



## The Gospel Message

The Gospel is described in God's word as the "things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 8:12). The following articles are dedicated to the proclamation of this Gospel:

### Introduction to the Gospel

"But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12).

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek"* (Romans 1:16).

**The Gospel** (or good news) is the message in the Bible of the coming Kingdom of God on this earth. This Gospel was preached to Abraham over 4000 years ago in very simple terms. He was told: **"In thee shall all nations be blessed"** (see Galatians 3:8).

*"God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities"* (Acts 3:26).

When the promised Kingdom comes, it will indeed be a time of blessing for all of the nations of the earth. There will be peace on this earth and good will among men, and all nations will call our Lord Jesus Christ blessed. He will be our King of righteousness and peace, and the whole earth will be filled with the glory of God.

### THE PROMISES (The Hope of Israel – The foundation for the Gospel)

<b>To Adam</b>	Genesis 3:15
<b>To Abraham</b>	Genesis 12:1-3, Genesis 13:14-15
<b>To Isaac</b>	Genesis 26:3-4
<b>To Jacob</b>	Genesis 28:13-14
<b>To David</b>	II Samuel 7:12-16

*"Then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. Salvation is found in no one else, for there is **no other name under heaven** given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:10,12).*

## **The Parable of the Sower / Thy Kingdom Come**

**Luke 8:5-8,11 (NIV)**

5. *"A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up.*
6. *Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture.*
7. *Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants.*
8. *Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown." When he said this, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear"...*
11. ***"This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God".***

Jesus often used parables to teach his followers about the Kingdom of God. He could have spoken to them more plainly, but he wanted to encourage those who were willing to seek for understanding.

Casual listeners were probably turned off by his approach. These appear in his parable as those who received the seed (his word) along the path. They had no real interest in his message of hope. It was "in one ear and out the other."

Others had hearts that were like the rocky ground. The word of the gospel did not survive because they did not seek for further moisture from the teachings of the Master.

Then there were those who received the word with joy, but they filled their lives with worldly things that choked out the gospel message. These material things were represented by the thorns.

Fortunately, there were some who proved to be good soil for God's word. They heard the word, and they allowed it to root in them. They watered and cultivated their interest in the good news of the Kingdom of God. Those who were good ground for the gospel prospered and brought forth fruit.

**Today, it is our turn to be the good ground for the word.**

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## Thy Kingdom Come

The Disciples asked Jesus: "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). Prayer is one of our most difficult forms of communication. Attempting to talk to the Creator and Sustainer of the entire Universe requires a great deal of humility. The hardest part however, is not being able to receive a direct answer. Yes, God does answer prayer, in accordance with his will, but we are not always perceptive enough to hear him, and accept his answer.

Our concern for the moment is just one small part of what is universally known as the **Lord's prayer**. It was this prayer that Jesus offered as a pattern for the disciples to follow. The prayer begins:

### Matthew 6:9-10

9. *After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*
10. *Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*

Jesus taught them to pray for God's kingdom to come. He made it very clear that there was a specific location for this kingdom. "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done **in earth**".

For the disciples, who were very familiar with the hope of the kingdom, these words were sufficient and appropriate. Unfortunately, today, there are so many ideas and imaginations concerning the Kingdom of God, that even the well known Lord's prayer may need some explanation.

If we want to pray effectively for God's kingdom to come, we must attempt to understand what the disciples knew about that hope. The disciples were Jews. They were the "people of the book". The Old Testament scriptures had been given to them with ample information about God's kingdom.

They were often reminded of their heritage. The Children of Israel were called out from bondage in Egypt 2000 years before Jesus lived and taught. Moses guided them to Mt. Sinai on the first part of their journey to the land that had been promised to Abraham. At Sinai, they were formed into *the original Kingdom of God on the earth*. They received laws and the Ten Commandments, including many types and shadows that were intended to teach them about the coming of their Messiah (God's anointed).

They understood that this Messiah would be their future king. David, one of the greatest kings of Israel during her former glory, was promised that one of his descendents would be the Messiah, and that he would sit on the throne of the kingdom forever. When Mary was told that she would bear this son of God, she was also informed that he would sit on the *"throne of his father David", and "reign over the house of Jacob forever"* (Luke 1:32-33).

When the disciples learned to pray for God's kingdom to come on earth, they understood that it would be a restoration of the Kingdom of Israel. After his resurrection, Jesus *"showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power"* (Acts 1:3,6-7).

We learn from this exchange that Jesus had with his disciples that they had every reason to believe that Jesus would restore their ancient kingdom. It was this earthly kingdom of Israel that was the pattern for the future Kingdom of God.

All of the Hebrew prophets had spoken of this coming event. Daniel spoke of the end of Gentile rule, saying: *"In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever"* (Daniel 2:44).

He also added: *"The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom **under the whole heaven**, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him"* (Daniel 7:27).

When we repeat the Lord's prayer, we are expressing the hope that the disciples had. That God would set up his kingdom on the earth, with Jesus as the king and with Jerusalem as the throne of the Lord. Our prayer is: **%*THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE, IN EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.***+

## The Gospel Net

Jesus had called his disciples to be fishers of men. He wanted them to leave their actual fishing nets and dedicate their lives to teaching others about the blessings available through the gospel of Christ.



The gospel of salvation is like a great fishing net that is cast into the sea of humanity. Many individuals are attracted to the net. They have been given an opportunity for very special blessings. Unfortunately, many turn away and are never really caught up in the hope of salvation.

### The Good News

The Gospel message that Jesus and his disciples taught centered around *"the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ"* (Acts 8:12). It was "good news" for all that were willing to hear, and who were looking for a future.

The gospel message was said to be the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believed it. Those who gladly heard the gospel words believed and were baptized, in obedience to the commandment of God.

### Heirs of the Promises

We are told in Galatians 3 that those who were baptized into Christ were part of his family. It did not matter if they were Jew or Greek by nature. It was not important whether they were male, female, bond or free men. They were now all one in Christ Jesus. As members of his body, they would become heirs to the promises that had been made to Abraham in the Old Testament.

## The Blessing

These promises included not only the land of promise, but also a blessing. Abraham had been told that *"all the families of the earth"* would be blessed through one of his descendents (Genesis 28:14).

We understand that this descendent was Jesus. It was Jesus that made it possible for our sins to be forgiven through his sacrifice (Acts 3:25-26). What a wonderful blessing this is. To have the guilt of sin removed. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). *"Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin"* (Romans 4:7-8).

If we have believed the gospel as taught by the disciples of Christ, and if we have been baptized into his name, we will share in the blessing promised to Abraham in two ways:

**A Blessing Today** . We can approach God in prayer through our mediator (who is Jesus), and have our sins forgiven during this present life. When we stumble through weakness, God will hear our prayers, in the name of Jesus, and he may remove our sins in accordance with his will.

**Future Blessings** . If we remain faithful during our life in Christ, keeping his commandments, we have the hope for eternal life in God's Kingdom on this earth. It will be God's pleasure to extend his mercy to us when Jesus returns to judge his saints.

## Fishers of Men

When we remember that Jesus chose a few common fishermen to be his disciples, we can feel confident that no matter what our occupation is, there is an opportunity for us to embrace the hope that is available through the gospel net.

We can share in the blessings that are promised through the gospel, and we can learn to become fishers of men also. There are others who may be waiting to hear the good news of the coming Kingdom of God. We can share our blessing with them. We can help others to understand the promises that God has made through the gospel of salvation.

God promised Abraham he would be the heir of a world that would be filled with God's glory in the future. He also promised that all nations would be blessed when the Kingdom comes. **Christ is the key** to those blessings and we all have an opportunity to share in them, through and in his name.

## ***"Heirs According to the Promise" (Galatians 3:29)***

### **Galatians 3:27-29**

27. *For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*
28. *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*
29. *And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

When we discuss the promises made unto the fathers (especially those that are related to Abraham), we often consider the 3rd chapter of Galatians. It is here we learn that the promises were to be fulfilled **through one special seed, which was Christ**. We are also told that those who are baptized into Christ will become "heirs according to the promise".

We gain access to a wonderful hope when we enter into covenant relation. It is a wonderful thing to have the opportunity become fellow heirs to the great and precious promises made to Abraham. As we contemplate the magnitude of this hope we notice that in the Galatians account, we will become heirs to a single promise. Normally, we think and talk about multiple "promises". Is there any significance to this distinction in terms?

### **Which Promise?**

If we have ever studied the promises, we would note that there has always been a special emphasis on the "promised land". Certainly, if we must choose only one, this must be the promise that we become heirs according to. In most of the writings on the subject of the promises to Abraham, reference is made almost exclusively to this promise of the land. The rest of the promises are seldom discussed in detail.

If we take another look at Genesis 12:1-3 (where the promises are first outlined), we should notice that the promise of land is initially only implied. Abraham is told: "*Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee*" (v. 1).

The promises that are then described are: "*I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*" (vv. 2-3).

The promises that are initially introduced to Abraham are:

1. He will be a great nation.
2. That God will bless him
3. That his name will be great
4. He will be a blessing
5. Others who bless him will be blessed
6. Other who curse him will be cursed.
7. In him shall all families of the earth be blessed.

(The promise of the land is later added to this list. It becomes a significant element of the promises. See Genesis 12:7 and Genesis 13:14-17).

Which of these promises will we become heirs "*according to*"? Since most of us are Gentiles after the flesh, the most logical answer would be number 7 (the promise at the end of Genesis 12:3), "***in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed***".

### **The Key Promise**

I suggest that this is really the key to all of the promises that were made to Abraham, and that it is the promise referred to in Galatians 3:39. This promise, that "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed", has its own special significance in the outline of God's

plan of salvation. The entire process of the atonement is briefly comprehended in this promise. We will appreciate this better as we learn the real significance of this key promise.

### **A Prominent Promise**

This particular promise is always specifically mentioned as the promises were repeated: In Genesis 18 for example, we read:

#### **Genesis 18:17-18**

- 17. And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;  
18. Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?*

In Genesis 22, after Abraham demonstrates his obedience and faith ( in the incident with Isaac), God told Abraham. *"And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice"* (Genesis 22:18). In Genesis 26:4 and in Genesis 28:14, the promises that were passed on to Isaac and Jacob also included this same statement, *"in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed"*.

### **The Gospel Message**

We note also, that in Galatians 3:8, this promise is elevated to the status of the gospel. *"And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed".* This promise is so significant that it can be used as a brief summary statement of the entire gospel message. It is increasingly obvious that there is more than meets the eye in this promise.

The mystery is revealed in the New Testament, where this same promise became a prominent part of the teachings of the Apostles. In the Acts, this promise is clearly explained, lest there be any question concerning its meaning:

#### **Acts 3:19,25-26**

- 19. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;...  
25. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindred's of the earth be blessed.  
26. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.*

It is made evident in this reference, that this promise is linked with the sacrifice of Christ. The blessing of the forgiveness of sin, was made possible through his death and resurrection. This is the blessing that was promised through the seed of Abraham. The same promise that we become heirs to, when we are baptized.

We experience the initial benefit of this blessing immediately. Our sins are forgiven as the result of an obedient faith as we rise up from the waters to walk in newness of life.

### **Justification Through Faith**

*"And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed" (Galatians 3:8).*

Abraham himself was introduced to this principle when "he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:6). As an excellent example for us, he later showed that his faith was indeed strong enough to merit justification.

#### **Romans 4:20-24**

*20. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;*

*21. And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.*

*22. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.*

*23. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;*

*24. But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.*

Paul picks up this important theme in his writings to the Romans:

#### **Romans 4:3,6-8**

*3. or what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness...*

*6. He continues by saying: "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,*

*7. Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.*

*8. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*

James helps to balance the implications of this principle of righteousness by faith:

#### **James 2:22-23**

*22. Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?*

*23. And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.*

### **The Promise**

Returning again to Galatians 3, we hope to conclude our comments by looking at some of the key verses in the context of this important chapter: In verses 3-9 Paul sets the stage by

talking about the importance of faith. He quotes Genesis 15:6 saying: "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Galatians 3:6).

He adds: "*Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham*" (Galatians 3:7-9).

Verse 14 continues: "*That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith". Further, he adds in verse 22: "*But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe*".*

The entire chapter speaks out on this important principle. The blessing promised through Abraham's seed is the forgiveness of our sins through faith in Christ:

**Through our baptism, we become members of his body, and "if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise".**

## The Seventh Day of Rest

When God created the earth, we are told that the process involved six days and that he rested on the seventh day:

### Genesis 2:1-3

1. *Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.*
2. *And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.*
3. *And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.*

We know from the story of the Old Testament, that the seventh day rest became a very significant part of the Jewish week. It was called the Sabbath day: "*Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you*" (Exodus 13:31).

### Day of Rest?

The Children of Israel were instructed not to work on the Sabbath. It was to be a day of rest:

### Exodus 20:8-11

8. *Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.*
9. *Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:*

*10. But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:*

*11. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*

Unfortunately, as time passed the Sabbath rest was reduced to a ritual observance. The principle of the rest was lost and there was a definite need for further understanding on the subject. Jesus added some additional instruction in the New Testament.

When he was being criticized for healing on the Sabbath day, he reminded his adversaries that there were certain obligations that were still reasonable on the Sabbath day, such as watering your cattle, or circumcising a son if it happened that the his eight day fell on the Sabbath (see Luke 13:14-16 and John 7:22-23).

### **Healing on the Sabbath**

Jesus made it a practice to do much of his healing on the Sabbath day for another reason. The Sabbath rest was typical of a period of rest that was coming in the future. When the future Sabbath came, there would be more than a rest from daily labour. In the coming "rest", man would be freed from the sickness and diseases that are currently a part of our mortality. Jesus used the power of the Holy Spirit to heal these diseases to demonstrate how God's power would be used to eliminate sickness and disease in the future.

Jesus was preaching the good news of the coming Kingdom of God. The Sabbath day was typical of that Kingdom that was coming on the earth. When he healed on the Sabbath day, he was providing a real live visual lesson of what it would be like in the Kingdom.

### **I Will Give You Rest**

When we begin to understand that Jesus was teaching and preaching about this coming Kingdom, some of his other teachings have added meaning. For example, he taught:

#### **Matthew 11:28-30**

*28. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

*29. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

*30. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

Jesus would not only lighten our burdens in this life, (by providing us with the peace of mind that comes with hope), but he would also help us to find eternal rest, in God's Kingdom.

The Kingdom of God will fill this earth with God's glory, and it will bring a time of peace, when they will beat their swords into plowshares. This Kingdom is described as: *"times of refreshing"* that *"shall come from the presence of the Lord"* (Acts 3:19).

## **Rest For the People of God**

In Hebrews 4, this kingdom is also spoken of as a time of rest. It is here that connection is made to the seventh day of the creation: Consider the following verses from that chapter:

### **Hebrews 4:4-11**

4. *For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.*
5. *And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest.*
6. *Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:*
7. *Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.*
8. *For if Jesus (Joshua) had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.*
9. *There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.*
10. *For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.*
11. *Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.*

### **One Day = One Thousand Years**

The Apostle Peter adds another dimension to this study about the seventh day of rest. Speaking about the coming judgment that precedes the Kingdom of God, he tells us in II Peter 3:

### **II Peter 3:7-9**

7. *But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*
8. *But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*
9. *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

It is reasonable to conclude, when we look at all of these facts, that God has a very definite timetable in his plan for this earth. If we consider that the seven days of creation may have been a type, and that one day with the Lord is like a thousand years, we would expect that this earth would experience 6000 years of labour and travail, followed by a 1000 year "day of rest" for the people of God.

### **They Reigned with Christ 1000 Years**

This idea is well supported in scripture. It is consistent with the message found in Revelation 20:6 . *"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such*

*the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."*

## **The Seventh Day**

The Seventh day of creation then, was intended as a type. The day of rest for God, was typical of the coming Kingdom of God on this earth. That Kingdom would be a time of rest for God's people, who would live and reign for one thousand years. God's people will rest from their labours, and the earth will be refreshed. The curse on the ground will be removed, and the earth will bring forth abundantly.

The Prophet Micah told about that wonderful time of rest in these words from his 4th chapter:

### **Micah 4:1-4**

- 1. But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.*
- 2. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*
- 3. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*
- 4. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it.*

## **The Promises to Abraham**

*"And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, In you all the nations shall be blessed" (Galatians 3:8, NKJV).*

Among the notable men of God described in the Old Testament writings is one very special man. His name is Abraham and his many qualifications include such expressions as: "friend of God", "father of the faithful" and "heir of the world".

Abraham was a very faithful servant of God. His role in the plan and purpose of God began during his early life some 2,000 years before Christ. God's plan for Abraham is still active with certain precious promises that will be fulfilled after Abraham is resurrected from the dead.



## New Testament Role

Many people think of Abraham as a character from history, confined to the early chapters of the book of Genesis. The truth is that the name Abraham appears over 60 times in the New Testament, which is a testimony to the importance of this man throughout the entire plan of God.

## Abraham and the Gospel

In the verse quoted at the head of this page, we are told that the gospel of salvation was preached to Abraham. Abraham was given the essence of the gospel message when he was told that through him and his descendent (Christ), all nations of the earth would be blessed. The principle for that blessing is clearly described. God would justify the Gentiles (nations) **through faith**.

## Strong in Faith

Abraham was a man with such strength of faith in God that he has become the father of the faithful from all ages. He was promised a son when he was seventy five years old. He believed in God's promise and remained faithful for twenty five years before Isaac, the promised son, was born.

His great faith is described thus:

### Romans 4:18-22

18. *Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.*
19. *And being **not weak in faith**, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb:*
20. *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was **strong in faith**, giving glory to God;*
21. *And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.*

## Our Example

Abraham is an excellent example for us as we attempt to achieve the blessing of eternal life through our faith in the promises of God. The promises made to Abraham are well worth our consideration as we look for the motivation that inspired Abraham to faithful obedience.

Abraham was given very special promises. **We can inherit these same promises through Christ.**

## The Promises

God made many "great and precious promises" to Abraham and to his descendent, Jesus Christ (II Peter 1:4). We have the opportunity to be the children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and if we have been baptized into Christ, we also may become Abraham's

descendents and heirs to the same promises. These promises are outlined in the Book of Genesis starting in Chapter 12. These promises to Abraham are:

### **Genesis 12:1-3**

1. *Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:*
2. *And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:*
3. *And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*

The promises continue in Chapter 13:

### **Genesis 13:14-15**

14. *And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:*
15. *For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever*

### **Additional Promises**

### **Genesis 22:15-18**

15. *And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,*
16. *And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:*
17. *That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;*
18. *And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.*

### **God's Oath**

These precious promises were so special, and so sure and certain to be fulfilled that God swore by himself. The writer to the Hebrews tells us:

### **Hebrews 6:17-18**

17. *Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:*
18. *That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.*

This hope is the hope of the promises made to Abraham and available also to us, through faith and baptism into Christ as described in Galatians 3:27-29.

**Promised Land  
Promised Blessings  
Promised Greatness  
Promised Descendents  
Promised Power  
Promised Forever**

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**Promises Fulfilled Through Christ**

## ***"That Old Serpent, the Devil and Satan" (Revelation 12:9)***

*"That old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan"* (Revelation 12:9). The world has been deceived, not only by the influence represented by these words, but by the terms themselves.

This subject is one of the most confusing in the Bible. The traditional view has been greatly influenced by ancient superstitions. Today, most Christians have been led to believe that there is a supernatural being who is the enemy of God and the author of evil.

This view is not only incorrect, it is also likely to distort our understanding of the Bible message and may jeopardize our hope for salvation. If we believe that an outside tempter is responsible for all of our sin, then how can we truly repent and be converted?

### **Enmity**

To understand the Bible teaching on the subject of the Devil and Satan, we must start at the beginning when the serpent which was the most subtle beast of the field, tempted Eve by lying about God's commandment.

For this deceit, "the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:14-15).

This sentence had far reaching implications and it is a prophecy that outlines the entire plan of redemption.

### **The Descendents**

The descendent of the serpent is sin. He was the father of all lying and deceit. The future descendent of the woman would be Christ He would overcome sin in his own body and destroy it on the cross, to redeem mankind from the curse of sin and death.

From the time that Adam and Eve were cast out from the garden as mortal creatures, there has been a constant struggle between man and the sin influence that the serpent planted.

The Apostle Paul describes this battle that is being waged inside of us in Romans 7:18-25. The desire to sin comes from within our own minds. *"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man"* (Mark 7:21-23).

## **Devil, Satan**

With this background we can begin to understand how that the words Devil and Satan were chosen to describe sin in all of its manifestations. When we "resist the devil", we are overcoming the sin in ourselves (James 4:7). When Jesus told Peter to "get thee behind me Satan", the sin was being manifested in another person. In the quotation chosen at the top of this page, (from Revelation 12:9) the sin was manifested in the government of that day, which was an adversary to the saints.

## **Contradictions in the Popular Theories**

When we take a good look at the subject of the Devil and Satan, we discover that there are several contradictions and inconsistencies in the traditional view. If there really were a supernatural being called the devil, the scriptures that are related should all be in harmony with this concept. This is certainly not the case. Following are a list of issues that you owe it to yourself to resolve, before you make any final conclusions on the subject:

- When did the devil fall from heaven? Was it before the creation as is commonly taught? (see Isaiah 14:12, Luke 10:18, Revelation 12:7)
- How did the serpent survive the flood, if he was the devil?
- How do you explain Isaiah 45:7 where God is said to create evil?
- If God spares not angels that sin, then how did the devil survive? (see II Peter 2:4)
- If the serpent was sentenced to crawl on his belly, why is he said to walk about like a lion in I Peter 5:8?
- Why would God use a messenger of Satan to help Paul to grow spiritually? (II Corinthians 12:7-9)
- Read Acts 5:1-4. Was it Satan that tempted Ananias, or was it his own heart (mind)?
- Why would the devil cast someone into prison? (Revelation 2:10)
- Why did Jesus refer to Peter as Satan? (Matthew 16:23)
- If Christ destroyed the devil through his death, then why would he still be around? (Hebrews 2:14)
- In Luke 20:35-38 we learn that angels are immortal. We have also just seen in Hebrews 2:14 that the devil will be destroyed. How could a fallen angel be destroyed?
- In I Timothy 1:20 we read that two brethren were delivered to Satan to "learn not to blaspheme". Would not this be inconsistent with the role of the devil?
- In I Corinthians 5:5 the Corinthians are exhorted to deliver an erring brother to Satan, to help to save him. How would you explain this?
- Why does James teach that a man is tempted by his own flesh if there is a devil? (James 1:14-15)

- Isaiah 14:12 is commonly applied to the devil. Why then is this proverb actually spoken to the king of Babylon, who is clearly referred to as a man? (see verses 4 & 16)

## **Symbolic Language - A Key to Understanding Wisdom**

### **Proverbs 8:1-5**

1. *Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?*
2. *She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths.*
3. *She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors.*
4. *Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man.*
5. *O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.*

### **Two Women?**

There are two women who have a prominent role in the instruction found in the book of Proverbs. The first is called **wisdom** and the other is a **harlot**, a strange woman that leads young men astray. When we read the language about these women it might seem logical to conclude that there are two literal, supernatural women out there in the streets. One is calling for men to be wise and avoid evil, and the other is tempting them to sin. Would this approach be any less reasonable than believing in a literal devil?

### **Personification**

To my knowledge however, no one is actually promoting such a conclusion. In fact it seems silly to think that this language is any more than a personification of the opposing influences in our lives. Strange as it is however, the same sinful influence that is personified by the harlot, is believed to be real when the word devil is applied.

### **Mother of Harlots**

In the book of Revelation, (which is a book that is filled with symbols) we find another very clear use of the harlot as a personification of sin manifested in the apostate church.

We are told in Revelation 17:

### **Revelation 17:1-2,4-5**

1. *... Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:*
2. *With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication...*
4. *And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:*

5. *And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*

This "*whore*" represents a system of false worship that has been influential in deceiving the people with lies about the "*old serpent, the Devil and Satan*".

Why? By promoting hell (the grave) as a place of eternal torment, ruled by their fabricated "Devil", their parishioners are coerced into paying their tithes, in the hope of being saved from this terrible end. The true servants of God are warned not to be deceived by the wine (teaching) of the harlot. They are instructed to "come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4).

Do not be deceived. The "*devil*" is only a word used to personify sin. It is the sin itself that leads to our eternal rest in the dust. If we resist this "*devil*", we can hope for the gift of eternal life, through Jesus Christ

### **Concluding Thoughts**

As we learn more about the way that sin is presented in the Bible, we understand that words such as the Devil and Satan are only representative of the various manifestations off sin.

### **The Curse of Sin**

One of the significant effects of the sin of our first parents was that we have inherited a nature that is cursed. We are therefore subjected to suffering, sorrow, sickness and pain as we endure our few days filled with trouble leading us all back to the dust of the ground.

### **Thorn in the Flesh**

Suffering and disease were more than a punishment. Such adversities are also intended to instruct us and hopefully lead us to repentance.

Paul's "thorn in the flesh" is an excellent example of the way that God may use an affliction to lead us to the humility that he desires in us. Paul expressed it this way:

#### **II Corinthians 12:7-9 (NIV)**

7. *To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.*
8. *Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.*
9. *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.*

This account demonstrates the language of the Bible. Paul's adversity, (which many believe was very poor eyesight) was called a messenger of Satan. It is obvious from the context that this thorn was under God's control and that it was applied for His purpose. The popular superstitions about Satan would find no support in this story.

## **The Destruction of the Devil**

When we consider the redemptive work of Christ, we are told in Hebrews 2:14 "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil".

What was it that Christ actually destroyed when he died on the cross? He died for our sins, and "*the wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23). It was the sin that dwelled in his own body that he destroyed by his death.

The destruction of the Devil (that is, sin in the flesh) was accomplished first in Christ, and even as promised in Genesis 3:15, he will return to bruise the serpent on the head.

With this victory sin in all of its manifestations will have been removed from the earth. All of the affliction, all suffering, sorrow, sickness and pain will no longer be remembered, "*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away*" (Revelation 21:4).

Our comfort from the scriptures is in the knowledge that all of the effects of sin will be removed. (Including the confusion in the terms and the superstitions that have deceived us.)

### **I Corinthians 15:25-28**

*25. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.*

*26. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.*

*27. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.*

*28. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*

## **"Ye Are My Friends, If Ye Do ... " (John 15:14)**

When we think about the "*things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ*" (Acts 8:12), we often concentrate on the hope that it represents for the future. Jesus taught us to pray: "*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*" (Matthew 6:10). We look forward therefore to the return of Jesus to this earth, when he will establish the Kingdom and the earth will be filled with God's glory.

### **Our Connection to This Hope?**

In our enthusiasm for the future glory, we must not lose sight of those teachings that instruct us how we as individuals may hope to share in this coming Kingdom.

In the quotation from the top of the page, we learn for example, that there is an obligation associated with our desire to become friends of Jesus. Indeed, there are commandments that we are expected to keep.

Jesus taught that in addition to becoming his friend, we might also become a part of his family, but not without associated responsibilities. *"For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother"* (Matthew 12:50).

### **The Sermon on the Mount**

One of the most significant discourses that was delivered by the Master is recorded in Matthew, chapters 5-7. This sermon contains many of the commandments of Jesus, and it teaches us how to do the will of God.

### **Seek First the Kingdom**

One of the keys to the lesson is found in the 6th chapter. Jesus teaches how important it is for us to set the right priorities in our lives. Our nature leads us to be concerned about the necessities of life; our food, clothing and shelter. Jesus teaches us that God understands our need for these things, and that if we place our search for God's Kingdom first in our lives, all these necessary things will be provided also.

#### **Matthew 6:31-34**

31. *Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?*
32. *(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*
33. *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*
34. *Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*

### **Doers, Not Hearers**

Jesus concluded his sermon by telling a parable. All those who listen to his sayings and do not do them are likened to foolish men who build their house on the sand. The wise, on the other hand, are those that hear and do. These are like those who build on a rock (Matthew 7:24-27). We should build on a rock, by learning and then doing, all of the teachings of the Master.

### **The Blessings of our Hope**

The "things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" are good news for all who are willing to hear the gospel and who then become doers of the word, bringing forth fruit from the Words of God that have been sown as seeds in their hearts.

Jesus assured us that he was coming quickly and that those who kept his commandments would be rewarded:

## **Revelation 22:12-14**

- 12. Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*
- 13. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.*
- 14. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*

## **The Lord is Merciful**

Some of the most comforting words of scripture are found in Psalm 103. We are reminded of the blessing of the forgiveness of our sins that is now a reality through faith in Christ. We read:

### **Psalm 103:8-18**

- 8. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.*
- 9. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever.*
- 10. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*
- 11. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.*
- 12. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.*
- 13. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.*
- 14. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.*
- 15. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.*
- 16. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.*
- 17. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;*
- 18. To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.*

As we review these beautiful words, we are encouraged by the compassion that has been made available to us through our saviour. We are given the assurance that God will be pitiful to us, even as a father pities his own children. We also learn that among these precious words of hope are those gentle reminders that these blessings are conditional.

Our own attitude and response to the promises of God is important. We have seen from Psalm 103 that the Lord pities "them that fear him". This fear is not terror, but a sincere respect for our Father, who is the Almighty, the Creator and Sustainer of all life. If we respect His power and authority, loving Him with our entire heart, soul and mind, then we will "Fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

## Blessings (IF)

We have these wonderful blessings available to us if we have understood that a transformation is necessary in our minds. When we are converted as a child of God, and if we are born again through the spirit, and renewed in the spirit of our minds, then we will appreciate the lovingkindness of God for those that fear him.



***"Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom" (Matthew 18:3).***

The Master taught that there must be a change in our attitude if we are to be really prepared for God's Kingdom. The words above are quoted from Matthew 18, verse 3. Jesus spoke these words in response to a question from his disciples. The followers of Jesus were only concerned with their own status. They had asked: *"Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"* (v. 1) Their attitude was entirely wrong. They needed to learn humility, and the example of a little child was chosen to teach them about true conversion.

## Conversion

Fundamental to the way of salvation is the idea of repentance or conversion. When we learn about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, we also learn that we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God, and that Jesus was the lamb of God, who came to take away the sins of the world through his sacrifice.

Forgiveness of sins is only a start. We are encouraged to forsake our sinful ways and to *"go and sin no more"*. We therefore are told to *"repent and be baptized"* as the beginning of a new life in Christ Jesus. A life in which we are instructed to deny ourselves and to take up our cross and follow the Master, who led the way by his own example.

## True Conversion is Difficult

It was obvious from the way that the disciples acted that true conversion is something that few ever accomplish when they are baptized. Peter, who was one of the closest friends of the Master was told that he still needed to be converted. On the night when Jesus was betrayed, Peter denied Jesus three times because he was not yet transformed (see account in Luke 22).

## Be Ye Transformed

The idea of conversion is expressed in many ways throughout the New Testament. In Romans 12:1-2 we are told: *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."*

In John 3:5 the principle of conversion is stated this way: *"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."* We are born of the water at our baptism, but we must then be born of the spirit by the renewing of our minds, by being converted even as a child.

In Ephesians 4 we find the same principle of conversion: *"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness"* (vv. 22-24).

### Little Children

Little children should be an example for us. They are totally dependent on their parents, they have simple and honest faith and trust that they will be cared for. We should renew our minds after this example that the Master has appointed for us.

We must trust in our Heavenly Father in the recognition that we are his children and that he will take care of all of our needs if we can learn to humble ourselves as a little child, in subjection to His will.

## God's Coming Kingdom on Earth



### Reasons Why the Gospel Encompasses a Literal Kingdom of God on Earth

One universal theme held by human beings is a desire for a golden age of peace, prosperity and happiness. This desire has been depicted in varying ways and has been called by various names: the Age of Aquarius, Xanadu, Shangri-la, Utopia, and the Millennial Reign of Christ. It is a dream that seems to arise from deep within the human psyche and may have been planted by the Almighty as a subconscious need in the very makeup of human beings; just like the human need to believe in something greater than ourselves.

However, for a believer in the Bible, there is only one form of this dream that reflects truth; the hope of the coming Kingdom of God on earth particularly as it will be manifested during the 1,000 year millennial reign of Christ.

In fact, the very gospel, which Paul in Romans 1:8 called "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth", consists of belief in **two primary things**: These are described in the book of Acts, the book that details the evangelizing of the Roman world, the spreading of the gospel message to the Gentiles. In Acts 8:12, we read that what Philip the evangelist preached to the people of Samaria was "**the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.**" Likewise, in the last chapter of Acts, we read twice in this chapter of what Paul preached in Rome up to the time of his death. In v. 30,

we read, " *And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, **Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.***"

In addition, it was the preaching about the kingdom of God that formed the focus of the ministry of Jesus. Time and time again we read that he came preaching the kingdom of God. Many of his parables were given to teach about that kingdom and the fact that he was its king. That is why he answered Pilate's question, "*Art thou a king then?*" by saying, "*Thou sayest I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world....*" (Jn 18:37).

A king rules over a kingdom and the Angel Gabriel promised Mary that the son born to her would be given the throne of his ancestor King David, and David's throne was a literal throne of a real earthly kingdom. Hence, when the disciples asked Jesus just before his ascension (in Acts 1:6) , "wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?", Jesus didn't dismiss their question as being ridiculous. He simply answered that it wasn't for them to know the times or seasons when this might happen; but he never implied that such a restoration would not take place. To restore is to re-establish something that previously existed.

The common foundation belief during the first three and one half centuries after the resurrection of Christ was that Jesus would return to earth, the resurrection of the dead would take place, and then he would then establish the kingdom of God on earth during a phase which would last 1,000 years; the so-called millennial reign of Christ.

This was an orthodox foundation belief of the early church up until the time when Christianity became the state-sanctioned religion of the Roman Empire and the church in turn became a powerful institution; around 360 A.D. During this period a very influential Christian named Augustine introduced a new idea which soon came to dominate the thinking of the Roman church. Augustine taught that the millennial reign was a figurative time period that began from the time of Christ's ministry. The one thousand years mentioned in Revelation when the saints would rule with Christ did not mean he would physically return to the earth. Instead, it meant that the spirit of Christ would rule the world through the Church hierarchy for a long indefinite period of time until Jesus returned to judge the earth and take his saints to heaven. The binding of Satan during this 1,000 year period meant that Satan would be cast out of believer's hearts. In other words, the whole teaching of Biblical prophecies relating to the kingdom were spiritualized and applied to the Roman Catholic Church.

This new thinking appealed to the newly empowered church clergy. Hence, in very short order, the whole doctrine of the coming kingdom on earth was supplanted with a new doctrine of the kingdom of God be realized through the Roman church. This fit perfectly with the newly ascendant doctrine that the abode of the faithful was as immortal souls in heaven.

Edward Gibbon, in his monumental work, the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire has this to say about this change in thinking>

"The ancient and popular doctrine of the Millennium was intimately connected with the second coming of Christ. As the works of the creation had been finished in six days and their duration in their present state, according to a tradition which was attributed to the

prophet Elijah, was fixed to six thousand years. By the same analogy, it was inferred that this long period of labour and contention, which now almost elapsed, would be succeeded by a joyful Sabbath of a thousand years; and that Christ, with the triumphant band of the saints and the elect who had escaped death, or who had been miraculously revived, would reign upon the earth till the time appointed for the last and general resurrection.

.....The assurance of such a Millennium was carefully inculcated by a succession of fathers from Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, who conversed with the immediate disciples of the apostles, down to Lactantius, who was the preceptor to the son of Constantine [about 360 A.D.] It appears to have been the reigning sentiment of the orthodox believers; and it seems so well adapted to the desires and apprehensions of mankind, that it must have contributed in a very considerable degree to the progress of the Christian faith.

But when the edifice of the church was almost completed, the temporary support was laid aside. The doctrine of Christ's reign upon earth was at first treated as a profound allegory, was considered by degrees as a doubtful and useless opinion, and was at length rejected as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism." (from Chapter 13, The Progress of the Christian Religion)

I believe this significant change in interpretation of the millennial reign of Christ was also partly responsible for causing the Roman church to abandon the significance of the physical resurrection at the return of Christ and adopt Plato's doctrine of the immortality of the soul. With this false focus, is it any wonder that most of Christendom ignores the substance of one half of the gospel message; the part Jesus emphasized; namely the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God on earth and the millennial reign of Christ.

What then is the Biblical case for a literal Kingdom of God on earth? Why is this teaching such a vital part of the gospel? Why is so central to God's plan of salvation for mankind? I think we could advance at least eight reasons for its fundamental importance as answer to these questions.

**1. It is required by the promise of regeneration of the physical creation.** If there is never going to be a period of earthly perfection when Christ reigns *on earth*, how or why would the apostle Paul say that all creation hopes for a restoration when mankind is redeemed? If redemption is purely spiritual in heaven, there would be no need for a restored physical creation on earth and no need for physically resurrected bodies. Yet Paul says, (in Romans 8:v.20-21)

*"For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; **because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now.**" (NKJV).*

The deliverance of sin-cursed creation must take place where we find creation-----namely on the earth.

In the Old Testament, we get a glimpse of what this regeneration will involve. In Isaiah 11:6-10 we read,

*"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. The*

*cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together. And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,...." (NKJV)* This is a description of the characteristics of animal life that will exist **on earth** at a future time. A set future time on earth is required for this to happen which we believe to be during the reign of Messiah; who is clearly referred to in the opening verses of this same chapter. He is described as "a Rod from the stem of Jesse" who will have the spirit of the Lord resting upon him.

**2. It is required if the physical resurrection of the dead is to have any meaning.** That is, if the abode of the faithful is as spirit beings in the bliss of heaven, there is no need for such spirit beings to be reunited with the physical body because heaven is a spiritual realm. If there is no literal kingdom on earth, a physical resurrection is totally unnecessary for spirit beings who are to reside eternally in heaven. Yet the Bible repeatedly stresses that the dead in Christ are "asleep" and will rise in the last day at the resurrection. For example consider this exchange between Jesus and Martha after the death of Lazarus. "*Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day'.*" (John 11 23-24 NKJV) A physical body **is** needed in order to participate along mortal human beings in a real kingdom here on earth.

**3. It is required if the second coming of Jesus is to have any meaning.** Otherwise, why would Jesus bother to return to earth? For what? To simply stop by and pick up his followers to take them back to heaven, and to survey the damage on earth? This hardly necessitates Jesus returning to earth because we read that the angels will gather the elect. In fact, the whole concept of the second coming of Christ is redundant without a kingdom on earth. It is no wonder the Catholic Church gives very minor treatment to the second coming of Jesus. Yet the bible clearly states, "*This same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven.*" (Acts2:11)

**4. It is required if the promised millennial rest spoken of by the writer to the Hebrews in Hebrews 4: 9 is to have the meaning it did to the early church;** namely as referring to the millennial reign of Christ during the seventh millennium from Adam. "There remaineth yet a rest [or keeping of Sabbath] for the people of God." (KJV) If the faithful dead are already enjoying an eternal state of bliss in heaven, there would be no need to have a distinct period of millennial rest. Such beings would already be in a state of blissful eternal rest.

**5. It is required by the prophecy of Daniel concerning the final fate of Nebuchadnezzar's image.** In Daniel 2:44, we read,

*"In the days of these kings shall the god of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, **but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand forever**".* He then goes on to elaborate that this is brought about in symbol by the stone that is cut out of the mountain without hands and smites the image on the feet so that it tumbles.

Virtually all commentators believe this is referring to the reign of the messiah after the destruction of the Gentile powers. Just as all the kingdoms represented by the image referred to real kingdoms or empires here on earth, so this kingdom that becomes a great mountain is referring to real kingdom here on earth. This is demanded by the context

because Messiah's kingdom is to consume all the existing kingdoms and this can only refer to the kingdoms here on earth.

**6. It is required if Jesus is to sit on David's literal throne which was located in Jerusalem, a real geographic location here on earth, and if the twelve apostles are to judge the twelve tribes of Israel in the expanded land of Israel; what the Bible calls the first dominion.** Jesus told his disciples, "*That ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*" (Matt. 19:27-29) Likewise, Isaiah wrote, "For unto us a child is born, and unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder : and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, **upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom**, to order it, and establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth, ever forever.

The kingdom of God is to be a continuation of the kingdom that David reigned over. This is in accordance with the promise made to David that "*thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established forever.*" (2 Samuel 7:16) Is it any wonder that the disciples asked Jesus just before his ascension, "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel" They understood from prophecies such as this such a restoration was necessary and that it would be the role of the Messiah to carry it out. .

**7. It is required by all the Old Testament prophecies about a coming messiah whom the Gentiles all over the world would seek after.** The Gentiles have sought after no other Jew but Jesus; nor will they. In Isaiah 11, v. 10 we read, "*And in that day, there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.*" Throughout the book of Revelation, Jesus is revealed as the "root of Jesse". It is clearly taught in the Old Testament that the Messiah would be someone the Gentiles would believe and that Gentile nations would submit to his rule and come to Jerusalem to do homage to the king. For example, in Micah 4:2 we read,

"Many nations shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the god of Jacob, He will teach us His ways and we shall walk in His paths.....He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off."

These verses make no sense if we regard the Catholic Church as the kingdom of God and the faithful as immortal souls residing eternally in heaven. In addition, these verses in their entirety speak of many nations coming to Jerusalem, recognizing it as their capital, when the Lord reigns from Mt. Zion during a time of universal peace and prosperity. Real geographic locations here on earth are mentioned and a time is being described that has never yet been witnessed on the earth. However, these descriptions are perfectly consistent with what we know elsewhere about the millennial reign of Christ.

**8. It is required if the Kingdom of God is to fall heir to all the kingdoms of the earth and be possessed by the faithful of all ages.** We read in Daniel 7:27 *and the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him*". If this kingdom is to rule over all dominions, then it is clearly referring to kingdoms on this earth. This is perfectly consistent with what we also read in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Psalm (v. 7-8),

*"The LORD has said to Me. 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession."*

It makes no sense for God to give his son the kingdoms of the earth for his inheritance if his kingdom is a heavenly kingdom rather than an earthly kingdom.

In summary, the kingdom of God represents the innate desires of what most human beings long for: peace, justice, order, security, prosperity, social justice, good health, long life, righteous laws, righteous rulers and a good benevolent government. The Bible clearly teaches that things will be realized throughout the earth in the Kingdom of God under the righteous rule of Jesus the Messiah, the King of Kings. While we still see through a glass darkly regarding many details of the coming kingdom, the Millennial Reign of Christ, and what follows that period, the general outline is clear.

Let us therefore persevere in "faithful continuance in well doing" as we wait for the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour to usher in His millennial reign; an appearing which we believe is imminent. For, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (1 Cor. 2:9)

By Rick Farrar

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