

WRITINGS OF JIM FEENEY

by Jim Feeney

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by Jim Feeney, compiled for study and devotional reading.

7 Chapters

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S. Are the Fivefold Ministries for Today?

Are the Fivefold Ministries for Today?

by Pastor Jim Feeney, Ph.D.

Summary: Has church tradition tricked us into calling almost all ministers “pastor”? Or should the Church today be benefiting from the five ministries of contemporary apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers? Is your pastor truly a biblical “pastor”? Very possibly so. But perhaps not. Sad to say, the modern Church has largely abandoned the broad-based “fivefold” ministry gifts of Eph 4:11 — that is, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers — and has too often settled for identifying most Christian ministers simply as “pastor”. But often those “pastors” are more precisely evangelists or Bible teachers, or even prophets or apostles. My desire in this article is to show from the Scriptures that all five ministries are biblically valid and needed today.

Eph 4:11-13 It was he [Jesus, vss. Eph 4:7-10] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

- These three verses are not difficult to understand. They quite clearly explain how, at the outset, Jesus Christ established five specific, named ministries to bring His church to full maturity. There is no biblical warrant for changing Christ’s pattern then to a different one now.

- Let’s briefly examine these verses, and we will see how they plainly describe the Lord’s provision for His Church for the entire Church Age. But first a glance at Eph 4:7-8 to establish the beginnings of a time frame.

Eph 4:7-8 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.”

- These two verses establish a context for the fivefold ministry gifts named in Eph 4:11.

- Those ministries represented a giving of grace by Jesus Christ (Eph 4:7).

- And when did Jesus do this giving? — “When he ascended on high” (Eph 4:8). While on earth, as recorded in the four Gospels, Jesus gave apostles (12 of them). But Eph 4:1-32 tells us that, after His resurrection and ascension to heaven, Jesus broadened that apportionment of His grace by giving the Church not only additional apostles, but also prophets, evangelists, pastors, and Bible teachers. We see many instances of these ministries represented by named men in the Book of Acts, subsequent to Jesus’ ascension to heaven.

- apostles (Acts 14:14; see also 1Th 1:1 with 1Th 2:6) • prophets (Acts 11:27-28; Acts 13:1; Acts 15:32) • evangelists (Acts 21:8; see also 2Ti 4:5) • pastors (not named, but clearly given in Eph

4:11) • teachers (Acts 13:1; see also 1Ti 2:7)

• The relevant point in Eph 4:7-8 is that Jesus was not content just to give the original twelve apostles. Upon His return to heaven, He continued to give His Church many and varied ministries — here specifically, additional apostles, as well as prophets, evangelists, pastors, and Bible teachers. There is no biblical support, nor is there logical reason, to change or discontinue the pattern that Jesus established for ministry in His Church. We will prove that point further from the Scriptures below.

Eph 4:11-12 [Jesus gave] apostles ... prophets ... evangelists ... pastors ... teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

Eph 4:12, KJV — “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry...”

Eph 4:12, Amplified — “His intention was the perfecting and full equipping of the saints (His consecrated people), [that they should do] the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body (the church).”

•• Are the saints (God's people) perfected yet? No? Then we today need all five ministries, which are given for this purpose.

•• Are the saints “fully equipped” to do the work of the ministry? Is the “work of the ministry” completed? Not yet? Then we today still need all five ministries to fully equip us for this noble work.

•• Is Christ's body, the Church, fully “built up”? Certainly not. Until it is, we need all the fivefold ministries to help us fulfill this heaven-ordained purpose.

Eph 4:11, Eph 4:13 [The five ministries were given, Eph 4:11] ...until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

•• All five ministries are to have their expression to and impact upon the body of Christ “UNTIL”:

• we all reach unity in the faith • we all reach unity in the knowledge of the Son of God • we become mature (King James: “a perfect man”) • we attain the whole measure of the fullness of Christ

•• I have never met a Christian who believes that the body of Christ has yet achieved the four goals listed above. Until that day comes, we need all five of the Eph 4:11 ministries. They are Christ's provisions to lead His Church towards these noble goals.

Among those who deny the present-day validity of the five ministries, the objections are not to pastors, and generally not to evangelists and teachers. Usually the stumbling block is contemporary apostles and prophets. Yet there is no biblical support for dividing these ministries, as is often done, into two groups — evangelists, pastors, and teachers for today, but apostles and prophets only for the early Church.

•• All five are needed to equip the Lord's people in every century of the Church Age.

•• All five are needed to bring the Church to unity and maturity.

- All five are needed to bring us — you and me — to the “whole measure of the fullness of Christ”.
- May the Church today move past erroneous traditions and teachings and once again embrace the gracious provision of Jesus Christ to His Church for the entire Church Age — that is, God-called, Spirit-anointed apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

S. Kingdom of God, Kingdom of Heaven

Kingdom of God, Kingdom of Heaven

Bible Study Notes

by Pastor Jim Feeney, Ph.D.

These are bible study notes that I compiled during an extensive study of the kingdom of God/kingdom of heaven over the course of several months. They are offered in their present format for those bible students who will look past the outline structure to find an in-depth study of this great bible theme.

Mat 3:1-2 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

- John the Baptist announced the nearness of the kingdom of heaven.
- The nearness of the kingdom was given as a motive for repentance - "Repent, for the kingdom..."

Mat 4:17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

- Interesting. Jesus' first public messages emphasized the same theme as John the Baptist's - that is, the nearness of the kingdom of heaven.
- And again, the urgency of repentance in light of the nearness of kingdom of heaven.

Mat 4:23 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

- Jesus preached the "gospel of the kingdom" (KJV). NIV calls it "the good news of the kingdom."
- Divine healing seems to be associated with the kingdom. That is good news indeed!
- In fact, supernatural healings would seem to confirm that God's kingdom was functioning in Jesus on earth.

Mat 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

- The kingdom of heaven is for the "poor in spirit."
- Expositor's Bible Commentary: "To be poor in spirit is not to lack courage but to acknowledge spiritual bankruptcy. It confesses one's unworthiness before God and utter dependence on him."
- An interesting point: the first and last beatitudes (Mat 5:3 and Mat 5:10) are the ones that mention the kingdom. In those two verses, it reads: "theirs IS the kingdom." In the other beatitudes, which don't mention the kingdom, the verb tense is "WILL be ... WILL inherit", etc. Matthew's deliberate (and inspired) choice of the present tense, not the future, makes a point about the present sense of the kingdom in this context.

- To the poor in spirit (Mat 5:33) and those persecuted because of righteousness (Mat 5:10), Jesus says, “[Yours] IS the kingdom” -- not “will be” as in the other beatitude promises.

Mat 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

- The kingdom of heaven is for “those who are persecuted because of righteousness.” For the time frame (“theirs is”), see notes on Mat 5:3 above.

Mat 5:19-20 Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

- We will be “called least ... [or] called great in the kingdom of heaven” based upon whether ...

- 1) we break God's commands and teach others to do so, or...

- 2) we practice God's commands and teach them to others.

- Interesting - the breaker and the keeper of God's commands are BOTH said to be “IN the kingdom.” But the breaker is called “least in the kingdom” and the keeper is called “great in the kingdom.” But both are called “IN the kingdom.”

- The one who broke “the least” commandment (19) is still included “IN the kingdom,” but is himself “called least in the kingdom.” But still “IN.”

- Conclusion: the saved person, who is “in the kingdom” but is breaking some of God's commandments is still “IN” the kingdom.

- The previous paragraph seems to support GRADATION WITHIN the kingdom ranks, not inclusion versus exclusion from the kingdom. Other instances of this gradation-within versus inclusion-exclusion:

- Mat 11:11 - “...he who is least in the kingdom is greater than [John the Baptist].” Again, suggesting ranks within the kingdom.

- Mat 20:20-23 - The mother of Zebedee's sons asked Jesus for special places “in [Christ's] kingdom” for her two sons. Jesus did not deny that there were special places in the kingdom, replying to her, “These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.”

- (Mat 5:20) A person will “certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven” unless his “righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees.” Pharisaical “righteousness” was an external thing, based on their outward appearance of following the Law. New Testament righteousness is an internal thing, an issue of repentance, faith, and grace.

- The implication is that those who do receive the New Testament free gift of God's righteousness by grace through faith do indeed “enter the kingdom of heaven (Mat 5:20).”

Mat 6:9-10 “This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’ ”

- The kingdom is an issue for fervent prayer.

- “Your kingdom come” - to be prayed by all Christians throughout the Church Age - suggests that the fullness of the kingdom is yet future.

Mat 6:31-33 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

- The kingdom of God seems here to be contrasted with the earthly pursuits of food, drink, and clothing.

- Jesus gives the kingdom its rightful priority - “Seek ye first the kingdom of God” (KJV) •• The kingdom is linked with “[God’s] righteousness”. They are both to be sought.

- “His [God’s] righteousness” - which we are commanded to seek - could be interpreted at least two ways:

- 1) “His” (apparently in contrast to “ours”) may suggest the imputed righteousness of God, attained by faith. Or...

- 2) It may refer to “righteous acts” (as in Rev 19:8, NIV). In this interpretation Jesus would be encouraging a level of righteous living, as in Eph 4:24 in its surrounding context - “...put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” The immediate context in Eph 4:1-32 is righteous deeds, righteous living.

Mat 7:21-23 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

- Neither man’s words (“Lord, Lord!”) nor his claim to spiritual gifts (prophecy, exorcisms, miracles) will gain him entrance into the kingdom of heaven. No, entrance to the kingdom is “only” for those who “do the will of [God the] Father” as opposed to “you EVILDOERS.”

- Notice that Jesus says, “I never knew you,” strongly suggesting that they were never born again.

- Note also that Jesus did not necessarily agree that they had prophesied or cast out demons. He simply said that “many will SAY...” to Him that they had done these things in His name.

Mat 8:11-12 I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- The “feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” is clearly a yet-future sense of the kingdom. It suggests to me an experience after Jesus’ Second Coming.

- The context is (Mat 8:5-10) Gentiles entering the kingdom by faith in Jesus (Mat 8:10, the Gentile centurion) in contrast to the Israelites(KJV: “the children of the kingdom”) being excluded for their refusal to believe in Jesus.

- Two groups appear here - (1) believing Gentiles in the kingdom and (2) unbelieving Jews being “thrown outside [of the kingdom], into the darkness.”

Mat 9:35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.

- Like Mat 4:23 - Jesus is seen “teaching ... preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing...” Again, healing is associated with the kingdom.

Mat 10:7-8 As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

- Once more, as with Jesus and John the Baptist, the message is: “The kingdom of heaven is near.”

- Some manifestations associated with the kingdom are: “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils” [KJV]. We are beginning to see a repeating pattern of the demonstration of God’s power being linked to His kingdom.

Mat 11:11-12 I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.

- Jesus certified that no one had yet lived who was greater than John the Baptist. Nevertheless, “he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” The “least” citizen of God’s kingdom is greater than the greatest citizen of earthly kingdoms.

- Don’t take a passive approach to this great theme of the kingdom of God. No! You must forcefully lay hold of it. You must press in to it. It is worthy of all your efforts to “lay hold” of God’s kingdom.

- Note: some commentators disagree with the above and believe that the “forceful men” are enemies of the kingdom - e.g., King Herod, antagonistic Jewish leaders, even demon spirits.

Mat 12:28 But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

- Once again, God’s power - here, in the exorcism of demons - is spoken of by Jesus as something that points to the presence in their midst of God’s kingdom.

- Here the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit is given as an evidence of the presence of the kingdom of God.

Mat 13:10-16 The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?” He replied, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to

you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. This is why I speak to them in parables: “Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: “‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’ But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.

- Some just hear the parables, the stories. Others hear and understand “the secrets of the kingdom of heaven.”

- Jesus tells us why some hear but don’t understand, see but don’t perceive (Mat 13:14). Jesus says it is because “this people’s HEART has become calloused” (Mat 13:15).

- “Calloused heart”? You will not know the “secrets of the kingdom of heaven.” By implication, the secrets will be known by those with sincere, obedient, God-seeking hearts.

- “The secrets of the kingdom” (Mat 13:11) - The Expositor’s Bible Commentary has an interesting note: “ ‘The mystery of the kingdom is the coming of the kingdom into history in advance of its apocalyptic manifestation’ ... That God would bring in His kingdom was no secret. All Jews looked forward to it. ‘The new truth, now given to men by revelation in the person and mission of Jesus, is that the kingdom which is to come finally in apocalyptic power, as foreseen by Daniel, has in fact entered into the world in advance in a hidden form to work secretly within and among men.’ [bold type mine]

Mat 13:18-23 Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

- (Mat 13:19) It is apparent that Jesus expects us to minister in such a way that people “hear the message about the kingdom.”

- For several listed reasons, the “message about the kingdom” doesn’t bear fruit in the hearer:

- (1) He doesn’t understand it, and the devil snatches it away from him.

- (2) Trouble or persecution cause him to fall away.

- (3) The message of the kingdom is choked by the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth.

- Those who hear and understand the kingdom message bear a crop - 100-, 60-, or 30-fold.

- Central to this portion of Scripture is the fact that “the message about the kingdom” receives a varied reception among different people.

- (Mat 13:19) God intends that “the message about the kingdom ... [be] sown in one’s heart.” The heart is where the kingdom will or will not be treasured.

- Similarly, the parallel in Luk 8:15 says that those who “produce a crop” are those who hear and retain the word of the kingdom “in a noble and good heart.”

- The “message about the kingdom” (Mat 13:19) must also be understood (Mat 13:23). Then it will yield an abundant crop.

Mat 13:24-30 Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ ‘An enemy did this,’ he replied. ‘The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ ‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

Mat 13:36-43 ...“Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.” He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

- This is a kingdom parable - (Mat 13:24) “The kingdom of heaven is like...”

- Jesus seeks to grow the kingdom of heaven by sowing good seed(i.e., people, “the sons of the kingdom”) in the world.

- The devil tries to thwart kingdom growth by sowing his people(“the sons of the evil one”) among the good seed.

- Jesus will leave his mixture of God’s people and the devil’s people together until the “end of the age.”

- Then He will have the angels harvest the world - casting the “weeds ... into the fiery furnace.” And the “good-seed” people of the kingdom will “shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

- In this Church Age the kingdom people (“good seed”) and the devil’s people (“weeds”) live mixed together. At the “end of the age” they will be divided.

- Here the division is clearly between two categories - 1) “the good seed ... the sons of the kingdom” and 2) “the weeds ... the sons of the evil one.”

- In this parable, the in-the-kingdom versus out-of-the-kingdom division is clearly between the saved and the lost (“sons of the evil one”).

- Remember, “kingdom” and “church” are not synonyms. This parable is not talking about good and evil people in the church, but rather in the broader kingdom of God on earth. Recall that Jesus said (Mat 13:3) that “the field is the world,” not the church. The world is the context of this kingdom parable.

- The kingdom-field, which is the world, is bigger than, not equal to or smaller than, the church.

- A related thought - that the “field is the world” is proof positive that the kingdom from the outset was intended to include Gentiles as well as Jews.

Mat 13:31-32 He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches.”

- The kingdom of heaven started seemingly small. As earlier verses said, it came into direct proximity to men and women with Jesus’ coming to earth.

- The kingdom is to be “planted.” It starts small, it grows, and it becomes large.

- It provides a safe roost for the birds of the air.

Mat 13:33 He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

- Again, the kingdom has seemingly small beginnings - typified by the small volume of yeast.

- But when “mixed” into this world, it will eventually “work through all the dough.”

Mat 13:44 The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

- The kingdom of heaven is like a “treasure.”

- Jesus said, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Mat 6:21). Man’s treasure and his heart will be collocated.

- The kingdom of heaven is to be treasured above all other treasures.

- Jesus said, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God...”(Mat 6:33, KJV).

- He expects us to “sell out” all else in pursuit of His kingdom.

Mat 13:45-46 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

- This is similar to the “treasure” kingdom parable.

- The kingdom is “of great value.”

- It is worth selling everything to acquire it.

Mat 13:47-50 Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- This kingdom parable leads right up to the Second Coming of Christ - [Mat 13:49] “the end of the age.”

- The kingdom net became “full” with two groups:

- (1) the “good fish” - “collected...in baskets”

- (2) the “bad fish” - thrown away

- At the end of the age, apparently not before, the angels will separate these two groups, here [Mat 13:49] called “the wicked” and “the righteous.”

- “The wicked” will be thrown “into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

- It is important to bear in mind here that Jesus has “delivered us from the wrath to come” (1Th 1:10). It would seem necessary to identify the “bad ... wicked” people of this kingdom parable as lost (unsaved) people. For all the redeemed have been delivered by Jesus from “the wrath to come,” which would surely include a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth like the “fiery furnace.”

- Further, in Mat 13:50 of this kingdom parable, the “wicked” are thrown “into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” This identical phrase is used in Mat 13:42, the parable of the weeds, to show the destination of “the sons of the evil one” (Mat 13:38).

Key point: These who end up weeping and gnashing their teeth in the fiery furnace are not believers who missed out on the kingdom, but are “sons of the evil one (Mat 13:38) ... the bad (Mat 13:48) ... the wicked (Mat 13:49).”

The “all who do evil” who are “weed[ed] out of His kingdom” (Mat 13:41) are the lost, the unsaved, the “SONS OF THE EVIL ONE (Mat 13:38) ... THEBAD (Mat 13:48) ... THE WICKED (Mat 13:49).” It is they who will end up “in the fiery furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Mat 13:51-52 “Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked. “Yes,” they replied. He said to them, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”

- There are numerous, often conflicting opinions among commentators about the meaning of these verses. I can’t resolve those. But some clear points emerge.

- Jesus wants us to “understand” kingdom principles.

- the precise identity in context of the “teacher of the law” is variously interpreted. But there is a clear, key point:

- The one “instructed about the kingdom of heaven” is expected to bring forth new treasures and old.
- This may refer to the greater understanding of God’s kingdom that the New Testament adds to the sparser teaching of the kingdom in the Old Testament.
- One point is clear: only Christian believers can teach “new treasures as well as old.” The unbelieving, Jewish teacher of the Law can only teach “the old.”

Mat 16:18-19 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

- The “building [of the] church” and the kingdom of heaven here seem to be associated.
- The church is people. The kingdom has to do with ruling, with reigning.
- There is binding and loosing authority given to leaders (such as Peter) in God’s kingdom.
- (see note above) We see God’s people (the church) reigning (the kingdom).

Mat 16:27-28 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

- The two verses taken together seem to indicate that at the Second Coming Jesus will “come in His kingdom.”
- That might suggest a final, realized fullness of the kingdom at His Second Coming.
- Jesus had already said at His First Coming that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mat 4:17, KJV).
- Yet He also told us (Mat 6:10, KJV) to pray, “Thy kingdom come,” indicating that there were aspects of the kingdom not yet realized at His First Coming.
- There are numerous, often conflicting, interpretations of the meaning of those who will “not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”
- At present, I have no definitive understanding of this phrase.

Mat 18:1-4 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

- Interesting - Jesus did imply (Mat 18:4) that there is such a thing as degrees of greatness in the kingdom.

- Remember, Jesus has already said in Mat 5:19 that there are those who “will be called least in the kingdom of heaven” and those who “will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”
- Humility (Mat 18:4) is needed for “greatness” in the kingdom.
- “Change” (Mat 18:3) is needed to enter the kingdom.
- “...never enter”! (Mat 18:3) - The person who does not “change and become like little children will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”
- Does this change-to-enter requirement refer to the changes associated with getting saved? Or does it refer to changes subsequent to getting saved?
- The King James phrase “except ye be converted” may suggest initial salvation.

Mat 18:23-35 Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. The servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”

- The essential message of this kingdom parable is our forgiving the brother who is indebted to us just as God has forgiven us our indebtedness.

Mat 19:12 For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.

- The previous context is celibacy versus marriage.
- The renunciation of marriage - by those “to whom it has been given” (Mat 19:11) - is seen as a positive choice in seeking the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 19:14 Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

- “...belongs to such as these” - Little children are an example of traits expected in those to whom the kingdom “belongs.”

- What those traits are is the subject of much commentary. Some suggestions are: humility, simple faith, and teachableness.

Mat 19:16-17; Mat 19:21-26 Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments." ... Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell 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." When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

- Interesting ... Jesus answered, "If you want to enter life, obey the commandments." The context was the rich man's question: "What good thing must I do to get eternal life?"

- In Mat 19:20, the man asked, "What do I still lack?" in the context of what he needed to do to enter life. That context is important, because neither his question nor Jesus' answer (Mat 19:21) were speaking of Christian perfection, but of what he still lacked to enter life.

- Jesus (Mat 19:21) identified the rich young man's specific problem as his unwillingness to part with his wealth.

- That may or may not be someone else's "lack."

- (Mat 19:23) Jesus said, "It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." Not impossible, but hard.

- The reason probably lies in the truth of Jesus' words elsewhere that one "cannot serve God and Mammon. "We can serve only one master - God or possessions - but not both.

- An important insight is seen here. A careful reading of the contextual flow of Mat 19:16-24 seems to show Jesus using the phrases "enter life" (Mat 19:17) and "enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mat 19:23) as meaning the SAME thing.

- To "enter life" in this Scripture portion means to "enter the kingdom of heaven."

- Mat 19:23-24 taken together are clear proof that the Bible terms "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" mean the same thing.

- The question in Mat 19:25 - "Who then can be saved?" - is asked in the context of "entering" the kingdom of heaven/God. The disciples (Mat 19:25) seemed to understand Jesus' teaching to be indicating an equivalence between getting/entering eternal life (Mat 19:16-17), entering the kingdom (Mat 19:23-24), and being saved (Mat 19:25). That is, entering eternal life = entering the kingdom = being saved.

Mat 20:1-16 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing

nothing. He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. "He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?' 'Because no one has hired us,' they answered. He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.' When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.' The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. 'These men who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.' But he answered one of them, 'Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?' So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

- This kingdom parable reveals kingdom principles:

- We don't "deserve" our rewards based on the amount of work we have done.
- The corollary idea is that the pay was distributed not by merit, but by free grace.
- Another kingdom principle clearly seen is the absolute sovereignty of the landowner (God).
- An overriding thought in Mat 20:1-16 parable is that rewards in the kingdom are not by works but by grace!

Mat 20:20-23 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. "What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom." "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."

- Mat 20:22 says "...in your kingdom." The parallel in Mark 10:37 reads "...in your glory." This parable is clearly referring to the visible kingdom established at Christ's Second Coming.

- The disciples' and their mother's error was in their wrong belief that status and position mattered in the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 21:28-32 "What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.' 'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go. Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered. Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him."

- In this kingdom parable the key was doing what his father wanted, which required repentance.
- In context this parable is spoken as a rebuke to the Jewish religious leaders (Mat 21:23).
- Mat 21:45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them.
- The Jewish leaders professed to obey God (Mat 21:30), but did not.
- The harlots and publicans (Mat 21:31) at first (in their lives and conduct) did not obey God, but later repented.
- Result? The repentant ones entered the kingdom "ahead of" the disobedient leaders.
- The required repentance (Mat 21:32) was related to "the way of righteousness."

Mat 21:33-45 Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time." Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?" Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed." When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them.

- Mat 21:45 makes it clear that in this kingdom parable Jesus was talking about "the chief priests and the Pharisees." In context, the Jewish leaders who rejected Jesus.
- The result of their rejection of Him? - "the kingdom of God will be taken away from [them]..."
- So in some sense they had had a claim to the kingdom in order for it to be "taken away" from them.
- One commentary (and perhaps others?) suggests that this taking away of the kingdom from them was God's removing from them of their Old Covenant privilege of mediating God's authority on earth among the chosen nation of Israel.
- (Mat 21:43) "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit."
- Those to whom the kingdom is given are expected to produce fruit ("its" refers to "the kingdom"). So there will be discernible evidence in the lives of people in the kingdom of God.

Mat 22:1-14 Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’ But they paid no attention and went off - one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how did you get in here without wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

•• Very important! - This cannot refer to a wedding banquet either (Mat 22:1) in heaven or (Mat 22:2) after the Lord's Second Coming. In those two scenarios there could not be:

• refusal to come (Mat 22:3) • paying no attention and going off (Mat 22:5) • those invited killing the master's servants (Mat 22:6)

•• No, to the contrary, whatever this wedding banquet precisely is, it must occur while men and women are still on earth with the ability to refuse or to disregard the Lord, or to kill His servants.

• “(Mat 22:8) The wedding banquet IS ready ... (Mat 22:4) everything IS ready. Come to the wedding banquet.” This is a wedding contemporary with a time when men and women can still refuse and disregard the Lord.

•• The invitation of people “both good and bad” (Mat 22:9-10) to attend the banquet again places this banquet in a time frame when the “good and bad” are still mixed together - that is, the Church Age, not the Millennium or later.

Mat 23:13 Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

•• The Jewish leaders themselves were not entering the kingdom of heaven. And they were preventing others from entering. How?

• The answer probably lies in Mat 22:41-46 in context with the woes of Mat 23:1-39 - that is, in their failure to see Jesus as the Christ.

• If so, the shutting out of and entering into the kingdom depend upon proper recognition of Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah.

Mat 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

- The kingdom message is indeed “good news.”

Mat 25:1-12 At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’ Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’ ‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’ But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others also came. ‘Sir! Sir!’ they said. ‘Open the door for us!’ But he replied, ‘I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.’

- This kingdom parable has numerous interpretations among Bible scholars. Two themes stand out to me.

(1) “The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet.” (Mat 25:10) Those not ready did not go into the wedding banquet.

(2) The one major difference between the wise and the foolish was, respectively, an abundant or a minimal supply of oil. The required readiness seemed to be linked to their supply of oil. Oil in the Bible is often, if not universally, a symbol of the Holy Spirit. If oil = the Holy Spirit, note that all ten had oil. The difference was in the abundance of oil or paucity thereof.

Mat 25:31-46 When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’ Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

•• The time frame is Jesus' Second Coming (Mat 25:31). At that time He makes a separation of the people of earth (Mat 25:32).

• Those whom He calls "cursed" He sends into "eternal fire" (Mat 25:41).

• Those whom He calls "blessed" are told to "take [their] inheritance, the kingdom" (Mat 25:34). The wording makes it clear that this is not the present, invisible "kingdom" that is "within" us (Luk 17:21). Rather, this is the visible, eternal kingdom, and here at the precise time of Christ's Second Coming, the redeemed are told to "take your inheritance, the kingdom."

•• Note that the "eternal fire" (Mat 25:41) punishment (Mat 25:46) of the lost, the "cursed," the "goats," is just as "eternal" as is the "eternal life" of the righteous (Mat 25:46). Both instances of "eternal" in this verse are the same Greek word.

• Those who inherit the kingdom inherit it eternally.

• Those who do not inherit the kingdom are excluded from it in punishment in fire that lasts eternally.

• Christ's teaching here leaves no room for a temporary place of purging fire for the redeemed - such as the Catholic Purgatory - prior to entering the Lord's presence for eternity. No, but rather Christ gives us only two alternatives:

1) eternal inheritance of the kingdom for the "sheep," the "blessed," "the righteous" (Mat 25:46), or...

2) eternal punishment (Mat 25:46) in eternal fire (Mat 25:41) for the "cursed," the "goats."

Mat 26:27-29 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

•• The Lord's Supper, among other truths, points ahead to the coming kingdom.

•• 1Co 11:26 declares: "Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

• This verse, coupled with our Matthew text, tells us that we, Christ's disciples, will celebrate communion throughout this Church Age, but Jesus will not celebrate it with us "until He comes." His coming, then, seems to be equated (Mat 26:29) with the visible establishment of His "Father's kingdom."

Mark 1:14-15 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

•• In the Mat 4:17 parallel the themes of repentance and the nearness of the kingdom are declared by Jesus.

- In Mark's account Jesus is seen also to emphasize faith towards the kingdom message - "Repent and believe..."

Mark 4:10-13 When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, 'they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!'" Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?"

- See notes on Mat 13:10-16.

- (Mark 4:13) "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?" This is interpreted by some as Jesus making this the key, central parable to understanding all others. Perhaps, but another quite plausible interpretation is offered in The Expositor's Bible Commentary: "There is a slight rebuke in Jesus' statement. The implication is that the meaning of the parable of the sower was clear and understandable. If the disciples could not understand this clear parable, how could they understand more obscure ones?"

Mark 4:26-29 He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain - first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

- Follow the agricultural process - first, the sowing of seed in the ground ... then a quiet, invisible period of no discernible growth ... then the seed sprouts and grows ... finally it matures and is harvested.

- "This is what the kingdom of God is like" - • It starts with the sowing of seed. Other parables show that "seed" can refer to:

- people, "the sons of the kingdom" (Mat 13:38), or • the "word of God" (Luk 8:11) • So the kingdom of God involves God's word and God's people being "sown" in the world.

- "This is what the kingdom of God is like" -

- It has quiet, invisible beginnings (like the seed in the earth), followed by growth unto maturity, leading to a harvest.

Mark 4:30-32 Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade."

- See comments on parallel in Mat 13:31-32.

Mark 9:1 And he said to them, "I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power."

- See comments on the parallel in Mat 16:27-28.

- Note one difference - in the Matthew account it reads “will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.” In Mark’s account it reads “will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.”

- So in both accounts it is made clear that some of them would not taste death before some powerful “coming” of Jesus and His kingdom. This kingdom “coming” must have already occurred from our perspective in time, since all His listeners are now dead. Diverse interpretations of this passage abound!

Mark 9:43-48 If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where ‘their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’

- A careful reading of the parallel Mark 9:45 and Mark 9:47 will show that the phrases “enter life” and “enter the kingdom of God” mean one and the same thing.

- The opposite of entering life (Mark 9:45) is being “thrown into hell [Gehenna].” The opposite of entering the kingdom of God (Mark 9:47) is exactly the same - that is, being “thrown into hell [Gehenna].”

- The parallelism of Mark 9:45, Mark 9:47 leads to this conclusion:

- We will enter “life/the kingdom of God” OR we will be thrown into “hell/Gehenna.”

- Entering the kingdom and entering life mean the same thing. The alternative is being thrown into hell.

- We either enter eternal life [Mark 9:45] (= entering the kingdom of God [Mark 9:47]) or we enter eternal punishment- (Mat 25:46 “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life”).

- Mat 19:16-24 displays this same use of the phrases “enter life” and “enter the kingdom of heaven/God” as synonymous. To “ENTER” life is to “ENTER” the kingdom.

Mark 10:13-15 People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”

- See comments on the parallel in Mat 19:14.

- An interesting note: in the parallel passage in Luk 18:15, the “people were ... bringing babies...”

- The Expositor’s Bible Commentary (p. 713) has an interesting comment: “The point of comparison is not so much the innocence and humility of children (for children are not invariably either innocent or humble): it is rather the fact that children are unselfconscious, receptive, and

content to be dependent on others' care and bounty; it is in such a spirit that the kingdom of God must be 'received' - it is a gift of God, and not an achievement on the part of man; it must be simply accepted, inasmuch as it can never be deserved."

Mark 10:22-25 At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "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."

- See comments on the parallel in Mat 19:16-24.

Mark 10:25-26 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." The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?"

- The disciples' response is interesting - they equated entering the kingdom (Mark 10:25) with "being saved" (Mark 10:26).

Mark 12:32-34 a "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

- The teacher of the Law had penetrated through the 600+ commands of the Law to discern the most important one - to love God with all that is in us.

- Jesus commended him for his insight by saying that he was "not far from the kingdom of God."

Mark 14:24-25 "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. "I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God."

- Clearly referring to a future sense of the coming of the kingdom of God.

Mark 15:43 Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body.

- Even honorable pre-new-birth Jews understood that there was a coming kingdom of God. They were anticipating it and "waiting for" it.

Luk 1:31-33 You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.

- It is "his [Christ's] kingdom."

- It will be a never-ending kingdom.

- The kingdom has to do with Jesus Christ reigning (Luk 1:33).

- The kingdom is not a physical place, but a realm of the sovereign rule of Christ.
- That the kingdom is not a physical place is clear in Jesus' words: (Luk 17:20-21) "The kingdom of God does not come visibly, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."
- This verse from Luk 20:1-47, along with the declaration in Luk 1:33 above that Christ will "reign...[in] His kingdom" again affirm that the kingdom is a matter of reign, not of location.

Luk 4:42-43 At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. But he said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent."

- Jesus declares that "why [He] was sent" was to "preach the good news of the kingdom of God."

Luk 6:20 Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."

- Here the kingdom is said to be for the "poor." In the Mat 5:3 parallel the kingdom is said to be for the "poor in spirit."

- In either case, the poverty suggests a dependency on God.

- Again here, as in Matthew's account, Jesus used the present tense - "yours IS the kingdom..."

Luk 7:28 I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

- Remember, John the Baptist came in advance of the kingdom of God - (Luk 16:16) "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached..."

- As great as pre-kingdom John was, it is "greater ... [to be] in the kingdom of God."

Luk 8:1 After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him.

- As in Luk 4:43, the preaching of the good news of the kingdom of God was a central ministry for Jesus.

- It is said that "the Twelve were with him", and they undoubtedly picked up on the urgency to Jesus of the kingdom message.

Luk 8:9-10 His disciples asked him what this parable meant. "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, "though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.' "

- See notes on the parallel in Mat 13:10-16 and Mark 4:10-13.

- Note the parallel in Mark 4:11-12 : "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, 'they may be ever seeing but never

perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!”

- Harmonizing the accounts of Mark and Luke, we see that the contrast is between “you” (Jesus’ believing disciples) and “others [Luke] ... those on the outside[Mark]”, who have not been “forgiven” [Mark].

- The secrets of the kingdom are revealed to believers and hidden from those who choose not to believe and remain “on the outside...[not] forgiven.”

- Jesus is not teaching that some believers get the revelation of the kingdom and other believers are not allowed to get it. Jesus is teaching that those who do not hear and understand the kingdom are “those on the outside,” who do not enter among the “forgiven.” They are not saved.

Luk 9:1-2 When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

- Again, the kingdom of God is linked with supernatural power and authority - here, exorcisms and healings.

Luk 9:11 ...but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

- Once more, an association of healing and the kingdom of God.

Luk 9:27 “I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.”

- See notes on the parallels in Mat 16:27-28 and Mark 9:1. Scholars offer many and varied interpretations of this verse.

Luk 9:59-60 He said to another man, “Follow me.” But the man replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

- This scenario underscores the very high priority the kingdom must occupy in our lives.

- “The dead” who were to bury their own dead are obviously biologically alive, or they couldn’t do any burying. So the reference is probably to their being spiritually dead. If so, this would be another illustration of kingdom people as believers and non-kingdom people as unbelievers.

Luk 9:61-62 Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-by to my family.” Jesus replied, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

- Again, as just above, the kingdom is to be a highest priority to God’s people.

Luk 10:8-12 “When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you.’ But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.’ I tell you, it will be more

bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.”

- Again, healing is an evidence of the kingdom - “Heal the sick...and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you.’ “

- The comparison to Sodom’s judgment shows how disastrously fatal it is to reject the kingdom of God, remembering that the kingdom of God is the reign of God. To their own judgment, many will reject God’s rule over them.

Luk 11:1-2 One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.” He said to them, “When you pray, say: “‘Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.”

- As noted in the Mat 6:9-10 parallel, the kingdom is an issue for fervent prayer.

- As in Matthew, “Your kingdom come” - to be prayed by all Christians throughout the Church Age - suggests that the fullness of the kingdom is yet future.

Luk 11:20 But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.

- As in Mat 12:28, the exorcism of demons is shown to be an evidence of the present reality of the kingdom of God, manifested in the person and ministry of Jesus.

Luk 12:29-31 And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

- This seems to be a shortened version of Mat 6:31-33 (see notes on those verses).

Luk 12:32 Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.

- “...pleased to give you the kingdom” - As with the concept of salvation, the kingdom is “given”, not earned by works.

Luk 13:18-19 Then Jesus asked, “What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air perched in its branches.”

- See notes on Mat 13:31-32.

- Again, there is an emphasis on the power of the kingdom to grow.

Luk 13:20-21 Again he asked, “What shall I compare the kingdom of God to? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

- Similar to the parallel in Mat 13:33.

Luk 13:23-30 Someone asked him, “Lord, are only a few people going to be **SAVED?**” He said to them, “Make every effort to **ENTER** through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us.’ “But he will answer, ‘I don’t know

you or where you come from.’ “Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’ “But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’ “There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the KINGDOM of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the KINGDOM of God. Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.”

- This is a kingdom parable, concerning “entering” the kingdom (Luk 13:24, Luk 13:28-29). Jesus taught it in reply to their question concerning being “saved” (Luk 13:23). Jesus elaborated on “entering...the kingdom” as being the equivalent of being “saved.”

- The “weeping there, and gnashing of teeth” (Luk 13:28) occurs among those who are NOT “SAVED” (Luk 13:23) - that is, those who are excluded from the kingdom by the closed narrow door (Luk 13:24).

- This is the clear context - that is, those who are excluded from the kingdom are those who are NOT SAVED (Luk 13:23).

- The “weeping and gnashing of teeth” by those who are NOT SAVED = EXCLUDED from the kingdom should be factored in to any interpretations of weeping and gnashing of teeth elsewhere. For example:

- Mat 8:10-12 where, in contrast to the faith-demonstrating Gentile centurion, the unbelieving Jews will be cast into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- Mat 13:37-43 where the “sons of the kingdom” are contrasted with the “sons of the evil one.” The latter will be “weed[ed] out of his kingdom ... [and He] will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mat 13:41-42).”

- Mat 13:47-50, the kingdom parable of the net full of fish. The contrast is between the “good [and] bad” fish (Mat 13:48), the “wicked [and] the righteous” (Mat 13:49). The “bad ... the wicked” are thrown “into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”(Mat 13:50).

- Mat 22:2-13, the kingdom parable of the wedding banquet. The man without the wedding clothes (Mat 22:12) was thrown “outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mat 22:13). Many commentators hold the wedding clothes to be the garment of God’s imputed righteousness given to the saved. This would be an interpretation consistent with the previous passages above.

- Mat 24:48-51, the parable of the “wicked” (Mat 24:48) servant. He is “cut to pieces” and assigned to a place of “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mat 24:51). The context seems to me to be clearly an unsaved man incurring the wrath of God (“cut to pieces”), who is doing the “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mat 24:42).

- In Mat 25:30 it is a “worthless servant [cast] into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” “Worthless” is not the type of adjective God uses for His redeemed people.

- In sum, merging all the above verses, there seems to be a consistent teaching here about those who are the ones doing the “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” They are the UNSAVED (Luk 13:23)

= those who have not “entered...the kingdom” (Luk 13:24; Luk 13:28-29) = those without faith in Jesus (Mat 8:10-12) = the “sons of the evil one” (Mat 13:37-43) = the “bad ... the wicked”(Mat 13:47-50) = the man without the wedding clothes (Mat 22:2-13) = the “wicked ... [servant] cut to pieces” (Mat 24:48-51) = the “worthless” servant (Mat 25:30).

- The common denominator in these parables is that they are various ways of describing those who end up in “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” This large list of negative phrases all describe the UNSAVED (Luk 13:23) who do NOT ENTER the kingdom (Luk 13:24; Luk 13:28-29).

Luk 14:15-24 When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, “Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.” Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ “But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’ “Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’ “Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’ “The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’ “‘Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’ “Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.’”

- See comments on a similar parable in Mat 22:1-14.

- Jesus does not interpret the parable for us, but many have seen in it a reference to the rejection of the Gospel by Jews as a whole and the acceptance of it by Gentiles.

Luk 16:16 The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.

- See the comments on Mat 11:12.

- Jesus makes a clear distinction between the time of “the Law and the Prophets” and the time of “the kingdom of God.”

- The expression “everyone is forcing his way into it” is variously interpreted. One common interpretation is that it refers to people making diligent efforts to enter the kingdom of God in all its fullness.

Luk 17:20-21 Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The kingdom of God does not come visibly[NIV version ©1978], nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you [NIV margin: among you)].”

- Jesus answers the question about the timing of the kingdom’s coming by saying two main things:

1) It “does not come visibly” or [KJV] “not with observation” or [KJV margin] not “with outward show.”

2) The “kingdom of God is within you [NIV margin: “among you”].” At the time of Jesus’ speaking, God’s kingdom was already present, but was “within” or “among” them, but not so much in visible, outwardly demonstrated form.

Luk 18:16-17 But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”

- See comments on Mat 19:14 and Mark 10:13-15.

- To “enter” the kingdom we must “receive [it] like a little child.” Interpretations of those childlike attitudes and traits abound - among them, trust, openness, and the absence of holier-than-thou attitudes.

Luk 18:18-27 A certain ruler asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good - except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.’” “All these I have kept since I was a boy,” he said. When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth. Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” Those who heard this asked, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus replied, “What is impossible with men is possible with God.”

- See comments also on Mat 19:16-26 and Mark 10:25-26.

- As in the Matthew and Mark accounts of this incident, in Luke’s account also there seems to be a clear equating of inheriting “eternal life” (Luk 18:18) with “enter[ing] the kingdom” (Luk 18:24-25) and “be[ing] saved” (Luk 18:26). That is, to be saved is to inherit eternal life is to enter the kingdom.

Luk 18:28-30 Peter said to him, “We have left all we had to follow you!” “I tell you the truth,” Jesus said to them, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life.”

- The highest priority - God’s kingdom! Even above home and family.

- Matthew, Mark, and Luke give us a variety of insights in the three parallels concerning good motives for “leaving” these other priorities:

- Luke: “for the sake of the kingdom”

- Matthew (Mat 19:29): “for my [Jesus’] sake”

- Mark (Mark 10:29): “for me [Jesus] and the gospel”

- Jesus teaches here that those who prioritize the kingdom first will receive abundant blessings both in this life and in eternity.

Luk 19:11-27 While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.' "But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' "He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it. "The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' "Well done, my good servant!" his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' "The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' "His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.' "Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.' "His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?' "Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.' "Sir," they said, 'he already has ten!' "He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away. But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them - bring them here and kill them in front of me.'"

- Jesus resolves the question of whether the kingdom of God would "appear at once." The answer (Luk 19:12) is no. Rather, "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return." Jesus indicated that there would be an interval of time before His return.
- Jesus also speaks of the importance of His disciples actively doing the King's work while the King is away - (Luk 19:13) 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.'
- In this "kingdom" parable (Luk 19:11), the enemies of the King are said (Luk 19:27) to be those "who did not want me to be king over them. "They were ordered to be killed in His sight.
- The king had "his servants" (Luk 19:13). One of them turned out to be a "wicked servant" (Luk 19:22). When the king came back, this servant suffered loss (Luk 19:24), but he was not among the enemies of the king who were ordered to be killed (Luk 19:27).

Luk 21:29-31 He told them this parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

- The context is Luk 21:1-38 as a whole. It is a chapter in which many signs of the end are revealed. The point is simply stated that as the signs are being fulfilled in the earth, we can know that "the kingdom of God is near" (Luk 21:31). In context, that is clearly speaking of the coming of the visible kingdom.

Luk 22:15-18 And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God. After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

- See comments on Mat 26:27-29 and Mark 14:25-26. Luke specifically speaks of Passover "find[ing] fulfillment in the kingdom of God" - referring apparently to the coming visible kingdom.

Luk 22:28-30 You are those who have stood by me in my trials. [29] And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, [30] so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

- The future Messianic kingdom is in mind, where they will eat and drink at Christ's table in His kingdom.

- There may be a link between their faithfulness to stand by Jesus in His trials (Luk 22:28) and His conferring on them a kingdom.

- In that kingdom the faithful apostles (clearly minus Judas) will sit as judges over the twelve tribes.

Luk 23:42-43 Then [the repentant thief] said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

- Interesting - Jesus seemed to make a link between His "com[ing]into [His] kingdom" (Luk 23:42) with His expectation to be "today...in paradise" (Luk 23:43).

Luk 23:51 ...[Joseph] had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he was waiting for the kingdom of God.

- Joseph of Arimathea "was waiting for the kingdom of God, "reflecting the Messianic hopes of devout Jews.

John 3:1-8 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

- Jesus told Nicodemus that to "see (John 3:3) ... [or] enter (John 3:5) the kingdom of God," a person must be "born again" (John 3:3), he must be "born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5). Jesus elaborated in verse six that He is referring to the necessity of a Holy Spirit-given birth.

- So being "born again" by the Spirit seems to be the prerequisite for "enter[ing]" the kingdom of God. This would be in marked contrast to Nicodemus's certain belief as a teacher of Israel (John

3:10) that one is commended to God by one's righteous works.

- Jesus, knowing full well what this preeminent Jew would have believed concerning righteous works of the Law, stated that no one could see or enter the kingdom of God without the new birth of the Spirit.

- In his commentary on this Gospel, F.F. Bruce writes: "To a Jew with Nicodemus's upbringing, seeing the kingdom of God would mean participation in the age to come, the resurrection life. In this Gospel as in the others 'the kingdom of God' in this sense is interchangeable with 'eternal life' (compare 'to enter life' in Mark 9:43; Mark 9:45, with 'to enter the kingdom of God' in Mark 9:47)."

John 18:36-37 Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

- Jesus asserts that His is not an earthly kingdom, but is "from another place," certainly referring to heaven.

- In verse 37 Jesus confirmed His kingship - "You are right in saying I am a king." Kingdoms have a king.

Acts 1:3 After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

- "After His suffering" and resurrection, Jesus continued to articulate His frequent message "about the kingdom of God."

- In this post-resurrection era, so should we!

Acts 1:6-7 So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.

- Seemingly, even after His resurrection Jesus' close disciples were still expecting and hoping for an immediate establishment of God's theocratic rule.

- Jesus in essence told them to leave the timing of that up to God.

Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

- Again, the urgency of preaching the kingdom message.

Acts 14:21-22 They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.

- Entering the kingdom of God will include “many hardships. ”Therefore, the apostles exhorted the disciples “to remain true to the faith.”

Acts 19:8 Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God.

- The kingdom of God continued to be a major theme of apostolic preaching.

Acts 20:25 “Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again.”

- Same as comments on previous verse.

Acts 28:23 They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.

- Paul was strongly moved to deliver an extensive sermon about the kingdom of God to the Jewish leaders in Rome.

Acts 28:30-31 For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Acts closes with the bold preaching of the kingdom of God in the major city (Rome) of the Gentile nations. Again and again, as here, we see the linkage of the kingdom message with “the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Rom 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

- The kingdom of God is not a matter of externals - here, “eating and drinking.”

- The kingdom, rather, is a matter of spiritual issues -“righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

1Co 4:19-20 But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.

- Another contrast:

- what the kingdom is not: “a matter of talk”

- what the kingdom is: “a matter ... of power”

- There is power in the kingdom because of the power of our heavenly King.

1Co 6:9-11 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will

inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

- A sober warning for all - "the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God." Wickedness is not compatible with God's kingdom.

- The solution to being excluded from the kingdom for wickedness (9-10) is to be "washed ... sanctified ... justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1Co 6:11).

1Co 15:23-24 But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

- After His coming (1Co 15:23), when "the end will come" (1Co 15:24), Jesus will hand the kingdom over to God the Father.

1Co 15:50-52 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed - in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

- The natural body that we now live in "cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1Co 15:50). It must first "be changed" (1Co 15:51), be resurrected (1Co 15:52) and changed into an immortal body (the following verses).

Gal 5:19-21 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

- This is a similar warning to Paul's statement in 1Co 6:9-10 that the wicked (here, "those who live like this") will "not inherit the kingdom of God."

- There is no place in God's kingdom for those who willingly choose to continue to live ungodly lives.

Eph 5:5-6 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person - such a man is an idolater - has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

- "The kingdom" is that of Christ and of God the Father. It is the same kingdom (singular). Both of them are co-regents.

- The wrath of God and exclusion from the kingdom are the final lot of those who remain "immoral, impure, or greedy." These are typical examples of the conduct of "the wicked [who] will not inherit the kingdom of God" (1Co 6:9-10, studied earlier).

Col 1:12-14 ...giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

- The “kingdom of light” (Col 1:12) and the “kingdom of the Son” (Col 1:13) appear to be synonymous expressions.

- Col 1:13 shows God as having delivered us (KJV) from the devil’s dominion into the Son’s kingdom. Every person alive right now lives in two of the three kingdoms: (1) an earthly, geographically defined “kingdom,” i.e., America, Canada, France, etc.; and (2) a spiritual kingdom - either (a) God’s or (b) the devil’s.

- Col 1:13-14 say that Jesus Christ “redeems” us, forgives our sins, and brings us “into the kingdom of the Son.” Our initial entrance “into” the Lord’s kingdom seems to be at the point of our salvation, when we are born again, redeemed, and forgiven our sins.

- The Expositor’s Bible Commentary (p. 179) has an illuminating comment on the Greek grammar concerning God having “qualified” believers “to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light” - “The tense of the verb is aorist, pointing to the time of the Colossians’ conversion. The suggestion is that the qualifying is not a process but an instantaneous act.”

- This seems to speak of an instantaneous entrance into the spiritual kingdom, not a progressive one. The verb tense speaks of a point-in-time qualifying for the kingdom, not the sense of “we are being qualified.”

Col 4:11 Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me.

- “Workers for the kingdom” - remember the pearl of great price. It is worth selling out all else for the sake of the kingdom.

1Th 2:12 ...encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

- The call into God’s kingdom should motivate us to “live lives worthy of God.”

2Th 1:4-5 Therefore, among God’s churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. All this is evidence that God’s judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.

- “Perseverance and faith” while undergoing “persecutions and trials” gain for us a great benefit - “as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.”

- Christians may be called to suffer for God’s kingdom(2Th 1:5).

- The response to such suffering that God counts as “worthy” is “perseverance and faith.”

- These verses are reminiscent of the words of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14:22 - “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.”

2Ti 4:1-2 a In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word.

- “Preach the Word,” get the Word out! Why? Because of the Christian’s passionate awareness of “[Christ’s] appearing and his kingdom.”

- The King is coming! Tell them about the King!

2Ti 4:18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

- “His heavenly kingdom” is probably a rephrasing of the more common “kingdom of heaven.”

- In light of his choice of tenses, Paul seems to have in mind the future sense of God’s kingdom, not its present reality within believers - “The Lord ... will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom.”

Heb 1:8 But about the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.

- This quote from Psa 45:6 says some important things “about the Son,” about Jesus Christ:

- He is addressed by God the Father in the words, “O God.” This is a powerful proof of Jesus’ Deity.

- Jesus is said to have a “throne.” This speaks of royalty, sovereignty, leadership.

- Jesus is said to have a “kingdom.” The King on His throne rules over His kingdom.

- “Righteousness” is said to characterize Christ’s kingdom.

Heb 12:28-29 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our “God is a consuming fire.”

- In contrast to transient earthly kingdoms - e.g., ancient Babylon, Assyria, Egypt, Rome, etc. - the kingdom of God “cannot be shaken.”

- For that reason, we who “are receiving [this] kingdom” should feel a sense of gratitude and a motivation to worship such an omnipotent King (the Regent of the kingdom).

Jas 2:5-7 Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?

- Several things are said about those who “inherit the kingdom” - • They are “chosen” by God (Jas 2:5).

- They are often those who are “poor in the eyes of the world” (Jas 2:5).

- But they are “rich in faith” (Jas 2:5). Faith is inseparably tied to “inherit[ing] the kingdom.”

- They love God (Jas 2:5).

2Pe 1:9-11 But if anyone does not have [the aforementioned godly qualities], he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior

Jesus Christ.

- Here, the future eternal kingdom is clearly in mind - "you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom."

- The "welcome into the eternal kingdom" will come in the context of the citizen of the kingdom having been "cleansed from his past sins."

- These verses make a strong statement that those entering the kingdom are expected to possess the qualities listed in 2Pe 1:5-7 : faith ... goodness ... knowledge ... self-control ... perseverance ... godliness ... brotherly kindness ... love.

Rev 1:5-6 ...and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father - to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

- Jesus is identified as "the ruler of the kings of the earth." God the Father has purposed to put all things under Jesus' feet (1Co 15:24-27).

- There seems to be a flow of thought: (Rev 1:5) Jesus has "freed us from our sins by his blood" and (Rev 1:6) by so doing He "has made us to be a kingdom..."

- Interestingly, the words used here are not "entering" or "inheriting" the kingdom, but BEING a kingdom to serve God. I suggest an analogy here -

- When a person is born again, he or she enters into the family of God. But that person also becomes PART OF the family of God (see 1Co 6:18; also 1Pe 4:17).

- Likewise, when a person is born again and has his sins washed away by Jesus' blood (Rev 1:5), he is not only brought "into the kingdom" (Col 1:13), but he also becomes PART OF the kingdom (Rev 1:6).

Rev 1:9 I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

- Associated with the kingdom are suffering and the need for patient endurance. These three things - suffering, the kingdom, and patient endurance - are "ours in Jesus."

Rev 5:9-10 And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

- Similar to Rev 1:5-6, just studied above. Jesus redeemed us by His blood and made us "to be a kingdom ... [that] will reign on the earth."

Rev 11:15 The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

KJV: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ."

- As the end-time events of the Revelation unfold, we see a power shift. Power once wielded by earthly kings and rulers is taken from them and exercised entirely by God the Father and Jesus His Son. This transition is fully finalized in Rev 19:1-21, at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to earth.

Rev 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

- Satan is cast from heaven after a mighty battle with Michael and his angels (Rev 12:7-9). This is a great milestone in the imminent realization of the eternal aspects of the kingdom - "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ."

Conclusion: The word "kingdom" is not repeated in the final two chapters of Revelation. But in these final two Bible chapters, the Second Coming of Christ is now past. And we see the Father and Son established "on the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev 22:1-5). Saved men and women live in the direct presence of God "for ever and ever."

Postscript: Dr. Tom Roselius offers an in-depth look at the kingdom of heaven. He offers some profound insights on the "within you" aspects of the kingdom, along with some ponderings about the kingdom in the end times that challenge some traditional interpretations. His study may be found at "Kingdom of God/Kingdom of Heaven: Then and Now".

S. Only One Way to God:

Only One Way to God:

Only One Savior, Jesus Christ

by Pastor Jim Feeney, Ph.D.

Summary: You hear people say, “All roads lead to God.” However, the bible exposes this as a tragic error that is leading millions to eternity in hell. By contrast, numerous Scriptures plainly declare that the one and only way to God is through the Savior, Jesus Christ. Let’s see what the bible clearly teaches about the one way to salvation — Jesus Christ!

Acts 16:30-31, KJV ...Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

- The apostle Paul was asked by the Philippian jail keeper, “What must I do to be saved?” Paul’s immediate response was to exhort the jailer to “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” and he would be saved.
- Paul did not offer or suggest multiple roads to God. He set forth Jesus Christ as the pathway to salvation.
- Jesus Himself stated this same truth, as the next Scripture shows.

John 14:6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

- The way, the truth, the life! Not “a way”.
- Not one of many ways to God, but “the way” (singular).
- “I [Jesus] am the way ... to the Father.”
- One can dismiss Jesus’ statement, to one’s eternal peril.
- Or one can accept Jesus as declaring an all-important truth — that is, that He and He alone is the pathway for men and women to come to God.
- Jesus did not allow for other avenues to salvation. He plainly said that “no one comes to the Father except through Me.”
- The apostle Peter joined Jesus and the apostle Paul in declaring the one and only way to salvation, as the following verses show.

Acts 4:10; Acts 4:12 [The apostle Peter said] 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.”

- Peter’s words are unequivocally clear: “Salvation is found in no one else [than Jesus Christ, Acts 4:10].”

- Not in good works, not in good intentions, not in trying hard. Sadly, millions of people have fallen for the error that says our good works will surely earn us a place in heaven. But the Bible clearly indicates that God’s “great salvation” is by the Lord’s grace, not by our good works.

- Eph 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.

- Tit 3:5, KJV Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.

- Likewise, Peter asserted that no other living being — past, present, or future — could lead us to God and to salvation. He said, “There is no other name [than Jesus’ name, vs. 10] ... by which we must be saved.”

- Great men like Abraham, Moses, Paul, and Peter cannot save us.

- The heroes of other religions — Buddha, Muhammad, Joseph Smith, etc. — certainly cannot save us.

- Only Jesus Christ the Son of God can save us and bring us to God.

- Let’s examine in the following verses a variety of insights into our main theme — that is, that Jesus Christ is the one and only way to God and to eternal salvation. First, let’s look at some of the insights offered by the apostle Paul.

Eph 2:17-18 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him [Jesus] we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

- Paul states succinctly that it is through Jesus that both Jew and Gentile “have access to the Father”.

- Jesus came from God the Father in heaven to earth (John 1:14; John 16:28).

- And now it is through Jesus — and His death, burial, and resurrection — that we have been provided access to God the Father in heaven.

1Co 2:1-2 When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

- The Book of Acts relates the story of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:1-22), now known to us as Paul the apostle. This persecutor of the early church had failed to find salvation in his strict adherence to Judaism. Then he found salvation, eternal life, and peace with God through his new faith in Jesus Christ.

- Thereafter Paul had one dominant message — “Jesus Christ and Him crucified”!

- Paul preached Jesus Christ as Savior — Jesus, who had died for our sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day. That, he said, was “the Gospel”, the Good News (1Co 15:1-4). To offer any other savior, or way of salvation, is bad news!

1Co 3:11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

- Too many people in this world try to lay some other foundation for salvation — for example, the doing of good works; living a decent, honorable life; going to church, etc. These are certainly good things to do, but they are not the foundation for salvation.

- “No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Jesus and Jesus alone is the only foundation for our salvation. He alone is the Rock upon which we can take our eternal stand. As the hymn says, “All other ground is sinking sand.”

1Ti 2:3-6 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men...

- Paul writes to young Pastor Timothy that the only mediator between God and man is the Son of God, who came to earth and became man for us, that is, Jesus Christ. He is the only mediator, the only go-between between lost sinners and a holy God.

- Now let’s examine a number of very clear Scriptural declarations by the apostle John of the unique place Jesus occupies in the salvation of our souls.

John 3:16-18; John 3:36 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.... Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.

- John 3:16 is among the bible’s most famous verses. It promises eternal life to those who come in faith to Jesus. But John 3:18 and John 3:36 add some important warnings.

- John 3:18 — “Whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” To reject Jesus is to incur God’s condemnation.

- John 3:36 — Eternal life is mentioned again as the reward for those who come in faith to Jesus. But we read the dire warning: “Whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.” It is a fatal decision to reject God’s only provision for salvation, Jesus Christ.

John 6:66-68 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

- At a time when some of Jesus’ disciples were leaving Him, Peter spoke words of wisdom for seekers of all generations: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” Peter knew that there was no other source, no other words, no other avenue that led to salvation than the words of truth that Jesus spoke about Himself and God the Father.

John 8:23-24 But he continued, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am [the one I claim to be], you will indeed die in your sins."

- In contrast to all other men, including His own apostles, Jesus asserted, "I am from above." His origin, His rightful place, and His current place of enthronement, is heaven itself.

- That being said, Jesus warned His hearers that if they did not believe in Him and in His words, they would die in their sins. Again, He was making a clear, unequivocal statement that it was through Him alone that we would be saved from our sins.

1Jn 2:1-2 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

- Who speaks to the Father in defense of us sinners? Jesus Christ!

- Who is the "atoning sacrifice for our sins"? Again, Jesus.

- The Bible declares us all guilty sinners (Rom 3:23). What remedy has God provided for that? Only one — "We have one who speaks to the Father in our defense — Jesus Christ."

1Jn 4:14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

- All roads do not lead to God. It is God, not man, who has the right to determine how lost sinners will have their relationship established with Him. And He has determined that His Son Jesus will be that divine provision for our salvation.

- "The Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world."

1Jn 2:23 No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

- John echoes Jesus' words that He, Jesus, is the only way to God the Father. He declares in no uncertain terms that "no one who denies the Son has the Father".

1Jn 5:11-12 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

- It is wonderful to find eternal "life in His Son."

- It is an eternal disaster to look elsewhere for salvation, for "he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." In closing this bible study, let's look at two final Scripture portions, both from the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews.

Heb 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

- Why is Jesus the one and only way to God? Because it is Jesus God's Son who was chosen by God to "taste death for everyone."

- As Paul wrote, it is Good News (“gospel”) that “Christ died for our sins” (1Co 15:3) and “was raised to life for our justification” (Rom 4:25).

- We serve a crucified and risen Savior, the only one God has ever appointed to such a glorious task.

Heb 9:27-28 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

- This same crucified, risen, exalted and only Savior Jesus Christ “will appear a second time ... to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him.”

- Are you waiting for Him as Savior? Or have you fallen for the eternally fatal deception, “All roads lead to God”?

- Jesus is waiting warmly, graciously, and openly today for you to come to Him for salvation. Believe in Him as the crucified and risen Son of God. Bring your sins to Him in sincere sorrow for forgiveness. And experience His welcoming you into the family of God and into the sure hope of spending an indescribably glorious eternity with Him and with God the Father.

S. Slain In the Spirit” | Holy Laughter | “Falling Out

“Slain In the Spirit” | Holy Laughter | “Falling Out”

Should We Join the Laughing and Falling Revival?

by Pastor Jim Feeney, Ph.D.

Summary: I first preached this sermon as a response to a movement in North American churches in the early 1990s. It featured what was called “holy laughter” and “falling out” (or being “slain in the Spirit”). I investigated these phenomena both in person and in the Scriptures. I found much excess and very little Scriptural support for the often bizarre activities of the movement. This 1995 sermon summarized my findings. Holy laughter, “falling out,” and being “slain in the Spirit” as an identifiable movement have mostly died out today (2006). However, although the broad movement fell out of favor fairly soon, these manifestations persist in many individual churches to this day.

Eze 33:7 Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them WARNING from me.

- I’m deeply burdened and moved to give you a warning.
- A “movement” has broken out in the U.S.A. and Canada.
- It was launched primarily by an evangelist from Africa. Then it got a major boost from widely-publicized meetings in a church in Toronto, Ontario. It has captured virtually entire fellowships of churches and millions of Christians.
- In November 1992, in Anchorage, Alaska, I attended 16 hours of revival meetings featuring what was then being called “holy laughter” and “falling out” or being “slain in the Spirit.” Some of those attending were also staggering around as if drunk, which was termed being “drunk in the Spirit.”
- Some of my minister friends embraced this. A few were undecided. Others were and are strongly opposed.

After two years and three months of observing and studying this movement, both in person and from other reports, plus much searching of the Scriptures, I wish to establish my personal position on this movement. I have much respect for my ministry friends who hold different convictions on this issue. However, I am sufficiently troubled by the nonbiblical nature of much of what I have seen and read that I feel it is imperative to “take a stand” based on Scripture.

- At the beginning of this move I believe it was, at best, a non-biblical mixture of spirit and flesh. As this move has progressed, I believe it has evolved increasingly to the point where it is bringing great confusion, damage, and division to the Church in North America.
- The early movement’s manifestations were primarily three: (1) laughing, (2) “falling out” or being “slain in the Spirit,” and (3) being “drunk in the Spirit.”

- Predictably, this has progressed to include now such “manifestations” as roaring, clawing the air like a lion, and (the latest) vomiting.

- These activities are labeled in the movement as “manifestations of the Spirit”. But the only place in the Bible where the phrase “the manifestation of the Spirit” occurs is in introducing the list of the GIFTS of the Holy Spirit:

1Co 12:7-11 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

- I want to examine the Laughing-Falling Revival in the light of the Scriptures.

- Remember Isa 8:20 — “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

- Recall also Acts 17:11 — “Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”

1Co 14:32-33 The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.

- Spiritual people [here, even prophets!] are under control. One of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control (Gal 5:23).

- That which characterizes the things of God is peace, not disorder! — even in “Pentecostal” church meetings like the ones in Corinth!

- At the end of 1Co 14:1-40, the Bible’s largest chapter teaching on the operation of the Holy Spirit in the assembled church, Paul closes with this charge: [vs. 1Co 14:40] “But everything should be done in a fitting and ORDERLY way.” Disorder is entirely contrary to the nature of the Holy Spirit and His operations in the Church.

- Paul says further [vs. 1Co 14:37]: “If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord’s command.” His encouragement to good order was “the Lord’s command”!

Acts 2:22 ...Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him...

- “SIGNS and WONDERS” — that is the catch-all phrase used in the movement to describe many of these things that can’t be substantiated by the Bible. So they are lumped under the term “signs and wonders.”

•• But notice! Jesus is specifically said to have done “signs and wonders.” Where is the record of them? The four Gospels! What were Jesus’ signs and wonders?

- Healing the sick
- Raising the dead
- Cleansing the lepers
- Casting out demons
- Multiplying the loaves and fish, and so forth •• And these are the types of signs and wonders Jesus’ disciples did in the Book of Acts!
- No falling ... No raucous laughing ... No staggering as if drunk. No crowing like roosters or roaring like lions.
- NO! They were too busy preaching the Word of God and seeing it confirmed with REAL signs and wonders.
- Peter and John raising up the lame man, with the result that thousands were saved.
- Paul raising up the dead boy Eutychus.
- Philip preaching Jesus in Samaria and having it confirmed with “...miraculous signs ... evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed ... great joy in that city.” (Acts 8:5-8) •• These are biblical signs and wonders! To confirm the Word of God.

LAUGHING [“holy laughter”]:

Search the New Testament. You will NOT find a hint of anything endorsing laughing in a gathering of believers. In fact, the New Testament refers only 6 times to laughing at all — five of those in a negative context. The final bible mention of laughing is James’s warning to Christians — Jas 4:8-10 “...You sinners... Grieve, mourn, and wail. Change your LAUGHTER TO MOURNING.... Humble yourselves before the lord...”

•• In the December 19, 1994 issue of his ministry’s magazine, Rev. David Wilkerson said, “Most of the so-called spiritual revivals today are mere cardboard structures.... Right now there are Jews mourning and weeping for their Messiah at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. And not long ago some 10,000 Lubavitcher Jews held a march in Brooklyn, crying, ‘This is the year of our Messiah!’ Their hands were upraised, tears rolled down their faces, and they wept and cried out for their Messiah.

“When I think of the 25 million babies aborted in this country and all the lost people who are going to hell, I don’t understand why multitudes of Christians are laughing. Why are millions of Jews weeping and millions of hellbound, disillusioned sinners crying themselves to sleep while charismatics are laughing? When the revival comes, the joy will be because of repentance and because of the ingathering of the last harvest of lost souls.”

FALLING [being “slain in the Spirit ... falling out”]:

Again, search the Scriptures.

- In the 66 books of the Bible, there is not one instance of a man or woman MINISTERING this experience to someone else. No prayer lines to receive the experience! No pushers! No catchers!
- JESUS is not recorded as ever ministering this in the Gospels. What's wrong? Did Jesus lack sufficient "Holy Spirit anointing"? I pose that ludicrous question because some of the leaders of this movement proclaim that people fall in the presence of the leader's anointing. That is preposterous when compared with the absence of these manifestations in the presence of the Bible's most anointed Man — Jesus Christ!
- This never occurred in the biblically recorded ministries of the great apostles Peter and Paul — or of any other apostles, either!
- In the Bible, those who fell, fell before the LORD, not man! Paul fell before Jesus. John on the Island of Patmos fell before the glorious Lord Jesus. No man pushed them ... no man prayed for them ... no one stood behind to catch them.
- In Rev 1:17-19, John fell before the resurrected, glorified Jesus. Jesus got John right UP and got him busy writing down the Revelation. John was lucid, alert, awake. Jesus didn't leave John lying down on the ground.
- Search the Scriptures. Again and again, people fell down before the Lord, not man; usually face forward; often voluntarily; and usually to worship.
- 2Ch 20:18 "Jehoshaphat bowed with his face to the ground, and all the people...fell down in worship before the Lord."
- Eze 3:23-24 "...the glory of the Lord was standing there...and I fell facedown. Then the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet." The Spirit lifted him up from the ground, rather than knocking him down to the ground!
- 1Co 14:24-25 "...convinced that he is a sinner.... So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, 'God is really among you.'" = conviction of sin and a voluntary prostration before God, still in full control of his faculties.
- The common denominator was: whether voluntary or involuntary falling, it was before God, not man. And no man or woman ministered the experience to others anywhere in the entire Bible.
- A note of caution to those who misunderstand John 18:6 — When Jesus said to the soldiers in Gethsemane, "I am He," it says "THEY drew back and fell to the ground." They were not overcome by the Spirit!

SPIRITUAL DRUNKENNESS:

Read: Acts 2:4, Acts 2:7-8, Acts 2:11-15 These are not drunk as you suppose [Acts 2:15].

- This passage is corrupted in the movement to justify conduct labeled as being "DRUNK in the Spirit."
- But it does NOT say anyone saw any staggering or any loss of control whatsoever.

•• To the contrary, the people's amazement was over hearing the tongues-speakers clearly articulating the wonders of God in foreign languages. [Acts 2:11-12] •• It was only the mockers [Acts 2:13] who ridiculed them with charges of drunkenness.

Eph 5:18-20 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

•• Read what it actually says; don't read into it.

• It says DON'T get drunk on wine.

• It says do be FILLED (not "drunk") with the Spirit.

• Hear that again. It says don't get drunk ... do get filled!

• It then lists the results of this filling with the Spirit: speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs ... a song in your heart to the Lord ... abundant thanksgiving to God. No staggering! No spiritual intoxication!

"Some FALL UPON THE GROUND, unable to bear the strained emotion or effect upon the mind; and some are THROWN DOWN by some supernatural power; others CRY OUT in ECSTASY; the speaker leaves the platform, passes by a young man, who becomes conscious of a feeling of INTOXICATION upon him, which does not leave his senses for some time. Others LAUGH with the exuberance of the intoxicating joy..." [Author's note: This is not a 1995 meeting. This was written in 1912 about the Welsh Revival of 1904-05 and its aftermath.] "...Briefly put, this is a glimpse into the mixed "manifestations" which have come upon the Church of God since the Revival in Wales. For, almost without exception, in every land where REVIVAL has since broken forth, within a very brief period of time the COUNTERFEIT stream has mingled with the true....[99-100] — (Jesse Penn-Lewis and Evan Roberts, from War on the Saints, 1912). The Famous Welsh Revival declined when these same manifestations began to break out, according to Evan Roberts, the primary leader of the Welsh Revival.

•• Christ would not have warned His disciples, "Take heed ... be not deceived", if it were not possible for well-meaning Christians to be deceived.

•• Arrogance and judgmentalism have entered into this movement. At least one of its major leaders prophesied judgment on those who deny that this is the move of God. I heard this personally spoken 27 months ago by one of the early leaders of the holy laughter-falling out movement.

•• This move fails the test of John 15:1-27 and John 16:1-33, where Jesus says that the Holy Spirit's mission is to testify of JESUS and to glorify JESUS.

• This movement in many cases (not all) glorifies its leaders ... it glorifies feelings and mood alteration ... it glorifies manipulated, mind-controlled conduct ... and it throws charges of "unbelief" at those of us who dare to declare that it fails to survive examination in the light of Scripture. In sum, what do I think is the source of much of what is going on in the Laughing/Falling Revival?

1. Unrestrained emotionalism 2. Learned responses, often manipulated by the speaker 3. An increasing element of the demonic Is GOD present and even operating among all of this? Of course! Because God loves people. He wants to save and bless people. But just as in the Welsh Revival of 1904-05, the false, the carnal, and even the demonic are, in my estimate, occurring with increasing frequency in this movement. My exhortation to those who have entered into this growing deception is to return to the preaching and teaching of the Gospel, the preaching of the Cross, the preaching of Jesus, and to seek confirmation of God's Word with biblical demonstrations of the Holy Spirit and power. As one pastor who fled from this movement said: "When worship of God becomes REVELRY, the next step is idolatry."

Let's obey the Bible command to TEST everything and hold on to the good.

Test these manifestations by the Word of God. Test "holy laughter"; test "falling out" and being "slain in the Spirit" through the ministry of men and women, as practiced in this movement. You will find that these things FAIL the test in the light of God's Word.

Preached at Medford (Oregon) Christian Center, Sunday, February 5, 1995

S. The Mighty Hand of God

The Mighty Hand of God

by Pastor Jim Feeney, Ph.D.

Summary: The mighty hand of God is ever ready to minister powerfully to us and through us.

Note to preachers: This sermon is in basic outline form and leaves room for you to add illustrations relevant to your hearers.

1Pe 5:6, KJV Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God.

- Let's see how mighty the Lord's hand can be in our lives.

Isa 48:12-13 Listen to me, O Jacob, Israel, whom I have called: I am he; I am the first and I am the last. My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens...

- The very creation was fashioned by the mighty hand of God!

Exo 7:4-5 [Pharaoh] will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out my divisions, my people the Israelites. And the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it.

- God's mighty hand worked acts of judgment against His people's enemies (Egypt) and brought deliverance to His people (Israel).

Jos 4:22-24 Tell them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.' For the LORD your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The LORD your God did to the Jordan just what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you might always fear the Lord your God.

- By His mighty hand God worked miracles, so that the people of this world would know that the hand of the Lord is powerful...

- ...and so that we might always fear the Lord.

Jer 1:9 Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "Now, I have put my words in your mouth.

- In visual symbolism we see the mighty hand of God inspiring prophets with His word.

1Ki 18:45-46 Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain came on and Ahab rode off to Jezreel. The power of the Lord came upon Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.

1Ki 18:46, KJV (literally) ...the hand of the LORD was on Elijah.

- The “hand”-power of the Lord for superhuman acts

Psa 37:23-24 If the Lord delights in a man’s way, he makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand.

- God’s mighty hand upholds the righteous when they stumble.

Isa 41:10, Isa 41:13 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.... For I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.

- No fear, no dismay! God holds our right hand and will help us.

John 10:27-29 My sheep...shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.

- We can find safety and security in the hands of God the Father and of Jesus Christ.

Acts 4:29-30 ...Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.

- The mighty hand of God brings healing and performs miraculous signs and wonders.

Acts 13:8-11 But Elymas the sorcerer ... opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith.... [Paul said] “Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun.” Immediately mist and darkness came over him....

- By His mighty hand God judges the enemies of the Gospel.

Acts 11:20-21 Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

- The Lord’s mighty hand brings evangelistic success.

Psa 98:1, KJV O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.

- In case your personal need was not covered above, remember that the mighty hand of God is available, ready, and willing to bring you the victory that you need!

Preached at Abbott Loop Community Church,

Anchorage, Alaska, February 5, 1978

S. The Spiritual Gifts of the Holy Spirit Are For Today

The Spiritual Gifts of the
Holy Spirit Are For Today

by Pastor Jim Feeney, Ph.D.

Speaking in tongues? Prophecies? Healings? Discerning of spirits? These and other supernatural signs and spiritual gifts were commonplace occurrences in the early Church. On that the Bible record is clear. But should we expect such spiritual gifts in our churches today? A growing number of Christians responded “Yes!” to this question during the twentieth century and up to the present time. The first half of the twentieth century saw the emergence of many of today’s large Pentecostal denominations, with the associated manifestation of various gifts of the Holy Spirit. In the second half of the twentieth century, the Charismatic Movement led millions more Christians in non-Pentecostal denominations to embrace the present-day validity of these spiritual gifts.

However, man’s experience and beliefs by themselves do not establish doctrine. That is the prerogative of the Bible. In the balance of this study, we will examine a number of Scripture verses which support the ongoing validity of the gifts of the Spirit throughout the Church Age.

1Co 12:4; 1Co 12:7-11 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.... (7) Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. This list comprises what Bible teachers commonly call the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit. In the order listed, as translated in the King James Version, they are:

- the word of wisdom
- the word of knowledge
- faith
- gifts of healing
- the working of miracles
- prophecy
- discerning of Spirits

- divers kinds of tongues
- the interpretation of tongues

Biblically knowledgeable Christians readily admit that these supernatural spiritual gifts occurred in the first century Church, as recorded in the New Testament. The question that is raised by some, and which is at the heart of this study is: Are these spiritual gifts still occurring today? I reply with a heartfelt “Yes!” to that question, and I invite you to consider the following Scriptures in support of that belief. (Bold text throughout this study is mine, added for emphasis).

Mark 16:15-18 [Jesus] said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.”

These verses, along with the companion verses in Mat 28:18-20, are known as the Great Commission. These words of Jesus make it quite evident that the Great Commission is intended for the entire Church Age, stretching from Jesus’ First Coming to His Second Coming. Consider the following:

- Jesus commissioned the Church to “go into all the world” with the Gospel (Mat 28:15). We are still in the process of fulfilling that command in this, the 21st century.
- Jesus commissioned the Church to “preach the good news to all creation” (Mat 28:15). That, too, we are still in the process of fulfilling.
- Those to be affected by the Great Commission are “whoever believes...” (Mat 28:16). “Whoever” would encompass all believers in every century.
- Supernatural signs - including speaking in tongues, driving out demons, and healing the sick - were promised to accompany the Great Commission. That is, the Gospel preached “to all creation ... [in] all the world ... [to] whoever believes” throughout the Church Age is to be accompanied by the supernatural spiritual gifts of God.
- In sum, the Great Commission throughout the centuries since Jesus’ death and resurrection involves preaching the Gospel of Christ, accompanied by God’s confirmation with supernatural manifestations - (Mark 16:20) “And the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.”

Mat 28:19-20 ...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” This is Matthew’s record of the same Great Commission that we just looked at. Consistent with Mark’s account, we see that “to the very end of the age” we are to “teach them to obey everything” Jesus commanded them, including His

commands to heal the sick, to cast out devils, etc.

It is vitally important that we Christians of the 21st century understand that Jesus intended the Great Commission to be pursued throughout the Church Age as He originally established it - that is, WITH accompanying supernatural signs. Sadly, for too much of history, the Church has been content to try to reach the world with the preached word only, thereby violating the Apostle Paul's great declaration: "Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction" (1Th 1:5).

1Co 1:7-8 Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (underlining mine)

Recall our opening list of the spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit, taken from 1Co 12:1-31. Here the apostle Paul is opening this same epistle by assuring them that they will lack no spiritual gifts all the way "to the end"! Contrary to teaching in some modern circles, the early Church was promised that all the way to the end of the Church Age, up to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, they would "not lack any spiritual gift." Millions of Christians around the world today continue to believe straightforward Bible promises from God like this one, and they are personally receiving gifts of the Spirit and seeing them regularly manifested by God in their midst - exactly as promised!

1Co 2:4-5 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

Today as then, it is vitally important that our preaching of the Gospel be accompanied with a "demonstration of the Spirit's power." Such demonstrations in Paul's ministry included healings and miracles, along with other gifts of the Holy Spirit. This principle still applies today. That is, the faith of those we lead to Jesus Christ must not rest on the skill and wisdom of our words, but on the Word of God confirmed with genuine manifestations "of the Spirit's power." In other words, the supernatural gifts of the Spirit provide Christians in every century with powerful testimony to the reality of the Gospel we preach.

John 14:11-12 ...at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

Jesus promised that believers (not just apostles) may do the works that He did, and even greater, because He has returned to the Father and given us His Spirit. Ministering your spiritual gifts is very much a part of "full gospel" ministry. Christ's disciples in the early Church did indeed do the works that He had done. They healed the sick, raised the dead, cleansed the lepers, cast out devils, and more. But note that Jesus' promise was not just to the disciples of that first generation, but to "ANYONE who has FAITH IN ME." If you have faith in Jesus, then in His Name YOU can

heal the sick, cast out demons, etc.

----- Rom 11:29 God's gifts and his call are IRREVOCABLE.

God's charisma are irrevocable. The Amplified Bible says: "For God's gifts and His call are irrevocable -- He never withdraws them when once they are given." The Greek word here for "gifts" is charisma, from which we derive our English word "charismatic." The Bible is assuring us that the charismatic gifts, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, are never revoked or withdrawn when once they have been given. In fact, the bible encourages us to increase in spiritual gifts.

Heb 2:4 God also testified to [our great salvation] by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

Jas 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who DOES NOT CHANGE like shifting shadows.

God the Father does not change, including in His giving of spiritual gifts. He confirmed the preached Gospel in the first century with "signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit." And He who "does not change" confirms the same Gospel in the 21st century with the same supernatural manifestations.

----- Heb 13:8 Jesus Christ is the SAME yesterday and TODAY and forever.

Jesus ministered in power, signs, wonders, and miracles in the first century. And the Bible clearly records Him empowering the early Church to minister with supernatural manifestations and spiritual gifts. Well, Jesus is the "same...today." Jesus has not changed. As in the early Church, so today He empowers His followers to minister in the power and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

----- Gal 3:3 Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?

KJV: Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

Jesus began His Church in the power of the Holy Spirit. He will bring His Church to maturity and completion in the same power of the Holy Spirit, not by "the flesh." The early Church was born of the Spirit and baptized in the Spirit. They ministered in the power of the Holy Ghost and manifested the supernatural gifts of the Spirit. But as Paul notes above, even in the first century there began adrift away from living and ministering in the Spirit to living and ministering in "the flesh," that is, by man's human abilities.

Some segments of Christianity in our day have made this same error - that is, believing that "human effort" can successfully accomplish Christ's Great Commission. To correct this error, Paul called them back to remembrance of their beginnings "by the Spirit". That is my desire in this study - to call the Church back to its beginnings, when the word of God was preached and confirmed in the power of the Holy Spirit with signs, wonders, miracles and gifts of the Spirit.

1Co 13:8-12 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is KNOWLEDGE, it will PASS AWAY. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when PERFECTION COMES, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see FACE TO FACE. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. This portion of Scripture has been used by some allegedly to prove that the gifts of the Holy Spirit ceased at some arbitrary time long ago. In fact, these verses prove exactly the opposite! They are among the New Testament's strongest references to the continuing validity of the spiritual gifts. Will prophecies, tongues and knowledge "cease ... be stilled ... [and] pass away"? Certainly. These verses clearly declare that. But the relevant question is WHEN and in what sense? The answers are clear from the very text itself - that is, in the perfected state that occurs upon the Second Coming of Jesus, not before.

1Co 13:10 says "...when perfection comes..." As of today, some twenty centuries later, this has not yet occurred. Jesus is the Perfect One. "Perfection ... comes" to us at His Second Coming, when we see Him "FACE TO FACE"! (1Co 13:12) Then, when we see the Perfect One "face to face," tongues will be stilled, prophecies will cease, and knowledge will pass away. But in what sense will they "cease ... be stilled ... [and] pass away"? This is a crucially important question. The answer is given in 1Co 13:12, using the specific illustration of "knowledge ...[which 1Co 13:8 says is to] pass away." 1Co 13:12 shows us that knowledge as we know it now "passes away" NOT in the sense of going from some to none, but in the sense of going from "know[ing] IN PART" (1Co 13:9) to "know[ing] FULLY" (1Co 13:12). This well-known portion of Scripture says nothing about the gifts of the Spirit ceasing in the sense of disappearing. The flow of thought, as clearly illustrated in 1Co 13:12, is that spiritual gifts that are partial now (tongues, prophecy, knowledge...) will go not from partiality to zero, but from partiality to FULLNESS. For the entire Church Age we can expect to "know in part and [to] prophesy in part" (1Co 13:9). Then, at Jesus' Second Coming, "when PERFECTION COMES, the imperfect disappears" and that which has been "in part" will (1Co 13:12) be brought to fullness!

1Co 1:7-8 Therefore you do NOT LACK any SPIRITUAL GIFT as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the END, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (underlinings mine)

Let us close with this Scripture that we examined earlier. Paul wrote to this Corinthian church about the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1Co 12:1-31). He showed (1Co 13:1-13) how those spiritual gifts would continue during the Church Age in their partial, incomplete state and then would be brought to fullness at the Second Coming of Christ. And Paul (1Co 1:7-8 above) clearly encouraged his hearers to expect to "not lack any spiritual gift ... to the end," right up to the "day of our Lord Jesus Christ." And that is my encouragement to the Lord's Church today. Preach the Word of God. Teach the Word of God. Share the Word of God in your personal testimony and witnessing. And expect God to confirm His word with "signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit" (Heb 2:4).

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