

# ***GRACE & TRUTH*** MAGAZINE

- ***The Kingdom Of God***
- ***Engagement And Marriage***
- ***Will God Forgive Me?***

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# GRACE & TRUTH

MAGAZINE

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# BOWING IN THE KINGDOM

Recently, when I was thinking of the Lord Jesus Christ and the “kingdom,” the first Bible passage that came to my mind was about the Lord Jesus’ entering Jerusalem prior to His death – commonly celebrated today as “Palm Sunday.” The crowds welcomed Him “shouting, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD; Hosanna in the highest!’” (Mt. 21:9 NASB). Just days later we see the same crowds crying out for the Lord to be crucified, showing hatred rather than love and proving that their public recognition of Him as their King (seen in their expression “Son of David”) had no real meaning in their hearts.

This presents a challenge for all of us who have professed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as we consider the kingdom of God and its significance today. Do we truly live as those who are in God’s kingdom, bowing as loyal and faithful subjects with hearts filled with adoration?

The kingdom is presented in several different ways in Scripture. The two most frequent expressions are “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of heaven.” The

*Concise Bible Dictionary* tells us that “in many respects the two expressions are identical, but the ‘kingdom of heaven’ occurs in the gospel of Matthew only, and stands in contrast to the Messiah on earth. It refers to the rule of that which God has set in heaven, and commenced when Christ went to heaven. It may be illustrated by the lights which God set in the heavens to give light and to rule the earth. The ‘kingdom of God’ is more connected with the moral state established in man.”

“Moral,” we are reminded, is concerned with what is right – the behaviors and beliefs related to what is and is not acceptable according to God’s Word. In other words, the awesome aspects of the kingdom of God are directly connected with what we view as being right and how we behave. They become very practical.

May we take note of the lessons that God gives to us in this month’s articles so we may act and think rightly, bringing honor and glory to our God and King! Let us bow before Him in every way.

Paul

**J**esus shall reign where'er the sun  
Doth his successive journeys run;  
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,  
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

To Him shall endless prayer be made,  
And praises throng to crown His head;  
His Name like sweet perfume shall rise  
With every morning sacrifice.

## *Jesus Shall Reign Where'er The Sun*

Blessings abound where'er He reigns:  
The prisoner leaps to loose his chains,  
The weary find eternal rest,  
And all the sons of want are blest.

**L**et every creature rise and bring  
Peculiar honours to the King;  
Angels, descend with songs again  
And, earth, repeat the loud Amen.

—Isaac Watts (1674-1748)



# An Invitation To Enjoy The Kingdom Of God Today



by Colin Salter

**T**he United Kingdom, where I live, is a green land of rolling hills, agricultural grasslands and trees – richly fruitful and surrounded by seas. It has a population of 63 million of whom I am one! The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where my foster daughter lived, is a very hot and dry desert region, irrigated to blossom in places where water can be made to reach. It has a population of 29 million. Both kingdoms have their rulers' palaces and historical succession within their royal family.

## The Kingdom Of God Is Unlike Earthly Kingdoms

When the Roman governor, Pilate, asked our Lord Jesus Christ, “Are you the king of the Jews?” (Mt. 27:11; Mk. 15:2; Lk. 23:3; Jn. 18:33 NIV), our Savior replied, “My kingdom is not of this world” (Jn. 18:36). Since Jesus’ kingdom is not “of this world” in which we

all live, it must be of somewhere else – of another world. It is different from the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia or any other human kingdom. Read the Lord’s full reply found only in John 18:36-37: “Jesus said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, My servants would fight to prevent My arrest by the Jews. But now My kingdom is from another place.’ ‘You are a king, then!’ said Pilate. Jesus answered, ‘You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to Me.’”

## Five Key Points

1. The Lord Jesus owns His kingdom: “My kingdom” and “You are right in saying I am a king.” The Prisoner, Jesus, was about to be executed, but He possessed His special kingdom.

2. His kingdom is clearly different: “not of this world” and “from another place.” It has no geographical boundaries but it does have a King and His subjects.
3. The kingdom is not to be physically fought over: “If it were, My servants would fight to prevent My arrest by the Jews.” Guns and bombs cannot defend or extend this kingdom.
4. The kingdom was the purpose of His incarnation: “... for this reason I was born, and for this I came into this world.” Our Lord Jesus came to bear witness to this special kingdom. He said it was “near” and urged all people to “repent” (Mt. 4:17) because discovering the kingdom would mean adopting a complete change of understanding.
5. The Lord Jesus’ kingdom is the true kingdom: “I came ... to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to Me” (Jn. 18:37). Facts are facts even if people don’t want to believe them. The kingdoms of the world and the kingdom of God are both real, but the kingdom of our Lord Jesus must always have the top place in the life of the believer.

### Taking On The Focus Of Our Lord

The third and fourth phrases of

the Lord’s Prayer focus on this kingdom of God: “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt. 6:10). Older translations conclude with “for Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen” (Mt. 6:13, a footnote in the NIV).

The Lord taught that we are to live in the character of His kingdom now: “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given you as well” (Mt. 6:33). Life for the Christian is much more than food and clothing, necessary as they are. Christians must pay more attention to our Lord’s kingdom than to anything else. To recognize the kingdom, promote it and witness of it must be top priorities for us, just as they were for Jesus Christ.

### “The Kingdom Of God” — What Does It Mean?

The kingdom of God is the active rule of God over His creation. He establishes, redeems, judges and blesses. He works for and through His people, but all for His glory. Consider several points:

- God’s kingdom is partly a present reality on earth and a greater, future hope in heaven.
- God’s kingdom is a spiritual experience, available to anyone God calls into the body of



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Jesus Christ. This body is the true Church on earth, seen and known by its visible actions.

- God’s kingdom embraces individual people rather than organized churches. They will have one clear understanding about Jesus Christ, His saving person and atoning work.
- God’s kingdom may be seen as subversive by human governments. They may feel threatened by watching the lives of true, pure and holy Christians. Daily Christlikeness has an influence!
- God’s kingdom includes Christian living that challenges and transforms local cultures by believers doing what God wants His people to do. This applies from the most remote tribal village to the most dangerous jail.

### Where Does All This End?

Eventually God will be seen to rule heaven and earth. John offers us a glimpse of this: “Grace and peace to you ... from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth” (Rev. 1:4-5). We whose sins have been dealt with by the blood of Jesus Christ, bought from every tribe, language, people and nation are “a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and ... will

reign on the earth” (Rev. 5:9-10).

The majority of people today cannot choose the country where they live. Yet God gives everyone the opportunity to enter into His kingdom. Our Lord Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again ... I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit” (Jn. 3:3-5).

### Several Important Questions

Here are a few vital questions I want to ask you.

1. Have you entered the kingdom of God?
2. Are you born again?
3. As a disciple, are you learning and able to discern God’s growing kingdom here and now?
4. Are your actions telling others that you are of His kingdom – a Christian?

My passport says I am a citizen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and it is valid for five more years. If God calls me home to heaven before then, I know from the inner witness of God the Holy Spirit that I will be welcomed into an “inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you [and me!] since the creation of the world” (Mt. 25:34). I sincerely pray I will see you there. **GT**



## LIVING AS HIS SUBJECTS IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

by Milton. P. Jamieson

A kingdom is a territory, realm, dominion, country or sphere over which a king or a sovereign exercises rule and authority. The kingdom of God is one that is all-encompassing, having various aspects such as the “kingdom of heaven,” the “kingdom of the Son” and the “kingdom of the Father.” In this short paper my desire is to look at the kingdom of God and its significance for today as I understand it from Holy Scripture.

### God’s Eternal Authority

Scripture is full of references testifying that God is the king and governor of the whole world:

- “The LORD is King for ever and ever” (Ps. 10:16 KJV).
- “For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth” (Ps. 74:12).
- “For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods” (Ps. 95:3).

In addition to showing that God is king, these verses and many more show that the world is His kingdom. Therefore, the kingdom of God is universal in its scope. (See illustration on page 10.)

### Past To Present

From time to time God delegated the kingdom of the earth into the hands of men. He placed it first in the hands of Adam and Eve – and we know how that ended in utter



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failure (Gen. 1:28, 3:1-13). He gave to Noah the kingdom, or the government, of the world but he also failed and became unable even to govern himself for he was found drunk and uncovered in his tent (Gen. 9:1-7,20-23).

God then ruled over Israel as their king for many years, using several men as His representatives or prime ministers – such as Moses, Joshua and the judges. In speaking of Israel, Balaam said, “The shout of a king is among them” (Num. 23:21). Gideon understood very well that the LORD was their king so he flatly rejected the offer to rule over Israel, saying, “the LORD shall rule over you” (Jud. 8:22-23). This went on until Israel rebelled against the LORD, wanting a man to be king over them instead: “But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said; Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee:

*for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them”*

(1 Sam. 8:6-7).

God gave them a man after *their* own heart in the person of Saul. He turned out to be a colossal failure. Afterward, God removed him and set David, a

man after *His* own heart, upon the throne as king and shepherd over His people Israel. David had full understanding that the kingdom was God’s – just listen what he has to say about the kingdom:

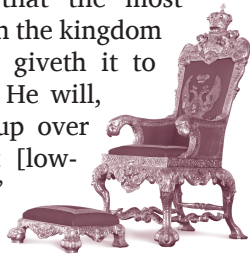
*“He hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel”*

(1 Chr. 28:5).

*“Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him”*

(1 Chr. 29:23).

God is the king over all the earth. Whether men submit to His rule or rebel, it does not change the fact that He is king forever: “... to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest [lowest] of men” (Dan. 4:17).



### Present To Future

The time will come when “the Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom [the earth] all things that offend, and them which do iniquity” (Mt. 13:41). Wickedness and wicked persons will be cleaned out of His kingdom and He will take His great

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power and reign for 1,000 years. But for the present He is allowing man to have his day, which will come to its peak in the Man of Sin – the Son of Perdition, the Antichrist.

When we read the Gospels and the Epistles we see that the expressions “kingdom of heaven” and “kingdom of God” are sometimes interchangeable, but there are differences. The kingdom of God is going on now in the hearts and lives of men who are subject to Him. The kingdom of heaven is also going on, but in a mystery for the king is absent. Therefore today, Christendom [professing Christianity] is the kingdom of heaven in a mystery and is likened to a field with *wheat and tares*, a dragnet in the sea that encloses all kinds *good and bad*, and the ten virgins with *five wise and five foolish* (see Matthew 13 and 25). Within this mixture of wheat and tares, good and bad, wise and foolish we have that which is true to God. They who are truly born again are the wheat, the good and the wise in these parables. They are truly the kingdom of God within this period of Christian profession.

The time will come when the kingdom of heaven will be set up in power and glory over the entire earth. During those 1,000 years Jesus Christ will reign over the earth as Son of Man. “The wolf

also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp [cobra], and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ [viper’s] den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:6-9). After this the Son will hand over the kingdom to God and God will be all in all (See 1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

### Kingdom Character Today

Now, apart from the fact that He is ruling in the kingdom of men, God is also ruling in the hearts and lives of men and women, boys and girls who have accepted and are subject to His Son. The character of the kingdom of God in the hearts and lives of believers is of a moral nature, for in the power of the Spirit the believer exhibits the moral features of the King, our Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul listed some of these in Romans 14:17:

“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but *righteous-*



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ness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

These are also listed in Galatians 5:22-23, among others, as the fruit of the Spirit. Being the moral features of Christ they should mark every child of the kingdom of God.

### How To Be A Part

There is only one way to enter this spiritual aspect of the kingdom and that is to be born into it. We were all born in the kingdom of darkness. But through sovereign grace we have been delivered from that kingdom and brought into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. This is through new birth – we must be born again in order to enter the kingdom of God! In John 3:3-7 the Lord Jesus told Nicodemus that it is a divine necessity: “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto Him, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.” It remains the same

today – new birth is still a divine necessity to enter the kingdom of God.

Dear reader, I know that the moment I mention “born again” the first thing that comes to some people’s minds is water baptism. Baptism is not being born again, neither was the Lord telling Nicodemus to go and get baptized. Instead, He was telling Nicodemus that he needed the life of God in order to be a part of God’s kingdom. In John 1:13 we are told of those who are born again: they are “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” This is something in which man has no part; it is altogether a work of God. Just like when one is being born into the world, the child being born has absolutely nothing to do with what takes place. No effort from the child is required nor can the baby give any help to his or her mother.

A person is born again when he hears the gospel and believes it. The Word enters into the heart and by God’s great power He imparts new, eternal life to that believing one. This is how one is born again, becomes a child of God and heir of the kingdom of God (See James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23).

### For Believers Today

What is expected of us, who are

the children and true subjects of the kingdom today? The Bible says that we are to:

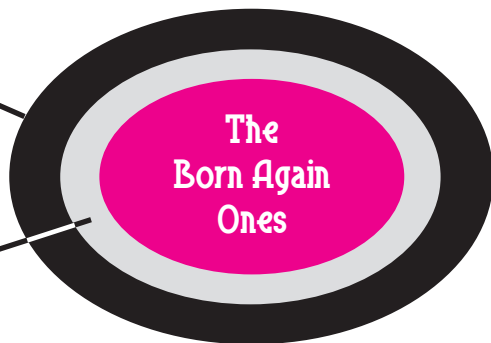
1. Exhibit the fruit of the Spirit – the moral features of Christ reproduced in our hearts by the Spirit of God. When the kingdom of heaven is set up over the earth the laws of the kingdom will also be such: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance ...” (Gal. 5:22-23). One can see these features emerging as the Lord presented the principles of the kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:1-7:29). We need not wait until the Millennium – these and other features of Christ should be seen in us right now!
2. Be loyal, faithful and true to Him in His absence, like Mephibosheth was toward David (2 Sam. 19:24).
3. Perform royal and priestly service: “But ye are a chosen gener-

ation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). Fellow believers, you and I have the high honor to speak of the wonders, glories and beauties of the King of Kings, our Lord Jesus Christ; and to serve Him with gladness as His messengers heralding the good news of God concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. To be good, kind and merciful, sharing our worldly goods and the King’s words in the gospel, teaching young and old, and showing to all the way into the kingdom of God are just a few of the many opportunities that we have to serve the King in His absence.

Indeed, “Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen” (Mt. 6:13). **GT**

**The Universal Kingdom of God**

**The Professing Christians**





# WHAT To Do And HOW To Do It In The Kingdom Of God

*Alfred Bouter*



**G**od is King: the true and living God and the eternal King (Jer. 10:10). It was God's plan to put everything under the control of a man – ultimately, this will be Christ (Eph. 1:10). When God created all things He saw that they were “very good” (Gen. 1:31 NASB). God put Adam in charge of everything (2:19) as His representative, or king if you will. Genesis 3 records how the innocent Adam and Eve failed and thus the whole human race fell away from God (Rom. 5:12). God's plan to put everything under the control of a man was postponed but not cancelled.

To realize His plans, in the fullness of time God sent His Son. Though born of a woman (the woman's seed, Gen. 3:15) and through her a descendant of Adam (Lk. 3:38), in Him was no sin. He came to His own (Israel) and was born under the Law (Gal. 4:4), but

they rejected Him (Jn. 1:10). Working together with the nations, they had Him crucified (Acts 2:23). God, however, raised His Son from the dead and exalted Him, giving Him a place of honor at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven (Acts 2:34,36; Heb. 1:3). Today Christ is crowned with glory and honor (Heb. 2:9) and soon, in “that day,” God will introduce Him in majestic splendor (2 Th. 1:10). In the meantime He has delegated His interests into the hands of His servants.

Now it gets complicated because these servants, who confess to belong to Him, have failed and still fail. Some of them are not even born again, being God's servants in name only – professing Him through baptism or other means without a real change of heart. The Lord had foreseen this development and announced it to His disciples (Mt. 24:43-51; Lk. 19:11-

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27), and the apostles elaborated on this teaching (Acts 20:29; 1 Jn. 4:1-3; 2 Pet. 2:2).

During the period of grace in which we live, a mixed condition and confusion exists. But God is pleased to have His interests taken care of by disciples, representing their Lord. He helps them as they acknowledge being a failing people – but with the desire to honor the rejected King in the same world that rejected Him. Such disciples need to put the Lord before the public. Even though He is physically absent from this scene, through His Spirit He is present with them: “Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts” (1 Pet. 3:15). In other words, by giving Christ His rightful place in their hearts He may have full control – because from the heart are the issues of life (Prov. 4:23) – and believers can be His witnesses in a world which is not (yet) visibly under His control. Here our topic, “The kingdom of God in its significance today,” combines with true discipleship. In other words, genuine disciples are needed to work out in actual practice what the kingdom of God really means.

### **The Book Of Acts Provides Further Help**

When giving His answer the Lord Jesus did not say that the ques-

tion posed by His disciples as to whether He would restore the kingdom to Israel was irrelevant. Instead, He explained to them what they needed to do while He would be absent (Acts 1:6-8) and spoke with them for forty days about the things pertaining to the kingdom of God (v.3). The Lord Jesus, the King, would be absent and His disciples – servants, representatives and witnesses – needed much teaching about what to do and how to do it. Led by God’s Spirit, the New Testament writers elaborated on these instructions in their writings. Therefore we have many Scriptures which address the topic of what to do for the honor of the King while He is absent from this world and at God’s right hand.

Acts contains seven key verses about the kingdom of God and most of them, except for chapter 14:22 which refers to the future though linked with our present walk, are connected to our topic of the kingdom of God in its present significance. Generally speaking, a close connection exists between our role and actions in the kingdom of God today and our position in the kingdom’s future manifestation [presence or appearance]. The Lord explained it in some of His parables and it was further taught in the Epistles.

The absent King’s interests are

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linked to the good news, the gospel. We read that as Philip the evangelist “preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized” (8:12 NKJV). In baptism these new disciples acknowledged the rights of the King, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In addition to these passages just mentioned in Acts (1:3, 8:12, 14:22), we find the four others about the kingdom of God – all associated with the apostle Paul:

1. “He went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of *the kingdom of God*” (19:8). This was a Jewish setting. Israel had rejected the Messiah and God’s claims through Him while He was with them on earth and when He spoke to them from heaven. Jewish people, including those living elsewhere in the world, needed to be taught to acknowledge Him and to submit to His interests. Saul of Tarsus had learned to do so and many other Jewish people before and after him (see Romans 1:16).
2. “I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching *the kingdom of God*, will see my face no more” (20:25). Here the set-

ting is the assembly (church) at Ephesus, composed of men and women who were called out from among Jews and Gentiles. From Ephesus sometime before this speech, Paul had written to the believers at Corinth, “Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God” (1 Cor. 10:32). Thus the believers called out from among Jews and Gentiles form a new testimony linked to the kingdom of God.

3. “He explained and solemnly testified of *the kingdom of God*, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening” (28:23). The setting is a prison in Rome. Paul invited the Jewish leaders in Rome because, being in prison, he was not able to visit them as he would otherwise have done. He explained how the Scriptures relate to Jesus the Messiah and how each one is responsible before God to submit to His claims, even though the leaders at Jerusalem had rejected them.
4. “Preaching *the kingdom of God* and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him” (28:31). “Preaching” in this verse, meaning “proclaiming,” refers to a public

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witness testifying about God's rights – as Paul was doing. Disciples today should follow Paul's example. Furthermore, the kingdom of God centers on Christ, who is the King and whom believers own as Lord in faith and obedience. Paul had written some years earlier, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved" (Rom. 10:9 NASB).

The Book of Acts concludes with the important verse quoted at the beginning of the fourth point and it shows that no one can stop the work of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is now seated at God's right hand. This verse implies a challenge: The things concerning His blessed person and the kingdom of God in its present meaning are to be proclaimed and taught on an ongoing basis, while those who do this place their trust in the Lord.

### The Kingdom Of God Today And Its Link With The Future

The future reign of Christ will be a rule marked by *enforcement*, when righteousness will publicly reign and every knee will bow before Him who will be acknowledged by "the name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9-10).

In the eternal state His rule will be marked by harmony and unity, when *righteousness will dwell* and enforcement will no longer be needed (2 Pet. 3:13).

However, the period of grace in which we live is marked by willing hearts who choose to submit to Christ's claims because of love for Him – righteousness is *reigning in grace* (Rom. 5:21). On our side an ongoing exercise and a constantly renewed commitment to Him is needed, as we find ourselves in a world opposed to God and Christ and because we have the flesh (the sinful nature) still in us. Therefore, we need to "endure" and keep going while carrying a burden. A close link exists between this exercise and our future place in glory with the King: "If we endure, we shall also reign<sup>1</sup> with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us" (2 Tim. 2:12 NKJV).

Among differences of opinion or convictions, and while surrounded by "strong" or "weak" believers, we need to remind ourselves of Paul's teaching that "*the kingdom of God* is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). When God's rights are maintained – not only in theory but also in practice, "for the kingdom of God is not in word only but in power" (1 Cor. 4:20) – peace and harmony will be



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enjoyed. The Holy Spirit will add joy as these things are being worked out under His control or sway. Even though we are in a wicked world, this control by the Holy Spirit is realized because God “has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Col. 1:13). How precious it must be for our God and Father to have sons who are committed to His interests and those of His beloved Son during a time and in a world where His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, is still rejected. This must be special to our Lord Jesus, who is the King! That is why several Scriptures show the impossibility of mixing Christ’s interests with what belongs to this world.

### **The Challenge Continues**

It is impossible to have entrance into His kingdom now or in the future while being under the control of this world, which is under Satan’s rule – “the god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4). “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

Paul then says, “And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (v.11). We see the moral power of God’s kingdom and the work of the Holy Spirit operating in the name of the Lord Jesus (the King), though still rejected in this world. The two systems – this present evil age and the world to come under Christ’s rule – cannot go together, as Paul confirmed:

- “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption” (1 Cor. 15:50).
- “Envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:21).
- “This you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God” (Eph. 5:5).

### **In Closing**

Do we see the apostle Paul as our spiritual father? We should (1 Cor. 11:1) as then we will learn

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from him just as the young believers at Thessalonica did. He wrote to them, “How we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory” (1 Th. 2:11-12).

As we are waiting for its manifestation in glory, we identify with Paul’s desire to “be counted worthy

of *the kingdom of God*, for which you also suffer” (2 Th. 1:5). The suffering is because of the fact that we identify with our Lord who is rejected in this world, and in so doing we prepare for the future aspect of His kingdom when He will reign in glory and the believers with Him. Praise God! **GT**

<sup>1</sup>The verb *reign* is literally, “to reign as kings together.”

### The Kingdom Of God

**T**he kingdom of God is presented in three distinctive aspects that all run on together today. The first embraces only *those who are born of water and of the Spirit* as seen in John 3:3-6. The second embraces *all who profess Christ as Lord* as seen in Matthew 13:24-50, while the third embraces *the whole universe, heaven and earth* as seen in Daniel 2 and 4.

A place where these three circles are clearly seen is in Ephesians 4:5-6. “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling” (KJV) is connected with the first circle in line with John 3. “One Lord, one faith, one baptism” associates with the second circle found in Matthew 13. “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” is the third circle as seen in Daniel 2 and 4. It has often been pointed out that only believers are in all three circles. Lifeless professors are in circles two and three; while the rest, outside of professed Christianity, come only under the rule of God as the sovereign ruler of the universe.

—George Davison, *Precious Things* (adapted)

## Q&amp;A

**“Preaching the kingdom of God.”**

- ***What does this mean?***
- ***Should believers today preach the kingdom of God?***
- ***Does that embrace the gospel as set forth in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4?***

**T**he apostle of the Gentiles, although for two years prisoner at Rome, was preaching the kingdom of God (Acts 28:31). Remarkable! In Rome, the very center of man’s greatness and power, Paul had the courage to proclaim the majesty and glorious greatness of his Lord and Master. The world had viewed that same blessed One as worthless, crowned Him with a crown of thorns and crucified Him. Yet, He is risen, exalted and glorified on the Father’s throne. He will soon come again to reign on this earth where He was crucified.

The apostle in his parting address to the elders of Ephesus said, “... the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God,

will see my face no more” (Acts 20:24-25 NKJV). The burden of the ministry, which he had received, was to witness to the grace of God and proclaim the kingdom of God. These things are linked together. It could not be otherwise.

Our Savior is the Messiah, the King of Israel. Looking at the Psalms one can count 25 or more references to God’s anointed King, such as:

- “My King” in Psalm 2:6 is God’s Son, the Son of the Father’s love,
- “My King and my God” in Psalm 5:2,
- “The LORD is King forever and ever” in Psalm 10:16, and
- “Who is this King of glory? ... The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah” in Psalm 24:7-10.

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We leave this very profitable study to you to pursue.

The Son of God came into this scene by becoming Man. He has the dignity of the King. The theme of the Gospel of Matthew is “the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.” That is the royal One, the King and the Promised Seed. Therefore we read at once: “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?” (Mt. 1:1, 2:2).

The theme of the Gospel of John is the glories of the Son of God, yet nowhere in the Gospels is the Lord Jesus so much spoken of as the King as here. Only John records that the multitudes after the feeding of the five thousand “were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king” (Jn. 6:15).

In chapter 12 our blessed Lord was honored at the table as the King. Some of His own had made Him a supper and each one was delighting to take their place which grace had given them. One was serving and another enjoying fellowship. Mary brought the ointment of spikenard, very costly, and lavished it all upon His feet. She recognized Him alone to be worthy of all. “While the king is at his table, my spikenard sends forth its fragrance” (Song 1:12). Oh, that all the Lord’s own would understand this better and be so willing to pour the adoration of

worshiping hearts at His holy feet! He surely is worthy. The savor of His great Name would fill all the house and be carried everywhere (Jn. 12:3; 2 Cor. 2:14).

Again in John 12 we read: “A great multitude ... cried out: Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD! The King of Israel!” (vv.12-13; see Psalm 118:25-26). The Holy Spirit applied Zechariah 9:9 to this scene: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.” He received this recognition as “the King of Israel” from the multitude, but He is soon seen weeping because they had not known the time of their visitation (Lk. 19:37-44). After the rapture the godly remnant will pass through exercises of heart and be willing to receive Him as their King. But now only His sheep know His voice and follow Him (Jn. 10:4).

At the close of John’s gospel, the Lord is the object of scorn. Pilate speaks seven times of Him as King:

1. “Are You the King of the Jews?” (Jn. 18:33).
2. “Are You a king then?” The Lord’s faithful answer was, “You say rightly that I am a



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king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice” (v.37).

3. “Do you therefore want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” (v.39).
4. Pilate’s soldiers crowned Him with a crown of thorns and said, “Hail, King of the Jews!” (19:3). Pilate brought Him forth so arrayed thus giving this act his public approval (v.5).
5. “Behold your King!” (v.14).
6. “Shall I crucify your King?” (v.15).
7. Pilate gave the last in writing: “JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS” (v.19). “What I have written, I have written” (v.22) was his final, unalterable verdict. Although an unrighteous judge and not realizing what he was saying, Pilate bore witness to the truth.

Although Jew and Gentile have disowned the Lord as King, “Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” All His own gladly recognize His glory as King. Yet someone will reply, “We are a heavenly people and He will be the King for an earthly peo-

ple.” Very well! But let me illustrate the point.

A bride, soon to be queen, the king’s wife, delights much in the fact that her lover is the coming king. He has not as yet ascended the throne. The day of coronation is still future. She will love to speak of his being honored as the king. She loves that day. To her he will be the loving husband, yet she is happy to tell of his dignity and majesty. She is much grieved at his being rejected and could never associate for a moment with those who scorn the coming king. So it is with the Christian today.

We are a heavenly people and are waiting here in this scene for our heavenly Bridegroom, who will soon come to take us to Himself (Jn. 14:3; 1 Th. 4:16-17). We also love His appearing (2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Jn. 3:2), when He will come in His glory. We, the redeemed, will be with Him. As King of Kings and Lord of Lords (1 Tim. 6:15), He will take His rightful place and reign. Then it will be proclaimed, “The kingdom of the world of our Lord and His Christ is come, and He shall reign to the ages of ages” (Rev. 11:15 JND), and the 24 elders are seen on their faces worshiping God at that glorious sight. We do so now in anticipation of that day.

The King is rejected now but He has been enthroned by the Father

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and crowned with glory and honor. The kingdom as present is a spiritual one. It is the sphere where the will of God is recognized and obeyed. Only those “born again” can see and enter the kingdom of God today (Jn. 3:3,5,7). We are to seek that kingdom and His righteousness; He has promised to take care of the other things. Our Father knows what we need (Mt. 6:32-33).

We are to be the proclaimers of the gospel of the grace of God to the lost sinners of the world, also instructing them in the kingdom of God. We should love to tell of the royal majesty of our blessed Lord. The place as King is due to Him in this scene of His rejection. It is sad that we hear so little of that coming, glorious day of His appearing. Some preachers even deny that there will be such a display of Christ’s glory in this scene.

The verses mentioned in our question, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, are the fundamentals of the gospel: “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (NKJV). But that

is not all. In the same chapter the kingdom is spoken of in verses 23-26. Later, we read of the mystery of His coming for His own (vv.51-57).

The term “gospel” means “the glad tidings,” and it includes all! All is important in its place. Christ’s birth is “good tidings of great joy” (Lk. 2:10). His death and completion of the redemptive work is a source of glad tidings for sin-troubled souls – here they learn that the sin question has been divinely settled. The resurrection of the Lord is good news, for here we learn that we are justified. Not a single charge can be brought against one who puts his trust in the risen Savior. He is coming again for us – believers. That is good news rich with comfort for we will then be forever with the Lord. What joy to Him and to us! He is going to come with His own to reign – what glad tidings for the godly remnant and joy to us to see Him receive His rightful place and reign, and we with Him!

—Answered by G. A. Wiese  
in the September 1939  
*Grace & Truth Magazine* (adapted)

### **The Fundamentals of the Gospel**

**“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” -1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (NKJV)**

# The Parable Of The Ten Virgins

by Jacob Redekop

*“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.”*

—Matthew 25:1 NKJV

The kingdom of heaven embraces the entire sphere of Christian profession. In this parable, told in Matthew 25:1-13, we find the kingdom of heaven likened unto ten virgins who, having taken their lamps, went forth to meet the bridegroom. Here we have those who have heard the Word and have taken a position in this world in contrast to either the Jews, who worship the one true God, or to the heathen, who worship any number of false gods. They have taken on the Christian religion as a profession and therefore are responsible on this basis.

We find in these verses a limited sphere occupied by those who took their lamps of testimony – whether true or false, wise or foolish – and according to their profession they will have to give account to God. It is clearly not

the whole world spoken of here, nor their receiving or rejecting the gospel testimony. Rather, it is a picture of those who have accepted it, even though their acceptance may be merely an outward expression. Here it is not a question of *having* spiritual life, but of *occupying a position in the world as being identified with* this rejected One to whom they now bear witness. Such a witness can only be rightly done in the energy of the Holy Spirit, as symbolized by the oil. It is in this way that the wise and the foolish are distinguished, for to all outward appearances there is no difference. All had lamps, slept, and arose to trim their lamps; but the dark night made manifest their true condition and also displayed the desperate need of the foolish virgins. They had no oil. What a

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sad awakening it is for those who call, "Lord, Lord," only to hear the answer, "I do not know you."

The foolish turned to the wise, seeing that the wise possessed what the foolish had not, only to be directed then to the true source where their need could be met. In Revelation 3:18 we have similar counsel given to those who are mere professors: "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see."

We understand from Paul's epistles that the character of the testimony in the present Church period is heavenly. The calling, position and hope are heavenly because heaven is the place where Christ has gone in virtue of having finished the work of redemption on the cross. It is in Christ that all truth is centered, and therefore it is to His blessed Person that we are called to render testimony.

In Matthew 25 we see the virgins going forth to meet the bridegroom. There was an energy seen at the beginning, leaving all behind in order to meet Him. It is not so much His coming, but the *One* who is coming – the Person! This is what characterized the early church. They waited for the

Son from heaven, even Jesus. "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). Each of the four items mentioned in this verse has to do with Christ. We read in Ephesians 4:21: "As the truth is in Jesus." The fellowship is that of the Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor. 1:9). In the breaking of bread we show forth the Lord's death until He comes (1 Cor. 11:23-26), and we pray in His Name (Jn. 16:22-27). These passages show how completely the life of the early church was formed by the One whom they were following. What a bright testimony this was – only to be quickly marred. Already in the apostle's day, Paul wrote, "All those in Asia have turned away from me" (2 Tim. 1:15). John was led to write, "You have left your first love" (Rev. 2:4). Very soon the virgins all slept.

For hundreds of years the professing church was in this sad state. Already in its early history, the presence of the Holy Spirit was set aside and substituted by man's arrangements, only to introduce deadness – a mere form without the power of the Holy Spirit. The result was that Christ was displaced and the power and value of His work were denied. The heavenly position of the



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believer was lost sight of and with this came a settling down to the level of this world. The blessed hope of His return was given up, and soon all slumbered and slept. Value was placed upon *man's work* to obtain righteousness and favor with God, rather than upon *Christ's finished work* as an accomplished righteousness and the basis of one's acceptance with God. In short, the ministry committed to the apostle Paul was soon unknown.

Since our parable of the ten virgins is general in nature, what lesson do we have here for the individual? It is this: Although in its broad outlines we are part of the professing body of Christendom, this professing body is composed of individuals – each one being a contributor to the general condition. Each individual is either true or false, wise or foolish, thereby raising or lowering the general condition. Not one of us who has taken upon himself the name of the Lord Jesus Christ can dismiss his responsibility that is associated with that name and position. “Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?” (Lk. 6:46 NKJV).

What could possibly change this state of things when all slept? It surely is not by man's efforts, but only by the Spirit of God whose presence and work testify

of Christ and glorify Him. “At midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’” (Mt. 25:6). When was this cry made and the truth of Paul's ministry recovered to the Church? When was the hope of the Lord's return announced again, as well as other truths relative to the position and calling of the Church?

This clearly did not happen during the Reformation, although unquestionably that was a work of God in giving His Word to the people and in preaching justification by faith. It was about 180 years ago that an awakening took place in many places and countries which affected all of Christendom. The evidence of this is found in many publications still in print, not only from the pens of those whom God used in spreading these truths, but also from those who rejected them. The nature and unity of the Church, its heavenly calling and hope, the coming of the Lord for and with His own, and many other truths were recovered and loudly proclaimed.

The effect was that many Christians separated themselves from their unscriptural associations and gathered together simply as Christians on the ground of the one Body, unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They owned the presence of the Holy

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Spirit in their midst to guide and direct. Spiritual gifts were recognized, not by man's appointment, but as given by Christ, the ascended Head of the Church, for the edification of the people of God. This truly was a trimming of the lamps. Everything inconsistent with a going forth to meet the Bridegroom was cut off. These Christians were characterized by simplicity and unworldliness.

Mere profession could not carry this light. The energy was lacking. They might trim their lamps to bring them into outward conformity, but this does not give light. Oil is needed – the power of the Holy Spirit. The foolish turned to the wise for oil only to reveal their folly, even as Simon in Acts 8 was willing to pay money to have the power to communicate the Holy Spirit to others by the laying on of his hands. He thought that the gift of God might be purchased with money. In this it is not man's place to give, but to receive. "I counsel you to buy from *Me*" (Rev. 3:18), and the terms of this transaction are laid down in Isaiah 55:1: "Without money and without price."

It is clear that we do not have the gospel presented in the words of the wise virgins, but a warning. We desire to press this message upon the conscience of any who are relying upon something other

than the work of God in their souls. "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His" (Rom. 8:9). These words are unmistakably clear. You may belong to the best church organization on earth and be the most zealous religious worker to be found, but if you do not have the Spirit of Christ you do not belong to Him. All your good works are worthless for they are nothing but dead works, an empty profession. You may compare yourself with other professing Christians and come to the conclusion that you are better than they. You have committed no "big sins," as people say. But remember, when the foolish virgins came and said, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" the solemn reply was, "I do not know you." Have you come to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation?

There is also a solemn warning in this parable for each one who sincerely loves our Lord. The midnight cry has been sounded, "Behold, the Bridegroom is coming; go out to meet Him." How has this affected us? Has the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ brought about a response in our hearts? Have we earnestly replied, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus"? Is this accompanied by a separated walk and devotion to Him? Do our behavior and dress speak of separation rather than conformity to

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the world? This world is guilty of having crucified the Lord of Glory. Can we then join hands with this Christ-rejecting world and at the same time render a faithful testimony to Him? We cannot and we must not! In the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, “the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal. 6:14 KJV). “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation

of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:13 NKJV).

As the Bridegroom, our Lord’s interests are centered in His own. He knows them that are truly His, He calls His own sheep by name, and He goes before them. He alone is worthy of our hearts’ affections. “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Heb. 12:28). **GT**



## RESPONSE

- Many thanks for sending me your magazines for the past year. Your write-up on “Lying” (Mar. ’13) addressed an important issue that is being overlooked by many Christians today. I believe that many souls have been touched, including myself.

– *Iwo, Nigeria*

- Thank you so much for the January 2014 edition of the magazine. The topics were really inspiring. A call for Christians to “Go!” is what I felt from God to me personally. – *Visakhapatnam, India*

- Please continue my sub-

scription to your wonderful little magazine. I don’t always agree with your writers 100%, but I want to honor the good work that you all do in the name of the Lord Jesus.

– *Illinois, USA*

- I live alone, an elderly pensioner. I read your articles with great interest and then pass it on to a niece who is getting to know the Scriptures and learning to pray.

– *Parrearra, Australia*

- I truly am thankful for your magazine as it aids me greatly in the continuing growth and education of my Christian faith. – *California, USA*

# Engagement And Marriage For The Christian



by Eugene P. Vedder, Jr.

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*Editor's note: A few points in this article may not be viewed as suitable for young children. If reading to a family, it may be wise to review the article first.*

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## Engagement And Marriage

From beginning to end God's Word speaks much about marriage. It makes clear the sanctity of marriage, for marriage was instituted by God in the Garden of Eden before our first parents sinned and was designed by Him for the blessing and joy of mankind. Marriage is also a lovely earthly picture to help us understand the relationship between Christ and the Assembly (Church). Ephesians 5:22-33 makes this very clear.

Scripture does not say much about engagement, the period of commitment immediately prior to the consummation of a marriage. But God's Word definitely recognizes engagement, sometimes referred to as betrothal. Customs and practices in regard to engagement vary in different parts of the world. However, what is important for Christians is what God says in His Word.

In the western world two people may decide they want to get

married and they then make this known by getting engaged. Sadly enough, in this ungodly world often a man and a woman simply begin living together and then perhaps later decide to get married. This is, of course, absolutely contrary to God's will for mankind. No matter how commonplace it has become or how it is glamorized in the world, before God this is sin, and God's Word speaks of it as fornication.

At the time the Bible was written engagement was normally a matter arranged by the parents or families of the couple. This pattern is still followed in many cultures today. It makes sense to the extent that parents normally have acquired experience in married life that their young people do not have, but it has serious, potential drawbacks too. Marriage is probably the second most important decision an individual has to make in his or her life, second only to accepting the Lord



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Jesus Christ as his or her personal Savior and Lord. The will of God must be paramount in our lives!

Strictly speaking, at least for Christians, engagement is a matter of a man and a woman committing themselves before God to marry one another. (We emphasize, *a man and a woman*, for God's Word does not recognize any other relationship as marriage, regardless of men's laws or court rulings). The period of engagement is the final time for them to prepare themselves for marriage. Their love will be growing and they will want to be together, but they must exercise care to keep pure, avoiding all intimate contact for God has reserved the joys of this pleasure for the married couple.

If during the engagement either individual should find that he or she does not feel free before God to enter into a lifelong exclusive oneness with the other, this is the time to end the relationship, heartbreaking as this may be. Both God's Word and practical life experience demonstrate the awful disaster that a wrong marriage can be for husband, wife, children and even the families and friends of both partners.

### Some Scriptural Examples, Pro And Con

In Genesis 24 we see Abraham concerned about a wife for his

son Isaac and sending his oldest servant to find one suited for him. He gave careful instructions as to where he should go and what kind of woman would not be suitable. Upon arriving where he was sent, the servant prayed for direction and eventually negotiated with the family of Rebekah. The family agreed that the match was of God, and Rebekah personally said, "I will go," when asked whether she would go with the man. The family blessed Rebekah as she left. Arriving home, the servant told Isaac all that he had done. The marriage was consummated and Isaac loved Rebekah. Many today would have problems with such an arranged marriage, but this is the first marriage we read of after the original instance where God made and brought Adam his bride. Furthermore, in many of its details this story is a beautiful picture of His Bride, now being procured [taken] and prepared for our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the case of Esau we see him taking wives for himself that were a grief to his parents (Gen. 26:34-35). There is no word as to an engagement or even of his parents being consulted about whom he married. He took two Canaanite wives to begin with, and a daughter of Ishmael as a third wife when his parents were

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grieved because of the first two wives (Gen. 28:6-9). Nothing is said about his parents being involved in any of his decisions.

Isaac and Rebekah sent Jacob to his Uncle Laban to take a wife of his daughters (Gen. 28:1-5). Jacob went with his parents' blessing but made his own arrangements (Gen. 29), ending up with both of Laban's daughters plus their maidservants as his wives. Jacob worked seven years for Rachel whom he loved, he was deceived by his uncle who gave him Leah, and then he worked seven more years for Rachel. We see the disorder and strife that polygamy brings as we consider Jacob's messy family life.

In Genesis 34, after Jacob's daughter Dinah was humbled by Shechem, he and his father came to Jacob to arrange for Shechem to marry Dinah. Jacob's sons came in from the field and involved themselves in the negotiations for this marriage. Shechem was noted as being honorable above all in the house of his father. But Jacob's sons Simeon and Levi were treacherous and killed Shechem, his father and all the males in their city. Thus the engagement was broken and no marriage occurred.

Judah in Genesis 38 acted shamefully and entirely on his own – first in having a Canaanite as a close friend, then in taking a

Canaanite wife. His shame continued in looking for a prostitute and later in almost having his daughter-in-law burned for her pregnancy for which he was responsible.

Deuteronomy gives us a restatement of the Law God gave to Israel. Galatians shows us clearly that we Christians are not under that Mosaic Law, yet there are many things we can learn from it. Several times, and especially in Deuteronomy 22, we find God making a distinction between a woman who was married, a woman who was engaged, and one who was not engaged and thus not married. We see that the penalty for lying with a man's wife – what we would term adultery – was more severe than for the rape of an unmarried young woman. The penalty for raping an engaged woman was more severe than if she was not engaged. Thus God clearly differentiates between non-engaged women, engaged women and married women. The distinctions God makes show us plainly that engagement is not a light thing in His holy eyes.

How sad to read of Samson's engagement and subsequent wedding in Judges 14. "She pleases me well" or the converse is still the criterion for many an engagement and wedding in the world today. Insistent self will, putting pressure on parents, acting against

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God's expressed will, keeping secrets from parents and spouses, marrying out of the will of God, making worldly friendships, following customs of the world – all these things are integral to [essential parts of] the lives of all too many, even Christians.

Turning to the New Testament we find in its very first chapter an engaged couple, Joseph and Mary. Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant. He was called her husband although they were not yet married and Mary was still a virgin, something Luke also emphasizes. Matthew 1 calls Joseph an honorable man and says that he was not willing to expose Mary publicly, so he wanted to break the engagement secretly. God's angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, telling Him not to fear to take Mary as his wife for the child she was bearing was by the Holy Spirit, and this Son would save His people from their sins. Inspired, Matthew added that all this was according to prophecy, which he then cited. So we see that under normal circumstances Joseph could have broken the engagement, but that it took a message given by an angel in a dream to keep him from doing this.

The apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 11 spoke of espousing (engaging) the believers at Corinth to

Christ. He wanted to present them as a chaste virgin to Christ, but they were listening to false teachers and thus being unfaithful to Him. He regarded this as a very serious issue. We, indeed, are in a period of engagement waiting for our Lord to come and take us to Himself. After this the marriage supper of the Lamb can be celebrated for which the Bride has made herself ready (Rev. 19).

### Dissolving An Engagement

These passages from both the Old Testament and New Testament show clearly that engagement and marriage are not the same in the eyes of God. Engagement is a solemn commitment which should never be taken lightly, but there are circumstances under which an engagement can be broken. One of these would be fornication on the part of either the woman or the man. Also if two individuals are engaged and one is a believer and the other is not, the believer should not marry the unbeliever. Scripture tells us that our "yes" should be yes and our "no," no. But we must obey God; and there are circumstances where we need to humble ourselves, recognizing that in getting engaged we have failed by making a wrong decision or agreement. In such a case we should humble ourselves before the Lord, confessing that what we

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have done is wrong rather than making the matter worse by entering into a marriage that would bind us for a lifetime in a relationship that is contrary to the will of God. These are not the only reasons that would warrant dissolving an engagement.

When it comes to wanting to dissolve an engagement simply because one feels that he or she loves someone else more, this must be seriously weighed before the Lord. Do not enter into marriage lightly! God tells the husband to love his wife (Eph. 5:25,28,33) and the wife to love her husband (Ti. 2:4). Beware of entering into a marriage if your heart is taken up with someone else rather than the person you are engaged to marry! When a person is engaged he or she should be looking forward to married life with the one they are engaged and not be occupied with someone else.

### **In Conclusion**

Many other factors may enter into the matter of engagement and marriage: wealth or poverty, education or illiteracy, unity of faith or lack of this, health, goals in life, family, social or cultural pressures and so much more. But the most important thing for Christians is that both the man and the woman must be firmly convinced that the engagement and the marriage before them is truly the Lord's direction and will. If such is not the case, the marriage will be a prospective disaster. It would be better to break off the engagement and relationship than to have to live in a marriage not of God the rest of one's life – or to break such a marriage by divorce, which is something God hates (Mal. 2:16). Divorce is not in God's plan for marriage for it completely spoils the picture of Christ and the Assembly, which human marriage is meant to portray. May the Lord be seen in all that we do! **GT**

“For this reason a man shall leave  
his father and mother and be joined to his wife,  
and the two shall become one flesh.’

This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and  
the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular  
so love his own wife as himself,  
and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

—*Ephesians 5:31-33 NKJV*



The purpose of this column is to help you study the Bible on your own. Look up the Bible references and think about them before writing your answers. Do not send this study to us, as this is not a correspondence course.

## DISCOVER WHAT THE PREACHER HAS TO SAY IN ECCLESIASTES

CHAPTER 10 – By Alan Groth

*“Blessed are you, O land, when your king is the son of nobles, and your princes feast at the proper time – for strength and not for drunkenness!”*

—Ecclesiastes 10:17 NKJV

As the Preacher moves into a proverbial form of writing, you will read about flies, horses and serpents; lands, cities and houses; and kings, princes and rulers. Continue to study and you will receive further instruction by the Preacher as to things done under the sun.

### Read Ecclesiastes 10

1. What will spoil a man who has a reputation for wisdom and honor?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What word picture is used to describe this? \_\_\_\_\_
3. The wise and the fool are contrasted throughout this chapter. How many verses speak of one or the other or both? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Where are the wise man’s heart and the fool’s heart? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Where does the fool reveal himself? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is the error of the ruler mentioned in verses 5-6? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



7. Who are riding horses and who are walking? Is this proper order?

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8. What observations does the Preacher write about concerning work in verses 8-10? \_\_\_\_\_

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9. Verses 11-14 have to do with “words” in some way. Describe the use of them in each verse.

v.11 \_\_\_\_\_

v.12 \_\_\_\_\_

v.13 \_\_\_\_\_

v.14 \_\_\_\_\_

10. What brings woe to a land? \_\_\_\_\_

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11. What brings blessing to a land? \_\_\_\_\_

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12. When a building decays, it is the result of \_\_\_\_\_

A house leaks because of \_\_\_\_\_

13. What may a bird do? \_\_\_\_\_

Next month we'll *Discover* more of what the Preacher has to say in our study of Ecclesiastes.

# The Blessed Man

by H. A. Ironside (*Lord Is Near*, 1998)

*“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.” —Psalm 1:1-2 NKJV*

This blessed man is God’s ideal of what man ought to be in this scene. It finds its perfect fulfillment in the holy behavior of the Lord Jesus Christ, who ever did the things that pleased the Father. We, in our measure, are called to walk as He walked (1 Jn. 2:6), according to the example He has left us (1 Pet. 2:21). To do this we must be regenerated (Ti. 3:5). It is a life of holy separation from all evil that is in view. The blessed man is careful to avoid any participation with the ungodly so far as their attitude toward divine things is concerned. His piety

does not consist in a negative attitude toward evil alone, but in the positive enjoyment of what is good. The Word of God is precious to him and is his spiritual food, assimilated [absorbed mentally] by meditation (Jer. 15:16).

Perennially fresh and always fruitful, the blessed man is likened to a tree whose roots go down to the water streams, ever drawing up that which tends to growth and enrichment, so that he is a witness for God to all who know him, as they see how richly grace is working in his soul. **GT**

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O Lord, when we the path retrace, which Thou on earth has trod,  
To man Thy wondrous love and grace, Thy faithfulness to God.

We wonder at Thy lowly mind, and fain would like Thee be,  
And all our rest and pleasure find in learning, Lord, of Thee.

—J. G. Deck (1802-1884)

# Divine Titles

## AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

### Part Five

by A. J. Pollock

### Prophecies Concerning The Coming Christ

These prophecies are most illuminating and precise. How could writers, centuries apart in different countries and generally ignorant of what each other wrote or would write, give us one complete prophecy with the utmost precision? This indicates a divine power was controlling and guiding their pens – a Master Mind energizing each writer. The Bible is the only book in all the literature of the world which presents this unique and unanswerable testimony to divine inspiration.

A most striking prophecy followed man's sin in the Garden of Eden. Enmity was put between the serpent and the seed of the woman. That seed was Christ. Satan crushed His heel [something painful] when he led men to crucify the Lord of Glory. But Satan's apparent victory was actually his utter defeat. That will be seen in the future day when

Satan will meet his final doom in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10), thus fulfilling that first prophecy that Satan's head would be crushed [will be fatal] (Gen. 3:15 JND).

A later prophecy shed more light as to who Christ would be. We read, "Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14 NKJV). Immanuel means "God with us" (Mt. 1:23) and is another name for God. Isaiah wrote that Christ would be the Child of the virgin, but He would Himself be God.

The prophet throws still more light on the subject of the coming Christ, which historically did not come to pass for over seven centuries. "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6).

Would any uninspired writer in

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his wildest dreams pen this verse? It sounds apparently contradictory to speak of the same Person as a Child of days and “the Father of eternity” (JND). How could both statements be true? And yet we know from Scripture that the Child of the virgin, begotten by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, was God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). God as well as Man, yet one blessed Person – the Son of God – a mystery utterly beyond man’s comprehension! Our Lord Himself told His disciples, “No one knows the Son except the Father” (Mt. 11:27 NKJV).

It is an incomprehensible mystery to us, like the following Scripture: “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me, the One to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting” (Mic. 5:2). Here, in a seeming contradiction, is a Baby born in a defined place, Bethlehem, and yet we are told that the One so born was from everlasting. In taking up Manhood our Lord had a beginning at Bethlehem, but the One who had that beginning is God from everlasting, the eternal Son who never had a beginning. The Son was given, not born (Isa. 9:6).

As a last example from Scripture we read: “Come near to Me,

hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, I was there [there AM I, JND – the assertion of deity]: and now the Lord GOD and His Spirit have sent Me” (Isa. 48:16). We have here the three Persons of the Godhead in fullest concert for the blessing of man. Marvelous truth! The Word sent stands in great prominence in this Scripture. Was this not wonderfully fulfilled when our Lord, as recorded in John, announced 14 times that He was the Sent One of the Father?

To those in the temple who doubted He was the Christ He said, “You both know Me, and you know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. But I know Him, for I am from Him, and He sent Me” (Jn. 7:28-29). The circle is complete. The Lord plainly linked Himself up with the Sent One of Isaiah 48:16.

This forms a suitable finish to our study of the names of God in the Old Testament and affords a pleasing introduction to our study of divine titles in the New Testament. It is in the Person of our Lord that the Old and New Testaments join hands. **GT**

*Look for the continuation of this Series next month!*



# SECOND CHRONICLES

by Leslie M. Grant

*“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” —2 Chronicles 7:14 NKJV*

Here the gracious summing up of God’s ways in connection with the kings is continued. Solomon’s magnificent kingdom is seen here beautifully typifying the reign of the Lord Jesus in the peace of millennial glory. Nothing is therefore said of his grievous deviation from the path of obedience to God; his marrying many wives and being badly influenced by them.

The dividing of the kingdom in the days of his son Rehoboam must be taken note of, for grace does not set aside God’s government. Rehoboam was forbidden to attempt to bring the ten tribes back again by force. The ten tribes set up a new center at

Samaria and a new king. They are therefore only referred to in this book in connection with the history of Judah for God’s grace must be shown only in connection with His chosen line – the line of the true Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. This stands out beautifully in the histories of Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah.

Such a review that so magnifies the blessed counsels of the grace of God is a precious intimation [hint] of the character of the judgment seat of Christ for the believer. The books of Kings show us the obnoxious history of man, while Chronicles show how God’s grace transcends man’s sin. **GT**

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*This column is taken from the book “The Bible, Its 66 Books In Brief.”  
It is available for purchase from Believer’s Bookshelf USA ([www.bbusa.org](http://www.bbusa.org))  
and Believers Bookshelf Canada ([www.bbcan.org](http://www.bbcan.org)).*



– continued from outside back cover

done the most horrible thing imaginable – he had killed another human being. “I’ve taken a man’s life ... and I deserve whatever happens to me,” he said. He wiped his face and paused. Then he looked me in the eyes and asked: “But do you think God can forgive me?”

That question hit me with a wave of emotion as I thought about the Good News of Jesus Christ and how He came to save us from our sins. I eagerly shared the message of God’s grace with Bruno and then asked him a simple question, “Have you trusted Christ as your Savior.”

Shaking his head he said, “No,” and started sobbing profusely. When I asked if he would like to, he immediately said, “Yes.” He then bowed his head and prayed to receive Christ into his life. When he lifted his head he was beaming with a bright smile, and the expression with the sad eyes was no longer there.

Bruno’s life was so drastically transformed that he went from being the most despised and feared man in the facility to the most loved and respected. He found favor with all who worked around him. He accepted what he had done as sin and committed his future to God.

What God did for Bruno He will do for anyone who places his or her trust in Jesus Christ as Savior. God loves us and is more than

willing to forgive us of our sins. He said: “*I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins*” (Isa. 43:25 NKJV). “*God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against Him*” (Dan. 9:9 NIV). Forgiveness of all our sins is available simply for the asking.

When I think of Bruno’s story, I’m reminded of the apostle Paul who was responsible for the deaths of Christians, but God’s grace made a difference in his life (1 Tim. 1:12-16; Acts 22:4,19-20). For this reason he could say: “*This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief*” (1 Tim. 1:15, NKJV).

It does not matter who you are or what you have done, God’s grace – His underserved kindness – is all you need. Jesus came into the world as a man and He died on the cross for you and me. Jesus shed His blood so that our sins could be washed away: “*To Him all the prophets witness that, through His [Jesus’] name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission [forgiveness] of sins*” (Acts 10:43). “*The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin*” (1 Jn. 1:7).

Jesus rose from the dead on the third day and He is alive right now. He longs to save you and to forgive you of all your sins. Will you accept God’s forgiveness? **GT**

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## Will God Forgive Me?

by Roscoe Barnes III



**“BRUNO” HAD REACHED THE PINNACLE OF SUCCESS.** He owned his own business, lived in a nice house, drove a fancy car and had a beautiful wife. It seemed that his happiness would never end. But soon problems surfaced and his marriage fell apart. Before long he did something he would live to regret.

I met Bruno when I visited the medical unit of the detention facility where I was chaplain. Bruno was a hulking figure with sad eyes – an expression that told you something was wrong.

“I’ve been trying to reach you for a long time,” Bruno said as he greeted me with a handshake. He then offered me a chair. The 30-year-old man rarely smiled and was often ignored by those around him. He felt that people were either afraid of him or they simply hated him. Either way, most people, including other inmates, would not give him the time of day.

Without any prompting from me, Bruno began to tell me his story as he started to cry. “I can’t believe I’ve ended up this way,” he said with tears coming down his face. “I’d never been in trouble with the law. I can’t believe this is happening.”

He told me that he was at the end of his rope. Loneliness had set in like a heavy sack and all he could see was despair. Eventually, Bruno said that he had started to think of how he would take his own life. As he sat in front of me with his elbows resting on his knees he said he had

– *continued on inside back cover*

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