The Kingdom and Civil Government of God

Understanding our Place in the Kingdom of Heaven, in God's Civil Government during the History of the World, and in the Age to Come.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

I. WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN 1
A. Who Governs the Kingdoms of Earth? 1
1. The Kingdom of Babel 2
2. The Kingdom Of Israel 2
3. Why Wait to Rule the Kingdoms of the Earth? 3
4. The Kingdoms of the Earth Were once Given to Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus, but never to the Devil. 4
B. Jesus Will Govern the Kingdom of Heaven On Earth 5
1. Preaching the Good News of the Kingdom of Heaven 6
2. The Good News of the Kingdom of Heaven is not the Gospel of Salvation. 6
3. Is Proclaiming the Kingdom of Heaven Optional? 7
4. Spreading the Gospel of Christ as the Way to Enter the Kingdom. 9
C. The Millennial Kingdom of Heaven Is Taught by Jesus and Disciples 10
Summary 11

II. UNDERSTANDING THE KINGDOMS OF HEAVEN IN WORLD HISTORY 12
A. The Kingdom of Heaven in Heaven Governing all Creation 12
B. The Kingdom of Heaven on the Earth Governing the Garden 13
C. The Kingdom of Heaven on Earth Governing Israel 13
D. The Millennial Kingdom Of God on the Earth Governing All Nations 17
1. When Will The Millennial Kingdom Be Inaugurated? 17
2. What Happens to the Billions of People During The Tribulation Period Before Armageddon and The Millennial Kingdom? 17
3. Who Will Reign With Jesus At The Start Of His Kingdom? 19
4. Who Can Get Into The Kingdom of Heaven? 19
5. Who Will Not Get Into The Kingdom of Heaven? 20
6. Who Is the Least and Who is the Greatest In The Kingdom of Heaven? 22
7. What Kingdom Is Your Church Actually Preparing You For? 23
8. The Battle Of Armageddon Is The Start Of The Kingdom of Christ. 25
9. What Will Happen After The War? 26
10. Who Will Be Resurrected to Reign in The Millennial Kingdom? 27
11. By What Authority Will Jesus Govern Israel And The Nations? 28
12. God Has Authority Over The Nations And Will Give It To His Son. 29
13. Jesus Has Authority To Enforce His Peace Treaty With the Nations. 30
14. What Will It Be Like Once Jesus Is Given His Kingdom? 30

III. UNDERSTANDING THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IN THE AGE TO COME 31
The Kingdom of Heaven, of God and Christ—in New Heaven and New Earth 31

CONCLUSION 33

INTRODUCTION

Why did Jesus come to earth over 2000 years ago? What was his message? Love one another? Offer salvation for our souls? Preach repentance of sins? Uncover religious hypocrisy? Heal the sick? Teach the people? Build a following? Call disciples? Establish his church? Fulfill Jewish prophecy? Rebuke the devil? Well he certainly did all of these things and more, but what was his main message? What was the central theme of his ministry or work on the earth?

When he was about 30 years old, he began what is called his "ministry." As you may recall he first went to see his cousin John and John baptized him with water. At that time the Spirit of God descended upon Jesus in visible form. His purpose thereafter was established and his authority confirmed. What is the first thing Jesus did after that? Did he set up a church with pastors and elders? Did he exhort the people to believe he was the savior of the world? Did he establish a non-profit organization to evangelize the world? He did nothing of the sort.

The devil understood what was going on. Are we as perceptive? Let us eavesdrop on their conversation. After two failed appeals to get Jesus to doubt and to tempt God, the devil "took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory." "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Matthew 4:8-9. What is this all about? What does the devil have up his sleeve? Perhaps he was trying to impress Jesus by showing him the kingdoms of the world and their glory as if to say: "Let me show you what I've been doing and who is in charge down here."

Why was the devil focused on the kingdoms of the world? More importantly, why was he so desirous of Jesus reigning over all of them, under the Devil's control? The question then is this: What is so important about the reign of Jesus over the kingdoms of the earth? Why is this so important and what did this have to do with Jesus and his earthly ministry? Jesus taught his follower to pray: "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." But is Jesus even interested in politics, government or reigning as a King? The devil believed so or else his proposal to Jesus would be no temptation at all.

I. WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

A. <u>Who Governs the Kingdoms of Earth?</u>

It must have truly been a great sight to see all the kingdoms of the earth at a glance. It would be like you or I looking down at a great map in three dimensions, or looking down on the earth from the space shuttle or even from the moon. Jesus not only saw all the kingdoms of the earth including their great cities, land and geographical boundaries, but he also saw their glory. What is the glory of nations? When we think of the glory of nations and their governments we often think about their military strength or their commercial and industrial ventures. We also think about great buildings and skyscrapers, superhighways and beautiful parks. Whatever glories the earthly kingdoms in former days possessed were seen by Jesus on that day. He saw the nations associated with each kingdom, their boundaries, and their glory.

1. The Kingdom of Babel

While gazing at this spectacle and considering the devil's proposal, perhaps Jesus thought back to earlier times when he and his Father went down to the plain of Shinar. Recall they went down to earth to see the construction of a great city and its high tower with its top reaching toward the heavens. This was the first kingdom of mankind ever described in the Bible. It was the first Kingdom of men and a man named Nimrod was its master builder. Nimrod was the first man on earth to be described as "a mighty man" and a great hunter. Whatever he was or was doing, it was interesting enough for God and Jesus to visit and inspect.

Perhaps when the devil was talking with Jesus, he recalled the fate of that kingdom of the earth. You remember what happened. God said there is no stopping them from congregating in one place on the earth. God previously told Adam and then Noah to go out into the earth, but instead the people remained all together in one place—Nimrod's city. So as an inducement to obey Him, God confused the language of all the people. It was all babel. They could not understand each other. As a result, the construction of the tower and city ceased. The great unified city of mankind was abandoned. The Kingdom of Nimrod was no more. Genesis 11.

2. The Kingdom Of Israel

Or perhaps Jesus was thinking about the greatness of the kingdom of Israel. He knew, as the son of God and a student of the writings of the prophets, that God and the ancient Hebrews agreed together that God would be the King of Israel, their exclusive lawgiver, and their supreme judge. He also knew that God had promised the people specific parcels of land upon which to live and that God had promised to dwell among them through his Spirit in various forms. Jesus may have also recalled that the people of Israel rejected God as their King, preferring to be ruled by a man like the other nations.

Jesus knew that God had promised King David, and then King Solomon, that a descendent of theirs would sit on the throne of David one day and govern Israel as their King. Exodus 18-20; Isaiah 33:22; I Samuel 8; 1 Kings 8:25, 9:5; and Jeremiah 33:17. Jesus also understood very well that he himself was that King and would sit on the throne of David and rule Israel as prophesied. He knew this because his Father had promised it to him and that for this reason he was born. Jesus had read the prophet Isaiah. He publicly read it in the local synagogue. Luke 4:18-19. He read Isaiah Chapter 61 which spoke about the return of greatness to Israel among all the nations of the earth. He spoke of freeing their captives and of reinstituting liberty among the people. He knew all this when the devil was talking to him. Most importantly he understood the prophecy about him and the government God said He would establish in the future and that He would appoint Jesus to sit on David's throne in that new future government. Isaiah 9:6-7 declares

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called,
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

So Jesus knew that he was born to one day sit on the throne of David and govern the kingdom of Israel by right as a gift from his Father who has authority over all kingdoms of the earth to make and do with them as He pleases according to His law.

3. Why Wait to Rule the Kingdoms of the Earth?

Think about that. What would you do if your father gave you his family estate, its great house, and extensive lands and holdings? You would probably be pretty excited about that and look forward to the day it all took place. While you are thinking about that, one day another person comes along who has a reputation for lying and deceiving and says to you: "I'll give you all of those things your father promised, provided you first give me what I want." What would you think? You'd think: "Who is this guy? I have already been promised these things by my father. They aren't yours to give and I don't believe you anyway." You'd kick that charlatan out of your house and have nothing to do with him. That's what you do.

On the other hand, if the charlatan says: "Sure, that's all true but why wait for what has already been promised? If you will only do *one thing* for me right now, you won't have to wait. I can help you fulfill your future right now." That would be pretty tempting. You know the gift is yours but why should you wait? What's wrong with getting it now and here's just the guy that knows how to make it happen. You just have to do one little thing. Life is full of shortcuts.

Jesus, however, had the common sense and the prompting of the Holy Spirit to avoid the shortcuts. He also had the knowledge of the Scriptures. He knew his place in the kingdom. He understood the authority to reign as King came from God his Father, not a con artist like the devil, and certainly not the Roman government. John 18.

So it isn't surprising that Jesus was unimpressed with the devil's proposal to give him the kingdoms of the world. Jesus knew he already had a legal right to rule Israel as the son of David and sit on David's throne as a gift from his Father. He knew his Father, already possessed all the nations of the earth. He knew the devil is a liar and a cheat and a con man. He also knew the devil had no authority to offer Jesus all the earths kingdoms because the devil had no legal right, title or interest in them. The nations of the earth were his fathers to give, not the devils to give.

Thus, by the time the devil got to the punch line: "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me," Jesus knew the game afoot. Jesus was pretty insightful himself. He knew that the kingdoms of the earth were not the Devil's property or possessions to give away. Jesus was familiar with the writings of the prophets. As we have noted, they recognized the obvious: that God

ruled over all the kingdoms of the nations and that God alone is the God of all the kingdoms of the earth. 2 Chronicles 20:6; Isaiah 37:16. He also knew that God will give the kingdoms of the earth to whomsoever He will for any purpose He desires.

4. The Kingdoms of the Earth Were once Given to Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus, but never to the Devil.

Moreover, Jesus being a student of the scripture also knew of others to whom God had given the kingdoms of the earth. Interestingly enough, God gave the kingdoms of the earth at one point to Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel 2:37-38. Later on He gave the kingdoms of the earth to Cyrus. Ezra 1:2; 2 Chronicles 36:23. Now that is very surprising to learn. Isn't it interesting that God would give the kingdoms of all the earth at specific points in history to gentiles and military dictators? Neither Nebuchadnezzar nor Cyrus were Jews. Cyrus was King of Babylon and Persia. Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon before Cyrus. They were not sons of Israel. Yet, God gave them the kingdoms of the earth for certain times during their lives. God never gave King David all the kingdoms of the earth and God never gave Solomon all the kingdoms of the earth.

But does the Bible say that God gave the devil the kingdoms of the earth? No. We find instead that the devil is the "deceiver of the whole world," but not the King of the world. Revelation 12:9. The devil certainly tries to influence and blind men and twist the truth in this world. We could speculate that by adding "deceiver of the whole world" to his resume, that such qualifications may land him a job as a political advisor to powerful governments. It may also catch the eye of those in human resources looking to fill management positions in the international banking community, or other positions working for governments or their bureaucracies like federal departments and agencies where deceit is a job qualification.

But such a qualification doesn't mean that God would appoint the devil to govern the world, or gave him the kingdoms or nations of the world. 2 Corinthians 4:4. We don't find that idea presented in the Bible. What we find instead is that the devil merely *claims* that he has authority over the kingdoms of the earth. Of course that's a lie, but this is the claim he is making to Jesus. He's saying: "I'll make a deal with you, I have the kingdoms and I'll give them to you if you fall down and worship me." Even Luke 4:5-6, where the Devil claims the worlds Kingdoms were delivered to him is just another lie the devil tells.

So Jesus, knowing his Father has authority over all the nations of the earth, and that He has given them to whomsoever He pleases, and that He has not given them to the devil, and that He has already promised Jesus that he will be King of Israel, and one day King of all the kingdoms of the earth during the future millennial period, it makes perfect sense for Jesus to turn down the devil's offer. Rather than arguing, Jesus simply responds to the devil's proposal that it was written: "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve." This was the end of their conversation. For what can the devil say against the word of God? Even the devil had the brains to figure out he couldn't oppose the word of God. It makes you wonder what motivates mere human beings to deny or disparage the word of God. Perhaps the better question is to wonder *who* motivates human beings to deny the word of God.

B. Jesus Will Govern the Kingdom of Heaven On Earth

We are examining the devil's temptation of Jesus to illustrate a point which bears on the central message and purpose of Jesus' ministry on the earth. Recall the question: Why did Jesus come? So far the discussion has been about kings and kingdoms, not evangelism and salvation. Why is this? It is because the central message of Jesus' ministry on earth is about the kingdom or more specifically, about the *Kingdom of Heaven* on earth. The devil's effort to claim that the kingdoms of the earth were his is a brazen act of usurpation of God's authority to give the kingdoms of men to whomsoever he will.

Jesus knew that his Father had already promised him the kingdom of Israel as the genealogical heir of David. He knew his Father had also promised him authority to rule all the other kingdoms of the earth some future point in time after his death and resurrection. He also knew that God never gave any of this to the devil and frankly never will. The challenge Jesus faced is that he had to wait for God's timing to fulfill all these promises. He had to resist the devil's proposal to shortcut those promises, get his kingdom now (at least in Israel) and throw out the Roman government. But Jesus kept the faith and held onto the promises of God, making it easy for Jesus to refute the devil because of these promises. What promises are we talking about again?

In Psalm 2, God's son declares that God said to him: "I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.'" God even warns the future Kings of the earth to serve the Lord with fear and trembling, and show respect and submission to Jesus. If the Kings of the earth refuse to do so, God's wrath will be quickly kindled and they will perish for their disrespect or disobedience. Jesus knew this promise and threat when he rebuffed the devil.

Jesus also was familiar with the book of Daniel which said that "the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the *people of the saints* of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." Daniel 7:27. Isn't it interesting that Daniel spoke of the greatness of the kingdoms of man. The devil likewise spoke of the greatness of these kingdoms, so Jesus was familiar with what was being discussed. It was not a new idea.

It is also noteworthy to observe that all of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall not only be given to Jesus but shall also be given to the "people of the saints of the most high." Who is he talking about? Who are the saints of the most high? The saints of the most high are those who are believers in Jesus Christ. They are those who God has declared as righteous and includes non-Christians such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob among others. Matthew 8:11. Daniel says they shall be given the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms of the earth subject to the King of Kings. The rule of Jesus as King of Kings is also presupposed when Paul refers to the fact that Jesus will one day deliver his "kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet." 1 Corinthians 15:24-25.

The key point here is that the Kingdom of Heaven is central to Jesus' thinking. Is it crucial to yours, or is this the first time you have heard of it? He was familiar with the kingdoms of mankind.

Jesus was fully aware that his presence and mission on earth was intended to spread the knowledge of his coming kingdom. His coming kingdom would rule the kingdoms of the earth. It was old and familiar ground to Jesus. He understood it. The devil understood it. God understood it. Do we understand it or are we late to the party?

1. Preaching the Good News of the Kingdom of Heaven

After the devil left Jesus, the very next thing Jesus did was to go to the city of Capernaum by the sea. You are probably thinking this is where he talks about salvation and encourages evangelism. Well no, that is not the case. At the sea he preached the good news of the kingdom of God. Jesus said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God." Luke 4:43. That is the first thing he did. He declared that this was his purpose. He declared this even before he asked others to follow him or called those who eventually became his disciples. This was his purpose because he said it was his purpose. It was not his purpose in Capernaum alone. He said "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose." Luke 4:43

From that time on, Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Matthew 4:17. What else did he preached about the Kingdom of Heaven? He said, "The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached." He said in Matthew 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." In Matthew 5:10, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. In Matthew 5:19 he warned that "whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments [of God] and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven."

He also discussed those persons who were not likely to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. That must certainly be of some interest. He declared that "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven." Matthew 5:20. Indeed, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." Matthew 7:21. Are you interested in knowing if you are in the Kingdom? Jesus said that he tax collectors and the prostitutes will go into the kingdom of God before the religious leaders of his day. Matthew 21:31. That should make us want to look at what he is talking about very carefully.

Jesus also gave the disciples the "secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven." Matthew 13:11. Finally, Jesus said "among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he." Matthew 11:11.

2. The Good News of the Kingdom of Heaven is not the Gospel of Salvation.

In referring to the Kingdom of Heaven and all of these details, cautions and warnings, one thing is brutally clear; Jesus was not talking about the gospel of salvation. He was not referring to the message of salvation at this point. He was not engaging in evangelism at this point either. He certainly was not claiming or asserting that the church he founded was the same thing as the

Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus was preaching something other than these matters. He was preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Sitting there reading this toady, stop and ask yourself: "Do I really know what he is talking about?" Can you say off the top of your head?

What is clear is that Jesus was constantly talking about the "Kingdom of Heaven" more so than salvation. In fact, most of his *parables* were kingdom parables, not salvation parables. Jesus told his disciples that he would speak to the people in parables because they had not been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven like the disciples. Matthew 13:11. Jesus spoke to the people in parables because "seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand." Matthew 13:13.

What did he say about the Kingdom of Heaven in parables? You and I are not counted among the original disciples. True, we have the Holy Spirit to help us understand. So what do these parables of the kingdom mean? In Matthew 13:24, he said, "The Kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field." In Matthew 13:31 he said "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field." In Matthew 13:33, He told another parable: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened." In Matthew 13:44 he observed that "The Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

In Matthew 13:45 Jesus reiterates: "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls." In Matthew 13:47, he says "the Kingdom of Heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. In Matthew 13:52, he noted that "every scribe who has been trained for the Kingdom of Heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old." "The Kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants." Matthew 18:4. The disciples were instructed by Jesus to proclaim that "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Matthew 10:7.

Thus, we see that the Kingdom of Heaven was the central teaching of Jesus. It was not his only teaching, but it was his central message. He had the forthcoming kingdom in mind which his Father previously promised him, when he refuted the devil. He had the kingdom in mind thereafter in Capernaum and in the cities he visited. He had the kingdom in mind when he talked to the people in parables. He had the kingdom in mind when he said it was like this and that and compared to this and that. He had the kingdom in mind when he talked to his disciples and admonished them to teach the kingdom to others. Why go through all these comparisons and take up so much time talking about the Kingdom, unless he meant it to be very important?

3. Is Proclaiming the Kingdom of Heaven Optional?

Is proclaiming the Kingdom of Heaven optional? Can we say: "Well this kingdom discussion is all very interesting and seemed important to Jesus, but its just not my thing?" Just reading that sentence should cause you to laugh out loud. Don't you consider yourself a saint? Remember what

Daniel wrote when he said that the kingdom heaven "shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High"? Daniel 7:27. Are you really going to take the position that your promised part in the Kingdom of Heaven by God Almighty is "not your thing?" Perhaps God will say to you then: "Ok, then, well if that's not your thing, how about you go to the other place?" You know, the *other place*. It's not heaven. It's not earth. It's the other place.

At that point you would take a great interest in the Kingdom of Heaven and fall down on your wobbly knees and say to God: "Well I'm here, tell me what I should do." There's nothing like a little heat to effect an attitude adjustment. Jesus might also ask you a few questions: "Didn't God give you gifts on earth which you were supposed to develop to maturity? How do you plan to use them in the kingdom?" What will you say? Will you say: "I'm not sure what you're talking about." That response will not impress Jesus. Well you have at least identified your spiritual gifts, haven't you? You at least lived your life on earth using them, didn't you? Boy, you didn't screw this up too, did you?

Is proclaiming the Kingdom of Heaven more important than tithing, or fellowship dinners, session meetings, or church attendance? Perhaps it is more important than evangelism and personal piety? Or perhaps it is at least as important as these things? Can we acknowledge that? We are not diminishing the gospel of salvation. Paul referred to it as a matter of first importance. 1 Corinthians 15:3. But this emphasis cannot diminish or devalue the declarations of Jesus himself regarding the importance of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Perhaps you are still stuck on ranking Jesus teaching. You have a list in your mind—"these things are crucial, these other things are less important." The importance of the Kingdom of Heaven is way down on the list of what it means to be a Christian. Evangelism, personal piety, and salvation are way up at the top. They are the top three. Tithing is up there too, even though the Levitical priests of ancient Israel no longer perform their priestly functions and certainly not at your church. You have in your mind that there has to be a pecking order. You have in your mind that there has to be a ranking of living the Christian life in which you do this first, then that, and then these other things if you have time. My friend, that is no way to approach the Christian life. Yes, there are things that are more important than others. But we must make time for all of the things that are important to God.

Don't think that: "Well if I have time after devoting my energy to those three, perhaps I will add the Kingdom of Heaven to number four on the list." Is that how Jesus approached his message about the kingdom? Did he say: "Well salvation is number one on everybody's list and if I have time after that then you and I can talk about the Kingdom of Heaven"? Or did he say: "Hey friend, if you can spare the time, you should focus on developing your gifts I gave you so that one day you can use them in the kingdom?" 1 Corinthians 12. Romans 12:6-8. Everyone can rationalize how they go about life. All we are doing here is presenting the Kingdom of Heaven as central to Jesus own teaching and reason for coming.

Even so, since Jesus had this approach and teaching, would it be too difficult if we also adopted this approach and teaching, at least a little bit? Would it be too difficult if we spread the gospel of the kingdom in the same way in which Jesus did? Would it be too difficult to have a sermon or two

about this in our churches? Does every sermon have to be about salvation or personal piety or evangelism or love? Jesus certainly taught on these things. But Jesus did not dwell exclusively on any of these to the detriment of discussing the Kingdom of Heaven.

Perhaps you don't believe that this focus on the kingdom can possibly be true. You're confident that Jesus came to save us and that's really what the Scripture is all about. But that's not what the Scripture says as the numerous references stated above attest. Perhaps you can't comprehend the relevance or importance of the kingdom because your minister never ever preached a sermon on this subject. You never heard of a physical kingdom to come in which the righteous and believers would rule the nations in their new immortal bodies. You never heard from your church leaders that Jesus Christ would reign as King over the world's kingdoms as a gift from his Father.

Think about this. Your church leaders and minister are not Jesus Christ. They are not apostles or disciples. Your minister may very well not know what he or she is talking about. They may be trained in a seminary or have a PhD, but does he or she know what Jesus is talking about when he talks about the Kingdom of Heaven? The guy or gal you listen to on the radio may not have a clue about any of this. You are an adult. Read the Scripture for yourself and figure it out. That is your birthright as a Christian. Don't sell it for a bowl of church traditions with its go along and get along COVID-19 inspired deference to the opinions of others.

4. Spreading the Gospel of Christ as the Way to Enter the Kingdom.

Alright then, in what way did Jesus actually spread the gospel of the kingdom? If you and I are going to spread the gospel of the kingdom we might want to know how he did it. That makes sense. Jesus talked about the kingdom being at hand. Have you ever told anybody that the kingdom of God is at hand? Don't you think if Jesus found time to preach this truth, you could spare a few minutes in your week to mention it once? Jesus talked about the poor in spirit and those were persecuted for righteousness entering the kingdom. Have you ever talked to anyone about how to enter the kingdom of God? It might be important if you are thinking of entering it yourself.

Jesus talked about who was in the kingdom and who was not. Have you ever thought about how to get into the kingdom? You certainly have thought about how to get into heaven. But do you know how to get into the Kingdom of Heaven? When you evangelize others do you talk about getting into the Kingdom of Heaven? Or do you fall into circular reasoning that the purpose of evangelism is to save others, and their purpose in turn is to save others, whose purpose in turn is to save others? Or perhaps church growth is the ultimate goal, or even worldwide salvation? Whatever diversion you may embrace, don't ignore the Kingdom of Heaven.

Perhaps it would be important to think *why* salvation or eternal life is important. It is important not as an end in itself. It is important because it is the way to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. We're not just talking about heaven or entering heaven. We're not talking about eternal life for its own sake. We are talking about these matters for some greater purpose. We are talking about the Kingdom of Heaven and that salvation is the means by which all may enter therein.

Jesus talked about how difficult it was to get into the kingdom. He talked about who is great in the kingdom and who is not. His disciples even argued about who was the greatest in the kingdom and where they might sit relative to Jesus's throne. Jesus reminded them that humility was a prerequisite to entering the kingdom. Matthew 18:1-3.

It might be a positive first step today for us to at least start where the disciples started and argue about whom is the greatest in the kingdom, as opposed to never discussing the subject at all. At least the disciples who were told the secrets of the kingdom, acted foolishly enough to argue about who was the greatest. But which condition is actually worse from God's point of view; arguing about whom is the greatest in the kingdom, or never talking about the kingdom at all? Would it be too difficult to talk about these things?

C. The Millennial Kingdom of Heaven Is Taught by Jesus and Disciples

Emphasis on the Kingdom of Heaven was not just a passing phase or idea during the lifetime of Jesus. It was still preached even after the death of Jesus. An examination of the book of Acts easily demonstrates that even after the death and resurrection of Christ, the disciples were still preaching the gospel of the kingdom. Thus, Acts 8:12 reminds us that Philip "preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ." And in Acts 28:31, even Paul was said to be "proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ." Perhaps you are greater than Phillip. Perhaps your pastor is greater than Paul. Phillip and Paul talked about these things. But perhaps your pastor is greater than these two men and need not follow their example?

You may be trying to rationalize all this talk of the kingdom by thinking that the gospel of the Kingdom is just another way of referring to the gospel of Christ. Perhaps you think: "They are just all the same thing. They all refer to the gospel of Christ and evangelism and the four spiritual laws, right?" Well no, that is not right. Why even conclude such a thing? Did you know that a review of the phrase "Gospel of Christ" reveals that it was used 8 times, but never once used by Jesus himself? John the Baptist referenced it. Mark 1:1. Paul referred to it numerous times. Romans15:19; 2 Corinthians 2:12; Galatians 1:7; Philippians 1:27; 1 Thessalonians 3:2. Paul even called it "my gospel" on three occasions. Romans 2:16; 16:25 and 2 Timothy 2:8. But Jesus never used the phrase, the "Gospel of Christ." The "Gospel of God" is referred to seven times in the New Testament by Jesus, Peter and Paul.

On the other hand, Jesus refers to the "gospel of the Kingdom" three times in Matthew. The "Kingdom of Heaven" is referred to 31 times, all in the book of Matthew. The "Kingdom of God" is referred to 53 times in the first four books of the New Testament by Jesus. His followers refer to the kingdom of God 14 times beginning in the book of Acts. Paul referenced the Kingdom of God and Christ. Ephesians 5:5. Given these numerous references to the kingdom, twisting the kingdom message into a merely spiritual or existential experience is to be avoided. Don't be satisfied to simply declare that the kingdom is "in your heart" and that is it. Yes, the kingdom is "in the midst of you" but this does not mean it's the only place it is present or will be present. Luke 17:21.

Upon learning this for the first time, a normal person would begin to wonder what it all means. How is all this to be understood? Perhaps in trying to piece it all together, you may be tempted to

think that the gospel changed after Jesus died and the earlier gospel of the kingdom was no longer relevant. You might reason, that: "Well, the book of Acts was a book of transition, and we don't hear about the gospel of the kingdom after that." So the Kingdom is expired or no longer relevant? Yet, in Matthew 24:13-14, when Jesus is speaking of the end times (specifically, the Tribulation period), he says, "But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."

If you believe the Tribulation hasn't happened yet, and is still in the future, then the gospel of the Kingdom is something that must still be proclaimed after the death of Christ. Moreover, Matthew 24 seems to clearly indicate when the Great Commission (Mat. 28:18-20) is ultimately fulfilled, i.e., the gospel will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, it will be the gospel of the kingdom, not merely the gospel of Christ which is proclaimed. This is bad news for most major ministries who believe the great commission mandates the spreading of the gospel of salvation as an end in and of itself, rather than as a means to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Summary

Thus, far we have discussed the coming Kingdom of Heaven as a central theme of Jesus ministry. We've also seen efforts to undermine or this Kingdom gospel. The devil tried to shortcut the coming of the Kingdom. We have made an extensive examination of the Scripture to show that references to the Kingdom of Heaven are broad and repeated. We have also endeavored to show that the gospel of salvation through evangelism and the great commission itself are actually the means by which one may enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, rather than an end to in and of themselves.

Of course, all along the way we have taken time to critique the lack of any meaningful teaching about the Kingdom by the church and clergy. We have tried to admonish the reader to think through the matter for him or herself or for their own benefit as to how their place in the Kingdom of Heaven is to be secured. This raw appeal to self-interest hopefully will prompt each of us to give just a little thought to what each of us might be doing in the kingdom with our new incorruptible and not overweight body.

When the Kingdom arrives, it is not likely we will be spending our days sitting around drinking Starbucks and talking about theology. There will be much work to be done in assisting Jesus in the administration of his worldwide government of all the nations of the earth. These include among others the worldwide cleanup of dead bodies after the devastating war, the complete rebuilding of the earth's infrastructure after its destruction, and the massive environmental cleanup operation which will take place. Empowering families to direct the education and upbringing of their children, engaging in occupations and agricultural pursuits throughout the earth as from the beginning will also be time consuming. Of course, the adoption and application of the law of God worldwide, and the administration of Jesus' government and his courts of justice will be the top priority.

If you're not preparing yourself today for at least one of these or other relevant functions, and you can stand the embarrassment of not having developed your gifts in this world when asked to

account for it in the next, perhaps you may take some consolation in the fact that Jesus might give you 1,000 years to catch up so that you might be useful to the King in the service of his coming Kingdom of Heaven.

II. UNDERSTANDING THE KINGDOMS OF HEAVEN IN WORLD HISTORY

A. The Kingdom of Heaven in Heaven Governing all Creation

We have thus far have noted that the kingdoms of the earth do not belong to the devil. We've established that the kingdoms of the earth belong to God and He will do with them what He will and when He will. We have also learned that He has decided to establish a millennial kingdom on the earth at some point in the future and has promised His son, Jesus the Christ, the right to sit on the throne of that kingdom as the legal heir of King David to govern the nation of Israel during that time. We have also learned that Jesus will govern all the other nations of the earth during that period and those who are believers in Jesus Christ in this life and shall reign with him over the nations during this period of history. We also observed that during history, God gave the government of the kingdoms of the earth to Nebuchadnezzar and to Cyrus for certain purposes during their lifetimes.

We now turn to a chronological survey of the various manifestations of the kingdoms of heaven including the millennial civil government under the authority of Jesus. This is important because it shows that God's historical purpose has always been to govern as a King. This is true before the world, during the period of the history of the world, and after the world we know ceases. Thus, the Kingdom of Heaven is not a new or novel theme. It was not new or novel to Jesus when he spoke of it during his ministry. It should not be new or novel to any of us if we know God and understand how He looks at these matters.

Starting before the beginning of time, we learn that God is enthroned as the King of His Heavenly Kingdom. That Kingdom has no known beginning. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God." Psalm 90:2. "Your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting." Psalm 93:2. Similarly, scripture is clear that the kingdom of God in Heaven has no end. "How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation." Daniel 4:3.

So, what does this kingdom of God in Heaven look like? Here is a description of the nature of that Kingdom of Heaven. The Psalmist tells us that "The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all. Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word! Bless the Lord, all his hosts, his ministers, who do his will! Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion." Psalm 103:19-22. What is being described here? The Psalm describes a system of government which in its structure is very similar to any other monarchy. God is the King. He rules over all. He has workers in the kingdom to do his will throughout his realm. Of course, corruption, graft, kickbacks, insider trading, and taxation are all missing.

Thus, the kingdom of God in heaven is God's throne in the heavens, from the beginning and

will last until the end of time as we know it. From heaven He rules over all as the sovereign Creator. At this very moment He is governing the heavens and administering his civil government. Yet, is that all He does? Has God ever administered a civil government on the earth at any time?

B. The Kingdom of Heaven on the Earth Governing the Garden

Though not technically a Kingdom on the earth, the fact that God was present on the earth in the Garden of Eden deserves an honorable mention. As God walked in the Garden and talked with Adam and Eve, He gave them instructions and rules to live by. When those rules were broken He conducted an investigation, determined guilt, and imposed punishment. These are important elements of the civil government of God in the Garden and reflect Kingly rule and governmental functions with regard to His creation and creatures. Genesis does not refer to the Garden as God's throne so the analogy is not complete, but the Garden as a place where God dwelled among mankind on the face of the earth deserves our acknowledgment.

It is also worth noting and will become more significant when we get to the last Kingdom of Heaven on the new Earth in the New Jerusalem, that in several important ways, God returns to the garden theme. For instance, the Garden of Eden had the tree of life. Genesis 2:9 states: "And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." So too, the New Jerusalem will likewise have "the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Revelation 22:2.

The key point, however, is that God was dwelling with His creation on the earth in the Garden. Genesis 3:8 declares God's presence: "And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden." He was not walking in heaven. He was on the earth. God left the Garden after that. He visited the earth on other occasions we know of such as when He sealed Noah in the Ark and shut the door. As we have also mentioned, He visited the tower Nimrod was building on the plain of Shinar before He confused the language of mankind. But these visits established no Kingdom or civil government on earth.

Later on well after the Garden, He will choose to dwell with the People of Israel. He will also govern the nations in the millennium through His Son nearer the end of our present earthy history. After that millennial period He will dwell with His people both Jew and Gentile in the New Jerusalem on the new Earth. "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God." Revelation 21:3. But we are getting ahead of ourselves. The first real earthy Kingdom of God involved the Hebrews during their travels and later to the Israelites as a nation in the land He first promised to Abraham.

C. The Kingdom of Heaven on Earth Governing Israel

This form of God's kingdom—the Kingdom of Heaven on earth in Israel, is distinguished from the Kingdom of God in Heaven that was previously discussed. The Kingdom of God on earth in

Israel began when the ancient Hebrews consented with God that He would be their God and they would be His people. Exodus 19:5-8 reveals how this nation and its civil government were inaugurated. God said: "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel. So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him. All the people answered together and said, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do.' And Moses reported the words of the people to the Lord." The people accepted God's offer to be their king pursuant to a compact of civil government.

It is clear that this intended "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" had a King. That King was God himself. I Samuel 8:4-7 affirms this from God's own lips. "Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, 'Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.' But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, 'Give us a king to judge us.' And Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, 'Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.'"

Likewise, this kingdom of God on earth in Israel has its throne in a physical place on the earth, not in heaven. We know from Matthew 5:34 that God's eternal throne is in Heaven for Matthew refers to it as the "throne of God" in heaven. But we are talking about another throne. This is the throne of God in ancient Israel. God was the King of Israel from the start. He appeared to Moses and gave instructions first from his mountain in a dark cloud. Exodus 3:1: 18:5; 24:13. This was followed by God appearing as a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire. Exodus 13:1

Soon thereafter in their wanderings, a tent was erected by Moses to help the people seek God. Exodus 33:7 declares that: "Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the Lord would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp." This wasn't like City Hall where everybody wandered in and out at will. It was more structured. But the key point is that within the tent of meeting, there was a special place or room called a tabernacle. This is where the spirit of God resided. Exodus 40:34 declares of this place, that after Moses arranged the interior of the tent and tabernacle as per God's instructions (the original interior designer) and after Moses put the final cover on the tent, then "the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." You can bet God's spirit was in that physical place on the earth itself.

This was not some vague mystical experience practiced by the people. This was not smoke and mirrors or some priestly hallucination. This was a real manifestation of God's Spirit dwelling on earth, in a physical structure. That structure was repeatedly erected, taken down and moved and re-erected on the People's travels to the land He had promised to Abraham. God or at least his Spirit was dwelling among Jews and Gentiles, citizens and foreigners living in the land. God's Spirit was there as the King of Israel, the Supreme Legislative body and lawgiver, and as Supreme Judge of the people, both citizen as well as the 153,600 resident alien living in the land by the time of Solomon. This was no invisible Kingdom or King. It was real. It wasn't "in my heart." The people saw the smoke (thus the misused phrase "holy smokes"), the dense cloud, the pillar of fire, and the

glory of the Lord entering the tabernacle.

Don't skip over this fact about aliens and foreigners living in Israel. It shows God always considered that mankind should have access to Him and that He desired to live among mankind. See Acts 17:26-27. "And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him."

After the rejection of God by the people as their national King as recorded in 1 Samuel 8, Saul, David, then Solomon served in that capacity subject to God's law and to varying degrees the other prohibitions listed in Deuteronomy 17. God promised that King David's heirs would sit on this earthly throne and in the future. King Solomon testified to this when he said in 2 Chronicles 6:10: "Now the Lord has fulfilled his promise that he made. For I have risen in the place of David my father and sit on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised, and I have built the house for the name of the Lord, the God of Israel." The Queen of Sheba even recognized this fact. She says in 1 Kings 10:9: "Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the Lord loved Israel forever, he has made you king, that you may execute justice and righteousness." This was a physical place on earth. You could travel there and see it all. The people did just that, travelling there from all parts of the earth during Solomon's reign.

Finally, a temple was built by Solomon from whence God gave further direction regarding the governance of Israel. Solomon built the temple (and a palace for himself too). The Temple included a "Most Holy Place" similar to the tabernacle in the tent that God also covered with a dark cloud and filled in the same way as He did with the Tent of Meeting.

When the building and furnishing of the Temple were completed, it was all dedicated. At the dedication, "the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God." 2 Chronicles 5:13-14. Solomon asked: "But will God indeed dwell with man on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, how much less this house that I have built!" 2 Chronicles 6:18-20. God did not abandon his throne in Heaven. His spirit and glory were on the earth in that place. The locations of the tabernacle and holy place were not thrones in the traditional sense, but they were places from which God's Spirit governed on earth.

This is the account of the Kingdom of God on earth in Israel as it became manifested on the earth by the free consent of the Israelite people. It was a Kingdom on earth, governed by the Spirit of God as King, directly at first and then though human Kings later on, who were sometimes obedient but after Solomon mostly disobedient to God and His covenant and law. It had a physical seat of government in clouds, pillars, tabernacles and eventually a Temple with a holy room in Jerusalem.

God's civil government also had laws God enacted regarding holiness. It had God's civil laws and punishments for Israel. It had laws based on the laws of nature which existed from the beginning of the human race and governed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and also after the worldwide flood during Noah's days. These laws all together constituted the "law of the land." This

particular civil government had a beginning in earthly time. It also had an end in time when the Babylonian and Assyrian captivity was enforced, though not a permanent end of the nation of Israel as we shall see. The Kingdom of Heaven in Israel is not to be confused with the Kingdom of Heaven in Heaven. Nor is the Kingdom of Heaven in Israel to be confused with the Kingdom of Heaven during the millennium or the age to come.

The Kingdom of Heaven in Israel is simply a description of the kingdom of God at that time upon the face of the earth in its particular form, for a particular people, for a particular purpose and during a particular period of time. Its purpose was to establish a kingdom of priests and create a holy nation on earth. That purpose was not fulfilled but that was its purpose. Nor was that purpose fulfilled by the coming of Jesus or the establishment of his church. It will be fulfilled one day in the Kingdom of Heaven during its millennial manifestation on earth. Revelation 5:9-10 declares that God's kingdom of priests shall reign upon the earth. "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

On the other hand, the nation of Israel's purpose was to be a nation under God on the earth in which God governed through His civil government according to His laws by the consent of the people. Israel's national purpose was not spiritual salvation. If you try to read that into God's purpose, it will distort your whole understanding of what God is actually doing. Moreover, its laws were not established so that the people may through obedience thereby enter into a millennial Kingdom. Nor was its purpose to save the Israelites so they could enter into the new heaven and new earth.

Securing entrance into those kingdoms for Israelites and all other peoples of the nations during this time was not a function of citizenship in Israel, nor by being a resident alien in Israel, nor by being a son of Abraham, nor by being a Jew or Gentile. Entering these future kingdoms is accomplished by means of a person's righteousness in the eyes of God, not because of their birth as Jews, citizenship in the kingdom of Israel, having Abraham as their father, or observance of the laws of Moses. It is God who determines the criteria of what constitutes righteousness and at a minimum includes those who actually believed in God's existence and seek him out, though he is not far from each of us. Acts 17:26-27.

The key difference between ancient Israel and all other nations in history, as kingdoms are concerned, is that in Israel, God was king. (1 Samuel 8:7). He ruled directly as King from Moses until Samuel. Thereafter, God retained the exclusive right to choose Israel's kings, which after King Saul were David and his male descendants. Technically, God's throne was in heaven, but beginning with David, Israel's throne was the throne of David. And David and his heirs were the representatives of God on earth. 2 Chronicles 6:5-6; Psalms 89:3-4.

Thus, since ancient Israel was a kingdom with its own civil government, and God was sovereign over the nation in a unique way, a way in which He has not been sovereign over any other nation, Israel was the first true manifestation of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

D. The Millennial Kingdom Of God on the Earth Governing All Nations

Let us now turn to the Kingdom of Heaven on earth intended by God to govern all of the nations during the millennial period. This is what Scripture refers to as the Kingdom of God. Luke 21:31 refers to the Kingdom of God as something to come. "So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near." Luke 22:16 and 18 indicates that Jesus will be there and he will not eat food or drink wine "until the kingdom of God comes." When will it come? Jesus was asked: "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority." Acts 1:6-7. The short answer is, we don't know.

Let us examine that millennial kingdom in a little more detail. The millennial period, is an extremely important time.

1. When Will The Millennial Kingdom Be Inaugurated?

Perhaps the first question is when will the millennial kingdom be inaugurated? Jesus answers this question by declaring that only God knows the time. Though there will be signs which preexist this period of time, the exact date is not known, and cannot be known. If anyone says to you that they know the date, rest assured they don't have a clue what they're talking about. We do know, however, that the millennial kingdom will last approximately 1,000 years give or take a few at the end at which time the devil and his minions will be set free for a final war against Jesus and the saints.

2. What Happens to the Billions of People During The Tribulation Period Before Armageddon and The Millennial Kingdom?

Let us inquire who will be present on the face of the earth in the millennial kingdom. To answer this question we first need to know who dies and who survives the tribulation period which takes place before the battle at Armageddon which itself begins the Millennial Kingdom. These survivors will be normal human beings. They may technically be citizens of their own governments and nations but this will not account for much in the Kingdom of Heaven which God will establish on the earth during the millennial period. We are talking about those who have not yet received their new resurrected body, and in fact may never receive it, depending on their conduct and confession during their life. For them, their eternal status will be determined at the great white throne judgment where they will be judged worthy of eternal life or face perpetual death in the lake of fire.

It is difficult to say how many people will be alive at that time—those that have survived the tribulation, that short period of time occurring immediately before the second coming of Christ. How many survivors of that time will remain? Of course, we don't know the exact number, but Scripture does tell us what will happen to the population of the earth during the tribulation. As such we may be able to determine a range for the number of people who may survive the tribulation and be present when the battle of Armageddon actually takes place.

For instance, the current population of the world is about 7.8 billion human beings. Assume for

the sake of discussion that none of them are believers in Jesus Christ and none of them are regarded by God as righteous. Just assume this so that we can do the math for illustrative purposes. This assumption of course will tend to overestimate the number of people remaining but it illustrates a more salient point as will become apparent shortly. One of the first major genocides during the tribulation occurs when the last two horsemen of the apocalypse, "Death" and his companion "The Grave" "were given authority over one-fourth of the earth, to kill them with the sword and famine and disease and wild animals." Revelation 6:7-8.

Beginning with 7.8 billion persons alive and assuming the tribulation began today, the death of 1/4th of the population would be about 2.0 billion people. "Death" and "the Grave" are aptly named. Their slaughter would reduce the population of the world to 5.8 billion people. For example and illustrative purposes only, the population of China is 1.4 billion. The population of India is 1.3 billion. The population of the United States is 331 million. If half of China and half of India's population, and all of the United States' populations were put to death, that would be about 2 billion people. Can you grasp the cataclysmic nature of this event?

The next major catastrophic loss of life will occur when the sixth angel is commanded to release the four demons bound at the Euphrates River. These demonic beings held in captivity will be turned loose to kill one-third of all the remaining people on earth. John testified that he even heard the size of their army, which was 200 million mounted troops. Revelation 9:14-16. This could mean human beings constituting a military force, or 200 million demonic beings who will actually do all the killing of one third of the people the earth. Either way, the annihilation of one third of 5.8 billion people or about 2 billion people, leaves 3.8 billion people remaining. Though the percentages are different, i.e. one fourth and now one third, as the math turns out, the same number of people that are killed each time is about 2 billion people.

Returning to our population charts for illustrative purposes, 4 billion people translates into the total annihilation of the entire populations of China, India, the United States, Indonesia, Pakistan, Brazil, Nigeria and Bangladesh, the top eight populations of the earth. Of course, the death will be spread out over the face of the earth and not just in these countries. But think about your own nation with every one out of two persons dead and you get a sense of proportions.

How does the disciple John describe this remaining number of people after decimations of the population? Will they be good people like your next-door neighbor? He says in Revelation 9:20-21 that "The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts." You make think God is harsh in his judgments, but not even those who remain deserve better.

There are three more seal judgments, six more trumpets, and all seven bowl judgments yet to come. None are good news to the rest of mankind. During these events the earth will be devastated by earthquakes, hail and all matter of environmental cataclysmic events. Cities will be reduced to rubble. Agricultural will be destroyed. Infrastructure will be damaged if not destroyed. The quality of life as we know it will no longer exist. During these times many more people will perish. We are

not told exactly how many. But we are told that only near the end will people repent and acknowledge the authority of God. Jesus also said that if he did not come back and shorten the tribulation period, that all flesh would die. The death of all flesh is reminiscent of Noah's flood. Matthew 24:22. In this case it would mean 3.8 billion people. Fortunately, Jesus promised to come back before every human being on the earth is killed or dies.

3. Who Will Reign With Jesus At The Start Of His Kingdom?

While we do not know when the millennial kingdom will begin, we do know it will begin at the end of the tribulation period when Jesus appears in the heavens as the King of Kings. We also know that he will call unto him at that time his followers both dead and living. We know that he will appear upon the face of the earth among its nations, and in northern part of Israel to face the armies of the nations of the world. We know that he will defeat them in battle with relative simplicity with the sword of his mouth. We know that he will then set up or establish his worldwide government in the city of Jerusalem. We know that he will govern the reconstituted nation of Israel in its land originally promised by God to Abraham and his descendants. The land will be divided into 12 equal divisions more or less, one parcel for each of the 12 tribes of Israel including Judah. We know that Jesus will govern that nation by right already granted as the son of David and the King of Israel. We know that he will govern the remainder of the nations of the earth and all their kingdoms, though we do not know how that consent will be obtained or under what exact circumstances.

We do know that the people, who remain alive, certainly a small percentage of the original population, will be weary of death and the worldwide destruction of their cities, agriculture, commerce, and way of life. Isaiah 24:3 says the earth will be emptied, and Isaiah 24:6 says few men will be left. They will also be tired of sexual immorality, sorcery, worshiping of demons and will be ready to repent.

We also know that the people whom Jesus has given new immortal and resurrected bodies of flesh and bone will serve in his government in various parts of the world and as his public servants. Perhaps they will also serve in the private sector to rebuild the world and the nations according to the law and commands of Jesus. This is speculative. Some will serve in the government of Christ in Israel according to the laws of Moses. That workforce may be constituted entirely of Jewish believers and the righteous Jews according to God. This too is speculative.

The resurrected bodies of all such persons will be incorruptible and do the will of God in the administration of business, governments and of the courts and in the other public works which Jesus undertakes. They will not be bribed. They will not be corrupted or corruptible. They will administer the law with equality and justice. Marriage and the family will remain for the un-resurrected living on the earth-those who survive the tribulation and battle of Armageddon and who are born during the millennium. The dominion mandates given to Adam and then repeated to Noah will also remain in effect and apply to them.

4. Who Can Get Into The Kingdom of Heaven?

In looking at the Scripture to understand who can get into the Kingdom of Heaven or is eligible

to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven, we find several interesting statements. First, we find that it is hard to get into the Kingdom of Heaven if one is rich. Matthew 19:23-24. While it may be hard, it is not impossible but Jesus stresses that it is hard. The reason that it is hard is that money tends to refocus one's thoughts away from the things of the kingdom. This is not a universal rule but it is something which is a tendency. Jesus makes note of it. But being rich is not the only distraction in this world.

By contrast, James 2:5 states that being rich in faith is a critical virtue for getting into the kingdom. Being rich in faith is the opposite of being arrogant and prideful. It's hard to get into the kingdom if one is arrogant and prideful, as humility appears to also be an essential character quality of citizenship. Jesus says that the prostitutes and tax collectors could enter the kingdom before the Pharisees. He was critical of their arrogance and their unteachable legalistic spirit. Matthew 5, verses 3 and 10, state that the poor in spirit will be in the Kingdom of Heaven and those who are righteous will be in the kingdom even though persecuted for that reason in this world.

Another example of who are eligible to enter the kingdom, are those who do the will of God, not merely talk about it. In 1 Corinthians 4:20 Paul says that the Kingdom of Heaven is a matter of power, not talk. Thus, those that enter the Kingdom of Heaven are those that bear fruit in this life. Apparently knowing and practicing the greatest commandments to love God and love your neighbor is also an important prelude to entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. Mark 12:33-34. Of course, to enter the Kingdom of Heaven and become a citizen of the kingdom, one must be born again (John 3:3), or whom God regards as righteous such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets. Luke 13:28. Those who are born again or whom God regards as righteous and in turn produce fruit in keeping with that spiritual rebirth will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Matthew 21:43.

5. Who Will Not Get Into The Kingdom of Heaven?

The Scriptures are also clear when it describes who cannot inherit the kingdom and those who simply cannot enter the kingdom. First, those who do good works in the name of God are not guaranteed admission thereby. "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" Matthew 722. But Jesus said to them: "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness."

This seems odd because they did all these great things in the name of God, but Jesus says "I never knew you" and that what was done was lawlessness. We may speculate they prophesied falsely. Perhaps they cast out demons by the name of the prince of demons. Perhaps they did many mighty works in the name of God, but the works were merely works of darkness claiming to be works of light. The point is that simply saying "I did this for God" is not enough. God will examine what was done and whether it was done from righteousness or from unrighteousness. We must also be mindful that the key is Jesus knowing you and not the other way around. The wise do not leave this to games of chance and circumstance.

So merely doing great things in this world and even claiming to do them on behalf of God, is not enough to get into the Kingdom of Heaven. Workers of evil are ineligible for citizenship. In addition, Jesus said that our righteousness must be greater than the fake righteousness of the Pharisees and the scribes, i.e., the clergy and lawyers of his day. Jesus said: "For truly, I say to you,

until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes 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 does them and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven." Matthew 5:19-20.

This sort of teaching does not sit well in the church today, fixated as it is on God's "grace" at the expense of teaching God's law. We can only speculate how this modern teaching will be regarded by God when he identifies those who are least in the kingdom because they relaxed the least of His commandments and taught others (their congregations) to do likewise every Sunday for their entire ministry. Rather than pointing to the scribes as an example, Jesus said that one must enter the kingdom as a little child. That is to say with straightforward humility that is not hemmed in with exceptions and calculated philosophical defenses and understandings. Those who humble themselves like a child are the greatest. Those who teach others to discount God's law are the least. Matthew 18:3-4. This is not a simple "child-like faith" we are talking about. It is a robust faith that produces good fruit that is required.

The Scripture makes a distinction between those who are eligible to *inherit* the kingdom and those who *enter* the kingdom. Those who cannot *inherit* the kingdom are the unrighteous. But in this life the unrighteous have a chance to change and become righteous. They are then eligible to inherit the kingdom and may in fact inherit the kingdom, if they are born again and bear fruit, or if never hearing the gospel of Christ, are regarded by God as righteous. It is also quite clear that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven and that one must be born again as previously noted. 1 Corinthians 15:50.

Moreover, certain specific misconduct also renders people ineligible to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. Specifically people who engage in unrighteousness and includes those who are sexually immoral, those who are idolaters, the adulterer, the male homosexual, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, those who revile others, swindlers and those who participate in orgies. God says these acts will make one ineligible to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. 1 Corinthians 6:10. Ephesians 5:5 also states that those who are covetous have no inheritance in the kingdom. Those who turn from this type of conduct, however, become eligible to inherit provided they meet the other criteria as previously noted.

This is why conduct in this life is so important. Certain conduct makes one ineligible to even inherit the kingdom, while righteous conduct keeps the door open to the possibility of entrance. It 9 is instructive."touched upon the implications of this verse for modern church practice. t God' who are least in the kningdom.is actually very simple when you think about it. Those who enter through the door into the kingdom are those who are born again and do the will of God rather than merely talking about it. They are the humble who supplement their faith with righteous conduct and bear fruit. 2 Peter 1:5-11. This is why we should "make every effort to supplement our faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love."

6. Who Is the Least and Who is the Greatest In The Kingdom of Heaven?

Jesus tells us that among those born of women there is none greater in the world than John the Baptist. We also know that John the Baptist was given the Holy Spirit in his mother's womb. Yet, of John the Baptist, while being the greatest in the history of the world, Jesus says that he is the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. It is difficult to understand how this can be, but Jesus says this is so. Perhaps it may help in accepting it by recognizing that citizens of the kingdom will not have bodies of flesh *and blood*, but rather of flesh *and bone*. Those bodies of flesh and bone will be like the angels, though will not be angels. Luke 24:39; Matthew 22:30.

Perhaps the playing field will be more level in the Kingdom because John had the advantage of being born with the Holy Spirit while all others did not. Yet, in the Kingdom of Heaven both John and each one that is in the kingdom will have these new bodies. Interestingly, these bodies will be eating bread and drinking wine, though we also know that the Kingdom of Heaven is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness. Romans 14:17.

Another indication of those who are the least and those who are the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven was described in Matthew. Here Jesus declares that those who follow the law and teach others also the law of God will be the greatest in the kingdom. On the other hand, those that set aside the law, or diminish the law or simply ignore the law and teach others the same are considered the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. We have previously touched upon the unfortunate implications of this verse for modern church teaching which ignores the law of God or worse, declares it is no longer applicable.

Likewise, those who use their talents are rewarded in the kingdom with more talents. They are given positions of greatness over many cities. Luke references the parable of talents alluding to the Kingdom where faithful servants were given authority over five and ten cities. But those in this world that don't use their talents will lose *all of them* in the next world. They will rule over nothing and may even find themselves excluded from the kingdom. Luke 19:17-20. It is the righteous who will shine in the kingdom and we are admonished to train for the kingdom in this life. Matthew 25:28-29 is instructive. "So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away."

Likewise those who are virtuous and their day to day living reflects their virtues which supplements their faith (as 2 Peter 1 declares) shall be greater in the kingdom than those who pay no attention to adding virtue to their faith. Here is how it is put: "For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

By supplementing faith in this way we can be rich when we enter the Kingdom of Heaven. But

only those who are born again will enter the Kingdom.

7. What Kingdom Is Your Church Actually Preparing You For?

We may pause here from our discussion about the particulars of the Kingdom of Heaven to address some immediate and pressing considerations. Is your church preparing you for the Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom of Hell, or the earthly Kingdom of Your Pastor? Don't be offended by the question.

Having discussed who is eligible to inherit the kingdom, who is in the kingdom, who is not in the kingdom, and who is the least and the greatest in the kingdom, a normal person will be evaluating their situation to know how they stack up. But what about your pastor? Will he be doing likewise? There are several church implications for all of the foregoing.

To begin with, we are all admonished to first seek the Kingdom of Heaven and His righteousness. Matthew 6:33. This stands in sharp contrast to modern church teaching which stresses evangelism and discipleship as the first and in many cases, the only or exclusive purpose of congregating or meeting. If the church you attend is serious about following Jesus and his teaching regarding the Kingdom of Heaven, then it should be reflecting the idea of seeking that kingdom throughout its programs.

The second point involves the use of God-given talents. We read that those with talents that are used on earth will receive more in the Kingdom of Heaven and those who did not use them will have them taken away. Thus, the church, in order to encourage people to be great in the kingdom, should be encouraging the use of their talents. Is that what happens in your church on Sunday or any other time? If not, why not? Do your church leaders not want you to be great in the kingdom? Do they really know anything about the Kingdom of Heaven? The wise seek answers and if none are to be found, then leave that place barren as you found it.

It has been suggested that spiritual gifts are like talents. We know from Romans 11:29 that the "gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." Romans 12:6 affirms that even though our gifts "differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them." Gifts are given by God to be used. You must judge for yourself if the exercise of spiritual gifts serves an immediate church or kingdom purpose. In either case, however, spiritual gifts should be taught and encouraged, not as the distraction as is common, but rather to increase faith and with it righteousness and good fruit.

If your church does not believe in spiritual gifts or does not encourage you to develop your own spiritual gift, can it be said that your church is assisting you to become great in this life or the kingdom to come? Such a church is herding you into the mediocre life of either not entering the kingdom or being ranked near the bottom. Consider talking to your board of elders or pastor about refocusing the church's programs in the direction of talents and gifts.

A third important element which ought to be reflected in church life is the teaching of the law of God. As noted previously, those who teach the law are greater in the kingdom. In addition, "every scribe who has been trained for the Kingdom of Heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out

of his treasure what is new and what is old." Are you being trained for the Kingdom? What is your church teaching about the laws of God that govern all mankind (we are not referring to the laws specifically applicable to Israel as a nation)? Are they teaching God's laws do not apply or have been superseded by "grace," or that learning about the laws of God are merely optional? If so then your church is really keeping you low on the kingdom totem pole. Jesus says these scholars and leaders will be least in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Thus, if you attend such a church and neither its pastors nor teachers teach the law of God, or they teach that "grace" has superseded all the laws of God, then know this – you and your pastor will be among the least in the Kingdom.

Perhaps a fourth element or implication for the church of the foregoing is that there needs to be teaching about righteousness. This means that your church should be identifying the sins of those who cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. It ought to also be discussing the virtues of supplementing one's faith as described in 2 Peter. This includes an emphasis on wisdom and all of its fruit. If your church is not warning you to avoid unrighteousness or not teaching you how to be righteous, then it is not really doing its job. Nor is it likely that you can change the leadership. For your own future's sake and the sake of your family, you will need to undertake these purposes though independent study if you cannot find a body of believers that considers these matters. Why stay if it is not preparing you for the kingdom? Otherwise, you are consigned to a life of mediocrity in the next life to come by your own choice.

A fifth and additional ministry the church should be focused on is healing and casting out demons if there are any among that body with this gift. These are essentially signs that the kingdom is coming and Jesus talked about them in Matthew 12 and Luke 9. The church that engages in these types of activity is one that shows the unbeliever what is to come. Jesus specifically gave his disciples this authority. Perhaps he will give that *authority* to you if you ask? Perhaps not if you can't be trusted to use it except to enrich yourself or go on television.

Finally, the church should be proclaiming the Kingdom of Heaven. That was the message of Jesus, the founder of the church. Is it too much to ask that the church follow its own founder? There are many examples in the book of Acts where the apostles and those noted there, essentially proclaimed the kingdom.

Thus, at the end of the day the church has a clear mission, and it's not evangelism only, nor is it evangelism first and foremost. The churches' first and foremost duty is to train others for life in the kingdom. Matthew 13:52. This means teaching the law of God. This means teaching about talents and spiritual gifts. This means teaching about humility in action and righteous conduct and avoiding unrighteous conduct. It means calling sin, sin and virtue, virtue. It means using one's authority to heal and cast out demons. This is true discipleship.

While no local church is perfect, the church that understands these tasks is a church that is going to help you in this life and as Jesus says, in the next life to come in his kingdom--the Kingdom of Heaven. The church that specializes in potluck dinners and ceremonies and traditions of men, the church that specializes in evangelism for evangelism sake and discipleship that cannot get past the

milk of the word, is not training you for the Kingdom of Heaven at all, or is merely training you live in the Kingdom of Heaven on the lowest possible rung.

Don't let the clergy deceive you about how great their mission and ministry is if they're not doing the things discussed herein. They run the risk of being the ones unto who God says, "I never knew you" or "You didn't teach these things so you're the least in the kingdom." It is your job not to be dragged down with them and their mediocre teachings on a variety of other issues. It is your job to figure out and decide what's best for you in keeping with the commands of God to prepare yourself for the coming kingdom. Whatever you do, avoid entering the Kingdom of Hell with your thoughtless friends. Strive to also avoid expending your strength in the few days you have, serving in this life on earth in the Little Church Kingdom of your Pastor. Your pastor's Kingdom will pass away.

8. *The Battle Of Armageddon Is The Start Of The Kingdom of Christ.*

Returning to our discussion of the coming Kingdom and what precedes it chronologically, we see that war, not love will initiate the Kingdom of Christ. Let us recall the context of Jesus' return. His return is timed precisely at that moment in history, on that one day, yes a 24-hour day, in which the kings of the earth and all their great generals have collectively amassed the greatest army the world has ever seen. This army has but one purpose. That purpose is to attack and destroy the remnant of God's people, Jew and Gentile on the face of the earth. This means that the battle will be a worldwide battle from one end of the earth to the other and not just located in one central place. But the main battle will be at a physical place in northern Israel called Armageddon, and it will affect or encompass the whole earth. Jeremiah 25:32-34.

Nevertheless, it will also be a battle for control of Jerusalem ultimately but will take place in northern Israel. Ezekiel 39:17-20. Remember, the Kings of the earth are doing the bidding of the Antichrist. His corrupt reach is worldwide. The military empires of the world are at his disposal and this is the Antichrist's idea of the final assault upon the people of God and the nation of Israel to destroy them and it once and for all, and wipe them and it and every vestige of them both from the face of the earth. All of the military might of the kingdoms of the earth have been amassed for this very purpose.

Suddenly Jesus appears in the sky. He is coming in the clouds. Every eye shall see him. This is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is riding on a white horse and the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen white and pure, are following him on white horses. This means those throughout the entire world will see him, and his armies. The Saints will not fight. How this is physically or technologically possible? No one can say, but the Scripture says every eye will see him in the heavens, not on television. It is a worldwide event. He has summoned forth from the grave the righteous and the believers who are dead and whom he has made alive again and given new immortal bodies. The peoples and leaders of the earth see this. Their natural reaction would be fear but they have seen the Antichrist do all sorts of things like this on television and in the movies.

Jesus looks out over the horizon and sees this massive military army set up on the plain around

in northern Israel, reputed to be the valley of Jezreel. The armies of the earth in their various tactical locations look up and see Jesus and his summoned followers, now alive. Does this shock them? Does this strike fear in their hearts? This is not their first engagement. Perhaps they are not impressed by this sight. After all they've seen the Antichrist do miracles. They have seen the Antichrist do all kinds of miraculous and unusual things. So Jesus merely appearing in the clouds on a horse may not strike fear. Not only that, he hasn't taken up any defensive position. He is advancing in the open without cover. Plus all of his followers lined up behind Jesus don't have any weapons. This will be viewed as just another tactical blunder by Jesus. The armies of the earth probably believe their guy can kill this guy. They have Special Forces. They have troops, they have planes, tanks and artillery. They have cavalry too. What does Jesus have, two angels and a bunch of civilians? The armies of the earth may not be impressed, at least not yet.

The war now begins. Jesus makes the first and only move. Jesus opens his mouth to launch his campaign. It is the words of his mouth that kill the armies of men worldwide or result in their deaths. The angels of death swing their sickles wide to harvest the living. The battle at Armageddon is over. The battle over the nation of Israel in the Middle East is likewise concluded. The blood of that battle alone flows as high as a horse's bridle for 184 miles. Where is this river of blood flowing? The Mediterranean Sea is only 25 miles or so from the valley of Jezreel where the battle at Armageddon is supposed to take place. See Revelation 14:20. Topographically it may be that the river of blood runs toward the Jordon and down into the Dead Sea rather than over to Haifa and into the Mediterranean.

The slaughter is so great that God calls it's a "great sacrificial feast on the mountains of Israel" and sends the birds to "eat flesh and drink blood." Ezekiel 39:17. All the birds will be gorged with the human flesh that has been destroyed. Revelation 19:17-21. They will eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great." All of these were gathered to make war against Jesus and against his army. It is an utter defeat for the Kings of the earth. It is annihilation.

If you can grasp it, you would see that such a military slaughter would now strike fear and terror into the hearts of the peoples of all nations. Their political leaders would stand there dumbfounded. At some point somebody will say: "What's next? Maybe Jesus will come to our country and destroy everyone here too?" That is the time when Jesus could offer a peace treaty. That is the time when Jesus could propose to the political leaders of the earth that God is in charge. The kings may be informed that Jesus will set up his earth civil government and govern all the nations with justice as their King, by their consent. Consent will likely be granted considering the alternatives. This is speculation of course.

9. *What Will Happen After The War?*

After the war, Jesus will turn to the administration of his worldwide civil government. After war, comes peace. What will the followers of Jesus Christ with their incorruptible bodies actually do during the millennial kingdom of Christ? The best guess at its most simple level is that they will work. Let us remember the context. The armies of the world have just been destroyed. The dead are piled everywhere. Much of the infrastructure has been destroyed by earthquakes. Many of the

technological advances of men have also been destroyed or ruined. The earth population has been decimated. There's a lot of cleaning up to do. There are a lot of new things to be built.

The people who will undertake these tasks will need someone to show them how it is to be done according to the legal and policy directives issued by Jesus in connection with his civil government. There will also be laws to enforce and courts to be administered. Marriage, giving in marriage, family and children, parent based education, the ownership of land, agriculture, trade and industry, worldwide commerce, all these things will continue for those with human bodies. Those with immortal bodies will not enter into marriage and will not bear children. We cannot here undertake an enumeration of everything that must be done. We can analogize in some ways to things that are currently being undertaking by the civil governments of the world to the extent they actually seek to govern according to the immutable laws of justice. But let us not get ahead of ourselves.

After the war is over, who will be alive in the millennial kingdom and what will be the state of affairs?

10. Who Will Be Resurrected to Reign in The Millennial Kingdom?

We have touched on who will be present in the Kingdom with Jesus. Let us pay closer attention to the details. As Jesus descends from heaven to earth he will call the dead from the grave to join him in the First Resurrection. Does this include all of the dead from the beginning of the world? No. These are not all the dead but only those dead who at the time of their death were Christians, meaning they believed that Jesus was the son of God and accepted his offer of eternal life. We speak generally here. Also included among this group are those that lived prior to the time of Jesus whom God for reasons known to Him, declared them to be righteous. These include Noah, Daniel, and Job as well as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob for instance. Matthew 8:11; Ezekiel 14:14. The group also includes those who were alive after the time of Christ and never heard of him, but nevertheless they sought out God and God declared them to be righteous according to His standards.

The rest of the dead will remain dead and will not live in the millennial kingdom. They will come to life and be judged at the great white throne judgment spoken of in the book of Revelation, 20:11-15. Those persons who died as the dead physical descendants of Abraham will not be among those who Jesus calls to life in the millennial period merely because they are the physical descendants of Abraham. They must fall within one of the foregoing groups to then be resurrected.

Once the dead are called to life in the First Resurrection, another group will join them. This last group is composed of those Christians who are living at the time that Jesus returns. They will not see death as the others have seen death. Each person in these four categories (dead Christians, the dead righteous before Jesus, the dead righteous after Jesus, righteous living Christians alive when Jesus comes back) will receive a new body of flesh and bone in lieu of the bodies they had or used to have of flesh and blood. Jesus says of himself after he was resurrected in Luke 24:39: "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."

We refer here to the "righteous" as those whom God declares as righteous who have never

heard of Jesus. What that standard of righteousness is we cannot say. If you say "This cannot be as only believers in Jesus enter the Kingdom." In such a case accept what you can and reject what you must but don't throw out the baby with the bathwater. Do not reject this entire article over this point.

Their new body will be their resurrected body compliments of Jesus who was the first human to be resurrected from the dead and clothed in a new body by God. That event set the pattern for the dead and living Jesus will call unto him as he descends to the earth. This group will not face the second judgment at the great white throne judgment and the new bodies which they have been given will be immortal. More importantly, the new bodies given to the former dead and now resurrected and living people will be incorruptible. Pslam 16:10. Acts 2:31.

This group will be citizens of the kingdom of Christ. Philippians 3:20-21 declares "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself." What does this citizenship signify? It means that we will have the right and authority to be stewards appointed by Jesus Christ in the administration of his worldwide civil government. Christ will operate his government from the capital located in Jerusalem.

Finally, those who survived the tribulation period and the war at Armageddon and have not died will also be alive. They will remain in their old body of flesh and blood. They will continue to marry and bear children and populate the earth, taking dominion along the way as does all mankind in the present age.

11. By What Authority Will Jesus Govern Israel And The Nations?

In one capacity Jesus will sit on the throne of David as its rightful heir and he will govern the reconstituted nation of Israel according to the laws laid down by God through Moses. Speculation may lead to the view that the actual public servants administering the government of Jesus with regard to the nation of Israel alone will be composed only of biological Jews resurrected at Christ's coming.

So too we speculate that the administration of all the other kingdoms of the earth through the worldwide civil government of Jesus Christ may be assigned to Gentiles resurrected at Christ's coming. Christ will rule the nations not because he has authority to do so as the son of David, as such authority is only limited to the governance of Israel. He will rule the nations either because of a treaty or covenant yet to come in which the kingdoms of the earth agree with Christ, acknowledge their military defeat, and recognize his civil government as their sovereign.

Now you might ask how or why the nations of the earth would ever enter into a covenant or a compact with Jesus Christ recognizing his authority to govern the nations of the earth during the millennial kingdom period. That is a good question. Remember, that when Jesus is given the throne to begin the new millennial age, the state of the earth will be grim. Most of the major cities of the world will have been already been reduced to rubble, destroyed by earthquakes and hailstorms. The arable land will have been destroyed by pestilence. The food supply will be severely diminished.

Business and agriculture will have come to a grinding halt. The military-industrial complex will be bankrupt and out of business. The economy of the world will be ruined and every insurance company either bankrupt or out of business. Wall street will be no more. Facebook and Google gone.

God himself will have already executed His judgment of death upon at least one half of the earth's population. That is a lot of people not paying their cell phone bill. He will have rendered useless, damaged or destroyed most of the things of man. His inventions, technology, and personal property which he created and idolized are ruined. God will also have reshaped, repurposed and reclaimed for His Son's particular Kingdom use, the face of the earth itself, meaning the physical land. He will reshape the earth's geography though earthquakes hail and blood, and other expressions of His divine will. He is preparing the people and the earth for His Son's reign as both the King of Israel to rule as the genealogical heir of David through Solomon. He is also preparing the land, nations and remaining governments of the world for the worldwide Kingdom of His Son.

As noted, this may be accomplished through national treaties between King Jesus and the governments of the other nations of the earth by mutual consent. It is plausible to reason that, after having their military annihilated at the battle at Armageddon, there would be nothing left for the nations to do except to sue for peace. The way of earthly Kings is and has been from the beginning, war, unjust wealth, and slavery. I Samuel 8. The way of the King of kings is truth and justice. Revelation 15:3. Isaiah 2:4 declares that: " He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

12. God Has Authority Over The Nations And Will Give It To His Son.

Revelation 2:26-27 states that "[T]he one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father." Here God gives authority over the nations to His Son to rule the nations.

We must remember God has authority over the earth as its Creator. See Genesis 1. He reaffirms this to Israel declaring "all the earth is mine." Exodus 19:4. God established the Nations in Genesis 10 by inducing the people to scatter across the face of the earth from the uncompleted Towel of Babel. He also said to Abraham in Genesis 17:4 that He would make Abraham "the father of a multitude of nations." Recall He said to Israel in Exodus 24:34 that He "will cast out nations before you and enlarge your borders." Acts 17:26-27 provides additional insight: "And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him." Ezekiel 14:12-20 indicates God is at liberty to judge any land or people with famine, wild animals, pestilence or the sword. See also Jeremiah 18:7-10.

God has authority over the nations because He created them, made them, and already has a covenant with the father of a "multitude of nations." Genesis 10; 17:4. It should come as no surprise therefore that He says He will give the nations to His Son to govern, to rule and to judge them.

Speaking of His Son, God says: "From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty." Revelation 19:15. Swords, iron rods, winepresses, fury—these are not instruments of advice or entreaty. These are instruments of coercion and force. Therefore, Jesus as King (and not as Savior) shall "rule all the nations with a rod of iron" (Revelation 12:5) and Jesus as King (and not as Savior) will receive authority from God to so rule. God now has such authority as the Creator and Maker of nations. He can grant that authority to whomsoever he pleases. Yet, if the governments of the earth consent to be governed through a peace treaty, that would be an acceptable means to legitimate His rule.

13. Jesus Has Authority To Enforce His Peace Treaty With the Nations.

Jesus will be fully authorized to use whatever force is needed to impose his laws, executive orders, and judicial decisions adopted by his civil government, upon the nations and over the other governments of the earth through a treaty or otherwise. Perhaps it will not come to force and violence on every occasion as in most cases people will understand the new order of the ages and accept it for what it is—to be governed by a man who was dead and came to life; a man who defeated the militaries of the world in a single day; a man whose father previously judged and put to death every other human being on the face of the earth and who leveled every mountain and raised up every valley and made the uneven ground level (Isaiah 40:4-5); and a man in whom the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and whom "all flesh shall see it together."

14. What Will It Be Like Once Jesus Is Given His Kingdom?

Though we cannot be certain, consider some other scenarios. Jesus will degrade the military industrial complex, the surveillance state, and the various alphabet federal agencies. He will render the Republican and Democratic parties politically irrelevant. He will abolish prisons and government control of education. Parents will recover the authority to educate their own children by their own consent. Families will recover the authority to exercise dominion over their own land, property and animals, as provided for in Genesis 1 and 9. "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease." Genesis 8:22. The seasons will continue under the reign of Jesus in the millennial Kingdom.

That means the curses of Genesis 3 will continue. It means that women who do not have redeemed bodies will continue with pain in childbearing. It means that their desire shall be contrary to their husband, but he shall rule over his wife. It means that the ground is still cursed, and in pain shall human beings eat of it all the days of their life. It means the ground will grow thorns and thistles. It means mankind shall work the land by the sweat of his face. It means those without redeemed bodies shall return to the ground in death, for out of it mankind was taken and to dust he shall return.

His civil government and kingdom means that agriculture will continue. It means the earth shall bring forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. The seas, sun and the moon and the planets will also continue during this time. The waters will swarm with swarms of living creatures, and the birds

will fly above the earth across the expanse of the heaven. The earth will also bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.

God will continue to make mankind in His image and likeness, male and female. He shall continue to give them every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. They shall have them for food, and they shall have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. Marriage and family shall continue, though not for those with new bodies who have once been dead and whom now Jesus has made alive again. Matthew 22:30.

Jesus may also elect to restore some form of the legislature, the executive branch and the judicial branches of the governments of the nations of the earth. This is speculative. The nations will obey the rule of law and do justice, not serve the corporatocracy, military ambition, material greed, lust for power, war or human hatred. Thus, politics as we know it will cease. The equivalent of these changes will occur among each nation of the earth, not just the United States. The United States is not really an important nation to God in fulfilling His plans. It may be simply one of the nations of the earth at that time if its existence continues. "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed." Revelation 15:3-4. Justice is the hallmark of His government. The governments of the earth will see this, fear, and follow His just laws.

The worldwide Church of Christ Jesus previously instituted when he was here first will continue but there will no longer be a need to employ the clergy or elders or utilize any corporate superstructure. "Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years." Revelation 20:6. In other words, the believers and the righteous will be priests and share in His reign. The vocation of priest or clergyman will be non-existent.

Radio, cable and network television will not look the same. The film industry from "A to Z," or in this case from Bollywood (India) to Zollywood (Zimbabwe), with Hollywood (USA) and Hallyuwood (Korea) in between, will also be re-envisioned. The things that will be the same, different or non-existent deserve additional consideration, but space does not permit further speculation here. Perhaps all you care about is if the bars will still close at 2 pm. or if your favorite sports team will still be around. Ok, at least that is a start. But who can say?

III. UNDERSTANDING THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IN THE AGE TO COME

The Kingdom of Heaven, of God and Christ—in New Heaven and New Earth

Continuing our historical chronology from before time, to the Garden of Eden, to the nation of Israel and through the millennial civil government of Jesus, we now turn to the end of the age. In Revelation 21:3 John states: "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God." John tells us

that God was "seated on the throne" and said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Revelation 21:5-6. There was no temple in the City—the New Jerusalem. "And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb." Revelation 21:22.

Moreover, in Revelation 22:3, John states that in the new heaven and new earth and its New Jerusalem will be the seat of God's throne. His government will be fully operational. "The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him." It will be a governmental operation. It will have citizens—the righteous of God. Its citizens will be shining bright as the sun with their daily civic responsibilities on behalf of the King and in the Administration of the Kingdom. The idea that the righteous will instead be floating around strumming harps or talking with the Prophets, Moses or Jesus all day is an unfounded tradition of men. Jesus will be busy governing.

In Ephesians 5:5, Paul states that: "For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no *inheritance* in the kingdom of Christ and God." Conversion to Christ can change one's inheritance status and make one eligible to inherit the Kingdom. Entrance into the Kingdom requires one to be born again as flesh and blood cannot enter the Kingdom. John also refers to the Kingdom of Christ and God as a place in which some are excluded. This is also affirmed in Revelation 22:15 which verse declares that: "Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood."

Here God describes a physical place in the future for His Kingdom with the throne of God and Christ governing the City and the nations of the new earth from the New Jerusalem located on the new Earth. "And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the *nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it,* and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life." Revelation 21, 23-27. Note the reference to nations on the face of the new earth. The kings of the earth will bring their glory into the New Jerusalem. This means there will be nations on the new earth with civil governments of their own who will bring the glory of those nations to the New Jerusalem, the seat of God's Kingdom and government. Nations will have populations. Not everyone will live in the New Jerusalem but the righteous will be free to come and go.

Many people often regard this Kingdom as being in heaven only, but in fact the Kingdom of God and Christ is located and administered from the world's new capital-the New Jerusalem in the new earth. It will be established in the New Jerusalem on the new earth at the end of the age. The new earth will be a physical place. The New Jerusalem will be a physical city. The nations of the earth will be located on a physical planet. The New Jerusalem's stunning and mammoth physical dimensions, gates, and foundations are all describe with particularity in Revelation 21:15-21. For fans of J. R. R. Tolkien, the Mordors of this world cannot compare.

CONCLUSION

For our purposes here, what is important is to recognize that God's kingdom governing the nations of the new earth at that time will not be a new or extraordinary concept. God has been in the kingdom business since before the beginning of the Earth. He governs the heavens as King even now and rules over all his dominions. His angelic agents and beings do His will as their King. His Kingdom is from everlasting to everlasting.

God has always wanted to live with his people and govern them since the first opportunity presented itself in the Garden He planted at Eden. He has wanted to live with the people of Israel and govern them according to their consent as a people of His own in the land He promised to them as a nation. He has wanted to live and govern the nations of the earth through his son Jesus Christ in the millennial period and has prepared a place and work for the believer and for the righteous to perform.

Are you ready to do that work? Are you preparing yourself now for that work in these future kingdoms? Can we agree that Christ talked about the Kingdom of Heaven, both the millennial kingdom and the New Jerusalem kingdom to come? Can we agree that because he talked about it quite a bit, maybe we should give it some more thought? Maybe we should be thinking about what we can do to prepare ourselves to serve with Him as He governs the nations, restores the earth to the state He has intended, and governs all of the kings and the kingdoms on the face of the earth during the millennial period, in the age to come and throughout all eternity.

Let us not throw away our chance to prepare for this future by thinking that since we are believers and saved nothing further is required by way of preparing for these future kingdoms. That would be a grave mistake, and a waste of the talent and the gifts which God has given you. You know best how to mature and develop your own gifts. Our hope is that you are prepared on that day instead of having nothing to say or offer because you never thought in this life about reigning with Jesus or service in his Kingdom. "Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years." Revelation 20:6. Are you ready to reign with him for a thousand years? Have you prepared yourself by studying the law of God and his standard of truth and justice? Are you able to do your part to establish and to uphold His government with justice and with righteousness, from this time forth and forevermore? It's not too late to start. It's not too late to understand our place in the Kingdom of Heaven, and God's civil government in the history of the world, and in the age to come.

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