

The Constitution Of The Kingdom Of The Heavens

(Often referred to as “The Sermon On The Mount”)

Matthew 5-7

Study Guides On:

- The Kingdom Of God And The Kingdom Of Satan (1)**
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Synopsis Of The Constitution Of The Kingdom Of The Heavens

Matthew 5-7

The passage of scripture in Matthew 5-7 is often referred to as “The Sermon On The Mount”. While this title addresses where the words of Jesus were spoken, we prefer to consider the words as His presentation of the Constitution of His forthcoming kingdom. Unlike the Law given to Moses, this constitution affirms He as the Messiah can and will fulfill the Law, but He goes even further. Not only so, those who know Him as the King after His resurrection from the dead, will have the kingly life dwelling within them. As the Life-giving Spirit, Christ becomes life to and in the believer. To respond and to live by this Life within them constitutes the believers with the source of divine life and the divine nature that will build an everlasting kingdom in and through the saints, the believers from the time the church was established, and continuing until the kingdom is completed.

This constitution describes what kingdom people look like when they are normal believers. The standard is far higher than that of the Law, yet the indwelling King will be well able to bring forth His kingdom through the communion and cooperation of those who will believe. The Law is about restricting fleshly and natural behavior, about ethics, honor, and acknowledging God. The new Constitution of the kingdom of the heavens is about a King and about His kingdom who become people who are not only empowered to keep the Law, but to become people constituted with divine life mingled with and lived out through their humanity.

In this study of the Word, we will see what is this kingdom and what are the details of its constitution. This is not a study about impossible standards and impossible living. It is an entering into His words, into His thoughts, and into Christ himself as the King who will be the provision to become individually and corporately what He desires. This is a study not about going to heaven, but about the King’s passion that His heavenly life be imparted into fallen men, men and women who are born anew into another kingdom on the earth. It is about the growth of each member and of the entire kingdom. The kingdom people become a collective testimony of oneness to a waiting, needful, watching world. This is a study for today’s believers, not on “going to church”, but on “becoming the church”, full of Christ’s content and practice in daily life in “the here and now”.

How can we realize this seeing, this receiving, this application? The King taught His disciples how and for what to pray. His passion then, as now, is that His believers pray “Thy kingdom come...on earth...as it is in heaven...” May we come to the Bible as though it were the first time we had read it, seeking Him, and positioned in our hearts to respond to the passion of His heart’s desire that His kingdom be furthered on the earth, now, here where we live.

The Bible is a biography of two supernatural persons and their offspring. It is the biography of God and it is the biography of Satan. The Bible shows us not only God but the issue of His life and authority, which is His kingdom. The Bible shows us Satan and the issue of his life and authority, which is his kingdom. Each life contains an authority and that authority is expressed in, over and through God's highest creation, man.

In the beginning, there seems to be no doubt God ruled over all things He created. According to Genesis 1:1, "in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth". In the beginning it was a wonderful situation, as it is when God initiates anything. Speaking of this, Isaiah 45:18 says "For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens: God himself that formed the earth and made it: He hath established it, He created it not in vain (Hebrew "tofu", i.e. "waste"), He formed it to be inhabited..." Yet, in Genesis 1:2 the scripture says "and the earth was without form and void" (Hebrew "tofu", i.e. "waste"), also translated as "and the earth became waste and empty".

These passages indicate clearly that after the first verse there was a significant change. What had been created to be habitable had become wasted and empty. Under God's ruling there is blessing and a habitation, but blessing was gone, and habitability no longer existed on earth. Comparing Genesis 1:1-2 with Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, this must be the juncture during which Lucifer rebelled against God, and considered himself equal with his Creator.

Under the authority of God, Lucifer had much administrative responsibility among the angels and hence he, with them, were under the ruling life in the kingdom of God. Through his influence, many of the angels who served the Creator with him also rebelled. In that seizing for himself a leadership of his own, he initiated an anti-kingdom, meaning not only did he rebel against the ruling of God but he commenced his own line of authority with himself as its head.

This seed of rebellion was re-established and advanced further in the garden of Eden. At that time, his infectious, rebellious, serpentine, poisonous nature was added into Adam and Eve. Although God continued His life and ruling authority, so did the Lucifer-become-serpent-Satan. By Genesis 10:9-10, fallen humanity had multiplied its rebellious infusion and Nimrod (representing the kingdom of Satan) became the originator of his own kingdom at Babel (the seed of Babylon). Similarly, Melchizedek was the king of Salem, (the seed of Jerusalem) and represented the kingdom of God with Abraham as the father of faith (Genesis 12-14).

These two lines grow from small seeds to powerful entities as the Bible progresses. By the end of the Bible, Jerusalem versus Babylon is the central focus in the climax of the last days. The two personalities, God and Satan, are both expressed in and through humanity. One humanity is redeemed and one continues in its lost and wasted condition. These two lines pass through all of human history, and earth is the central battlefield, with the two kinds of humanity being the means of expressing image and dominion.

The Bible clearly indicates that God has allowed Satan to have much effect as a power in the air as well as by evil spirits and demons on the earth. Currently, the earth is the dwelling place of two opposing lives and kingdoms. Satan expressed through the flesh of fallen man prevails in today's world. Christ dwelling in the spirits and hearts of redeemed men issues in the church today. The battle today is the world versus the church; Satan versus God; the kingdom of darkness versus the kingdom of light; and minds set on the flesh versus minds set on the spirit. Today, the battle is so intense. The world speeds on in its rebellion. The question is, how is the church, which is to ask "How is the kingdom of the heavens" on earth today?

Study guide: The kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan

There are two kingdoms in the universe, both of them focusing on the earth. Out from the life of God comes His spontaneous ruling authority, a place of life and light; and out from the serpentine life comes the product of his defiled life with its ruling authority, a place of death and darkness.

I. The kingdom of God

A. His life

1. uncreated, unchanging, eternal (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 90:2; Job 38; Rev. 1:4-8)
2. Jesus was tempted in all things, and maintained purity (Heb. 2:8; 4:15)

B. His domain

1. the heavens (Gen. 1:1; Isaiah 45:18; Ps. 8:1-2; 11:4; Is. 66:1; Neh. 1:1-5)
2. the earth (Gen. 1:1; Psalm 24:1; 25:13; 37:11; Matt. 6:10-13; Rev. 21:2)
3. the spirit of man (Zechariah 12:1; Job 32:8, 18-20; I Corinthians 6:17)
4. the church (Matthew 16:16-18; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5: 25-27, 32; I Timothy 3:15-16; Ephesians 3:14-19)

II. The kingdom of Satan

A. His life

1. created as an angel for service to God (Is. 14:12-17; Ezek. 28:13-19)
2. as Lucifer, fell into temptation, utterly defiled and defiling, re-named Satan (Obadiah 1:3; Zech 3:1-2; Matthew 4:10; Luke 10:18; 13:16; 22:3, 31; II Cor. 12:7; I Tim. 5:15; Revelation 2:9, 13, 24; 3:9; 12:9; 20:2, 7)

B. His domain

1. the heavens (Job 1:6; 2:1; Eph. 2:2; 6:12; Daniel 10:9-21)
2. the earth (Gen. 3:1-15; Rev. 20:1-2; Job 1:7-8; 2:1-7; Matthew 4:1-11)
3. the flesh (Romans 7:17-20; Luke 22:3; Acts 5:3)
4. the world (Genesis 10:9-10; I John 3:8; 2:15-17; II Cor. 4:4; Galatians 1:4)

For prayer, fellowship and further study:

1. Can you prove God and Satan exist? How do you know He/they do? If intelligence is the greatest attribute of man, why do some intelligent people believe and some do not?
2. What common goal do God and Satan share? (Gen. 3; Job 1-2; Rom. 7-8; Rev. 2-3)
3. How and when did God's kingdom begin and what is His ultimate goal?
4. How and when did Satan's kingdom begin and what is his ultimate goal?
5. How can we be freed from the kingdom of God's enemy? (Acts 26:18; Colossians 1:13; II Corinthians 3:15-18; John 4:24)
6. Why does our loving God allow Satan to have so much authority and still cause so much suffering on earth today?
(Ref.: "The Function And Usefulness Of Satan In God's Purpose And In Man's Suffering", by R.N.)

In the prior study on page four, we looked into the two kingdoms in this universe, each having man and the earth as its central focus. In this regard, we distinguished the two persons, God and Satan, and their respective opposing kingdoms.

In this study we will consider just the kingdom of God and one aspect of it called the kingdom of the heavens (Greek, "heavens", often translated to read in the singular, as in the King James Bible). There are not two different kingdoms. There is one eternal kingdom of God, but the book of Matthew makes it evident there is a period in the midst of it called the kingdom of the heavens. The kingdom of the heavens is the kingdom of God expressed in a particular way and time on the earth. It is the time period to which the Bible specifically refers begins with the birth of the church in Jerusalem and continues through the time of the kingdom age on the earth.

This thought is similar to having a male who is also a married man. Which is he, a male or a married man? He is both. His entire life he is a male, but only a certain portion of his lifespan is referred to as the period of his marriage. It is a period of time when crucial things take place, which only enhance his current and forward ability for maximum development as a male in accomplishing his ultimate goal.

In the same sense, do we speak here of the kingdom of God or of the kingdom of the heavens? Again, both. The kingdom of God spans the entire period under the ruling of God, but the kingdom of the heavens is a crucial period advancing His eternal purpose on the earth.

The kingdom of God was in the Old Testament, which John knew. It might seem that John (the baptizing one) was declaring the coming of Jesus when he declared that the kingdom of the heavens was at hand. Yes, in the sense that Jesus was introduced not only as the Lamb for redemption but also as the King in his forthcoming kingdom, and Jesus the King being the reality of the kingdom. It is crucial to observe, however, that Jesus quoted John, saying the same thing. Jesus also said the kingdom of the heavens was at hand, indicating there was something yet to come before it would actually commence.

Matthew writes of the revelation by Jesus to his disciples that He would build His church; but the disciples, of course, knew nothing of what that actually meant since it had not yet begun. In that same revelation, the church and the kingdom of the heavens were interchangeable terms, and Peter was told he would be given the keys to this kingdom. After the Lord's resurrection, and after he had breathed into them to receive the Spirit, he spoke to them of the kingdom for forty days before His ascension. It was the kingdom of God, and particularly of the kingdom of the heavens of which he spoke, and not the earthly aspect of the kingdom which will one day be restored to the Jews. In Acts one, this is made evident by their question and his response to it.

As to the keys of this kingdom to which Jesus referred, the Spirit used Peter to open the advancing gospel to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles. Those two keys opened the way for one church, the body of Christ, the beginning of the one corporate expression on the earth for which God's heart had long yearned and planned.

After the church was begun with notable effect in Acts, it was repeatedly referred to in the Acts and numerous epistles as the kingdom of God. As in the words of Jesus in Matthew, so it was in the following history and letters, that the church is the equivalent of the kingdom of God in this age. From God's view, the church is the kingdom and the kingdom in our time is the church. Many parables in the four gospels accentuate and clarify this point. Much needs yet to be seen, heard and practiced in this pattern. May the Lord help us to not look quickly past this marvelous truth in the Word of God, which in our time seems to be so hidden.

Study guide: The kingdom of God and the kingdom of the heavens

The kingdom of God and the kingdom of the heavens are not two different kingdoms. The kingdom of the heavens, of which only Matthew speaks repeatedly in his gospel, refers to the kingdom of God in its process of becoming seeded and practiced on the earth as the church. In this period of time, the two kingdoms are the same kingdom but specifically deal with the time period of the church by which the kingdom of God is seeded on the earth and grows to maturity as the corporate testimony of God, the anti-testimony to the kingdom of Satan expressed through fallen mankind. Hence, there is ultimately a replacement of the first Adam and his offspring by the Last Adam and His offspring. This planted seed will eventually cover the earth by the time the millennial kingdom is fully manifested.

I. The kingdom of God

A. Old Testament

1. From eternity past (Isaiah 45:-13; Psalm 90:2; Job 38)
2. Israel (Isaiah 45:17; Genesis 12:1-3; 14:3; 27:29; 35:9-14; Psalm 22:28
Hosea 13:9-11; Daniel 2:35, 44-45)

B. New Testament

1. Israel (Luke 13:28-30; Acts 1:6-7; Romans 9-11; Revelation 21:10-12)
2. John the Baptist (Malachi 4:5-6; John 1:23; Matt. 3:1-2; 11:7-12; Luke 16:16)
3. The church (Matthew 16:16-18; 18:1, 15-22; Luke 9:62)
4. To eternity future (I Cor. 4:26; 3:20-23; 15:24; Rev. 21:1-7; 22:1-5)

II. The kingdom of the heavens

A. The disciples' prayer (Matthew 6:10-13)

B. The eternal purpose of God (Matthew 16:16-18; Ephesians 1:7-14, 18; 3:9-11)

C. The parables regarding the kingdom of the heavens (Matthew 13:3-11, 36-43)

1. (#1, general sowing to all, no mention of the kingdom of the heavens; 13:3-9)
2. #2, kingdom of heavens having false ones in the midst of true ones (13:24-30);
and interpretation of the sown seed, its growth, contents, judgment (13:36-43)
3. #3, abnormal appearance as by the mustard seed in a field (13:31-32, 36-43)
4. #4, the "woman" corrupting the meal with hidden leaven (13:33-35)
5. #5, like a treasure hidden in a field (13:44)
6. #6, purchasing of the pearl (church) by the merchantman (13:45-46)
7. #7, like a net collecting good and evil ones (13:47-50; 25:32-46; Rev. 14:6-7)

For prayer, fellowship and further study:

1. Luke, Mark and John speak of the kingdom of God. Matthew also speaks of the kingdom of God, but primarily of the kingdom of the heavens. Why do you think this is?

2. If someone views the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the heavens as totally interchangeable terms, is that accurate? Can you disagree and “keep the unity” (Eph. 4:3, 13)?

3. Matthew 13 is addressed to the disciples regarding the reality of the kingdom of the heavens, yet much is revealed also about falsity, abnormality and corruption. Why, and what does this indicate?

4. Can you distinguish between the kingdom of God (physical Israel) and the kingdom of God (the kingdom of the heavens, the church on earth, as spiritual Israel)? (Acts 1:3, 6-8; Romans 2:28-29; Romans 9-11; I Corinthians 15:22-28).

5. Read the following essay on this topic.

The Bible shows us numerous extreme events that earmarked major progressive expressions in the thinking and purpose of God. For example, as radical as the Red Sea suddenly opening down the middle and making dry ground for Moses and the Israelites' escape from Egypt; as radical as the flowing Jordan River stopping to open a way for the prepared people of God into the Good Land; and as radical as the prayer of Joshua stopping the sun in the midst of the sky for an entire day, so also was the radical cry both of John and of Jesus exclaiming "Repent! For The Kingdom Of Heaven Is At Hand!"

As the Red Sea was crashing, as the Jordan River was flowing, as the earth was in rotation around the sun, so the events of culture and the daily grind of human living were in motion when John the Baptist came declaring this world-changing announcement. Do you find it easy to pass over this phrase in the Bible? Like most of us, probably so.

The prophet says to "break up the fallow (ploughed, but obviously unused) ground" "for it is time to seek the Lord..." (Hosea 10:12). As believers we may be like a ground broken up for the purpose of receiving seeds of life to grow a field for harvest, but like a negligent farmer we may leave the work undone until the ground appears useless only because it is unused, unprepared, unreceiving and therefore unfruitful- never more so than in regard to this topic at hand does this apply.

I hope the Lord will find in our hearts a ground broken up, refreshed in its ploughing so His words might have entrance like ready seeds in a prepared field (Psalm 119:130a; Matthew 13:19, 23). The phrase "Repent! For the kingdom is at hand!" represents much and we can gain and produce much if we hear the same thing that was spoken. The following thoughts are written with this hope in mind:

1. This proclamation was first uttered not by Jesus, but by John, the baptizing one, the half-second cousin of Jesus (Luke 1:36, of Mary and Elizabeth the mother of John). Luke 3 describes the coming of John preaching the baptism of repentance and preparing the people for the coming of Jesus who would baptize them with the Holy Spirit (positive) and with fire (negative). In Matthew 3:2, the baptizing John declares "Repent! For the kingdom of heaven is at hand!". In Matthew 4:17, the forthcoming King repeats the exclamation of John by announcing to the Jews with the same words: "Repent! For the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" Both the forerunner of Jesus, and Jesus as the promised Messiah, the Christ, made this declaration foremost in their ministries.

2. This declaration implies a major sea change in history, for it was the prophesy of Isaiah and Malachi (Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 4:5-6; Matthew 11:11-14; Luke 1:17; 3:4, Matthew 3:2-12) of a voice in the wilderness would one day come to declare this day. John was clearly the fulfillment of this prophetic marker. It is notable that the Son of Man quoted John in declaring this forthcoming event, and not vice versa.

3. John spoke of the forthcoming kingdom and baptized all who were willing. Even Jesus insisted it was necessary to be baptized in the river Jordan, (i.e. to be symbolically buried), by John. In His divinity, there was no need of baptism, but as the offspring of Mary He was made "in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:7). As a flawless man, He was even "made sin" for us (II Cor. 5:21); and therefore joined in the personal and public experience of pronouncing the first Adam in need of a collective burial.

4. The fact of this burial was immediate in baptism, but the reality of it was secured later on the cross by His blood (Hebrews 9:14-16). It is in this we find the reason and

must marvel at the stature of John in the eyes of God. Jesus said “Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist...” Not only through baptism did he terminate the old creation but he introduced the forthcoming extension of the kingdom of God on earth; hence the identification of His coming motion in the kingdom of the heavens (Matthew 6:10, 13; 11:11a; Luke 16:16).

5. John appeared like a wild man in the wilderness, yet he was the unique person for whom world history had waited for the centuries since Isaiah and Malachi. He was the means God used to “bury” the old kingdom, the Satanic kingdom, the kingdom of flesh, culture, religion and the essence and nature of Adam himself with his worldwide offspring. John was the means not only to “bury” the past and give the willing an opportunity to repent of sin, but of proclaiming the imminent conception of the coming kingdom age in world history.

6. The kingdom of the heavens had not yet come, it was just being prepared to come. John introduced it and Jesus confirmed the introduction. The fact that both John and Jesus said “the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 3:2; 4:17) makes it clear the kingdom of heaven did not begin, strictly speaking, with the coming of Jesus in the flesh (John 1:14).

Jesus would be revealed as the King later, but His kingdom did not commence until after His resurrection, as evidenced by the interchangeable use of “church” and “the kingdom of the heavens” in Matthew 16:16-18. The spectacle of this forthcoming kingdom was significant, in that the focus was not on God’s people going to heaven, but on the kingdom of heaven coming to the earth. To miss this thought is to partake of one of the primary strategic errors of traditional Christianity today, and thereby misconstrue or leave unexplainable and un-experienced a great portion of the Bible, especially the latter part of the Gospels, the Epistles, and The Revelation of Jesus Christ.

7. The kingdom of God is the ruling of God based on the authority of the life of God. The kingdom of God includes from eternity past when there was life over which to rule and to eternity future when there is no more enemy or opposing kingdom (I Cor. 15:24-25). The kingdom of heaven, on the contrary, is the kingdom of God, but it is the kingdom of God accomplished only in a certain period of time and in a certain way for a certain purpose. In the same sense, you may say someone is a male his whole life, but his role as a husband is for a specific time period and for a specific purpose in his overall life as a male.

8. Luke speaks primarily of the kingdom of God in its broad general terms. Matthew speaks primarily of the kingdom of God in its specific term of time and therefore identifies it as “the kingdom of the heavens” through most of the book, though not always (Matthew 6:33). According to Matthew 16:16-21, the kingdom of the heavens would be birthed at a later date. The later date was at the initiation of the church by means of the indwelling Christ in John 20:21-23 and Acts 1-2. In Matthew 16, “church” and “kingdom of the heavens” is used interchangeably.

9. It is after the revelation to Peter that Jesus was “the Messiah”, “the Christ” (both mean “the Anointed One”), that Jesus moved specifically towards the events of His death, burial, resurrection, ascension, indwelling and outpouring as the Spirit after His resurrection, to produce the church, which He purchased on the cross. (Acts 20:28; Matthew 16:21; Ephesians 5:25b-27; 3:10-11; Acts 1:3-5; 2:4; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31; I Corinthians 4:20; Romans 14:17; Colossians 4:11; I Thessalonians 2:12; II Thessalonians 1:5; II Peter 1:11; Revelation 11:15; 12:10).

10. Since the kingdom of God existed from the beginning, the coming of the kingdom of the heavens to the earth implied a monumental, progressive development. The focus no more would be heaven and no more just the kingdom of God as Israel had known it. It was the extension of mystical heavenly authority to practical heavenly authority expressed through a collective people inhabited by the God of the heavens on the earth as originally planned (Genesis 1:26-28). It was a declaration that Satan and his kingdom of darkness would be progressively replaced, not “in the sweet bye and bye on a golden shore” but here, beginning now in the midst of the darkness on the corrupted earth.

11. After the resurrected Christ had breathed His indwelling life as the Spirit into the apostles in John 20:22, He spent the next forty days before His physical ascension speaking of the “things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:1-3). This kingdom was initiated in full by the Spirit poured out upon the believers, clothing them with power for preaching the full gospel (Acts 2:4, 41, 47). This was no more “repent for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand”. No, the time was now completed for this message and this was the actual birth of the heavenly kingdom on earth in and upon those who believed into Christ and received Him as their divine life supply in and through their human living (Matthew 16:16-18). It was no more “at hand”, for it was actually initiated in Jerusalem.

Jesus the Messiah (the Christ) is the source, life, center and circumference of the kingdom of the heavens; hence, the forthcoming move of God included not only the inception of the church, His body, but of He himself as the life-giving Spirit after His resurrection to indwell those who believe.

12. After the birth of the church was completed through the events of John 20:21-23 and Acts 1-2, throughout the Acts and the epistles, the church as the kingdom of the heavens within the kingdom of God are clearly the same thing. The church is the heavenly kingdom of God on earth today. Unlike many have come to teach, the kingdom was not suspended until the Lord’s physical return. (Acts 14:22; 28:23, 31; I Corinthians 4:20; 15:50; Rom. 14:17; Galatians 5:21; Ephesians 5:5).

The kingdom of God has been in the past and will be in the future (Luke 1:33). The kingdom of the heavens is that time section of the kingdom of God which is the age of the mystery of Christ, which is the church, the body of Christ, the corporate expression of God in this age on the earth in preparation for the full growth of its life and domain during the time of the millennium, in which the earth will be fully covered and recovered by the full gospel of Christ through His body (Daniel 2:35b, 44-45; Isaiah 9:7; 27:6).

May we be enlightened and strengthened to grasp and enter into the reality of the kingdom of the heavens today, the church life as it was originally implemented by the accomplishment of the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Christ of God on the cross and in His resurrection, ascension, indwelling and outpouring for the producing of His image and dominion on the earth today as originally intended by God (Genesis 1:26-28; Ephesians 3:10-11).

This is a great advance in God’s eternal purpose towards completing the entirety of His heart’s desire through the kingdom of God, the kingdom of the heavens, the genuine, biblical church life in this age.

This portion of the gospel of Matthew is traditionally called “the sermon on the mount”. Although this “title” may not be incorrect, it is also not definitive. It doesn’t identify what Jesus, the forthcoming King, was specifically addressing.

For perspective, the gospel of Matthew is focused on the kingdom of God, which he makes evident to us, in the church age, is called the kingdom of the heavens. Matthew’s presentation presents a complete picture of the Lord’s gospel in this period of time. As with any proper government, there must be a standard, and a legal, verifiable means of acceptable content and operation. This is called a constitution.

Rather than referring to Matthew 5-7 as merely a sermon given on a mountain, then, we will think of it in terms of the constitution for the kingdom which Jesus the King is opening to those who believe in the gospels. This gives it definition, meaning, purpose and goal.

This portion of the constitution is often referred to as “the beatitudes”. What does “beatitude” mean? Webster defines it as declarations of happiness or blessing, particularly in relation to the “nine beatitudes given by Jesus in the sermon on the mount”.

These opening “declarations” by Jesus to the disciples indicate specifically what is the state, what is the condition of those who experience the life of the kingdom of the heavens. Although the principles in these truths are universal, these words do not apply specifically to the general population of humanity. Rather, they pointedly apply to the forthcoming kingdom population who will be indwelt by the life of the King himself after His resurrection.

To be clear, humanity is the basic and crucial population here. However, it is not a population that tries “to be like Jesus”, or gives itself to “self-improvement”, or strives to be “religious”, or is the means to give false hope to a natural person who hopes “if he is good enough he may get into heaven when he dies”. Far from any of the preceding items, this population to which Jesus refers is not only human, but it is a humanity indwelt by the divine life of the King. There is only one Christ, only one Man, only one qualified King, only one resurrected and anointed One who is capable of living out such a life presented in Matthew 5-7.

It is a great error of people, even of genuine Christians, to try to fulfill the life-demands and the life-requirements presented here. Any and all efforts inevitably and certainly end in defeat, discouragement and perhaps further unbelief. It is crucial to “see”, to “know”, and to experience that only Christ can live the life of Christ. But how? When? Where?

There is only one Jesus, one Messiah, one Christ, one unique Son of God; there is only one unique, life-imparting, Life-giving Spirit who is the Christ who can impart himself into a believer. It is this receiving of the Spirit of Christ into the human spirit of man that qualifies a believer as one who can begin to know, to practice and exhibit the life and nature of the kingdom people of whom Jesus speaks here.

It is not the King plus the believer(s) in an outward, objective way that constitutes the kingdom of God; as this is the great error of traditional Christianity. Rather, it is the King’s inward ruling as the Spirit producing a kingly life in His people that is genuine, practical and current. It is with the believer’s cooperation such happiness is produced in, through and around him as identified and defined by Jesus here in “the beatitudes”, which are the introduction of the constitution of the kingdom. These nine items describe those who would contain and live out the kingly life of the King in His forthcoming kingdom on the earth. Their nature is not merely human. Their nature is an uplifted humanity imparted by the resurrected Christ in His divinity indwelling them for their enjoyment and experience, now, daily, not just in the future.

Study guide: the nature of the kingdom people

In the first testament, the primary legal document issued in the words of God was called the Law of God, given by Moses to Israel, the kingdom of God. This document included ten absolute and impossible demands with no way for even the most passionate human being to fulfill them.

In the second testament, the primary document was the constitution given by Jesus to His disciples on the mountain. The emphasis of the Law was on civility to mankind and a life practice that restricted behavior and honored God. Even if the Law could be kept, it only described a testimony of God, not a relationship with God.

The emphasis in this portion of the message by Jesus on the mountain was even higher. It not only required perfection of the Law, but going further, described what a person looks like in his inward attitudes, feelings, views and intentions who would be a normal member of the forthcoming kingdom of the heavens in its inception, growth and practice on earth.

Unlike the impossible requirements of the Law, the requirements of this Constitution are even higher. The marvelous difference here is that the Christ who completed the Law went even further to make a way for His kingdom people to experience mutual abiding in Him as He keeps and fulfills the description of the Constitution in and through them.

I. The Law

A. Given to Moses

1. on the mountain, above the Sinai wilderness (Exodus 19:2ff; 20:7-17)
2. preceded by the loving expression of God's intention for Israel to become a kingdom of priests and an holy nation (Exodus 19:3-6)

B. Failed by Israel

1. their forthcoming failure guaranteed by confidence in their flesh (Exodus 19:9)

C. Fulfilled by Jesus (Matthew 5:17-20)

II. The Constitution Of The Kingdom Of The Heavens

A. Given to the disciples

1. on the mountain, above the sea (Matthew 5:1)
2. explanation of what kind of people would be in this kingdom (Matt. 5:1-12)

B. Fulfilled by Jesus and provided for His receivers (I Cor. 15:3-4; II Cor. 5:17; Col. 1:27; John 6:57, 63; Hebrews 1:1-8; 2:20; 5:8; 7:19; 8:17, 10-13; 10:10-20)

C. Described the new nature of kingdom people (Matthew 5:1-12)

1. ...poor in spirit...theirs is the kingdom of the heavens (Matthew 5:3)
2. ...mourn...they shall be comforted (5:4)
3. ...meek...they shall inherit the earth (5:5)
4. ...hunger and thirst after righteousness...they shall be filled (5:6)
5. ...merciful...they shall obtain mercy (5:7)
6. ...pure in heart...they shall see God (5:8)
7. ...peacemakers...they shall be called the children of God (5:9)

8. ...persecuted for righteousness' sake...theirs is the kingdom of the heavens (5:10)
9. ...rejoice when men revile, persecute and speak all kinds of evil against you falsely "for My sake", as with the earlier prophets...great is your reward in the heavens (5:11-12)

For prayer, fellowship and further study:

1. In light of this portion of the Bible, evaluate a bumper sticker that says "Christians are not perfect, only forgiven".

2. If the nation of the Jews failed in the Law, what are the possibilities the real Jews (Romans 2:28-29) can keep the Constitution?

3. Evaluate common concepts of believers such as:

- a. "We must try harder to be like Jesus."
- b. "Now that I'm saved everything is alright because I'm going to heaven and get my mansion there."
- c. "As long as I do my best I hope God will understand, especially if He grades on the curve like in school."
- d. "I don't need to go to church to know God; I can do whatever I want."
(Deuteronomy 12:8; Judges 17:6; 21:25; Hebrews 10:24-26)

4. The requirements of the Law were impossible to keep. The requirements of the new constitution of the kingdom of the heavens were even higher. The first document limited the sinful nature of man. The second document required perfection expressed through an imputed divine nature mingled with, and expressed through, human living.

- a. What if a believer doesn't "measure up" in this life; what about the results in the next life after the judgment of the believers?
- b. Is it possible to "measure up"?
- c. What is God's provision for "measuring up"?
- d. Is there any excuse for believers to not experience this nature and its life?
- e. What are practical steps into a lifestyle of this perfecting? (Heb. 5:8; Col. 1:28)

This section in the constitution of the kingdom refers us to the effect upon the world of those who live out the heavenly life in their daily circumstances. The influence the heavenly people have is very practical, very “down to earth”. It is spiritual in source and nature, and it is genuine and observable in its practice and expression. This may help us realize that anything truly spiritual is best realized by others and validated by others as an exhibition of human living out from a spiritual content.

The effect of the kingdom people is twofold: 1) salt and, 2) light. When the kingdom people live by the life of their King, their influence on the world around them is profound in these two aspects.

Salt properly used is a preservative of that which is edible, and keeps it from corrupting and rotting. In earlier days in this country when refrigeration was not available, meats and fish were often packed in salt to preserve them and keep them from decaying. When believers live a kingdom life, those around them feel the presence of a heavenly saltiness that cautions them against being further corrupted, at least when they are aware of the presence of the salted believer who is in the enjoyment of Christ; and who is in a peaceful mind that an unbeliever can only imagine. Salt is not only a preservative, it is tasteful. A believer who lives in the kingdom’s source of life is a testimony against corruption, but he need not be deliberately offensive. His living is tasteful, even as it exposes to the conscience of unbelievers and backsliding believers that Christ is real, He is enjoyable, He is present, and He is his personal Lord and King. All this he can enjoy without imposing himself on others. What a marvelous life the kingdom people are given to receive and share!

Salt preserves tastefully, and light is the expression of life (John 1:4), an illumination of that which is real, living and hopeful. Light exposes the darkness, not by effort but by simply shining. The kingdom people radiate a heavenly light from within their being that is Christ living in and through them. Their mission is not to deal with darkness by negative aggression but to enjoy the Life of Christ the King indwelling them. Who out from and with them is the shining to others around them. The shining of a godly life causes darkness to disappear.

When the kingdom people live a salted life, they spontaneously prevent corruption and heal the atmosphere and circumstances around them. When they enjoy Christ as the light of life (Philippians 2:15), the life of God is made visible and tangible through their daily speaking and living.

Being salt and being light to the world around the believer is not automatic. It is not like a free pass given to one who is born again. On the contrary, the life that transmits such an essence is a kingdom life, a life under the conscious discipline and standard of the King. To be born again is to be loved unconditionally by God; but the believer must grow and go further to become a proper maturing son in the kingdom. This is a vigilant exercise of loving, seeking and yielding to Him without regard for self, for plans or for future.

To be a proper kingdom believer is to be a believer demonstrating by life and by lifestyle he is under the authority and inner ruling of the King. His influence upon others ought not be out of religious imposition due to doctrinal understandings. Rather, he must himself first be salted. He must himself enjoy the life which becomes an enlightenment to others. To the hopeless, watching, needful world, such a believer and such believers do make a difference. To be a passive Christian and miss salt and light may assure eternal salvation, but the world in this age may never notice; but the rewards to the believers in the age to come will expose the difference.

This section on influence must focus on the condition of the believers, the believers who are exercising the kingdom reality currently. The emphasis of salt and light is about what happens when believers are constituted with a salted life and a life that in itself is a light to those round about them.

This is not about a believer trying to influence others because he knows he should. It is not about trying to be like Jesus as the Savior or the Lord Jesus as the King. It is not about anything of human effort trying to become kingly, royal in stance and behavior. On the contrary, it is about a believer under the inward ruling of the King being enlivened by the increase of divine life and by the indwelling in the imparted divine nature received at his new birth. It is about the living of this believer dealt with by the Lord living out what he is becoming.

When that life is exhibited, it is through his experience of his personal and corporate Christ in daily living. It is that spontaneous and exercised living that becomes the salt and the light to the world around him. This is utterly different than the traditional religious approach of trying to be what in himself the believer is not. This way is the way of enjoyment in the midst of obedience. It is the way of relief, of release, of liberation, boldness and purity of conscience both with God and with men.

When the kingdom people are themselves salted in the death of Christ, the life of Christ in them becomes light to the world. Hence, the King can say to the kingdom people in this section of the constitution “You are the light of the world”, (because they first died to themselves so they could enjoy Him as the rising life in them that through them cannot but shine out its authenticity); for as their Source, did He not say in John 8:12 “I am the Light of the world”?

I. Salt

A. The believer being salted

1. the first man put to death (Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:5-7; Colossian 3:3)
2. the second man given life (Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:4; II Corinthians 4:16; I Corinthians 15:22; Philippians 1:21)

B. The salted believer being salt to others

1. the effect of the death of Christ must be practiced (Matthew 5:13, 37)
2. the effect of salt in the believer on others (Mark 9:50; Col. 4:6; Eph. 4:29)

II. Light

A. The inward life being expressed as light

1. the pattern of the life of Jesus being light (John 1:4; 5:26;8:12; I John 5:11)
2. the believers shine out the light (Matthew 5:15-16; I Thessalonians 5:5-6)

B. The enlightened believer(s) shining out what he possesses

1. the believer lives and practices in the pattern of Jesus (John 8:12; I John 1:7; Matthew 6:22-23; Luke 11:34-36)
2. the shining out is both individual and corporate (Matthew 5:14; Rom. 13:12)

For prayer, fellowship and further study:

1. How can you become salt and light? Is this a one-time experience?
2. If you yourself are first salt and light, is it an effort to salt the world and shine on it?
3. Give an example(s) of being salted yourself, of enjoying Life and being enlightened yourself, of being salt or light to others.
4. Is the biblical pattern to seek light or to seek life? What is the difference scripturally and practically in experience? Can you identify such experience(s)? Can you speak it or write it down?

Among Christians there has long been a question about what to do with The Law, usually referred to in the testaments as the Law of God given to Moses, especially “The Ten Commandments”. Should we lay aside the law, for has not the time of grace replaced it? Should we live according to the law, or according to grace?

The law represents the testimony of who God is and what He is like. How, then, can we even consider the law might be no longer relevant? It also represented to His people what kind of perfection would define them as being compliant with His standard for His kingdom people.

As with many things, the tendency is to ask an either/or question and expect an either/or answer. Law? Or grace? I believe the second testament helps us see it is not an either/or answer: it is both. How can we suggest this? The question we ought to ask is not if the law should be abandoned in order to receive grace. On the contrary, rather, the question is, how can the demands of the law be fulfilled so that its fulfilled requirements might provide a righteous means by which to receive grace in such abundance that the demands are no longer an issue. The demands need to be satisfied, but beyond the demands there is so much more. The question is not *if* requirements of the law can be fulfilled, but *how* they can be fulfilled so that sufficient, and even abundant, grace can be rightfully and righteously enjoyed.

The Law is about behavior. It is like a measuring stick that exposes shortage. Grace is different, for it is not about objective behavior but about a flowing and receivable life that not only behaves, but supplies far beyond the minimum standards of righteous living. It is not enough to behave perfectly. Such unattainable behavior would not be enough, even if it could be acquired. Such a behavior would speak about accomplishment of a standard, but it would not speak about a life that transcends the keeping of rules while receiving with joy an even higher life-supply, a supply for not only oneself but as an outpouring of unconditional love for others.

The great error of the Jews was they actually believed they could keep the commandments of God instead of confessing immediately they could not and imploring God to be their Keeper. Therefore, they lived in the failure of fallen and natural lives that try to please God, yet having neither authority nor strength to do it. The law was given as a yardstick with impossible requirements to a rebellious people so they might see they could not match the requirements of God’s testimony in their own life, nature and strength.

Ultimately, in this defining portion to the His disciples, Jesus makes it clear that the demands have not lessened, and in fact must be fulfilled to the most minute degree. It was His perfecting work on the cross that satisfied the Father’s demands. It was the victorious resurrection that validated that accomplishment and became both the hope and the life-source to receivers of this resurrected Christ. The constitution of the kingdom of the heavens, soon to be initiated after His resurrection, would then have the means to produce a corporate humanity who could live in and by such a life. The demands of the law would be a minimum, and the receiving grace would match the demands with enjoyment, with hope, with sufficiency and with validation of testimony.

The kingdom requirements are humanly impossible. This is why the kingdom people must learn to live by the divine life and the divine nature which each one receives as a life-seed within them at their new birth. This life is for each member of the body of Christ, the church, the kingdom of the heavens, under the intimate, detailed and marvelous perfecting work by the King in this age. May we pledge ourselves to enter into this thought so He might perfect each of us in the accomplished and available grace of His life for His purpose today in and through the church.

The old Law could not be ignored. It had to be satisfied if the righteousness of God was to be affirmed and testified. However, the Law of the kingdom was even higher. Once for all on the cross, Jesus as the perfect sacrifice satisfied the need for righteousness of the original Law. Further, as the resurrected Christ, He would be enabled as the Life-giving Spirit to indwell the believers, and with their cooperation be their new source as divine life, divine nature and divine strength to live in, by and with Him in their daily lives. Such a life lived out individually and collectively not only meets the demands of the Law of Moses, but it goes further as a living testimony of God in the Body of Christ on the earth today in the church, as the kingdom of the heavens.

I. Christ, the righteous one satisfying God

A. The old sacrifice

1. Moses offerings of blood for atonement (Exodus 24:3-8; Hebrews 9:19-22)
2. Offerings were temporary and transitory (Hebrews 7:16, 19; 10:1-4)

B. The new and eternal sacrifice

1. Christ, the high priest, the tabernacle, and the living sacrifice (Heb. 9:11-15)
2. Christ, God's satisfaction for others in redemption (Heb. 9:23-28; 10:5-26)

II. Christ, the life-supply for righteousness in His saints

A. The availability of Christ

1. Christ being Righteousness in and to the believer (I Corinthians 1:30)
2. Christ indwelling the believer(s) (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 1:27)

B. The new laws for the kingdom people

1. the law of love (Matthew 5:44-45; 22:36-40; John 13:34-35)
2. the law of life (Romans 8:1-16; Hebrews 4:2; 8:10-12; 10:15-22)

1. In this passage of Matthew 5:17-48, the King said that old standards of perfect behavior were no longer the standard. The new standard would be the perfection of motives and thoughts in the heart that would nullify the possibility of secret, unrighteous behavior. Furthermore, the kingdom people would be characterized by loving their enemies, not just refraining from doing wrong to them.

What is your personal response to this requirement of the new law of the kingdom people? What is your personal experience? What is one specific experience you have had, whether seeming positive or negative?

2. Since Christ has fulfilled the old Law and become the Life-giving Spirit to impart the new law of life into the believers, how does a believer discover, experience and practice this?

3. Compare this portion of the constitution to the typical teachings and practices of Christendom today.

4. What step(s) do you need to take to enter into the spirit and letter of this section of the constitution of the kingdom people?

This section of the Lord's ministry regarding the forthcoming kingdom standards is crucial in that it distinguishes religious behavior from a genuine life. Further, it places the genuine life in the context of being in total compatibility with, and participation in, the King's heavenly kingdom on earth.

It is ever the lot of religious leaders to appear stately, godly, dignified, right and in pure motive. What better example of religious leadership is there than a man who gives alms, prays and fasts?

These needed parts of godly living also cater to the religious lusts of the natural man inclined to consciously build up his self-image before others. The natural man is inclined to live a self-centered life and seeks no interference from an outside force. To give and to pray and to fast is contrary to taking and to self-seeking. However, there is a part of the natural fallen life that desires to do good. It therefore knows it should give and that it should include God in decisions. The natural life, knowing these good things, is nevertheless limited in its ability to give and to pray without being impure in motive. Thus, the kingdom people should let God be their goodness and their righteousness, rather than living out of despicable self-righteousness.

Thus, the religious leaders are tempted to live the life of a hypocrite. They are natural like all men, but they have learned to put on an exterior which the supportive public recognizes and approves. They have not been radically changed inside to live by Another Life, but they have learned to cover themselves with an exterior supported by their natural concepts of God and by their degraded concepts of the first testament given to them in the ancient days. They love themselves like all men, but being leaders know they should give, yet they want to make sure everyone knows the cost of their sacrifice. Similarly, they would choose their own way to make it public how much they even pray and fast, for after all, that is contrary to natural tendencies.

There is a problem here, for God had provided greatly detailed ways for the Jews to live as the kingdom of Israel. However, God-given instruction to the Jews had centuries to degrade into this religious status, that of acting like God would wish, but living lives of utter hypocrisy in opposition to Him due to self-righteousness produced out of evil hearts. The constitution of the kingdom lays the axe to the root of this kind of standard, this kind of religious training, to this kind of self-serving, arrogant and hypocritical representation of the thought and instruction of God. This God-authored instruction, when degraded by religious fervor, was the source of their rebellion against the Messiah King and of His being given over to death on the cross.

This portion of the teachings of Jesus goes on to provide for not only the *need* to give, the need to pray and fast, but for *how* to give, how to fast, how and what to pray. He turns the disciples away from outward religious behavior to seeking oneness with God's desire to plant His kingdom of the heavens on the earth in forthcoming days among them. It is at this point He teaches them what tradition calls "the Lord's prayer". More accurately, I prefer to call it "the disciples' prayer". As that also may stiffen into a formality, let's think of it as the coming King's instruction to the disciples on how to pray in a way they may enter into the life and thought of God. Such a prayer puts away the natural life, opens the way to live by a spiritual source to produce a spiritual, heavenly kingdom on earth through a God-soaked humanity.

This prayer is the opening of God's heart regarding the heavenly kingdom coming soon among them, and it deals wonderfully with how to arrange their lives with themselves, with others and with God in order to be fully available for an absolute commitment to become genuine constituents of the King as His kingdom people.

All religious people know that to be righteous is important. Because of a self-serving motive, and due to the weakness of the natural life, religion is typically limited to producing the hypocrisy of a self-righteous leadership. Much to the contrary, the constitution of the kingdom of the heavens disallows that kind of righteousness. The righteousness in the kingdom is that realized by living in motive unto God with actions that confirm the motive. Such a motive enables a believer to pray, not about his image, but about the heart of God, which is the planting and growth of His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven already. It also enables and empowers him to give and to fast in the same principle.

- I. A righteous living unto God, not a self-righteous living before men (Matthew 6:1, 33; II Corinthians 9:9-11)
 - A. Giving of alms (Matthew 6:2-4)
 - 1. giving to others is fertile ground for impressing others with your generosity
 - B. Praying (Matthew 6:5-15)
 - 1. praying openly to be noticed strengthens feelings of false humility
 - C. Fasting (Matthew 6:16-18)
 - 1. fasting openly to be noticed strengthens feelings of false superiority
- II. A life for the kingdom (Matthew 6:6-13; Acts; I Cor. 4:20; Rom. 14:17; Rev. 2-3; 19-21)
 - A. Praying (Matthew 6:6-10)
 - 1. praying God's way replaces the natural mind with His mind and intention
 - B. Provision (Matthew 6:11)
 - 1. to be given to the kingdom attracts Satan's attacks against daily needs
 - C. Relationships ((Matthew 6:12)
 - 1. forgiveness God's way maintains a way to restore, renew and maintain kingdom living and serving together for His purpose
 - D. Liberation (Matthew 6:13)
 - 1. in being freed from the evil one, the kingdom people are empowered to live for the kingdom daily for the glory of the Father

For prayer, fellowship and further study:

1. All religions and many philosophical attempts at religion emphasize giving, praying and fasting. What is your experience in these three legs of a proper living? What do each of these exercises imply about one's lifestyle and purpose?

2. Compare the giving of alms, praying and fasting in religion with the way Jesus instructed His disciples regarding the same exercises. Are their two kingdoms implied here? Is it possible that doing good things can be part of the kingdom of Satan?

3. Read again "the disciples' prayer". Why is each point crucial to bringing forth the kingdom and practicing it consistently?

4. Compare the focus of "the disciples' prayer". The King of the forthcoming inception of the kingdom of the heavens said that they should pray to the Father "Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven". The entire focus of this phrase on the kingdom in Matthew is the coming from heaven to earth the kingdom of God. "Kingdom of the heavens" is used at least twenty-six times in Matthew. Heaven is mentioned many times also, but not once in the sense the believers will go there to stay, if at all. Why is this? Why does Christendom have such great emphasis "on going to heaven" when the Bible emphasizes the King's passion to grow His kingdom on earth for eternity?

5. Read the following essay on "The Disciples Prayer".

The Disciples' Prayer

Matthew 6:9-13

The history of God until Jesus came

In the beginning...God. Although God has always been since “the beginning”, to His creation He was invisible. It was a huge step in revelation when the invisible God became visible in and through the human living of Jesus. If you wish to see how God thinks, how He might react to certain circumstances, what things He finds important, how He addresses human needs, there is no longer a need to read the imaginations of great philosophers or analyze religious teachings, or merely wonder what God would be like if you could know Him. No, just look at the Jesus of the four gospels in the New Testament and you will see clearly the expression, the glory, the unfolding, the opening of God to mankind through one Man, Jesus the Christ.

The instruction of Jesus on how to pray for God's kingdom to come on earth

The life and teachings of Jesus changed the entire direction of human civilization. His teachings and His daily living were so powerful that people everywhere reacted strongly. Today, two thousand years later, even many atheistic kings and rulers of nations contrary to Christian thought use the calendar based on the birth of the Christ. During the years that Jesus was given to walk among the people on the earth, so much was taught and demonstrated by Him.

Consider the four gospels of the New Testament. Before the creation of mankind, God existed alone, except for the angels, but these books show how this mysterious God was reaching to the earth, to mankind, and to find a place of residence, a place for His dominion to be established and enjoyed through and with His creation. The gospel of Matthew, in particular, shows how Christ came to be King of this domain and how the kingdom of God would be birthed on earth.

He came to be the King, and that will become evident progressively. The beginning of the kingdom of heaven on earth didn't happen suddenly, and it won't continue to develop and be completed in the way legalistic religious leaders were and are expecting.

Matthew presents chapters five through seven as the Lord's description of His forthcoming kingdom. These chapters unlock far more than principles of human excellence or outstanding guidelines to human living. They unveil far more than merely high goals for living and working together in ministry with others and of trying to live in a way pleasing to God. No, this discourse is the foundational thought for how His kingdom would be birthed at the inception of the church; of how it would grow and continue growing, and what it would look like when it would function normally and in reality under the divine supply and authority of the King.

Unlike the rulers of the nations today, Jesus rules by loving and serving those with Him. He is not centered on power that makes the leader appear important. His focus is how to work out the will of the Father in a way that God is seen and mankind is secure and at peace. In the middle of His preparation for advancing the kingdom of God, He explains the foundational principles of His kingdom. Unlike the way of the nations in failed human history, he didn't talk about violence and the overthrow of competing nations. No, He spoke of replacing failure with a higher Life, a Life received and known and grown by praying, and then living out the prayer.

Jesus taught and practiced a life of prayer. His praying was not centered on asking for things or for asking the Father to solve a problem. His praying was His exercise of living by Another Life, by the Life of the Father. As believers, we ought also to live by Another Life. The work of Christ resulted in this provision. As believers we can and must learn to live by Christ as He lived by the Father. This discourse by Jesus is the only recorded instance where He informed the disciples with Him of how they should pray and for what they ought to pray in such detail. This prayer is the cause for what we ought to pray. Christ, as our applied life, is how we can accomplish, with and through Him, the goal of this prayer.

It is a thoughtful imperative, then, to consider His unique instruction of how to reach out to God by praying and what ought to be the focus and expectancy in these words. Although this prayer is referred to by some as “the Lord’s prayer”, it is more accurately a prayer for the disciples to take as a pattern for prayer. John seventeen may more accurately be called “the Lord’s prayer”, since it is the most impassioned, envisioned, conclusive and consummate prayer recorded of His own words. We think of this prayer in Matthew six as “the disciples’ prayer”.

This pattern of prayer given to the disciples of Jesus was so profound and yet so simple. It was composed of a single subject with three points. These points fully explain the entire practical way in which the will of God may be transmitted and completed in the growth of His kingdom on earth.

The disciples’ prayer: the kingdom and the needs of the kingdom people

The subject of this prayer is the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:9, 13). The Old Testament speaks much of the kingdom of God, especially as it began to take shape through His people, Israel. Many places in the New Testament indicate the church continues to expand the kingdom of God in this period of time. The Bible clearly indicates the kingdom of heaven is today the practice of the church life, (e.g., Matthew mentions the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven fifty-four times, Luke forty-four times; Matthew 16:18a-19a; 18:17-19; Acts 1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23; 28:31; Romans. 14:17; I Corinthians 4:20; Revelation. 11:15).

In order for the kingdom to progress in our day, the church people must have lives centered upon it. For this process to be practical, possible and powerful, various needs must be worked out. There are only three categories of things needed by the believers for them to live in a continuous state of yieldedness to the King for the kingdom of God to spread thoroughly throughout the earth. Although this is a broad and sweeping view, every experience of Christ as our life and the church as our kingdom living comes under the umbrella of these three items. It is important to realize that all three points are crucial and must be experienced thoroughly for the kingdom to be fully realized.

1. Firstly, our daily material needs must be met (Matthew. 6:11).
2. Secondly, we need to keep our relationships in a state of forgiveness (Matthew. 6:12).
3. Thirdly, we need for to be freed from the power of evil and from the evil one (Matthew. 6:13).

The kingdom of God, the subject about which the disciples ought to pray

“In this manner, therefore, pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...and do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one, for Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.’” (Matthew 6:9, 10, 13).

The words of Jesus in this passage open to us the very central thought of God. The will of God is the subject of the entire Bible. The will of God contains the deepest thought of God, and this prayer leads us into the thought of God and thereby into the will of God. After acknowledging God is our Father, we pray immediately for His will to be done.

This prayer is deeply related to the Lord’s charge in this same text... “Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). It is crucial we receive the revelation that the King (Jesus) said to first seek the kingdom. The history of believers indicate some have sought Him deeply and been spiritual “giants” and great leaders. Many of them have been so helpful in spiritual revelation, but the end is so often another division, another denomination, another independent church or free group.

The Lord’s cry is to seek not firstly Him, but His kingdom. Although this may sound strange to a traditional ear, it is the King who said it. If we seek what is on His heart, surely this is the most certain way to find Him in His kingdom. We testify strongly that those who seek what is on His heart will find Him deeply and intimately in the process. He is altogether waiting and ready to minister in a precious way to those who love the kingdom, for this is on His heart. This is His will, this is His goal, this is His heart’s desire, and this is the subject that must be grasped and experienced for the kingdom to be ready to spread over the earth. If, in the church-life we begin to seek the kingdom, this seedling will sprout strongly and be prepared to grow aggressively and mature in the millennial era, hopefully soon to come. Without a kingdom, there is no king. He must have His kingdom that He may have a place to be the King and administrate His domain on the earth. Through the church today His passion is that we pray and realize the content and power and planning in this prayer to bring His passion into realization and completion.

Our Father has a need: He yearns for His will to be worked out. His need is not out of weakness but from divine passion yearning for a humanity capable of providing joint participation with Him for His purpose. We, His redeemed sons by a living re-birth are commissioned to partnership with Him regarding His will. His unique will is that the kingdom may be established and spread on the earth, “just as it is in heaven”.

In heaven, the kingdom is established. Even though Revelation nine indicates the evil one, Satan, is not expelled in finality from heaven until the fifth angel trumpets, the kingdom is in God’s firm hand there and His passion is that it come in the meantime to earth, and that it fill the earth until Satan loses his granted authority over it. The Father desires that His kingdom of the redeemed saints, of the heavenly people on earth cover the earth as has the seed and race of fallen Adam for these thousands of years.

The earth is still under the jurisdiction of the evil one, and we must pray our Father’s will be done on earth just as it is in heaven. Although our position as believers is heavenly, our focus ought not to be on going to heaven. Our focus must be to pray from our heavenly position in Christ that the kingdom may gain a foothold on earth. It is by the practice of the truth and life in this prayer that He will be able to move through the earth until He is in practical possession, and displace the enemy’s hold upon it. Christ will expand His kingdom by this way through a church

that is full of Him, a church-life that expresses the will of God in origin, in substance, and in content.

Praying about the three needs for kingdom peoples' living

1. The need of material provision for the kingdom people

“Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11). Why should we pray about our daily provisions? In order for the believers to be free to dwell on the matters of the kingdom of God, they must pray that their daily material needs be met. If believers' minds were to be obsessed with fear that they won't have enough money to pay the rent or to buy adequate food, it would be difficult to have minds and hearts preoccupied with seeking firstly the things of the kingdom of God. Thus, the believers must pray their needs be supplied. If the believers are caught up in spending habits that consume their income by wanting and buying beyond their means, they are distracted from the peaceful mind needed to think upon the things that contain the will of God.

The believers therefore need to pray for their provisions to be met even as they learn to be faithful in not taking advantage of His faithful provision. Later in this chapter the promise to the believers is that if they will, in faith, seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness firstly, then all the material things needed for this life will be faithfully supplied by their Father (Matthew 6:33). To help us focus, we must therefore pray for provision of “our daily bread” so we can be freed from the nagging distractions of lacking money to eat and pay the rent on time.

This provision contains a condition. The condition is not conditional love: it is conditional provision. God never ceases to love His children, but His provision for them needs their willful cooperation for the sake of the kingdom. David affirmed this thought in saying that he had “...not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread” (Psalm 37:25).

As believers, we must therefore be liberated from everything that does not help us live for the kingdom of God more fully. We must firstly be liberated inside of our minds and inside of our hearts. We must be set free to be possessed by God for His will. A lack of liberation within us makes room to instead be possessed by the world, even as believers. It is to this end we are warned regarding the damaging effects of loving the world (I John 2:15-17).

To love the world is the opposite of loving the Father. To love the Father is to have our material lives be ample, yet planned and lived in such a way that we are free to center our desire and energy upon the will of God. The goal of our lives ought to be different than that of unbelievers. Our goal is to engage our time, our thoughts and our desires in a church-life centering on Christ in such a focused way that we move increasingly into the knowing and expressing of His kingdom.

This does not mean we neglect our jobs, our families, our neighbors, our friends and other responsibilities. On the contrary, our exercise of seeking the kingdom will bring us into a way that fills our practical daily living with focus, with completeness, with purpose, with satisfaction to a degree that unbelievers or uncommitted believers wish for, but can never possibly realize.

God has reserved the best of all things, human as well as divine, for His passionate kingdom-seekers (Mark 10:29-30). Christ is actually and practically the Way to live lives of peace and meaning and fulfillment. As we seek His kingdom first, we find Him therein as the Way, Him as the Truth we pursue, and Him as the one who spontaneously becomes the daily,

divine Life-supply for our human living. In this life-long commitment to His kingdom people, He has promised to meet our every human need...and He does.

2. The need of right relationships among the kingdom people

“And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” (Matthew 6:12). Why should we forgive others when they sin against us? The kingdom is a matter of relationships, not only with the King but with fellow members in His kingdom. The knowing of the Father is an intimate relationship, in a sense, vertical. It is the inner knowing of an earthly man and a heavenly Father. However, the bringing in of the kingdom from heaven to earth is more of a horizontal issue, involving the dear saints around us. The King and the individual believer is in a sense not too complicated, but being right and living in a state of forgiveness with those around us in the kingdom is not so easy.

The kingdom is composed of not only the King, but of all the believers, of all those who are under His heavenly ruling within them. For these believers to live as a kingdom of necessity means they have much contact in different kind of situations with each other. They serve and minister together, meet together, and seek what is on the King’s heart together. It is crucial, then, they be in harmony one with another.

We need to be right with unbelievers, but even more, we must be right with fellow believers in the church, with co-laborers in His kingdom. In order that we have harmony, fluidity, unrestricted mutuality and focus on the kingdom, we must be at peace with one another. It is therefore crucial we learn to exercise ourselves to live and practice forgiveness. Nothing forbids peace more than does un-forgiveness.

If we can not or will not forgive, the horizontal flow from one to another will be hindered and the progressing of His kingdom will thereby be lessened. In turn, the standard of forgiveness or un-forgiveness will be the standard by which the Lord conducts His relationship with us. Our horizontal relationship with fellow members of the kingdom therefore has a significant effect on our vertical relationship with the King.

Forgiveness is the practice of accepting each other in the same way and to the same degree that the cross and the blood of Christ testify that God has accepted each of the believers individually. If we learn to practice forgiving others and working together with them in peace, we will have the pure conscience and energy to focus on bringing the kingdom of the Father to the earth. To forgive another is to release any negative thoughts towards him or her as a member of the Lord’s Body. We must exercise ourselves in this matter, knowing the way we forgive others will be the way and the measure by which the Father will forgive us.

Yes, we must forgive, but humanly we just can’t. We may even be willing but the feelings linger and so do the memories. We dare not say we tried but “it” doesn’t work. If we must forgive, then there must be a way. The answer is not in struggling to free ourselves but entering into that inner place of rest where He dwells within us. In that resting place He is at peace and He is the One who can forgive through us.

Our responsibility is not to pretend we have forgiven when we can’t really make it. Our responsibility is to yield to the King, the one who rules and dwells within the spirit and within the heart of the believer.

When we yield our pride, our limited capacity to do what we know we ought, something happens. This yielding releases, as it were, a divine mechanism, a divine law in which He

spontaneously becomes not only our source of strength but the Forgiving One in us that passes through our willingness and our mind toward the one(s) who need our forgiveness.

By the cleansing blood of Christ, we can stand in the place of forgiveness, yield to Him; commit the situation, the person, and ourselves to Him, and then release it. Let it go. If the situation requires it, we may need also to tell the person he or she is forgiven. Whether or not the forgiven one accepts our forgiveness is not relevant. That portion is not up to the forgiver, but to the one forgiven. Once they are by us released, we are clean, and we need only to stand in that place of peace and kind ministry in humility.

We also may sometimes find it helpful, or even necessary, to confess this sin and our dealing with it to (an)other believer(s). This depends on the leading of the Lord's Spirit in us and the need of the offender or the offended one. Then, let it go. Don't introspect, don't self-analyze, just stand in the place of forgiving and of being forgiven, and continue forward positively, enjoying Christ as the fruitful Tree of Life and the fresh River of Life.

Though the feelings may remain, know that peace answers the accusing lie of the evil one, and stand in the safe resting place of the inner man. Once we have confessed, yielded and forgiven by faith, He is the One to work it out. Even if it takes some time before the feelings go and the memories dwindle, know it is done, and further experience will substantiate that. We are at peace to continue by faith seeking the kingdom in the peace of God with one another.

3. The need of being delivered from the evil one for the sake of the kingdom

"...hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth...deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom..." (Matthew 6:9, 13). Why should the disciples pray they be delivered from the evil one? To answer this, consider how this prayer begins. It opens by addressing the Father as the Holy One. Again and again throughout the epistles, the matter of the believers becoming holy is addressed. Peter stated that "the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation..." (II Peter 2:9); and to "...be holy in all your conduct, because it is written 'Be holy for I am holy'." (I Peter 1:15-17). In order that we as believers may partake of the Father's holiness in experience and in condition, we need to be delivered from evil and from the evil one, the devil, the source of evil who is the complete opposite, the antithesis of being holy.

The Lord here told the disciples to pray to the Father that they be delivered from the evil one. Why? For the sake of the kingdom. The kingdom is the living of a holy people living by the Life of their holy Father. Due to the completed work of the cross of Christ, believers, in position, are holy already. His work is done, however at our new birth it only begins. In condition, each believer must learn to take Christ as His life, as his Life supply by which he can grow into the condition of holiness, that ultimately matches the finished work of the cross.

For this, many experiences and usually many years are needed. The Lord kindly gives most believers several decades to ripen into maturity. The kingdom-seekers are the most blessed people on the earth, usually living long, even amid difficulties and sufferings living lives of peace, while the world bustles by...searching for it in vain.

To the degree believers escape evil and live by the divine life for such practical living, to that extent they may enjoy the kingdom life and the kingdom living. To that degree, the Father's kingdom of heaven is being implemented on the earth through the church's daily living. In this particular part of the disciples' prayer, we can see how great is the love of God for His children,

for His kingdom people. He gives us not only the right, but even the charge, to pray for deliverance.

Some examples and results of being delivered from evil and from the evil one

A broader look at the scope of the entire Bible gives us some perspective regarding deliverance from evil. Adam and Eve, Job, Jesus, Paul and the New Jerusalem provide important glimpses of this matter. A brief look at the experience of each one will encourage us. By these examples we may learn the importance of all disciples praying for deliverance from evil things and from the evil one, in order that each believer be preoccupied with the kingdom of God.

Adam and Eve. In Genesis three, the first couple were present as a single entity, composed of two distinct persons created to become voluntarily and factually one (Genesis 2:22-24; 3:1). They were a couple, they were two individuals, but in the eyes of God their name was but one unit, "Adam" (Genesis 5:2). In this situation in the garden of Eden, there were three parties: God, man (Adam) and the serpent.

Man was the subject of God's love and crucial to the completion of His purpose to populate the earth with a corporate man who would represent Him both in authority and in His likeness on the earth.

The serpent was in the garden, as it were, on probation. Lucifer had been God's ruling archangel in the universe and had been "fired from his job" due to his ambitious arrogance. He was under the punishment, the banishment of the glorious, life-creating God. Here he was in the garden of Eden existing in the form of a serpent and living through him. In his vengeful nature, he poisoned the man, Adam. He poisoned his ability to know God, injected him with a consciousness of his self in a perverted sense, and brought weakness and eventual death into his body.

Part of the marvel, the wonder surrounding the creation of man, was his appointment to replace Lucifer. Lucifer had much authority from God before his rebellion. After the fall of Lucifer, it was man instead who was appointed to bring God's authority and glory to the earth (Genesis 1:26-28). Instead of the archangel being covered with precious stones and glory (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:13-19) it was now the created man through His redeemer who would be the glory of God, and through transformation eventually become like precious stones, consummating in the living eternal city of God on the renewed earth (Isaiah 28:16; I Peter 2:4-9; Revelation 21:10-23).

Instead of Lucifer continuing to have great authority in the universe, it was Adam who was created to have dominion over the earth, representing God's authority. Even though Satan was given rule over the earth, it was Adam who was commissioned to grow into full authority over it and thereby increasingly displace and replace God's enemy. The more the saints of God live out Christ and thereby progressively bring the kingdom of God to the earth, the less ground the devil will have over mankind. It is evident that much remains to be accomplished before the Lord's kingdom is qualified to be in full assault against the ground of the enemy.

The serpent therefore attempted, and accomplished, a master blow by damaging Adam. With one poisonous injection he made the man unable to either glorify God or to represent God's authority on the earth (Genesis 1:26-28; 3:14-19; 6:5-7). God, Man and Satan were the three parties present at this crucial place in both spiritual experience and human history. Man was

placed between these two authorities. On the one hand, Adam was with His loving creator. On the other hand, Adam and Eve was(were) being pulled away by the serpent who tempted him (them), (Genesis 5:2).

Man was tempted and he fell, irreversibly damaged for a long time before God brought in His next stage of revelation, whereby man was not only recovered through the work of Christ on the cross, but was even enhanced in His resurrection.

In the meantime, man had not been delivered either from the evil one, Satan, or from evil activity which comes out of this evil source. The serpent tempted, the man fell and was severely damaged, as has his offspring been for these thousands of years.

Except for faithful believers, man has not prayed... “deliver us from the evil one, for Yours is the kingdom (God’s ruling source and domain), and the power (authority) and the glory (expression) for ever” (Matt. 6:13, Genesis 1:26-28).

Job. In the book of Job there were again the same three parties: God, man (Job) and Satan (Job 1:6-8). Once again, the two opposing authorities in the universe and on the earth, plus a man in between them. Here God gave Satan the right to tempt Job. Through it all, Job suffered immensely. Although Job learned much and received much marvelous revelation, the price was high.

Prior to the onslaught of the devil’s temptation Job was known by God as the most righteous man of all. Even so, how barely did Job escape totally falling away from God. He was the epitome of God’s honor and God’s endurance in a man, but few could ever suffer so intensely without yielding irreversibly to Satan, the evil one. Job was so strong and through God’s special supply was delivered into even a stronger place.

There is no shortage on God’s part, but the risk is serious and Jesus told the disciples to pray for deliverance from the evil one because the power of the evil one is great and real. It is immense and so many believers through the centuries have suffered greatly from onslaughts of the evil spirits, of demons and various Satanic activities including the temptation of worldliness. When it comes to this matter it is not time to be brave but to run. It is not for an individual to fight. It is a battle to be fought in the church corporately as members of the Body of Christ (I Peter 5:8-9; II Timothy 4:11-12; Ephesians 6:10-13).

Job did not choose to be tempted. God proved His faithfulness in sustaining Job, but it is foolish for a believer to put himself voluntarily in such a position. To do so is to tempt God, and leaves the man in an exposed place to be tempted by the devil, the evil one. It is foolish to ever assume we are strong enough to withstand the attacks of the enemy. The devil’s intention is not merely to hinder or damage a believer: it is to render him useless and ultimately destroy his function in and for the kingdom of God today, with eternal effects. In an effort to demonstrate the power of God, such a one may unwittingly reap damage to himself that will affect his ability to function for God’s purpose in the kingdom. Listen again to the pattern Jesus said to pray: “Father...deliver us from the evil one, for Yours is the kingdom...”.

Jesus. In Matthew four there were again three parties: The Spirit, Jesus, and the Devil (Matthew 4:1). Here the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted of the enemy of God, Satan, the Devil, the adversary of God and of man, the evil one. The Spirit was present as the speaking God. Jesus was present in His incarnation, God who had become flesh for all to see.

The devil was present as the adversary of God and the ruler of the world. There in the wilderness, the devil tempted Jesus in all points by which every typical man would surely fail.

But Jesus was different. Not only was Jesus the real God who became flesh as the Son of God, but He learned to live His human life by the Life of the Father (Hebrews 5:8). He chose to be weak in the same way all of His created mankind is weak, but He also chose to receive His Father's divine supply through His obedience to the Father for His daily living as a Man. It was by this He was protected and did not succumb to the weakness and its resulting death. He did not turn to Himself as the resource, as a typical, natural man nearly always does. He learned to draw on the Father as His source of a Higher Life moment by moment (John 5:19, 30).

In this, Jesus was a pattern for all believers. Rather than succumbing to the weakness of sin and its results, we ought to exercise ourselves to live by Him, by another Life. It is not for us to improve our life in a natural way. It is the progressive replacement of our failed natural life with His divine resurrection life that equips us to live in the church-life as the kingdom of God today.

When the evil one tempted Jesus, the devil acknowledged Him as the Son of God. That was part of his subtle temptation. He tempted Jesus in a way so as to pervert His standing in the triune Godhead; but Jesus did not answer Him then as the Son of God. No! Jesus said "Man... shall not live by bread alone" (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4). Jesus was there to be tempted by the Devil as a man, not as God. This is a great thing, that He faced and defeated the vengeful evil one as a man. Because of this, two chapters later He instructed the disciples to pray to be delivered from the evil one (Matt. 6:13). This is a wonderful revelation, because not only are most believers too weak in their spiritual exercise to live by Christ in total victory, but Jesus has already done it for us!

It is important therefore, that we learn to live by Christ as Jesus the Son lived by the Father. The victory of Jesus was due to His Father's supply, and the victory of the believer is due to the supply of the Spirit of Christ within him.

Jesus therefore charged the disciples... "In this manner, therefore, pray...deliver us from the evil one...for Yours is the kingdom..." (Matt. 6:9, 13).

Paul. Again, the same three parties were there- God (the ascended Jesus), man (Paul), and demons (Satan). Paul invaded the kingdom of Satan on the earth repeatedly. On one occasion a speaking demon said to another believer "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?" (Acts 19:15-16). What a remarkable testimony that Paul was known by the demonic world. This also implies some believers may affect the demonic world while other believers may not.

Although we see no specific reference that he was led by the Spirit to be tempted as was Jesus, Paul's life was in constant jeopardy in every sense of the word. He suffered the unimaginable nearly constantly. He was so strengthened in his spirit that he seemed to gain strength to stand even stronger. Paul's secret was he learned that strength resides not in his natural life, but in exercising oneness with the Spirit, not in a grit-your-teeth natural endeavor to be victorious. In his spirit, he learned to stand in the moment with the kingdom of God, based on what Christ had already accomplished, not on what he hoped might be done in the future.

Not many believers know or will realize such a vision and the demand, temptations and suffering that accompany it. Rather, the words of Jesus are precious, that we pray to be delivered

from the evil one. Many whom have treated this matter lightly have faced spiritual destruction in the midst of apparently good intentions and bold endeavors for the Lord's kingdom.

"...Father...deliver us from the evil one...for Yours is the kingdom..." (Matthew 6:13).

The New Jerusalem. As in Genesis three, the same three key parties are present near the end of Revelation. There is God, there is man and there is Satan. From the beginning to the end of the Bible, and in all the examples cited in-between, these three are the dominant characters, and everything in the entire Bible relates to them directly and/or indirectly.

We see Satan there, the evil one, who is no longer the little serpent, but the devil, as God's adversary, who has grown up to become the great red dragon. He is fat and monstrous with his devouring of humanity for so long. There his defeat is in climax and his judgment is final. At long last, he is cast into the eternal lake of fire, together with his wasted companions. God's gift of free will has prevailed. Although God's creation is for God's eternal kingdom, those who reject the Life and Way of the Redeeming King will not be forced into His glorious kingdom. They have by life and practice approved their disqualification, and join the place of eternal loss created for the devil and his angels (I Peter 3-4; II Peter 2-3; Jude; Revelation 20:1-3, 7, 10, 13-15; 21:8). After this, the problem of evil and of the evil one disappears.

Hell (Hades, the temporary holding place of all the dead) has been emptied and the judgment is completed. Those unqualified for the life of eternity have been resurrected for the judgment of damnation. Those prepared for an eternity with Christ, the Redeemer and Lord and King, have been resurrected, judged and rewarded accordingly. Hence, Hell is emptied, death is judged and they both, with Satan, are cast into Gehenna, the eternal lake of fire (Revelation 20:14-15).

God is there, but He is not the intangible, invisible God of Genesis one. He is the revealed God, the God who became flesh to be seen in His humanity (John 1:14). He is also the resurrected Christ who in and with His humanity became a Life-giving Spirit in order to inhabit His created mankind (I Corinthians 15:45). He has made a practical way for His believers to know Him intimately and personally and collectively. He is still there as the redeeming Lamb, ever the reminder even in eternity when all the saints are purified and sanctified, that it is He, as the Lamb, who purchased them back from the enemy's domain and corruption unto Himself. His love bent Him irreversibly toward mankind at the price of His own blood (Revelation 22:1-2). He spared nothing of Himself in order that He might love them, fill them, saturate them, and make them His holy, treasured vessels. They are the vessels made of earth, but they contain that heavenly Treasure, which is Christ Himself as the Life-giving Spirit, indwelling them (II Corinthians 4:7).

His passion consummated in the goal to express Himself within and through the inner being of His believers and receivers as the divine treasure upon the new earth for eternity. What a consummate glory it is! What a development of His kingdom's progression and maturity when John exclaimed in his vision "Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth...I...saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband...behold the tabernacle of God is with men! (Revelation 21:1-3).

Man is there, full of God and fulfilled in purpose. He is not the frightened individual hiding from God in the garden of Eden. He is there, not only right with God but reflecting the glory of God. This man continues to expand from receiving and enjoying God, whom He denied and feared before his redemption. You look at the collective man, still a myriad of completed

and fulfilled individuals, but they are not individualistic. None are lonely, sad, fearful or insecure. Each of them is the maximum expression of his part in God's creation, in the Lamb's redemption, and in the Spirit's transformation and glorification. They are individuals and yet they belong to the entire New Man in a fitting and completing manner, expressing their Creator, their Bridegroom, their Lord and King who resides in and upon and around them, individually and corporately, in His eternal kingdom.

Each individual, through the heat and pressure of life have learned and progressively practiced taking Christ as their actions and reactions, and have thereby in the midst of difficulties little by little been made into living, transformed precious stones (I Peter 2:4-10). These stones are not like heroes in the fallen Adamic life. They are gloriously metamorphosed and mature, but they are not for their own glory, nor do they wish in themselves to be complete for their own self-honor. They are for something bigger than themselves. They are parts of a whole. They are members of a body. They are for the building of God; they are glorious components as the bride and the wife of Christ as their Bridegroom and Husband for eternity. They are living members in the City of God. They are living at peace and in shared authority in the eternal kingdom of God.

You see them and yet you see the image and likeness of God. You look at the triune God and you see all the glory of His expression as Christ the Man, the Lover, The Lamb, and The Tree of Life in the midst of the River of Life, endlessly issuing out of the throne of God forever (Revelation 22:1-4). Man is glorious in his completion and God's glory radiates in His expression. The unity of God and man has been fully accomplished, and the evil one is defeated and dismissed forever.

How can we not be overcome with passion and joy at the vision of this completing vision, this glorious consummation in Revelation? This is that heartcry of Jesus with which the disciples were charged in the gospels to begin praying "...Your kingdom come...Your will be done...on earth...as it is in heaven..." (Matthew 6:9-13).

The Disciples' Prayer answered in its maturity and totality

Genesis and Revelation are like two wonderful bookends. They hold the beginning and the end of time together. In the beginning there were three little known parties. At the end, the consummation of these three, God, Man, and Satan is there. From beginning to end, we witness the trail of God's stepping progressively and victoriously, through time, with man in the midst of ever-increased opposition from Satan, the deceitful enemy of God and man.

The development of God's revelation regarding Himself, regarding His eternal purpose, and regarding the end of His defeated enemy is clear and decisive. Unlike the worldly stage, this drama is real. There is no dress rehearsal, only the ongoing development of a life and of lives with eternal results. In Genesis 1:26-28 is the view of man's participation in initiating God's kingdom on earth. In Matthew 6:9-13 and the parallel passage in Luke 11:2-4 is the charge to the disciples to pray for the kingdom of God to develop and spread on the earth as it is in heaven. In Revelation 21:10-22:5 is the unveiling of this accomplished work, the New Jerusalem which has come down out of heaven from God, glorious and total in its consummation as the kingdom of God on the new earth "forever and ever".

This picture in the Bible is very gradually revealed. It needs the perspective described here for the pieces to fit together. The Old Testament paints a portrait in symbols and prophecies of His long-term goal. The New Testament adds words to the picture of the Old Testament and

shows what it looks like when these symbols and pictures and words come alive. They are no more just concepts or prophecies or objective truths. The symbols have become tangible ways to contact and know the God of the universe in a personal relationship, intimately in His eternal kingdom.

In education, kindergarten, elementary school and high school are similar to the Old Testament. Physical and symbolic things are used to develop basic concepts and ideas. The New Testament gospels advance in spiritual revelation and understanding, similar to college in which more complicated applications are added that make the foundation of the early years applicable. The epistles continue in revelation and further application of revealed Truth as though they were a graduate degree. At last, like a doctorate degree, the New Jerusalem climaxes, with every maximum aspect of God's revelation, application, experience and demonstrative expression of the divine life in and through humanity.

The New Jerusalem is the full accomplishment of every aspect of the disciples' prayer in Matthew 6:9-13. The Father's kingdom is central, revered, passionate and wonderful. There, the redeemed and transformed ones of the new creation radiate with His faithfulness, for as now, so then, all needs are supplied by Him who is everything (Matthew 6:11). There, all human relationships are constituted as living testimonies through the way of forgiveness and respect, for the atmosphere of the City is nothing less than the Security and Peace of God (Matthew 6:12). There, humanity expresses the holy nature of God for it has overcome both the evil Satan and all his imputed evil things (Matthew 6:13).

There, in the New Jerusalem, the new creation imparted as a living seed into each believer at his new birth is matured in a God-saturated community. It is the full growth of God in man and man in God, and ought to be realized in the church-life today as a foretaste. Our practice today of the elements of this prayer are the seed-thoughts, the seed-learnings, the seed-growing of what will become full bloom in this eternal garden of God.

Today, our view and practice ought to be the living out of Christ from within us so to grow and become the corporate growth of the matured new creation. To know Christ in His fullness, we ought to experience Him in such a way that we will not be too surprised when we are in the Holy City in the maturity of His eternal kingdom. Coming into this eternal city ought to be a natural progression for believers, like stepping from one room into another one.

The New Jerusalem is the completed and matured New Man of Ephesians two, replacing the first failed man and its fallen civilization, and we ought to be in this normal, yet incredible, foretaste today. This thought and this direction and faithful practice will bring us into the kingdom of God in its fullness on the earth, "just as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9-13).

The living of humanity regenerated, restored and redeemed by Christ is the glorious expression of His divine accomplishment. The kingdom of heaven comes to fully cover the earth until Christ as Life is prevailing. The race and civilization coming out of fallen Adam's seed is replaced by the new race of humanity growing out of the seed of Christ, the last Adam (I Corinthians 15:45-49).

In the maturity of His kingdom, you see God, but you see Him in a corporate man that is saturated with the affect of enjoying His divine life. You see man, yet he is covered and filled with the Spirit that came to be Life and to give Life to the believers on earth. The second man, Christ and His living issue, is the new creation replacing the first man, Adam and his issue in the old creation. The second man in its completeness has become what the first man was originally intended to be.

The redeeming Lamb restored the loss caused by Adam's falling away from God's intention, and not only redeemed the believing ones, but further elevated His intention by lifting formerly damaged souls into transformed lives full of God, expressing all that God is in the kingdom of God. The vision of God is complete. To the believing ones "in Christ" enjoying eternity, He is simultaneously the "Christ in you" enjoying daily life. Christ is in the believers and they are in Him, presently and eternally.

The photographs and prophecies of the Old Testament, and the revelations and teachings of the New Testament, are now fully embodied in the transformed saints, and they in God. Truths have become their subjective experiences of this Life, and their living is fully the expression of Truth. To all in a glorious, maximal, universal dimension, Christ has for eternity become the Way. It is no longer necessary to pray "Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven", for it has come. It is the beginning of an endless celebration of what and whom He is... to, in, with, and for His creation, for His lovers, for they who have become His eternal dwelling place on the new earth in the New Jerusalem.

A concluding word

This is the subject and the completion of "the disciples' prayer" Jesus taught them to pray. May the Lord enable us to see this vision. To deeply exercise ourselves in the words and principles of this practical and transactional prayer is to imbibe and implement the basic elements and the essence of the divine revelation for the fulfillment of His purpose from eternity to eternity, and for the blessed consummation of His intention and our hope, from Genesis to Revelation. May we pray earnestly, practice diligently, and hope joyfully for the consummation of the heartcry of our King, the maturing of His kingdom... "on earth...as it is in heaven".

This section of the constitution of the kingdom cuts through all the layers of human needs for security. It opens with a statement that radically reverses the reason and the goals for which people ought to live. It doesn't minimize the need for security, but it exposes the weakness of trusting in security brought about by currencies, by finances and by the economy of commerce in the system of the world. It turns the understanding of values to another economy, that of God.

God's economy does not refer merely to how the kingdom people ought to spend their money versus how the unbelievers and backsliding believers do. Rather, the economy of God is about the King being the source and confidence and security of life, not about material currencies. Clearly, with this view of the forthcoming King and his forthcoming kingdom, the treasure of life is not survival for today and comfort for tomorrow; rather, it is an investment of heart, life itself and a lifestyle as kingdom people that knows how to live today in a way that will reap reward and the celebration of an ever-expanding and lasting kingdom far beyond this current segment of our existence in frail bodies.

In order to distinguish the importance of these two views, Jesus speaks of the two economies as forks in the road. Either live *for* this current existence, or live *by* the Life which created things all things and all living things for His eternal purpose. Of necessity, own material things outwardly as required in this temporary sojourn, but never let anything own you inwardly but God. His word here is so strong; you must choose: passivity is not an option; by default you will serve money as the hope of your security, or by choice you will choose God himself as your living hope and security without end.

In this passage, Jesus illustrates from every needed angle how crucial it is that the forthcoming kingdom people learn to live by a Life that is unseen but real, instead of trusting in a life that is seen but will always fail. He uses the birds, grass and flowers as illustrations of how God cares for them. He uses the human body as an illustration of how we are either in light or in darkness on these crucial matters of hope, faith and security.

In both a challenging and comforting word, He charges His disciples to seek the kingdom first of all, and then God will do His faithful part in meeting their material needs and cares. Their needs will be met as a byproduct of their seeking, whereas others spend all their time and energy seeking that security for itself, temporary as it is.

What does all this mean to the kingdom people today? All believers have in them a life that believes, but that faith needs to be in them more than an entrance into the kingdom. It needs to expand into the faithfulness of a kingly life, a lifestyle of kingdom living. For many years I could quote the verse where Jesus said to seek first the kingdom, but in my natural understanding I read it as a charge to seek first the King. But no, that is not what the Bible says, and no it isn't heretical, because the King said it. Why? It is possible for a believer to seek first the King, have some wonderful private moments with Him, but live an individualistic and self-centered life.

However, if we hear the words of the King and seek first of all His kingdom, He as the King comes with that seeking and we are able to hear His speaking and His faithful supply to us for the sake of what is on His heart, which is the transplanting and growth of His heavenly kingdom on earth today. Such a view makes our seeking intensely spiritual, and it also makes our experience intensely practical; for it is *out of* and *unto* Him, and it is *with* and *for* His primary desire that all the believers live not for themselves but a collective, corporate lifestyle under His kingly dominion. This is the central thought of this portion of the constitution of the kingdom of the heavens as a seedling on the earth today for the kingdom's expansion in the coming age.

Study guide: The material riches of the kingdom people

This portion clearly acknowledges the need of the kingdom people to have material provisions. The issue is not if there is a need. The issue is its source, their trust and their goal. Hence, it is crucial that the primary goal of the kingdom people is to firstly seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness in all the concerns of life. In this passage, the concerns of life deal with material needs.

I. Living with a heavenly view

A. Possessions (Matthew 6:19-20; Luke 12:13-24)

1. treasures are for heavenly investing, not earthly hoarding

B. Motives (Matthew 6:21-24; James 1:8; 4:8b)

1. the heart governing decisions about money
2. monetary decisions define which Master/master we live for and serve
3. the problem of being double-minded; either be light or darkness

II. Practicing a heavenly life on earth in the kingdom of the heavens

A. Trusting (Matthew 6:25-32; Philippians 4:4-9)

1. put away anxiety regarding basic provisions as does nature, such as birds, flowers and grass (needing food, water and sunshine)

B. Believing (Matthew 6:33-34; Hebrews 11:6)

1. faith is primary, live and seek the kingdom of God, knowing there is not a problem, for He will provide those who live with such a view and practice

For further prayer, fellowship and study:

1. Do you believe God will provide all your needs if you seek the kingdom as the King requires of the kingdom people? What does this mean to you now? What do you think it will mean to you in 5, 10, 30, 40 years?

2. If you live in poverty, does that mean you are spiritual? If you have possessions does that mean you are worldly?

3. How do you deal with feeling anxious about your finances and yet wanting to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness? What is the difference between His righteousness and self-righteousness?

4. Distinguish between seeking first the King, and seeking first the kingdom as the King requires. Why is this distinction crucial, and what might the different results be and indicate? What and who are you seeking first in your life today and in your long-term goals?

This portion of the constitution further addresses relationships with others. It exposes the self-centeredness in the thinking of every human being. It opens with the requirement to stop judging others, because such behavior is really the exalting of oneself. If a person does not feel superior, he will not look down on others. Judging is personal, implying the judge is qualified to know the motive of the accused, yet the heart of the judging one is as evil as the one he accuses.

If a believer judges another, he takes the position of self-qualification, the mindset of self-superiority. Such thoughts and words will be turned against him later at the judgment of the believer by the Judge of all. The standard of the prideful believer in judging another will be the same standard the Judge of all will use to evaluate his worthiness of reward or punishment relative to the future when the kingdom will have its full manifestation on earth.

It is a great error for a believer to assume authority to be the judge of another. It is like an arrogant son of the chief justice of the Supreme Court intruding on the court, then seizing and putting on the black robe of his qualified father because he, in the pride of his youth, feels as qualified to judge as his father, simply because he is a son. Such thoughts, such motives, such behavior is the sin of pride injected in every man through the fallen Lucifer. It is the natural life still having sway in the believer, and the kingdom life mandates it be replaced by the redeeming life of the Savior and the ruling life in him of the King. It is crucial that the kingdom people deal with the “beam” of pride in their own eyes before dealing with the “splinters” in a brother’s eye.

This portion of the scripture deals with improper, subjective judgment of the kingdom people. Only the King, the Judge of all men, has the standing to do this. Wisdom provides the kingdom people the insight to understanding the difference between subjectively judging the motives of another and the written Word’s objective judgment of a sinful behavior. It is not for a believer to judge the motives of another and its resulting behavior, but it is right for the church or a government to affirm in discipline an objective judgment on what God has judged already.

In such cases, the judgment is not a subjective one about motives by an individual but upon behavior in regard to the written Word of God. Any such judgment ought to be exercised in love and not in vengeance, in the sober and gentle spirit of discipline by the church, as in the second testament epistles and Matthew 18. The goal always is to recover an erring brother back to a normal function in the kingdom life, not to humiliate or alienate him as though discipline were the goal.

After such exposing words, one cannot help but realize the believer’s need is to take his eyes off of others and to utterly humble himself, to “ask”, to “seek”, “to knock”, and therein enact the promise of the Father’s provision of all things; for in such humility God is honored to bring the needy, humble kingdom-seeker into the blessed state of “finding”, a finding that honors the King and builds His kingdom.

In this section of the constitution there is another matter added. In the previous section, it was a great revelation to discover the kingdom people can actually trust God in both small and great things in daily living. In this additional section addressing that growing discovery, it is important to realize the King does not give indiscriminately, and neither should His kingdom people. Therefore, He says, to not foolishly “cast pearls before the hogs”. Indiscriminate giving, whether it be words, deeds or material things, may result from errant assumptions, presumptions, self-trusting, self-assessment, self-possession and self-understanding about the kingdom life. In all things, live by the King intimately, not for the King indiscriminately. The high standard of the kingdom people is to always treat others in this regard as they would like to be treated.

Study guide: The principles of the kingdom people in dealing with others

It is an amazing thing, but human tendency is to somehow think they know what to do and how someone else should live, even while their own life may be troubled and they are not sure what to do in their own things. The more self-assured and the more self-righteous a person becomes, the more obvious and the more damaging does this effect become. This effect of feeling qualified to evaluate others is often accompanied by a critical spirit; it is never more damaging than when it is resident in religious people and their leadership. The kingdom people need to turn away from this arrogant air, and live in a spirit of humility as did their Savior, Lord and King before His unrighteous, religious and political accusers.

I. On judging others (Matthew 7:1-5; Philippians 2:3-8)

A. The danger of evaluating others

1. dealing always first with yourself instead of others

B. The judging of others exposes only yourself

1. such doings affirm hypocrisy and blindness about your own condition

II. On caring for others (Matthew 7:6-12; I Thessalonians 2:1-20)

A. The need for asking, receiving and finding before God and from God

1. God's way is sensible, pure and matches a need

B. The need for discretion in distributing to others God's way of provision to us

1. The kingdom people ought to give, but not loosely or carelessly, just as God has given to us, but not loosely or carelessly

For prayer, fellowship and further study:

1. Consider how you evaluate others. Is it according to the humility and honor of God, or according to the arrogance and critical spirit of your natural life?

2. What is God's way (for you) to deal with being occupied with a "splinter" in another's eye while ignoring or being unaware of the "log" in your own eye?

3. In asking, seeking and knocking, what is the kingdom peoples' motive? (See also the disciples' prayer section of the constitution). Does departure from this motive affect God's (righteous) response?

4. Are there any restrictions on treating others as we would like to be treated? What is the result of our usefulness in the kingdom of the heavens if we selectively choose when to pay the price in ourselves for this response?

Whereas earlier parts of this new Constitution address the inward condition of the kingdom constituents, this portion deals primarily with the outworking of that inward heavenly life and the ground on which it is secure. As in all other portions of this constitution, it is important to see what is said in relation specifically to the kingdom of the heavens, the church age which would commence as evidenced in John 20:22 and Acts 1-2, per Matthew 16:16-18. Any other applications of these chapters, and indeed this book of Matthew, which focuses on the King and His kingdom, are secondary and based on principles more than goals.

This portion implies the kingdom people need further instruction regarding the kingdom life, which is the Spirit of Christ, in them. It is possible, indeed the history of the church makes it seem obvious, that believers may know Christ and yet neglect the church; that they may believe in the King but be ignorant about, and negligent of, the kingdom of the heavens. This concept separating Christ and the church, separating the Head and the Body, separating the King and the Kingdom today appears to be prevailing.

This portion, then, prepares the kingdom people to guard against using their redeemed life carelessly. The believer is warned that there is an easier way to live, but that is the way of the world and is a destructive path. Rather, it is crucial that the kingdom people seek out the King in a way they can live His way, a specific and therefore narrow way. Jesus said “I am the way”, and He as the way applies not just to His uniqueness in being the answer to the world’s need, but the path of metamorphic growth and development of a kingdom practice as a lifelong lifestyle after entering into the kingdom by means of the new birth.

Along the way, it is important to be affirmed in our walk. Thus, we must be aware that there are false prophets who look like fellow sheep but are really wolves covered with skins of a sheep so as to appear gentle and harmless. It becomes apparent that despite the difference between a wolf and a sheep, it is not always easy to recognize these detractors of the kingdom. Therefore, rather than just listening to their compelling words, the result of ministry is the telling identifier. It is the fruit of the tree that confirms what kind of tree it is. A flowering pear bears no pears, and a flowering cherry likewise yields no fruit. It takes awhile for fruit to come, so do not be hasty in judging the tree because of the flowers which appear genuine in intention.

In this passage, the tree is even more difficult to distinguish, because it does bear fruit, and it takes longer to discern whether it is good or bad fruit. The conclusion is not a judging which is contrary to the former section on “judge not”. Here, it is not the kingdom people in pride judging wrongly; rather, it is the tree which judges itself and by its own fruit affirms its excellence, or else exposes its defective source contrary to the King and His kingdom life.

In this context, Jesus addressed the fact that many who call Him “Lord” are deviant. Their deeds seem so good, so right, so useful, but they originate in the will of the doer, not in the will of Him who indeed is Lord. They believe in Him, but they are “not owned”, “not approved” by Him. In the coming full manifestation of His millennial kingdom, they will not be allowed to participate.

This section of the constitution is a powerful illustration of the need for the believer(s) to be fully yielded to the King for His kingdom in this time in a biblical experience of the church life. To hear, to respond, to obey and to live out this kingdom practice is wise as though a man were building a house on a rock, safe against all that would destroy it. To disregard or lessen the message and burden of the King is to suffer a great loss when the testing of the winds come. Clearly, there is a judgment for kingdom reward or loss, not only a judgment regarding salvation.

Study guide: The ground of the kingdom peoples' living and work

Hard work is not enough. Many deceivers work very diligently. Rather, it is the fruit they produce in their labor that defines their source of life and work. For those who work rightly according to the constitution of the kingdom, it is imperative they build their work of the church wisely, like a house built on rock for its foundation.

I. Living and working (Matthew 7:13-23)

A. The narrow versus the broad way

1. the way of the King is constricted but leads to life for the few seeking it (7:13-14)

B. Verifying a worker's ministry by the type of fruit he bears

1. the impossibility of a bad tree making good fruit, and vice versa (7:15-20)
2. some call the King "Lord", but don't do the Father's will and will be rejected (7:21-23)

II. Hearing and building (Matthew 7:24-29)

A. The necessity of hearing what the King intended

1. hearing is simple and requires only response (unlike seeing) (7:24-26)

B. Building a stable house resulting from a proper hearing

1. testing by a storm validates a proper structure (7:27-29)

For prayer, fellowship and further study:

1. The entrance through which gate is chosen determines whether the way will be narrow or broad. Can a believer choose Christ to as the Way and still walk the broad, destructive way? What will be the end of such a believer? Is this about possible loss of salvation, or something else?

2. If the type of fruit affirms what kind of tree was the source, we must know what is good and what is corrupt fruit. What does good fruit look like? What does corrupt fruit look like?

3. Since both the good tree and the corrupt tree are laboring to appear as workers in the kingdom of the heavens, what are the current standards for each kind of tree and how is each one treated in today's Christendom? Does this recognition and treatment match the King's description?

4. What is the basis of hearing the words of the King; what is the result of hearing in one's building work; and what are tests of the kingdom of the heavens in the scriptures? What is the situation among and around us today?

By some calculations, Abraham was born 1996 B.C. and lived 175 years. From the calling out by God from Ur of the Chaldees (i.e. “the land of demons”) to the coming of the Savior, the birth of the Messiah the Anointed One, the Lord, the King, the Christ, it was less than 2000 years. From His birth until the current time is just over 2000 years. Considering that what was unveiled to Abraham, then to Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, Solomon, the other psalmists and prophets, it is remarkable that the revelation and prophecies they received still degraded into a religion of the Jews that hated Jesus the Messiah and eventually was cause for His crucifixion.

It was not the common folk but the religious leaders that opposed Jesus at every turn in His ministry of three and a half years. The Judaism that greeted the Savior of the world should have been the fruit of a God-initiated revelation that began those many centuries before. Quite to the contrary, the revelation and sacrifice of the fathers who sought God had descended into abysmal thinking and practicing of a religion that was so “right” on the outside but was “full of dead men’s bones” on the inside. God who walked with Enoch, who allowed Noah to find grace, who called out Abram from a lost culture also sent His only begotten Son “from a far country” to His own people. Tragically, “He came to His own” and they killed Him, all the while quoting the old testament scriptures and thinking highly of themselves as the children of Abraham and the chosen of God.

Lest we find it too easy to pass over these historical facts about the Jewish rejection of the Christ without being deeply impressed, we would do well to look at the subsequent treatment of the Christ by the church since His ascension and its beginning. Curiously, people who call themselves Christians have had more time to degrade the original new testament fact and ministry than did the Israelites from the time of Abraham to the time of His first coming.

Dare we look at the condition of “the chosen people of God” today in this regard? We have the perspective to easily comment that the old testament “chosen people of God” became a rebellious people with a religion about God but fully contrary to Him. Today, it takes more courage to look at ourselves and ask the question, “Christians, church people, do we look more like the old testament Pharisees today?” Is it possible that the people who think of themselves as His chosen ones today are in darkness, in a veiled religion of Christianity and don’t recognize Him any more today than did the Pharisees and Sadducees when He came the first time?

Can it be that Christianity today is in the cloak of the Pharisees, espousing what it believes to be the truth of Christ when instead it is producing only a crusty religion opposed to what His intention is? Can it be that Tozer’s cry against “easy believism” has exported the faith into a religion “over there” “in the sweet bye and bye” instead of Christians who know what is the cross laying over their own lives in order to take responsibility and live out His joyous resurrection in daily lives that collectively portray a victorious Christ processed through their own lifestyle in the kingdom of heavens on the earth here and now?

The constitution of the kingdom of the heavens was not given to the disciples so they could escape from their situation and dream about a happy life in a mansion made just for them “over there” because life here is so disappointing and miserable. Acts 1-2 show what kind of people these dear ones became after receiving the Spirit of Christ as their indwelling dynamo. They suffered intensely, but they experienced an intense and glorious salvation. The life they can anticipate in the coming age is but a rewarding extension of what they processed and began in this one. What about us? Dare we look into His face, lay everything down and yield wholly to a first century Christ for a last century victory on the earth here...now...through us?

Study guide: The kingdom of the heavens today

Today there seems to be little or no attention to these chapters as we have studied them. There is scant fellowship or ministry about the kingdom of God; and such as there is seems varied and confused. The identification of the kingdom of the heavens (sometimes incorrectly translated as the Kingdom of Heaven) as being distinctive and yet identical with the kingdom of God in a time period which includes the church, is practically impossible to find or identify. What is known of “The Sermon On The Mount” tends to remain as wonderful words given by Jesus but received by readers as scattered thoughts and the cause for choosing favorite verses apart from the realization that the words are the words of the Messiah as the forthcoming King spoken to His disciples as a constitution for the kingdom life which would be produced out of His resurrection life imparted into, through, and out from His believers as the church, the mysterious, yet visible, advancing testimony of His heavenly life manifested on the earth in our time amidst a Christendom that seems to bear chiefly the fruit of division, confusion and corruption.

The entire process of producing the heavenly kingdom today involves a fantastic unfolding of the divine nature and life through significant motions of the triune God. As man is a unity in his tripartiteness, so God is a unity in His trinity.

The invisible God became flesh, and as such, the incarnated Christ was the mystery of God because He defined and explained God. The resurrected Christ became the Life-giving Spirit to enter into the regenerated spirit of a believer, and as such, the biblical church is the mystery of Christ today. As His kingdom today, the kingdom people ought to be His definition.

The collective of regenerated believers is the corporate container and expression of Christ today on the earth. Those who hear, see and practice that heavenly life as the church life today have opportunity, and an entrance through the way of the narrow gate to produce our portion of the kingdom of the heavens today. This is the point for which the constitution of the kingdom of the heavens was spoken in Matthew 5-7 and its application is crucial for its working out among His kingdom people in our time.

For the purpose of an overview in the Bible of the kingdom of the heavens today, we will consider the beginning and end of the process. The first aspect is the anti-kingdom of God’s enemy initiated formally as Babel in Genesis and matures in Revelation as The Great Babylon. The source of the anti-kingdom, before his rebellion against God was named Lucifer (“the shining one”) and consummated as Satan (“adversary”). The second aspect is the kingdom of God which was initiated formally as Salem in Genesis and matures in Revelation as The New Jerusalem. In the beginning God was triune but invisible. At the climax He remains triune, yet incarnated and indwelling those in His visible kingdom in their eternal, holy, “city of peace”.

I. Babylon

- A. Babel (Genesis 10:9-10)
- B. “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (Revelation 17:5; Revelation 2-3; 17-18)

II. Jerusalem

- A. Salem (Genesis 14:18; Hebrews 7:1)
- B. The New Jerusalem (Revelation 2-3; 21-22)

For prayer, fellowship and further study:

1. Read the entire Bible, especially the second testament from the perspective of this study on the constitution of the kingdom of the heavens in Matthew 5-7. Read church history from its beginning. Some good sources are Schaff's History Of The Christian Church, Broadbent's The Pilgrim Church, Andrew Miller's Miller's Church History, The twentieth century ministry and practice of recovered truths in the churches in light of the Word through publications of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee from The Living Stream Publishers in Anaheim, California. I also recommend acquiring The Recovery Version of the Bible from the same source, which was used in titling most of these ten studies on the constitution of the kingdom of the heavens.

2. In light of this study, evaluate "the dark ages" that followed the development and maturity of the Roman Catholic Church in the early and middle centuries and up to this time. Further, evaluate the recovering of lost truths and enlightenment through many of the saints including those who died for translating and publishing the Bible for the typical believers, John Huss, Martin Luther, John Carey, and especially the Lord's workings through The Brethren from 1828 for a number of years, and the light and practice seen by many of our brothers in China from the early 1920's.

3. Are you one who is consecrated to the King for His kingdom as one who asks, seeks and knocks, at any price, for His sake?

4. What decisions have you made, what decisions are you making, that will affirm in the future whether you chose the narrow way leading unto life, or the broad way leading to destruction?

5. Christian ministry has been typically broken into two definitive camps: those who believe you must be saved again every time you sin, and those who believe that once you are saved it is final and does not matter how you live the rest of your life.

Both views use the Bible as a basis for their thinking and produce an either/or alternative. I believe in the security of the salvation of the believer, but Matthew in particular makes it evident that there is much more. There is not only a final judgment of the unbelievers, but also a judgment of the believers in regard to reward. Those who are judged worthy of reward will be given much responsibility in the millennial kingdom in which the gospel will advance further until it covers the earth (e.g. Daniel 2:35, 44-45), whereas others may have their carnal works burned up and suffer some loss; and be given discipline to assist being prepared as mature saints with all the other kingdom overcomers, in the eternal city, the new Jerusalem in Rev. 21-22.

Do not be ignorant or passive about this matter. It is crucial for every believer to deal squarely with this issue. Ignorance of a law does not protect one from its result when the law is broken; neither does ignorance of the words of the King exempt the believers from knowing what it means to be among kingdom people for today and for the age to come.