what the kingdom of God/heaven is said to be and also have come to see that all the Person's of the Godhead are fully involved in all aspects concerning the kingdom; we now take a brief look at how this kingdom was made manifest to mankind. What methods did Jesus and His disciples use to illustrate that the kingdom of God had come into the lives of mankind? How would all mankind then and now know beyond doubt that the kingdom of God was in the one talking to them, was manifesting itself through this one into the lives of others and that this kingdom was made available by God to be appropriated by all mankind?

Through Preaching (proclaiming or speaking):

- “John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching (or proclaiming) a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Mk. 1:4).” See also Matthew 3:2.
- “From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Mt. 4:17)”” “But He said to them, “I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose (Lk. 4:43).”” “Soon afterwards, He *began* going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him, (Lk. 8:1)” “But the crowds were aware of this and followed Him; and welcoming them, He *began* speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing (Lk. 9:11).”
- “To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over *a period of* forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God (Ac. 1:3).”
- “And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand (Mt. 10:7).’”
- “But He said to him, “Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God (Lk. 9:60).””
- “But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike (Ac. 8:12).”
- And he (Paul) entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading *them* about the kingdom of God (Ac. 19:8).” ““And now, behold, I (Paul) know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face. “Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. “For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God (Ac. 20:25-27).”” “When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening(Ac. 28:23). “And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching (or proclaiming) the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered (Ac. 28:30, 31).”

Through Miracles, Signs, Wonders and Deliverance from Demons:

Above we see that Jesus, His twelve chosen apostles and His other disciples all used preaching to proclaim the kingdom of God so that all mankind would come to understand what it was all about. However, they (and we) need some method of convincing them to listen and respond to the message of the gospel (the kingdom). The method God chose for this was using miracles, signs and wonders; and though there are passages that mention this specifically, there are many more that clearly show that these were the signs Jesus said would follow or accompany those who are His disciples, just as God granted these to Jesus to show us who He is. This will easily be seen in the Scripture passages below and in what this un-named author wrote:

“What then are the evidences of the Kingdom?”

When John the Baptist was arrested and put in prison, he began to raise questions about Jesus being the Christ. "Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matthew 11:4-5). Jesus said that the evidence was in the healings and miracles which he did.

Jesus also told the seventy that he sent out, "And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you" (Luke 10:9). The healing ministry was the evidence of the coming of the Kingdom of God. The healing ministry was the demonstration of the Kingdom to encourage people to **ENTER** into the Kingdom.

The author to the Hebrews writes, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" (Hebrew 2:3-4). The evidence of the Kingdom was signs, wonders, with different miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you" (Matthew 12:28). Deliverance ministry is an evidence of the Kingdom. A summary is found in Acts 10:38, "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him (Evidence of...)."

- “And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ “Heal *the* sick, raise *the* dead, cleanse *the* lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give (Mt. 10:7, 8).””
- “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you (Mt. 12:28).”
- “And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. “These signs (or attesting miracles) will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly *poison*, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to

them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.] (Mk. 16:15-20).”

- “And He sent them (His apostles) out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing (Lk. 9:2).”
- “But the crowds were aware of this and followed Him; and welcoming them, He *began* speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing (Lk. 9:11).
- “...and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you (Lk. 10:9).’”

Once again we need to keep in mind that the power for these miracles is said to have come through the workings of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:28, etc.), through the auspices of God the Father (Acts 2:22, 19:11, etc.) and through the name and belief in the name of Jesus (Acts 3:6; 16, etc.) as God is entirely committed to establishing His kingdom among mankind.

Finally, the kingdom is made manifest to mankind in a way most do not appreciate and few are willing to partake of; but it is the way Jesus brought it to us, the way the early Church experienced such tremendous growth and the way we often see the expansion of God’s kingdom even now.

Tribulation and Persecution:

- “After they (Paul and Barnabas) had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *saying*, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God (Ac. 14:21, 22).””
- “I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance (or steadfastness) *which are* in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (Re. 1:9).”

Though there are few who are willing to recognize or partake in the suffering Jesus and all His true disciples underwent for the furthering of God’s kingdom, never-the-less, it is one way mankind does see that can become proof positive to them of the existence of this kingdom. As mankind sees these disciples of Jesus Christ ready to preach regardless of consequence, ready to undergo any indignity, still preaching His kingdom and more than willing to suffer anything including death to bear witness to the Lordship of our God and man’s desperate need of Him – they can truly begin to see that to such His kingdom is very real. This is surely one of the reasons Paul was able to lead many disciples into the kingdom; he was willing to bear a great deal to establish God’s kingdom. “...for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.” “Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. *I have been* on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; *I have been* in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from *such* external things, there is the daily pressure on me *of* concern for all the churches (2 Co.11:23-28).” “And when

they had come to him, he said to them, “You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (Ac. 20:18-21).”” And an unbeliever might ask or discover what the true believer knows as to where the power, the strength or the willingness to bear all comes from; it comes from our God, through faith in Him.

All that we do to further His kingdom is through tools given us by our Lord; whether we preach the Word with unction, let the gifts of healing and so forth flow through us or suffer martyrdom for His name’s sake – all we can do is granted us by our Lord and God – Jehovah, Jesus and their precious Holy Spirit. As we accept this, we must also keep it firmly in mind that the revelation of the kingdom of God has been and continues to be on going, one precept at a time. The biggest growth phase it has seen has been and continues to be through the outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit; first upon Jesus in His ministry, then upon the men and women in the upper room and down through the ages with Holy Spirit filled men and women taking this message around the world, making disciples and teaching them to be kingdom ambassadors. This is the kingdom of God in action; this is where we are seen to give up our own free will and completely submit to our Lord and God!

Why Do We Need to Enter God's Kingdom, Serving it and Him Now?

As we accept that all the triune Godhead is firmly committed to promoting, establishing, empowering and bringing into complete manifestation the kingdom of our Lord and God, the question at the head of this section comes to mind. What's the big deal with the kingdom of God? Why should I be concerned about it? What's in it for me? Dividing the benefits between temporal and eternal, we will try to answer these questions:

“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you (Mt. 6:33). See also Luke 12:31. In these two passages, Jesus has been speaking of food and clothing; basic human needs; He assures us that if we will seek out the kingdom of our God, God in turn will see that all our needs are supplied. Paul reiterates this precept when writing to the Philippians: “And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Php. 4:19).” Thus it is, that if we will give ourselves to seeking and promoting the kingdom of our God, we will not need to concern ourselves with the necessities of life for He has promised that He will meet them for us.

“And He said to them, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life (Lk. 18:29, 30).”” In this passage and its sister passages, Jesus show that there are both temporal benefits to be had and the greatest of eternal benefits. He tells His listeners that if they give up what many consider to be our due here on this earth, we will receive many times as much now and we will also inherit eternal life. Though it may sound impossible to give up houses, wives or family and yet have many more; we must recall that Jesus also tells us that though some things are impossible for men to do, all things are possible with God.

In addition to what this author considers the foremost gifting of God to those who serve His kingdom, the right to live in it for eternity, there are other benefits mentioned in Scripture. We will be like Jesus and as God gave Him a kingdom, so we too will be a part of that kingdom: “So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God (Mk. 16:19).” - ““You are those who have stood by Me in My trials; and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Lk. 22:28-30).”” “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is (1 Jn. 3:2).” We are kingdom heirs!

It is as we go through those trials and tribulations here that we are found to be worthy of His eternal kingdom and we will see absolute justice come into being through the righteousness of our God: “We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is *only* fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows *ever* greater; therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. *This is* a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of

the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed. To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count (or make) you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and *the* Lord Jesus Christ (1 Th. 1:3-12).”

And one day, according to Daniel, we saints will be given the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of every kingdom under heaven: “““He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they (the saints) will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. ‘But the court will sit *for judgment*, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. ‘Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of *all* the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom *will be* an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him (Da. 7:25-27).””

Though but a few are discussed here, both the temporal and the eternal benefits are indeed worth anything we might suffer here as we participate in our Lord’s kingdom now. One who is spiritually attuned will not read far in Scripture without coming across one of the many promises God has given to His children; however, in this author’s opinion, the greatest is still that we who submit our will to His will, establishing God as our Lord and King, will never face the judgment or the second death, but will instead ever be part of His eternal kingdom.

Who Will and Who Won't be a Part of God's Eternal Kingdom?

These are the final questions we must ask ourselves in this investigation of the kingdom of our God; who gets in and who doesn't. Ask nearly any Christian and most would tell you that those who inherit are those who are saved, those who have been born again (John 3:3, 5). Strangely, with all it has to say about the kingdom of God, being born again as being the means of entrance is not as often mentioned as some other precepts. As we will see, there are many other criterion mentioned, but these get little play as we rush people to be born again and seem to forget all else. In something of the order of their appearance in Scripture we have:

- ““But when his (Nebuchadnezzar's) heart was lifted up and his spirit became so proud that he behaved arrogantly, he was deposed from his royal throne and *his* glory was taken away from him. “He was also driven away from mankind, and his heart was made like *that of* beasts, and his dwelling place *was* with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until he recognized that the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and *that* He sets over it whomever He wishes (Da. 5:20, 21).”” Daniel seems to be telling us that one of the first things one must do is to recognize that God is God. The author of Hebrews agrees: “And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him (Heb. 11:6) (emphasis added).”
- John the Baptist and Jesus both agree that one must repent in order to be a part of the kingdom of God: “Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”” – “From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Mt. 4:17).”” Jesus also indicated that the Pharisees would be left out and sinners included in the kingdom because they heeded this call to righteousness: Jesus tells the Pharisees that prostitutes and tax collectors will get into the kingdom before them for they heeded John's call to repentance and the Pharisees didn't: ““Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get (or are getting) into the kingdom of God before you. “For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him; and you, seeing *this*, did not even feel remorse afterward so as to believe him.””
- In some of the Beatitudes Jesus indicated those who were to inherit the kingdom of heaven: ““Blessed are the poor in spirit (those who are not spiritually arrogant), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 5:3).”” – ““Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 5:10).”” There are many other passages that tell us that we must suffer for the kingdom, though few are more clear than what Paul tells the disciples in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch: “...strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *saying*, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” – And that which he writes to the Thessalonians: “...therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you

among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. *This is* a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering (2 Th. 1:4, 5)." John also speaks to this in relation to his own life: "I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance *which are* in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (Re. 1:9)."

- He goes on to say: "'Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps (does) and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 'For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 5:19, 20).'" So we see that to be very advanced in the kingdom we must heed the commandments and teach others to do likewise; also we learn that our righteousness must exceed that of the scribe and Pharisees if we are to even enter His kingdom. In line with this idea of keeping His commandments Jesus also tells us: "'Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter* (Mt. 7:21).'"
- Jesus also indicates that His disciples gain special understanding of His words and thus will know the mysteries of entrance into the kingdom: "'And the disciples came and said to Him, 'Why do You speak to them in parables?' Jesus answered them, 'To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted (Mt. 13:10, 11).'" See also Mark 4:11. He also shows that the Old Testament saints will be there to enjoy the kingdom: "'I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline *at the table* with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 8:11, 12).'" See also Luke 13:28, 29. This idea of understanding and obeying Scripture as aiding one to enter the kingdom is also seen when Jesus speaks of the greatest commandment: "One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, 'What commandment is the foremost of all?' Jesus answered, 'The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.' 'The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these.'" The scribe said to Him, "Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that HE IS ONE, AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM; AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART AND WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, AND TO LOVE ONE'S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God (Mk. 12:28-34)."
- "But He said to them, "Not all men *can* accept this statement, but *only* those to whom it has been given. "For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are *also* eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept *this*, let him accept *it* (Mt. 19:11, 12).'" Perhaps Jesus is telling us that

those who give up even what are natural desires to seek the kingdom will progress in their walking with Him. This does seem to agree with this teaching from Mark: “And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. “For whoever wishes to save his life (soul) will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. “For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? “For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels (Mk. 8:34-38).”” Here again we seem to be led to understand that those who are willing to give it all up for the kingdom will find their place with Jesus in glory; and again this may be seen in this teaching: ““If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell, where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED (Mk. 9:47, 48).””

- Jesus also shows us that it is those who are wise and keep watch who will come into His kingdom: ““Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. “Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. “For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. “Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and *began* to sleep. “But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet *him*.’ “Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. “The foolish said to the prudent, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ “But the prudent answered, ‘No, there will not be enough for us and you *too*; go instead to the dealers and buy *some* for yourselves.’ “And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. “Later the other virgins also came, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open up for us.’ “But he answered, ‘Truly I say to you, I do not know you.’ “Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour (Mt. 25:1-13).””
- Jesus also tells us that we need to become like little children in order to enter the kingdom; in one place even saying we must be as humble as they are if we want to advance very far in the kingdom of our God: “At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, and said, “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted (lit. ‘are turned’) and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. “Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. “And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea (Mt. 18:1-6).”” – ““But Jesus said, “Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these (Mt. 19:14).”” – “But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, “Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. “Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all* (Mk. 10:14, 15).”” – “But Jesus called for them, saying, “Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. “Truly I

say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all* (Lk. 18:16, 17).” One wonders how many of us humble ourselves before our Lord or before the other brethren as a child might or how many even recognize (in humility) our great need of our God and Savior.

- Paul tells us in the letter to the Thessalonians that we must walk in a manner worthy of inheriting God’s kingdom: “You are witnesses, and *so is* God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; just as you know how we *were* exhorting and encouraging and imploring (or testifying to) each one of you as a father *would* his own children, so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory (1 Th. 2:10-12).” The author of Hebrews seems to have had this same thought: “Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe (Heb. 12:28).”
- “Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him (Jas. 2:5)?” Here we have James telling us that God chooses the poor to be rich in faith and inherit the kingdom; strangely there are few Christians rushing to live in poverty so they might claim this promise.

As quite often one can tell just as much about a precept by looking at it from the opposite side, we will now take a quick look at those who are said to not be able to enter into God’s kingdom as this will show to better effect, who can.

- Speaking to the Pharisees Jesus told them: ““Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people (lit. ‘nation’), producing the fruit of it (Mt. 21:43).”” Coupling this with what He told His disciples about the need to have their righteousness exceed that of the Pharisees if they wished to enter into His kingdom; Jesus obviously felt the fruit (deeds or actions) of the Pharisees were not such as pointed toward righteousness. Jesus reiterates this idea quite often, such as later in Matthew: “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in (Mt. 23:13).”
- “And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, “How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!” The disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” They were even more astonished and said to Him, “Then who can be saved?” Looking at them, Jesus said, “With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God (Mk. 10:23-27).”” See also Matthew 19:23, 24 and Luke 18:24, 25. Couple this with James telling us that God chooses the poor and one might wonder why more Christians are not content to live in poverty so they might grow in faith and assure their inheritance of God’s kingdom.
- “And He said, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest *it is* in parables, so that SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND (Lk. 8:10).”” As we viewed this to show that Jesus told His disciples that they would be given understanding of the kingdom as they would have spiritual discernment because they showed a desire to know the precepts of the kingdom, we can also use this to see that those who do not choose to seek out the precepts of the

kingdom will not be given spiritual discernment and thus won't know how to enter into the kingdom of our God. Luke also shows us (by using a passage already linked to who will enter) to contrast who won't: "In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out. "And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline *at the table* in the kingdom of God (Lk. 13:28, 29)." There are many who believe themselves to be spiritually 'safe' (as many Israelites did) who will not enter the kingdom; Jesus and His apostles warn of this tragedy again and again, but many yet refuse to listen.

- "Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable (lit. 'corruption') inherit the imperishable (lit. 'incorruption') (1 Co. 15:50)." As Jesus told Nicodemus, one must be born of water and the Spirit in order to inherit, as He told Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world; so Paul leads us to understand that this flesh will never enter into the kingdom. We are so worried about feeding, caring for and pampering our flesh; but our Lord knows that this is not what is important – our spirit is important, for it is that which will become incorruptible and inherit God's kingdom.
- In both Galatians and The Revelation of Jesus Christ, we are given a lengthy list of those who will not enter in and though this list boils down to those who choose to gratify carnal desires by living unrighteous lives, the lists should be examined. "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Ga. 5:19-21)." – "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. "But for the cowardly and unbelieving (or untrustworthy) and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part *will be* in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death (Re. 21:7, 8)." In Ephesians Paul gives the much shorter understanding: "For this you know with certainty, that no immoral (i.e. one who commits sexual immorality) or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God (Eph. 5:5)."

As Paul follows his list of who will not come into God's kingdom with the list of the fruit of the Spirit, we can be fairly sure that he is indicating that those who bear the fruit of the Spirit will be those who inherit God's kingdom. In this, and indeed throughout the understanding of who will and who will not be a part of the kingdom of heaven, we see again that God is in complete control of the kingdom, it is He who is preparing and deciding who has the steadfast faith needed to join with Him in His kingdom.

We might also note in a list of who will and who will not enter into His kingdom that many times Jesus or His apostles used a contrast within the same passage or in other passages to show more clearly who will inherit this kingdom.

Will inherit the kingdom

1. Those who recognize God
2. Those who repent of their selfish deeds

3. Those who are not spiritually arrogant or are humble before God as a child would be before a person of authority
4. Those who will be persecuted for righteousness' sake, who enter through tribulation
5. Those who keep the commandments of God, who do the Father's will and are righteous
6. Those who listen to the words of God with understanding (this would include saints from the Old Testament era)
7. Those who make themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom; that is those who willingly sacrifice even natural, normal desires to press into the kingdom
8. Those who are wise and keep watch for the coming kingdom
9. Those who are found worthy of the calling
10. Those who are poor in this world, but are rich in faith

Will not inherit the kingdom

1. Those who do not produce righteous fruit – see numbers 3, 5, 6, 9 and 10 from the first list
2. Those who trust in wealth (note that many try to use this idea to justify their desire for worldly wealth and its comforts, which may be why Jesus just referred only to the wealthy and not those who trust in wealth) – see numbers 2 and 10
3. Those who do not seek God or His kingdom – see numbers 1, 5, 6, 8, and 9
4. Those who are of flesh and blood (remember Lot's wife) – see all those above
5. Those who are immoral, impure, covetous or idolaters – again, see all the ones listed in the previous section

Again, the most important thing to remember here is that all the understanding of the kingdom must be sorted through the knowledge that this is God's kingdom; He is in complete control, it is He who provides the tools necessary to enter in and it is He who decides who will inherit with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

We started this paper believing that we would show the Holy Spirit to be He who is: **1) The mark (seal) God gives us to show we are part of His kingdom now and will inherit, with Jesus, all the eternal benefits promised when His kingdom is fully manifested – 2) He is also the One who brings all the tools necessary for us to operate according to the rules of God’s Kingdom here and now. In effect, He is the One who escorts us through the door which is Jesus and empowers us to live the perfection demanded by our Father.** Though this is true and proven within this paper, we have come to see more clearly the involvement of the entirety of the triune Godhead in establishing, confirming, perpetuating and preparing for the final fulfillment of the kingdom of God among mankind.

We have shown that the understanding of the kingdom was expected of the Jewish leaders/teachers and is still to be taught and understood today by the disciples of Jesus. We have seen that there was a great fulfillment of the manifestation of God’s kingdom among men within the life and ministry of Jesus Christ; this though the power of God’s Holy Spirit which dwelt in Jesus without measure. We have seen that God has always meant to live and reign among men, to establish His kingdom here with us and in us. We have seen that the understanding of God’s kingdom has been precept upon precept; a continuing revelation as we wait for its ultimate fulfillment in eternity.

We have proven that the Holy Spirit’s working in us not only parallels the information Scripture gives concerning the kingdom of heaven, but it has also been shown again and again that He is the catalyst for entering the kingdom, learning how to live according to kingdom principles here and now and He is also the One who empowers us to eternally commit ourselves to kingdom living. And as mentioned above, **we have also come to see that the Godhead has instituted, ordained and administered this kingdom upon man and for man.**

Clearly this paper has shown:

1. What the kingdom is and how this lines up with the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
2. Where the kingdom can be found; that it was seen in the Old Testament in God’s sovereignty over all the world and especially in Israel (though they never fulfilled their calling) and in the New Testament in the Church (who are in the world but not of it) and in the future world when our Father comes to tabernacle with us.
3. How this kingdom was made manifest through the workings of God unto mankind and how we are now to share this understanding with others, though it will cause us to be persecuted and to suffer, perhaps even unto death.
4. Why we need to enter and serve God’s kingdom here and now; both temporal and eternal benefits were discussed.

5. Who will and who won't enter into God's eternal kingdom; often contrasting the two as Jesus and His apostles did.

We have also clearly shown that mankind has his part in choosing to enter into the kingdom now, to remain steadfast in spite of any adversity and to focus on the glory to come as Jesus did so that we too will overcome all obstacles, victorious in our Lord and God. As this author tells us, we must examine ourselves now so we will be sure to be found on the righteous path when the time comes:

“In life there are all kinds of tests that we must pass. We must pass test after test to graduate from high school. Our cars must pass emission tests. We have drug tests, IQ tests, vision tests, hearing tests, allergy tests, and all kinds of tests. We are very concerned about passing these earthly tests because we know that a failure to pass them could be indicative of some serious danger and future failures. Yet we are strangely unconcerned about a future test that all mankind must pass or be sentenced to eternity in hell. There is a serious downside to failing to have our names in the Book of Life. This is one test that we absolutely must pass.

Paul exhorts the Corinthians to test themselves to see if they are indeed of the faith. In 2 Corinthians 13:5, he says, “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you--unless indeed you fail the test?” Did they have Christ in them, the hope of their future glory in heaven, or not (Colossians 1:27)? This is the question that they needed to answer. Implied in the notion that we should test ourselves is the fact that we can know if we indeed pass the test or not. The purpose in testing ourselves is thus to know whether or not we are saved so that, if we are not, we can do something about it before it is too late.

We should all come to a place of certainty regarding our eternity. 1 John 5:13 says, “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.” John's motivation in writing the epistle of 1 John was to explain how we can know for sure if we are saved. He wanted believers to be encouraged in their hope of eternal life, and he wanted unbelievers to have the true state of their heart exposed. God's desire is not that we wait it out and hope that we get into heaven. Knowing that we are going to be with Christ for eternity is something that we should anchor our lives upon now. If we do not know Christ, it won't help to find that out come judgment day. We need to know now so that we can repent and receive Him into our hearts as Savior and Lord. *We must test ourselves now so that we can know now.*

John's criteria for being sure of our salvation are as follows: 1) we keep His commandments (1 John 2:4, 29), 2) we love others, especially our brothers and sisters in Christ (1 John 2:9), 3) we do not love the world or the things of it (1 John 2:15), 4) we confess Jesus as Messiah and as God in the flesh (1 John 2:23-24, 4:15), 5) we are being taught by the Spirit (1 John 2:27), 6) we do not practice sin (1 John 3:9), and 7) we practice righteousness (1 John 3:9). These are very basic and black and white criteria. Either we are in Christ or not. Either we love others, or we don't. Either we are led and taught by the Spirit, or we are not (Romans 8:14). Either we are those whose lives are characterized by sin, or we

are those whose lives show patterns of righteousness. Either we keep Christ's commandments as a general rule, or we do not. Either we are given to obedience, or we are rebels at heart. Either we love the lusts of the world, or we love Christ. Either we confess Christ as Messiah, or we deny His deity, reject His forgiveness, refuse the draw of the Holy Spirit, and do not submit to His authority. These seven criteria come as a package deal. John is cutting us to the heart to help us see whether we have a fallen heart or a heart that desires the things of God. He is trying to make the point that true saving faith has works as evidence (James 2:17). True Christians will have the fruit of good works, while those who do not truly know Christ will not have any spiritual fruit (Matthew 7:20). Rather, their lives will breed evil, destruction, sin, and hate. We must ask ourselves if we have put our faith in Christ as our Savior and Lord, and we must see evidence of repentance (Luke 13:5). Repentance is a turning from something and taking a new direction. We should ask ourselves what we have repented from and what we have turned to. There should be a clear difference.

Now Christians do stumble at times (James 3:2), and some have even made shipwreck of their faith (1 Timothy 1:18-20). We may not always love, think, or act as we ought, but there should be obvious evidence that we are not as we used to be. We need to look at the big picture of our lives. Have our lives been different since we turned to Christ? What sin patterns have stopped and what righteous deeds have begun? What do we do that is clear evidence of Christ at work in and through us? Is the love of Christ characteristic of our lives? Do we rejoice when truth prevails? Is it so obvious to others that Christ is our Lord that we end up taking some flack for it? Do our works and behavior deny Christ or affirm a love and devotion to Him? Do we really care about the welfare of others above our own? Is the fruit of the Spirit evident? These are all questions that should have obvious answers.

The point is that we can and should be confident of our salvation. What we need to do is to ask the Spirit of God to testify to our spirits that we are indeed children of God. He will do this as we go through these criteria and questions humbly and honestly if we are indeed born again (Romans 8:16). If we have doubts, we should seal the deal by asking God to forgive us of our sins once and for all and to impart to us the righteousness that can be ours through Christ. Christ bore our sins and the penalty thereof. We must thus receive Him as our Savior and confess Him as our Lord (Romans 10:9-10).

The issue is the state of our hearts. Either Christ is in us, or He is not. It is possible to be sure, one way or the other. Let's test ourselves now so that we can be certain of passing Christ's test come judgment time ("Do You Pass...")."

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