

Kingdom Citizenship Now!

*Experiencing God's Kingdom
On Earth As It Is In Heaven*

Laura Henry Harris



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The word *kingdom* will always refer to the kingdom of God, unless otherwise noted.

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Preface



Every living human being is a citizen of earth. Every person is also a citizen of an invisible kingdom that operates on the earth. Humanity lives in a world with two opposing kingdoms: the kingdom of God and the principality of Satan. The kingdoms are not equal in scope or power. The kingdom of God is eternal, incomprehensible, and without limit. The other kingdom is temporal, worldly, and finite. Because of the infinite vastness of the kingdom of God, this book can only attempt to illuminate an infinitesimal portion of God's kingdom in heaven and on earth. Yet even this limited knowledge is powerful, as believers who understand the kingdom of God can better grasp how to fully live in his kingdom.

The narratives of Scripture are overflowing with stories, parables, and biblical history, which interpret and aid in discernment of God's kingdom. Oftentimes the people of God are at war with their adversaries. Studying the victories and defeats of God's people teaches modern believers, the Church of Jesus Christ, how to live and walk with God. The adversaries of God's people may be the Philistines, the Moabites, the Canaanites, or many other "*ites*" found in the Bible. Yet each of these opposing armies teaches about the adversary, Satan, and his principality of darkness.

Scripture has many levels. Surveying the passages in a deeper way will reveal types and shadows of the kingdom of God. A *type* or shadow can be a person, an event, or even a parable that foreshadows or heralds an even greater person, event or teaching in the future. The type or shadow precedes the greater teaching or truth that is yet to come, and thus gives a glimpse of God's future revelation.

The book of Hebrews teaches the original, “is only a shadow of the good things that are coming – not the realities themselves” (Heb. 10:1). Believers learn about the latter by knowing the former. Understanding the subtlety of events and people of Scripture, and knowing they have deeper meaning, will enable believers to discern how past events become clues to what may happen in the future. These clues reveal insights into the supernatural realm, and allow greater understanding of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness.

Kingdom Citizenship Now! is formed into three parts: Kingdom Foundations, Experiencing the Kingdom of God Here and Now, and Believers Living in the Kingdom Realm. Part One traces the transferable commodity of kingdom authority from pre-Eden to the post-resurrection era and shows believers how a more complete view of kingdom authority will enable them to walk in greater blessings and victory. Part Two biblically illustrates how God’s kingdom manifests on earth as it is in heaven in ways that may be new to many in the body of Christ and have not have been understood or experienced by current believers. Part Three is a practical application of how believers may live in and experience the realm of God’s kingdom while living on earth.

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Introduction



My husband and I often walk down a lane near our home that leads to a beautiful stream. During our walks to the creek, we saw a vernal pool that had formed from a heavy rain. A vernal pool is a temporary puddle of water that may provide a natal habitat for frogs, lizards or other species. After a few days we noticed the pool was home to a large hatch of tadpoles, which live in water in the beginning stages of life. One advantage of a vernal pool is that it provides a habitat safe from fish and other predators. However, one huge disadvantage is that it can dry up before the tadpoles morph into frogs, form legs, and are able to navigate dry land. Day after day we observed the pool drying up and the habitat of the tadpoles becoming smaller and smaller. Eventually the tadpoles could not survive; there was not enough rainfall to sustain the habitat.

This unfolding scene was a reminder of humanity's limited understanding of the kingdom of God. The tadpoles' world consisted of a small rain pool. They lived and died in that small pool, not knowing that just a few steps further down the lane was a vast supply of water that could have sustained them. Just a minuscule fraction of the water in the stream would have been enough to supply their every need. Beyond that, even our rural county could have supplied tens of thousands of gallons of water to sustain their habitat. They did not know they could have had thousands and thousands of habitats in the 120 counties in our state with multiplied millions of gallons of water. They were unaware those millions of gallons of water could have been multiplied billions of times across the United States of America. They did not comprehend they could have had habitats in

many of the 196 countries of the world. Even so, the tadpoles lived and died in a pool about fifteen feet in diameter in a world with millions of *cubic miles* of water. Having said all of that, the water on the earth is still finite. It is a vast amount, but it is measurable.

Humanity could be seen as the tadpoles living in a vernal pool, not knowing the vast resources of the Kingdom of God that are within our reach. Our habitat will also pass away some day. We are living in a small pool, not knowing the vastness of the dominion of God. For a tadpole, the water of the world would have been mind-blowing in its *finite vastness*. But for humanity, what about the *infinite vastness* of God's kingdom that is available to us? Such is our understanding of the kingdom of God! We have but a tadpole's understanding of the kingdom of God in our own little vernal pool, not knowing or understanding the incredible and incomprehensible magnitude of the reign and dominion of God. It is exponential times infinity!

This will be our joyful challenge: In the study of God's eternal and infinite kingdom, we will do well to scratch the surface of understanding. Our minds do not have the capacity to grasp it, but we can try to learn more than we know now by the grace and revelation of God. We fail from the beginning because we attempt to describe the immensely immeasurable with measurable words. Even our language is inadequate to grasp the concepts of God's reign. We begin the journey with the understanding that we are tadpoles living in a vernal pool, but knowing God holds all the waters of the world in the palm of his hand (Isa. 40:12).

Earth is the one place where we know the manifestation of God's kingdom is limited. God has self-limited his kingdom manifestation on earth largely to the extent humanity seeks it and desires to see its exhibition. On earth, the kingdom is often seen by humans seeking with yieldedness and submission to the Lord, while joined with the power of God. The kingdom of God is always present, but it is not readily apparent except to those who are willing to seek it, receive it, and move in the kingdom realm.

I have heard it said Holy Scripture is shallow enough for a child to wade in without fear of drowning, yet deep enough for theologians to swim in and never touch the bottom. The kingdom of God is the same way; it is vast beyond measure, yet even a toddler can navigate

in the kingdom realm. Jesus made it abundantly clear one cannot fully comprehend the kingdom of God in his or her natural and limited way of thinking without yielding both life and understanding to the Lord. He often spoke in parables so the wise and learned could not understand; yet so simple that yielded people had comprehension. Though we have eyes to see and ears to hear, understanding and perception of the kingdom of God requires more. The kingdom of God is a multifaceted and complex system, but when there is spiritual understanding and perception, it is amazingly comprehensible. Later we will investigate how to yield our understanding to the Lord. For now, just recognize by yieldedness the Lord will reveal new levels of understanding and new directions we have never grasped before. I pray this book will help reveal the terrifying incalculability, along with the beautiful simplicity, of the kingdom of God. I pray that hearts are stirred with an increased personal desire to experience God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Powerlessness has constrained the Gospel message. The true Gospel message is so much more than salvation. The true Gospel message is the coming of God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Toothless teaching that leads to lukewarm believers is abhorrent to the Lord. I long to see the faith Jesus and the disciples possessed in the New Testament era within the hearts of modern disciples. I yearn to see the miraculous events in the lives of those early believers become everyday occurrences for current believers. I desire for current believers to understand that we are spirits living in a natural world. We are clothed in a natural body, of course, but our true lives are in the spirit. We can experience a life lived in God's kingdom. We are citizens of God's kingdom now! I implore believers to seek it.

Part One

Kingdom Foundations



Chapter 1

The Kingdom And The Beginning Of The World



To understand God's kingdom, one must first understand authority. I will make an even bolder statement and say if a believer does not understand authority, there can be no firm grasp of God's kingdom on earth. Authority is the legal and delegated right to rule and reign and exercise mastery over an area or domain. The discussion of the kingdom of God begins with events that happened before the creation of the world. Those events impacted the rule and reign of the kingdom of God on earth. The fall of Satan, the creation of the world, the Fall of Adam and Eve, and other events established the parameters of the manifestation and the limitation of the kingdom of God on earth as it is currently seen and experienced. A good understanding of those events and their impact on authority will lay a firm foundation for recognizing the kingdom of God on the earth as it is in heaven.

Eternal King, Eternal Kingdom!

God is the great *I Am*. God was, is, and always will be. The kingdom of God was in place before the world was created. Because God always has been and always will be, there has never been a time, nor will there ever be a time, when the kingdom of God did

not exist. The kingdom has always been existent because there was never a time that eternal King God did not exist. The word *kingdom* means the king's dominion, or the king's rule. A kingdom does not exist without a king, because a kingdom is directly tied to the rule and reign of the head. God is eternal; therefore, his kingdom is also eternal.

The God of all creation did not come into his reign of power and authority simply because humanity was created. Humanity does not make God the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is sovereign regardless of the creation of humanity. God does not need humanity to be God. He is God with or without created beings. His kingdom was eternal before creation, and it will be eternal after the end of the world, as it is now known.

Angelic Rebellion In Heaven

A snapshot of events that happened before the creation of the world can be piecemealed by looking at several Scriptures. Bible texts illustrate that God created the angels before he created the natural world. This is true because angels were seen worshipping God as he created the world. When God questioned Job, he asked,

Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?
Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its
dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a
measuring line across it? On what were its footings
set, or who laid its cornerstone - *while the morning
stars sang together and all the angels shouted for
joy?* (Job 38:4-7)

The singing morning stars are references to angelic beings. Also, the angels were shouting for joy during the creation. Angels were created before the earth and humanity were created because they were giving praise as the earth was being formed.

Lucifer, meaning light-bearer or morning star, was one of those created angelic beings. He was an archangel in the presence of

God. Ezekiel 28:11-19 provides a lengthy description of the angel Lucifer, and illustrates his status before and after his fall from the heavenly realms. He was the seal of perfection, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty (Ezek. 28:12). He was in Eden adorned with every precious stone, including carnelian, chrysolite and emerald, topaz, onyx and jasper, lapis lazuli, turquoise and beryl with gold settings (Ezek. 28:13). He was anointed as a guardian cherub on the holy mountain of God (Ezek. 28:14). Apparently he was a creature of great beauty and splendor.

Lucifer led an angelic rebellion in heaven. The Word states that Lucifer was blameless from the day of his creation until wickedness was found in him (Ezek. 28:15). He was filled with violence, and he sinned against God. God drove him, the guardian cherub, in disgrace from the mount of God (Ezek. 28:16). The root of his fall was that his heart became proud because of his beauty. His wisdom and splendor had become corrupted, so God hurled him to the earth and made a spectacle of him before kings (Ezek. 28:17). Lucifer desecrated the sanctuaries. God made a consuming fire come out of him and reduced Lucifer to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching (Ezek. 28:18).

Lucifer sought to exalt himself to be *like* the Most High! In his attempt to self-promote, he was brought low. He was further described in Isaiah 14:

How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! ¹³For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; ¹⁴I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'¹⁵ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the pit. (Isa. 14:12-15)

The fallen angel Lucifer later became known as Satan, the accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10). The book of Revelation further

illustrates what transpired before the creation of the world. A great war broke out in heaven: God's archangel, Michael, and his angels fought with the dragon and his angels. The forces of Lucifer did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer (Rev. 12:7-8). Lucifer, also known as the great dragon, the serpent of old, the devil, Satan, and deceiver of the whole world, was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him (Rev. 12:9).

Scripture testifies there is an "innumerable company of angels" (Heb. 12:22). Most scholars believe one-third of the angels chose to rebel with Satan, based on the account in Revelation:

Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads. ⁴Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth ⁷Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. ⁸But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. ⁹The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. (Rev. 12:3-9, selected verses.)

John, the author of Revelation, saw an enormous red dragon whose tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. Metaphorically, the stars in Revelation 12 refer to fallen angels. Satan, the great dragon, was hurled down to earth where he led the world astray. If this interpretation is correct, then one-third of all angelic hosts rebelled with Satan. That offers great assurance to every believer, because it means two-thirds of the angels still love, adore, and follow God's will. Angels may minister to followers of Christ at the Lord's command. Angels are helpers, and they come to the assistance of believers when God directs them to do so. The Lord will send them on behalf of believers and to do his will.

Order Out Of Chaos

After the fall of Lucifer, biblical history began, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (Gen. 1:1-2). When God created the earth, it was “without form and void” (Gen. 1:2, KJV). When the earth was created, it had no shape and it lacked order! The earth was void, but that begs the question, “Void of what?” A *void* is completely empty, a vacuum place containing nothing. How could the created earth be absent of everything? How could the earth be without matter? The void was confusion, chaos, and desolation. God encompassed the entire universe, but yet the earth at that time was empty and without form.

In the beginning chaos of earth, “darkness hovered over the face of the deep” (Gen. 1:2). Scripture reveals that darkness is always associated with the enemy, Satan. Darkness is where evil, unfruitful or rebellious servants were thrown. Jesus said in the parable of the unfruitful servant, “Throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness” (Matt. 25:30). That is what happened to Satan and his demons. Satan was thrown to earth and the earth was without light. It was utterly dark, without a shred of illumination. Imagine how horrible that would have been for one called “light bearer,” as was Lucifer. Matthew also shows that worthless subjects of the kingdom will be “thrown outside, into the darkness” (Matt. 8:12). In one parable of Jesus, the King told the attendants to tie a man who was not properly dressed for the wedding banquet, and “throw him outside, into the darkness” (Matt. 22:13). Darkness is a place of punishment. It is separation from the light of God. Darkness is imposed on the ones who rebel against the Word of God. Psalm 105:28 says, “He sent darkness and made the land dark – *for had they not rebelled against his words?*” Darkness is the place where evil dwells. Psalm 91:6 describes, “pestilence that stalks in the darkness.”

If darkness was upon the earth, then the earth was the place of Satan’s dwelling after he was cast out of God’s presence. This is a different understanding of earth: A place seemingly devoid of matter, without shape, but yet had darkness that hovered over the surface of

the deep. The formless, shapeless void of the deep darkness was the place where Satan was stationed from the time of his fall from heaven. Ezekiel 28:17 says, “So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings.” God cast Satan out of heaven into a vast universe, but he had to be somewhere, because God did not annihilate him. God is everywhere. There was nowhere Satan could go that God was not already there. Revelation 20, states, “Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and *there was no place for them*” (Rev 20:11). There was no place for Satan to go to get away from the glory of God when he was cast out of heaven.

God created a place for Satan that was full of darkness. It was a great crevasse; in other words, the “deep.” At that time the earth was a hole in the universe, a bottomless pit. God had to intentionally shield his light from Satan because the light of God is all encompassing. Revelation 22 describes the time when all things are restored. It says, “There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 22:5). Because the light of God is so all encompassing, there is never night in heaven. There is no lampstand because of the brilliance of God’s glory in the heavenly realm. However, Satan was located in the place called earth, but it was not earth as has been commonly understood as the abode of humanity. At that time, it was a place of deep darkness, indicating the complete absence of the light of God! It was the place of the abyss, a bottomless pit.

The earth was a place of deep darkness, surrounded by waters. Yet even though it was a formless void of deep darkness, the Holy Spirit hovered over the waters waiting for a word from the Lord. The waters were the separation from the place of God and the place of deep darkness. The enemy was the darkness over the deep. God burned him up; there was no form in him. The Spirit of God was hovering, but did not seek an occupation until the Father spoke. When the Father spoke, he brought order out of the chaotic void.

God said, “Let there be light and there was light” (Gen. 1:3). The light was good! In reality, God did not create light at that moment. He revealed light! The light was already there in God’s being. The

Word said, “*and there was light.*” Light was preexistent of that moment. That was not the first existence of light; it was the first evidence of light on the formless void of the chaotic condition of earth to that point! Light existed in God, “God is light; in him there is not darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). God is eternal, thus the light of God is also eternal. Consider that Satan was the “light bearer.” What was he bearing in heavenly realm before creation of earth, if light did not preexist the creation of earth? God is not who he is because of created order – especially earth, forms of life, and humanity. God is who he is regardless of created order. Can humanity be so arrogant as to assume that the light of God did not shine in the heavenly realms that pre-existed the ordering of earth? No, of course not!

God spoke and the light overcame the darkness. John 1:5 says, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” Then order from chaos continued as, “God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness” (Gen. 1:4). The darkness and light have no fellowship or communion with each other (2 Cor. 6:14). God continued to speak into existence the creation of the natural order of the earth. The corner of the universe where the demonic debris had been flung was being cleansed and ordered according to God’s plan.

Before God brought order in the creation of earth, the chaotic void of earth was the place of separation from God. If God is everywhere, and if God is light, then God had to intentionally mask his light so that it would not be evident in the void of earth. The void was the intentional absence of anything of God’s nature, including light.

Creation: Kingdom Manifested On Earth

Creation continued and God brought order to the earth. God created man in his image to rule over the order that God had established out of the chaos. After God brought order, creation of earth was the perfect blending between the kingdom realm and the natural realm. Adam and Eve were created in complete communion with God. There was no separation between them and their creator. There was no sin, and they were in the presence of the King. They experienced

manifest kingdom provision, kingdom health, and every other blessing of the kingdom of God in the Garden of Eden.

Adam was a spectacular human being. He was created in the image of God. Consideration should be given to what it means to be created in the image of God. An image is a perfect reflection, like looking in a mirror. The image of God in Adam may not have been in his physical form, because God is Spirit, but rather in his nature and character. Adam was endued with the nature of God. Adam was created pure and holy. He would have used all of his abilities to be who God created him to be. His body would have been stunning. His mind would have been connected to the mind of God and he would have heard God. He would have had divine revelation surpassing the revelation of the most accurate prophets. Adam would have walked in constant revelation of God. Adam would have had the perfect wisdom of God in all situations. In fact, every gift of the Holy Spirit of God would have been fully formed and functioning in Adam. His spirit would have been in perfect communion with God. Being in the perfect image of God, Adam would have truly been splendid and magnificent in every way.

God had dominion over everything in heaven and on the earth, and he gave the dominion and authority over all the earth to Adam and Eve. He created the male and the female as co-regents with him. In the creation, God said,

‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’(Gen. 1:26-28)

In the authority God had given Adam and Eve, they had all the benefits of the kingdom of God on earth. They ate from God's provision; they were fed from the breadbasket of heaven. The provision of the kingdom was readily accessible and they had no need that was not met. Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed (Gen. 2:25). In the beginning, Adam and Eve would have been unblemished by sin. They would not have had the shame that comes from living in a broken world. They shared purity with God.

The best blessing of the garden was that they were able to walk with God and be in his constant presence. A common precept of Scripture is that the pure shall see God (Matt. 5:8, John 1:47-51).¹ Adam and Eve were pure and transparent; there was nothing for them to hide because of their purity. They were with God and there was nothing impure or unholy that would prevent them from being in God's presence. Adam and Eve were created on earth but they were abiding in the kingdom realm as if they were living in heaven. Eden was the flawless unification of the natural of earth and the supernatural of heaven.

The first thing God did after creation was to "bless them" and give them instructions for exercising dominion: "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground'" (Gen. 1:28). Adam and Eve were the ambassadors of God who had permission to exercise dominion over every living creature, because the King had given them the right to rule and reign. God created Adam in his image to rule over *all creatures*. God said to rule, "over the fish . . . the birds . . . over the livestock and all the wild animals, and *over all the creatures that move along the ground*" (Gen. 1:26). Fish, birds, livestock, and wildlife seem inclusive of the created order of animal life on the planet.

Then what is included in the category of "*all the creatures that move along the ground*?" Creatures are created beings. Satan was a created being on the earth. The only eternal, non-creature is God – he was not created; he just always was! Satan and the demons were created and are not eternal. Adam was to rule over this age, as emissary of God on the planet. How could Satan become known as

the “ruler of this world” in John 12:31 if he did not take the ability to rule over the earth from Adam? Adam had the authority of rule over all creatures, including the demonic realm at first.

If Adam did not have the authority of God to rule over Satan and the demonic forces with him, there would have been no need for Satan to steal the authority of Adam. The battle for earth would have been lost from the beginning. Even as an angel fallen from grace, Satan would have had greater power than Adam. Angels were created higher than humanity with gifts and powers not possessed by humanity apart from God. The gift and calling of God is not recallable (Rom. 11:29). What Satan had was not taken away from him. Psalm 8 states that angels are higher than mankind, but man had the authority of God,

What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? ⁵ *You have made them a little lower than the angels* and crowned them with glory and honor. ⁶ *You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet: ⁷ all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, ⁸ the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. (Psa. 8:4-8)*

Angels, as supernatural beings, have power that humans do not have. If Adam had not been given the authority from God to subdue the entire planet, including the demons, Adam would have been out-classed by an angelic being from the beginning. Satan and his demons were within the realm of Adam’s authority from God. When God gave Adam dominion over the earth, God did not limit his rule of created beings to the animals. Adam was to rule over all creatures that move along the ground. Satan was already on the earth, because that is where he was sent when he was cast out of heaven.

The Blessing Of God Is The Favor Of God

God, as his first gracious act toward humanity, blessed Adam and Eve. They had everything they could need or want. A quick look at Deuteronomy 28:1-2 shows how to obtain the blessings of God: “If you *fully obey the Lord your God* and *carefully follow all his commands* I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. *All these blessings will come on you* and accompany you *if you obey the Lord your God.*” These directives to fully obey the commands of God in Deuteronomy are followed by a list of blessings and favor in virtually every area of life (Deut. 28:1-14). Obedience literally looses kingdom manifestation on the earth.

Conversely, for those who do not fully obey the commands of God, the opposite is true: no blessings are released, but rather curses are heaped upon those who disobey. Deuteronomy 28:15 says, “However, *if you do not obey the LORD your God* and *do not carefully follow all his commands* and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will *come on you and overtake you.*” This verse is followed by a very long list of curses for disobedience in every area of life – lack of provision, barrenness, slavery, defeat in warfare, confusion, rebellion of children, and many more. The first thing God did was to bless Adam and Eve, who were created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). Everything they put their hands to would prosper under the blessing of God (Deut. 28:12). Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant *on the face of the whole earth* and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food” (Gen. 1:29). Adam and Eve were placed in the garden, but they were not limited to the garden. They were given the whole earth. God said it, and “It was so” (Gen. 1:30b). The best part of the whole passage is that God saw what he had done in creation of the man and woman and it was “very good” (Gen. 1:31). Everything else God saw about creation was merely “good,” but when he made the man and woman in his image, he was well pleased with his work. He appeared to be a proud Papa. He gave his babies everything they would need and more! He gave them all the abundance of the whole world!

Rebellion In The Garden Of Eden

The Bible reveals that *every tree* in the garden was pleasing to the eye and good for food. The Word says, “The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—*trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food*. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:9). One tree was off limits because it was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God told Adam he was to tend the garden. The LORD commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for *when you eat* from it you will certainly die” (Gen. 2:16-17). Even though Adam and Eve had been given authority over life forms on the earth, it was clear that God retained authority over life and death of all creatures. Throughout the Word, God clearly has authority to give life and take it away. Also, did God know Adam would fail in his mission to subdue every creature? Revelation says Jesus was, “the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). God already had a rescue plan in place before there was ever a need.

If the events of Genesis 2 are chronological, Eve was not yet created when the Lord told Adam not to eat of that particular tree. The next thing the Lord said after the admonition not to eat was, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him” (Gen. 2:18). Later, after making the animals and finding no suitable helper for Adam, “The LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man” (Gen. 2:22).

If Adam told Eve exactly what God said about eating the forbidden fruit, either she did not pay attention or she intentionally disobeyed. On the other hand, Adam may not have told her exactly what the Lord said. It is like playing a game of “Telephone,” where the leader gives a message at the beginning of the line by whispering to the first person, who whispers the message to the next person, and so on. By the end of the line the message is completely different, inadvertently being changed by each person who hears the message from the previous person. In any event, for whatever reason Eve

did not have a good command of the word of the Lord, because she severely misquoted the word of God when conversing with Satan.² When the serpent tempted Eve to eat of the tree, she saw it was pleasing to the eye and good for food (Gen. 3:6), but in that regard it was just like every other tree in the garden. They were all pleasing to the eye and good for food (Gen. 2:9).

The one thing the tree of the knowledge of good and evil had that the other trees in the garden did not have was that it was desirable for gaining wisdom, according to the serpent. He said to Eve, “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5). This was the most tragic, dreadful day in human history. What Eve thought she was gaining in wisdom could only have been gained by fear of the Lord, for “fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 9:10, Ps. 111:10). As a stellar human being in constant communion with God, she had all wisdom at her disposal. What Eve sought to gain by eating the fruit could only be obtained by staying in the perfect will of God and in perfect relationship with God.

Deception took place. She ate and then took the fruit to the man. He ate. It was only after they *both* had eaten from the forbidden tree that their eyes were opened. Genesis 3 says, “She took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, *who was with her*, and he ate it.⁷ *Then the eyes of both of them were opened*” (Gen. 3:6b-7a). Eve, the bride, was under the covering of Adam, the groom. Eve sinned, but could Adam have covered her with his authority? Before he ate, could he have pled her case to the Father, just as Christ pleads the case of his bride to the Father? Her eyes were not opened when she ate the fruit; her eyes were opened only when Adam, her head, could no longer provide adequate covering for her. Once Adam engaged in the sin with the woman, he was no longer a pure covering for her and then their eyes were opened. Pause for a minute to consider: Adam heard the word directly from the Lord. No one can say he did not know what God said, because the word was given directly to him. He could have stopped the whole thing. At the very least he could have stopped himself.

In the kingdom blending with earth in Eden, all Adam and Eve had to do was to protect their ears and eyes, and listen to God. The

enemy first used the spoken word to corrupt. God had used the spoken word to create. Eve listened to the wrong voice when she listened to the enemy, Satan. She looked on the wrong thing when she became enamored with what she saw, “When the *woman saw* that the fruit of the tree was good for food and *pleasing to the eye*” (Gen. 3:6). Adam also listened to the wrong voice when he listened to the corrupted voice of Eve. They allowed themselves to hear pollution; they allowed impurity to come into their lives when God’s best was purity for them. Listening to God would have brought the wisdom Eve sought by eating the fruit.

The Fall: Concealment Of God’s Kingdom On Earth

Adam and Eve loosed the wrath of God by rebellion and disobedience. What had been the gracious gift of God in the joining of the kingdom of God and the natural realm was thereafter concealed. That which had been freely given was no longer available. Only by painful toil and the sweat of the brow would they eat after the rebellion (Gen. 3:17-19). The blessing of God as his first act toward Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:28) was replaced by multiple curses (Gen. 3:14-19). Adam and Eve were banished from the daily presence and provision of God, and were now forced to labor, toil, and sweat in order to achieve what had once been freely provided in the garden (Gen. 3:23).

Not only were Adam and Eve cursed, the ground was cursed and would not easily yield the produce that had been brought forth in the kingdom realm (Gen. 3:17-19). The animals were cursed and the communion of the animals with Adam and Eve was removed (Gen. 3:14). The animals had been under the protection of God and humanity. Adam and Eve had been *given every tree* but one for their food source. The kingdom plan was not for the consumption of living creatures for food, at least at that time. Even the animals were not to eat other animals. There was no “top of the food chain” in the animal realm. The antelope was not food for the lion. The Lord said, “And to all the beasts . . . and all the birds . . . and all the creatures . . . I *give every green plant for food*” (Gen. 1:30).

Animals became the first sacrifice to cover the first sin, because God sacrificed an animal to create clothing for Adam and Eve to replace their inadequate covering of leaves (Gen. 3:7, 21). I envision it was a perfect lamb! God said if they ate of the tree they would surely die. They did not die a physical death, but an animal died to cover their sin. They suffered separation from God. Thereafter, their dominion as coregents in the kingdom realm was lost.

The purity of what God had created in the chaste, unadulterated state moved the heart of God. When Adam and Eve allowed themselves to be corrupted by the tricks of the enemy, Satan, they were no longer pure and unadulterated. Once the toothpaste was out of the tube, there was no putting it back. Their eyes had been opened, and because of their disobedience they had unleashed sin on the world. They were then aware of the darkness that had been there in the beginning, but had been overcome by the light of God.

The blessing of God's kingdom was replaced by the curse of being in the kingdom of darkness. By one action, Adam and Eve changed kingdom realms for the entire earth. They rejected the provision and blessing of the kingdom of God and replaced it with the toil, hardship, and bondage of the kingdom of darkness. There was no longer a blending of heaven and earth in Eden. The dominion of the earth became the dominion of Satan. Adam and Eve gave the authority they had received as co-rulers with God to Satan, the accuser of the brethren. They had a choice and they chose to give up the blessing and live under the curse. God gave them authority and they gave it away. Satan said to Jesus, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; *it has been given to me*, and I can give it to anyone I want to. ⁷ If you worship me, it will all be yours" (Luke 4:6). That is what happens when God's people align themselves with Satan.

Adam and Eve gave all the authority they possessed to Satan and he became the "god of this age" (2 Cor. 4:4) and the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). Satan's goal was to conceal the glory and blessing of God: "The god of this age (Satan) has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4). In other words, the god of this age obscures the perception of

unbelievers (faithless ones) so they cannot see the glorious splendor of the good news of Christ! That is what happened to Adam and Eve. When they sinned against God, in the opening of their eyes, they saw the darkness. They were blinded to the light of God. When God cast Satan out of heaven, he voluntarily hid his light. When he cast Adam and Eve out of the garden, they could not see the kingdom of God as they had before their eyes *were opened*. It was still there, but they were really blinded by their sin rather than enlightened.

The good news of Christ is the revelation of God's kingdom on the earth. Christ is in the likeness or image of God, just as Adam and Eve were in the beginning of creation. Even believers are not able to see the kingdom of God on the earth because of the lies of Satan. The status quo changed after the Fall of Adam and Eve. God removed his presence and glory from the daily presence of the man and the woman. It is unlikely that God moved, but Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden, the place of the presence of God. Fierce angels barred the way to the tree of life. Humanity had been cast out of the presence of God, just like Satan had been cast out of heaven. "So the LORD God banished him (Adam) from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken" (Gen. 3:23). In one moment, the authority of the world had been given to Satan, and Adam and Eve were in bondage to toil, labor, and sweat, and were distanced from a loving God.

Chapter 2

Jesus: Renewed Kingdom Manifestation



So what does the Fall of Adam and Eve mean for obedient lovers of God? Thankfully, other testimonies in the Bible illustrate the Fall of Adam and Eve did not result in an all-time ban on the blessing of the kingdom provision of God on the earth. However, after the Fall, the perfect blending of the kingdom realm and the natural realm was replaced. The all-present manifestation of the kingdom of God was not seen on earth because authority was voluntarily given to the enemy of God by the ones God had given it to in the first place. The goal of fallen Lucifer is to steal, kill, and to destroy, which is what he first accomplished in the Garden of Eden.

Authority After The Fall

After the Fall, instead of the kingdom of God being fully manifest *at all times*, the kingdom *sometimes* manifests in the natural realm. The kingdom of God is always present, but it is not always manifestly evident. The dominion of God's realm is *mostly* evident when two things happen: first, when the will of God is accomplished by his dominion over the kingdom of darkness, and second, when someone in the natural realm invites the presence of God, bringing the manifestation of his kingdom in the process. Of course, that

does not negate the idea that God's rule and reign can sovereignly break into human lives, activities, and the natural order without human involvement if he so chooses. After all, God is sovereign and God can providentially move any time he determines. However, in Scripture it seems the Lord usually acts when his people are seeking, interceding, or imploring him with pure hearts. The chapters ahead will examine what it means for the kingdom to break into the natural realm, and investigate what Scripture teaches about how the kingdom manifests in the natural realm.

Plan Of Redemption

Jesus came to re-establish the dominion of God on the earth. Jesus had two directly stated purposes. First, he came to proclaim the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus said, 'I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, *for I was sent for this purpose*'" (Luke 4:43, NASB). The manifestation of the kingdom of God is associated with grace, as we will see as these pages unfold. Second, Jesus came to reclaim dominion on the earth from Satan, "*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil*" (1 John 3:8, KJV). Overcoming the works of the devil is associated with justice, as we will later learn. To fully understand what Jesus did when he died on the cross, we must understand what happened in the Old Testament, and then look at the agenda of Jesus when he walked on the earth. From the perspective of Scripture, everything after the Fall was the rescue plan of God to retrieve the authority Adam and Eve lost in the garden and to reestablish the kingdom blessing of living in the realm of God while living on the earth.

After the Fall of Adam and Eve, the earth became a very wicked place. The Lord God was full of remorse and lament for having created humanity. Genesis says, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.⁶ And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his

heart” (Gen. 6:5-6). In reality, God “de-created” the earth with the flood in Noah’s generation.

Consider this: God did not offer Noah’s generation a chance to repent! He spoke to Noah, the only righteous person, and gave him instructions to build a boat, not to preach repentance. These were the first generations of Satan’s rule of authority on the earth. God did not take back the authority Satan possessed to rule, reign, and subdue. God did, however, exercise his retained authority over life and death. The pre-flood status was unchecked wickedness. The Lord cleaned house.

Later, God entered into a covenant with Noah and his family, reminiscent of the covenant with Adam, but limited by being in the fallen world while Satan still possessed authority:

Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, “*Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.*”² The fear and dread of you will fall on all the beasts of the earth, and on all the birds in the sky, on every creature that moves along the ground, and on all the fish in the sea; they are given into your hands.³ Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything. (Gen. 9:1-3)

The result of the Fall was that Noah did not get the liberty to “subdue (the earth),” or to “rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground” (Gen. 1:28). Noah was only given the right to be fruitful, increase, and fill the earth (Gen. 9:1-2, 7). In other words, all the wicked people were destroyed, so God wanted his children to overtake the realm of Satan’s dominion. Noah also had the liberty of killing all creatures for food, because the animals were no longer in communion with and under the protection of humanity. There was no unity with creation as there was in the garden.

Because Noah lived in a fallen world, he had to live in a place where dominion and authority had been given to the enemy. He could have only exercised dominion after the flood had if he received

a lawful grant of authority from one who had it to offer. Because the dominion over the earth had been given to Satan, there was no dominion for Noah to receive. Two opposing parties (one righteous and one evil) cannot exercise or share the same authority, which is the legal right to rule or exercise control. Satan would not voluntarily give his authority away as Adam and Eve had done. The Lord previously had given authority to Adam and Eve and they had given their authority to Satan. The authority was not recallable, because the gift and calling of God, once given, will not be reclaimed (Rom. 11:29).

Authority is a transferable commodity, which can only be possessed by one person or like-minded entity at a time. The Lord did not overturn Adam and Eve's bad decision to give away authority, because he had gifted them. Adam and Eve had the ability to use the gift as they saw fit – which even meant to protect it from the trickery of Satan. Similarly, the Lord will not overturn the bad choices of humanity regarding his gifts and calling. There was no such limitation of Jesus taking authority back from Satan, because Satan did not receive authority as a gift from God, but rather he obtained it illegally through deceit.

Unfortunately, even after the flood, the sinful nature of fallen humanity in a fallen world began to rise up once again. Noah's son Ham had a moral failure, which brought forth curses on Ham's line of descendants. Ham's descendants were the line of people Satan used throughout biblical history to enslave God's people.³ The hunger for power took on a new level in Genesis 11. The people again wanted to be like God. Evil began to prevail on the face of the fallen earth. The events in Genesis 11 are pivotal to the reemergence of the kingdom of darkness on the earth after the flood, and they provide a basis for understanding what it means for reclaiming the kingdom of God on earth. Chapter 21 will deal with this in greater detail.

Eventually, God instituted a system of atoning sacrifices with Moses and the Law to save the people from the sin Adam and Eve had loosed on the world. The plan was for the people to have a way to cover their sins and come back into right relationship with God. The sacrificial system of the Old Testament required the people to bring an animal to be sacrificed to atone for their sins in order to obtain temporary cleansing from sin. The disharmony between humans and

animals again reared its ugly head. Animals were frequently put to death as an atoning sacrifice to cover the sins of the people. As a result of the loss of status in the kingdom of God and the dominion of the kingdom of darkness, animals were the creatures that died to atone for the sins of humanity. The Law was founded in justice, not grace.

The sacrificial system was imperfect because it was tied to the Law of Moses. The Law given by God on Mount Sinai set out the parameters and guidelines for behavior of the people. When the covenantal laws were broken, the people could find atonement in the blood of an animal offered to God. It was a system of substitutionary sacrifices to God, so that when the people sinned they could offer payment for the sin debt. The problem with the Law was that it brought condemnation. The system of the Law was stringent and people could not follow the law without breaking the covenant. What was meant to bring atonement and reconciliation with God only brought judgment for failure to comply.

The Law of Moses, also known as the Old Covenant, was a temporary fix to the problem of sin and loss of the manifestation of the kingdom of God. It failed because people were blessed for obedience and cursed for disobedience in Deuteronomy 28, which is exactly what happened to Adam and Eve. The Law tended to take people toward legalistic compliance without engagement of the heart, thus defeating the purpose of God's beginning plan. Hebrews 10 illustrates the reasons the Old Covenant of the Law was ineffective. It begins,

The law (the Old Covenant) is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.² Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins.³ But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins.

⁴ It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. (Heb. 10:1-4)

The Old Testament book of Jeremiah first presented the notion there would be a *New Covenant* between God and the people. The old system of animal sacrifice, which was ineffective in bringing permanent reconciliation with God, would be replaced. The New Covenant was not tied to the obedience of the people; rather, it was bound to the grace of God:

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when *I will make a New Covenant* with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, *my covenant which they broke*, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: *I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for *I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more*. (Jer. 31:31-34)

The New Covenant was introduced 600 years before Jesus gave himself over to death on the cross. Jesus knew before the foundation of the world he would be offered up as the perfect sacrifice to atone for the sins of the people. Jesus Christ is, “The Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). He is, “The Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). He knew people would not be able to live under the system of the Law. The New Covenant was based on the mercy, grace, and favor of the Most High God. People needed a bridge between themselves and their

Creator. Jesus knew before the creation that humanity would need to be saved.

With the New Covenant there was no longer a system of animal sacrifice for the atonement of sin. Through the New Covenant by the grace of God, Jesus became the one-time atoning sacrifice for sin. Hebrews 10 illustrates why the Old Covenant did not work, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you (the Father) did not desire, nor were you pleased with them’—though they were offered in accordance with the law” (Heb. 10:8). God was not pleased with the blood of animals, and the sacrifice of animals was not in accordance with the kingdom manifestation before the Fall. Then animals, as part of creation, lived in peace with humanity. It was an inadequate substitution to recreate the kingdom plan of God in Eden before the Fall.

The author of Hebrews also reported that Jesus said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will” (Heb. 10:9). With that he set aside the first covenant to establish the second covenant. The following verses draw a firm distinction between the annual sacrifices of the priest and the one-time sacrifice of Jesus:

And by (God’s) will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

¹¹ Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, *which can never take away sins.* ¹² But when this priest (Jesus) had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. ¹⁴ *For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.* (Heb. 10:10-14)

The conclusion is this, “And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary” (Heb. 10:18). The atoning sacrifice of Jesus shows the love of the Father for his people,

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!¹⁰ For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! (Rom. 5:8-10)

Plan Of Restoration For The Kingdom On Earth

God's plan of restoration on the earth meant the kingdom of God would be fully manifested in the end like it was in the beginning. The full manifestation of God's kingdom does not have to be delayed until humanity is in heaven, or until Christ returns to claim his bride. Jesus came to restore the kingdom on earth, even now while humanity is still battling for control on the earth. God is a loving Father of abundance, not poverty. In Eden, the blessing of God was fully manifested. God's ultimate plan is that people will live in the same perfect manifestation of God's kingdom. The plan of God has always been the manifestation of God's kingdom on earth. Everything from Genesis 4 to the end of Revelation is God's plan of redemption and restoration for his creation. The full redemption became available when Jesus reclaimed authority from the enemy, Satan, which had been given away by Adam and Eve.

When Adam and Eve sold their birthright for a piece of fruit, they impacted human history for all time. When Jesus died on the cross, he reclaimed and restored the authority Adam and Eve lost, but with the caveat that Satan is still roaming around, making miserable the people who believe his lies. He is already defeated, but his defeat is not fully manifested. When Jesus came, he came to bring forth the full manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. Paul confirms this in Ephesians 1:3 by declaring, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has *blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ . . .*" Blessing is God's divine protection, provision, sanctification, and

favor. God's intent is to bless humanity, and in fact, he has already (past tense) blessed humanity with every possible blessing in the heavenly (spiritual) realm. Blessing with every spiritual blessing is how things began in the Garden of Eden. Blessing with every spiritual blessing is how life *should now be* on earth, but the full kingdom blessing is concealed until it is revealed in some way or manifested by God.

Kingdom Come

The primary message of Jesus is often lost on Christians. When asked what Jesus came to do, most believers will say, "He came to save us from our sins." That is true, but that is a very limited and incomplete answer. Actually, Jesus came destroy Satan's works and to reveal the kingdom of God and restore its full manifestation in the everyday lives of human beings just like it was in the Garden of Eden. Concisely stated, the manifestation of the kingdom of God is the core message of the totality of Jesus' teachings. The "kingdom of God" is not only the rule of God in heaven, but the manifest presence and power of God's actual rule in heaven and on earth. The kingdom of God is manifested on earth when the authority of God is enforced against the enemy.

The first thing Jesus preached after his temptation in the wilderness was, "Repent, for the *kingdom of heaven* has come near" (Matt. 4:17). The very next thing Jesus did in Matthew 5-7 was to deliver the Sermon on the Mount, a concise teaching and dissertation of the kingdom of God. The initial part of Jesus' first sermon is called, "The Beatitudes," which is a succinct statement of God's kingdom. The Beatitudes may be read literally (as seen throughout this book) to teach the proper attitudes and attributes to invite the full manifestation of God's kingdom here and now. He first taught, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). In the teaching, Jesus also instructed believers to pray that God's kingdom should manifest on earth, "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). The core content

of Jesus' message was the inauguration of God's kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

When Jesus concluded the teaching on the Mount, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority (Matt. 7:28-29). Jesus understood what authority meant to the manifestation of God's kingdom on earth. God's will is not always brought forth on earth as it is in heaven, otherwise Jesus would not have given the disciples directions to pray for the realization of God's will on earth as it is in heaven. In other words, *if* God's will were *always* accomplished on earth, why would Jesus direct believers to pray for the manifestation of God's will on earth? Jesus was teaching that believers could see and live the kingdom realm now, just like Adam and Eve did in the garden before the Fall. The difference was that God gave them dominion and rule in the kingdom realm without any effort on their part. However, because current believers live in a fallen world, believers must usually seek God or overcome the enemy to see his kingdom manifestation in miracles, signs, and wonders.

The kingdom of God was frequently on the lips of Jesus throughout his ministry. The phrase "kingdom of God" appears over fifty times in the Gospels, almost always spoken by Jesus himself. The equivalent phrase, "kingdom of heaven," appears over thirty times in the Gospel of Matthew. Not only did Jesus talk about the kingdom of God, he also demonstrated the kingdom in his works of healing, deliverance, miracles of multiplication, and the overtaking the natural laws of weather, gravity, or horticulture for the kingdom purposes.

Jesus outlined his purpose for earthly ministry by stating, "I must *proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God* to the other cities also; *for I was sent for this purpose*" (Luke 4:43). The very purpose of Jesus was not *simply salvation* so we can be saved but live in a broken world until we die. The purpose of Jesus was to bring forth the restoration of the manifestation of the kingdom of God *NOW!* Jesus said, "The *time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news*" (Mark 1:14-15). That good news is that the kingdom of God is restored into the hands of

Jesus. It is now up to believers to strategically invite the realization of God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Jesus did not stop there. Almost all of the parables are teachings about the kingdom of God. Frequently, Jesus began his parables, "The kingdom of heaven is like . . ." When Jesus sent out the twelve disciples, who were later followed by 72 others, their stated mission was to, "*proclaim the kingdom of God*" (Luke 9:2). When Jesus fed the 5,000, the kingdom of God was his subject: "He welcomed them and *spoke to them about the kingdom of God*, and healed those who needed healing" (Luke 9:11b). Before he fed them through kingdom multiplication and manifestation, he taught them. Then he demonstrated the kingdom of God by the miracle of multiplying the loaves and fish – a true example of the dominion of God's grace over the natural realm.

Even after the resurrection of Jesus, the kingdom of God was the primary topic of Jesus' teachings, "After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and *spoke about the kingdom of God*" (Acts 1:3). In the following pages, the concept of God's kingdom will begin to take shape so a biblical understanding of what Jesus taught will emerge.

Restoration Of Kingdom Citizenship

So what does all this have to do with *Kingdom Citizenship Now*? When we accept the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ to save us from our sins, we become citizens of God's kingdom. We enter God's kingdom through Jesus, and by no other way. When we join with Christ, we are adopted as sons and daughters of God. We are transformed into royalty in the heavenly realm. We become princes and princesses in the kingdom realm because we are children of the King, and benefits come with that royal status. Colossians 1:12-13 says, "Giv(e) joyful thanks to the Father, who has *qualified you to share in the inheritance* of his holy people in the *kingdom of light*.¹³ *For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.*" This verse illustrates past tense

kingdom citizenship by saying Jesus, “*brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,*” not future tense that he “*will bring us in to the kingdom*” when we die and go to heaven. Jesus is the path to the kingdom of God and we enter God’s kingdom by believing Jesus is the Son of God who died for our sins. We cannot keep enough laws or be good enough to enter the kingdom of God without receiving Jesus as a personal sacrifice. What Jesus offers is free! Upon belief and acceptance of Jesus as a savior, we change kingdoms and instantaneously become citizens of the kingdom of God.

Paul says in Ephesians 1:4-5, “For he *chose us in him before the creation of the world* to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ *he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ,* in accordance with his pleasure and will.” God chose us for his purpose before the foundation of the world. Part of that purpose was for humanity to be holy and blameless before him. The ultimate plan is for humanity to be adopted as sons and daughters through Jesus. The sons and daughters are endued with all the benefits and status of royalty. His kingdom plan is that those whom he adopts through Jesus will experience the benefits of his kingdom immediately upon adoption.

The most difficult problem to overcome is to convince people they can walk in the realm of the kingdom of God on earth. Adam and Eve freely gave to Satan the authority that had been entrusted to them over the earthly realm. Jesus bought back the authority to rule and reign the earth with his blood, but humanity still has to fight for manifestation of the benefits of God’s kingdom and apprehend the kingdom by the power of Jesus’ name.

When Jesus fed the 5,000, he first told the disciples, “You give them something to eat” (Luke 9:13). He seemed to be saying, “You call forth the manifestation of the kingdom realm. Come on . . . you can do it!” The real issue is that it is up to humanity to participate in the heavenly and spiritual blessings or to reject them. Those blessings are manifest in the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. We can only access those spiritual blessings in and through Christ Jesus!

The Apostle Paul said, “In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention

which He purposed in Christ; He planned in the fullness of the times to sum up all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth” (Eph. 1:8-10). God will make known the mystery of his will through Christ Jesus. In his *kairos* moment, which is the Greek word for the perfect timing of God, each mystery will be made known and all things in heaven and on earth will be brought to fullness. Adopted sons and daughters will be blessed by the revelation of the kingdom plan because we are the objects of the love of God and we are the recipients of his plan.

In conclusion, it is up to each person whether he or she will participate in the heavenly and spiritual blessings or choose to reject them. We can only access those spiritual blessing in and through Christ Jesus! God’s kingdom plan is that those whom he adopts through Jesus will experience the benefits of his kingdom immediately upon adoption, not merely after dying and arriving in heaven. Remember, God gave the Israelites the Promised Land, but they had to conquer it. The Word says, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33). The choice to seek the manifestation of the kingdom of God belongs to the believers.

Chapter 3

Understanding The Status Quo Of Authority



S*tatus quo* refers to a state of existing conditions. The status quo of pre-Fall Eden was the kingdom of God fully manifested on earth as it is in heaven. First, God met all the physical needs of Adam and Eve. Second, they were in the daily presence of God, which would have meant perfect abundance of the kingdom in their physical bodies. Third, they were co-regents to rule over and subdue the entire earth and all created things.

The state of existing conditions after the Fall was drastically changed: blessings were exchanged for curses, provision came only with toil, and authority over the earth was lost to a fallen angel who hates God and hates what God loves. In the post-Fall world, the kingdom of God did not naturally occur or manifest in the natural realm. Now, only when the status quo of the natural is changed do we see the kingdom of God manifest on the earth.

To understand the status quo of authority, believers must first understand the difference between power and authority. Many in the Church have interchanged the words *power* and *authority*. However, the concepts of power and authority are not the same things. They are distinct concepts and if the nuances or differences are missed, believers will miss very important perceptions in the Gospel message.

The word *power* primarily comes from the Greek word *dunamis*. This is the same word from which is derived the English word dynamite. *Dunamis* means force, ability, might, or strength. One with power can easily overcome one with lesser power. It is simply a matter of the one with the most brute force overcoming to victory. In an arm wrestling match, the one with the most power will be the victor.

The word *authority* primarily comes from the Greek word *exousia*. *Exousia* is the privilege, freedom, mastery, influence, and legal right to rule or reign. Authority is the delegated ability to be in legal control and it comes with power, but it is more than just power. The one with authority has the right to enforce his will against one with power but who has no authority. Authority is the ability to enforce one's own will over and against others who do not have authority.

A prime example of authority is seen in governmental settings. A government is in control of its people. The government may delegate authority to a certain person to enforce the laws of the land. In other words, the individual with delegated authority has the power of the government standing behind him to overcome one with greater force and strength, but no authority. An officer of the law has authority and power; a criminal may have power, but no authority.

Another example of power and authority is a referee in a football game. He may have less physical strength or power than anyone else on the playing field, but he controls the game because of his delegated authority. He can expel a player from the game even though the player has more brute strength than the referee does. The referee has the power of the NFL standing behind him. The player is controlled by the massive organization that is behind the referee, more than the referee himself. The referee's authority trumps the greater power of the player.⁴

What Did Satan Gain In The Fall?

Believers often talk about what Adam and Eve lost in Eden, but rarely is it discussed what Satan gained in the Fall. Satan could only

receive as much as Adam and Eve possessed. Adam and Eve could give only that which God had given them in the beginning. They could give what they possessed in pre-Fall Eden.

When Satan was hurled out of heaven as a fallen angel, he took nothing with him but the power God had gifted him with before his fall. He had power, but he had no authority. The only way he could gain authority was to receive it from one who had received it directly from God. In the beginning, God had all authority, but God gave a measure of authority to Adam and Eve as co-rulers of the world. With God's grant of authority, Adam and Eve were going to rule all creatures, including the created angel Satan and his demonic followers. Once God gives a gift, it will not be reclaimed (Rom. 11:29).

Authority is a "transferable commodity," which means that only one person may possess that particular authority at a time. We will see later that there are different grants of authority. God gave some measure of authority to Adam and Eve and they gave it to Satan. We will also later explore that God retained authority, not giving Adam and Eve *all authority*. Satan received from Adam and Eve what they had received from God. That grant of authority from them was the totality of Satan's authority. He had no other authority – at least over God's kingdom. We will see in Scripture, before the fall he had power, but no authority. After the Fall in the Garden of Eden, Satan possessed the authority to rule and reign and "fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion . . . over every living thing" (Gen. 1:28, NKJV) because that was the authority of Adam and Eve.

Satan's Authority: The Temptations Of Jesus

When Satan gained what Adam and Eve had, that was all the authority that he *ever* possessed. That authority was also all Satan had to offer Jesus in the temptations of Christ in the wilderness. Satan could not offer Jesus that which he did not possess. In the following sections, a comparison will be drawn between what Adam and Eve gave to Satan and what Satan possessed to offer Jesus in

the wilderness. When believers study what Satan offered to Jesus, a clearer picture will emerge of what he gained in the Garden of Eden.

Temptation: Provision Of God

First, Adam and Eve were placed in the garden, but they were given the whole world for provision so they could satiate their earthly bodies. Satan stole from them their ability to receive provision by God's grace for satisfaction of their flesh. After the Fall, they could still eat, but only by the sweat of the brow and by their painful toil. They did not receive God's provision by his grace, but only by their work and effort.

Compare the loss of provision of Adam and Eve to the first temptation of Jesus to turn the stones into bread. Satan came to Jesus after he had fasted forty days and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread" (Matt. 4:3). In this temptation, Satan offered Jesus provision of the world for satisfaction of his flesh. Jesus did not sell his birthright for the lust of his flesh. He did not fall into the trap of Adam, by giving away something (God's kingdom) for nothing (food of the temporal world). Jesus did not give away the eternal for the temporal.

Take note, however, Satan did not even offer to turn stones into bread himself, but he told Jesus to do so. After Jesus had been in the wilderness for forty days, the enemy came to him and said, "If *you* are the Son of God, *tell* these stones to become bread" (Matt. 4:3). In other words Satan said, "Jesus, you do it!" This means provision for life was still in the realm of the kingdom of God. God had given Adam and Eve every green plant for food, but the Father did not tell them to rule over and subdue the plant life as he had with the creatures (Gen. 1:28-29). Satan could not even tempt Jesus with actual bread to hold under his nose. All he could do was offer the suggestion that Jesus take matters into his own hands and make the bread himself. It was an empty offer, because Satan could not manifest the bread himself. Because he could not create the bread, Satan told Jesus to speak to the stones.

Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every Word that comes from the mouth of God’” (Matt. 4:4). The bread offered by Satan could only nurture his hurting and weak flesh after it had gone without physical sustenance for forty days. Satan could no more offer eternal bread (the Word of God) than he could offer physical bread, because he did not have it to offer. Jesus later revealed, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work” (John 4:34). While Jesus had been torturing his flesh in fasting and prayer, he had been building his Spirit. His Spirit was strong enough to withstand the attack on any potential weakness of his flesh. Jesus later told his disciples “Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you” (John 6:27). Satan offered Jesus food that would spoil, in exchange for the eternal food that nurtured the Spirit by doing the will and work of the Father.

Temptation: Eternal Life

Second, Adam and Eve were in the daily presence of God. In the realm of God’s kingdom, their physical bodies would have experienced perfect health. Furthermore, they were not cursed with death until after they sinned against God. God said, “For *when* you eat from it (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) you will certainly die” (Gen. 2:17). They were not cursed with death before they ate of it. They lived in perpetual blessings and even though they were human, they had access to the tree of life. There was only one tree they could not partake of in pre-Fall Eden, and that was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That means before the Fall, they could eat from the tree of life. They had eternal life with God. After the Fall, they were cursed with death. When they were expelled from God’s divine presence, and their days of physical life were numbered. They would eventually die a physical death. The second thing Satan did was to kill their eternal lives by causing them to be removed from God’s presence and take away the access to the tree of life.

Similarly, the second temptation of Jesus was for him to call on angels to protect his natural life. The devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. Satan said, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone’” (Matt. 4:5-6). Jesus did not love his natural life enough to save it, but also knew no one could take it from him; it was his to give away. Jesus had authority to lay down his life. He would later choose to lay it down on the altar of God to redeem fallen humanity, but did not choose to lay it down on the altar of Satan. Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test’” (Matt. 4:6-7).

When Satan told Jesus to throw himself down, he was attempting to kill Jesus’ flesh, when Jesus was slated to inherit an eternal kingdom. His flesh could not inherit anything that would last. Jesus later said, “Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (John 12:25).

Once again, Satan was tempting Jesus with something he could not produce on his own. Satan did not say *he* would catch Jesus if he threw himself down, but God would dispatch angels to catch him. What this shows is that the power of life and death was still in the authority of God’s kingdom. Satan attacked Job, but God had total authority over his life and death. Satan could go only as far as the Lord would allow him to go, “The LORD said to Satan, ‘Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life’” (Job 2:6). Jesus did not engage in the pride of life. Satan could not take his life from him. It was Jesus’ life to lay down. Nothing could separate Jesus from the love of God.

So far, in the first two temptations, Satan was impotent to produce what he had offered to Jesus. First, he told Jesus to turn the stones into bread, and second, he told Jesus that the Father would send angels to catch him, if he threw himself off the temple. In neither case, did Satan offer anything that he could produce. Satan had nothing to give up in the first two temptations.

Temptation: Kingdoms Of The World (Fill The Earth And Subdue It)

Third, Adam and Eve had been given the right to rule, reign and take dominion over earth and all creatures. They possessed the world as rulers. They had dominion and authority over all that was living. The Lord said, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and *subdue it*. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground” (Gen. 1:28). God also positioned them in the garden, but gave them the whole world. Satan destroyed their right to rule the world as God’s ambassadors. In fact, the right to rule and exercise dominion over all living creatures was the totality of what Satan took from the Fall. He took their authority to rule and subdue the earth and made it his own.

The third temptation of Christ was for Satan to offer him all the kingdoms of the world. The devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. Satan said, “This authority . . . has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish” (Luke 4:6). Satan had started with lesser, even false, lying temptations, but the intensity grew with the third temptation. Finally, Satan offered Jesus something he could produce when he said, “If you will worship me, it will all be yours” (Luke 4:7).

This is the crux of the matter: Satan wanted to be like God and he wanted to receive God’s worship. That was exactly what he wanted in heaven before he was cast out. When he became proud in the heavenly realms, Satan said in his heart, “I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon.¹⁴ I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; *I will make myself like the Most High*” (Isa. 14:13-14). His goal had not changed, only the method of his pursuit had changed. After this temptation, Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only’” (Matt. 4:9-10). After all that, the devil left Jesus, and angels of God came and attended him.

When Satan offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, it may appear on the surface to be a huge offering – wealth, riches, prestige, and power, for all time the earth existed, but Satan offered

him nothing that would last. Everything that can be shaken will be shaken, including all kingdoms of the world. All the earthly kingdoms will pass away, and will be no more. God's kingdom cannot be shaken, but Satan's kingdom will be shaken and destroyed. Hebrews says, "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe" (Heb. 12:28).

Satan said to Jesus, "All this *I will give you.*" Finally in the third temptation we see the fruit of the Fall. In the first two temptations, Satan had nothing to offer. This temptation of Satan was real, although tangible and temporal but not spiritual and eternal. Satan offered Jesus every comfort for his earthly life. Jesus did not even have a place to lay his head. Even so, Satan did not have much to offer him. He was gambling with nothing in his hand; he tried to bluff, but Jesus called him on it. He offered him all the *kingdoms of the world!* The only kingdom that is important is the eternal kingdom of God! He offered Jesus a sad exchange for the glory of God. Satan offered him nothing for something. That which Satan had taken from Adam and Eve, the rule and reign of the world, was all he had to offer to Jesus. No more, no less. He could only offer back to God that which God had given in the first place. The only thing Satan had to offer Jesus was authority over the natural world for a very short time – until the end of the age.

One more point: Scripture reveals that Jesus did his work on earth in the authority from the Father. It is clear that God had retained authority. That is how we know that God did not give *all authority* to Adam and Eve, and they did not give *all authority* to Satan. It begs the question: in the temptation, was Satan trying to gain the authority that Jesus had from the Father? Satan had a voracious appetite for the authority of God. He had a voracious appetite for world domination. Was he trying to leverage something temporal for something eternal? The temptations, or at least one of them, had to be real to be of kingdom merit. Rhetorically and academically speaking of course, if Jesus had fallen during the temptations, would Satan have possessed the authority Jesus used on earth from the Father?

Natural Versus Eternal

There are a few things we must understand so we can understand Christ and the kingdom of God. First, all the temptations of Christ were in the natural. They were meant to soothe needs and stroke the desires or lusts of his natural life, if he had any. The temptations of Satan were not supernatural; they were not spiritual. They had nothing to do with the citizenship of Jesus in kingdom of God. In Scripture, Satan is called “the god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4), and “the prince of this world” (John 12:31; 16:11). Satan could only offer that which he had as god of this age. Satan is not eternal; he is a temporal, created being. He could only tempt the natural life of Jesus because he possessed nothing eternal. He could not tempt Jesus with the eternal kingdom of God, because it was not his to give.

This is a good lesson for us, should we ever be tempted by worldly goods or temptation of fame and glory. It is written, “For everything in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – comes not from the Father but from the world” (1 John 2:16). When we agree to take the things of this world in exchange for a true, loving, authentic relationship with God, that is exactly what we are taking – nothing for everything. True kingdom understanding will help humanity see that exchanging the temporal for the eternal is a bad deal, any way it is sliced.

Authority On Earth

Authority is complete legal control to be in charge of an area or realm. Authority is a delegated right; it is the lawful use of strength. Authority is different than power, which is to enforce control by brute strength without having a legal right. During Jesus’ ministry on earth, Satan still retained the authority from Adam and Eve, up until the resurrection. During his earthly ministry, Jesus worked in the authority of the Father, which predated his recapture of authority from Satan after his resurrection. For example, Jesus said in the temple the works of his ministry were being done on the authority of the one who sent him. He said, “*I am not here on my own authority,*

but he who sent me is true” (John 7:28). Even the words he spoke were on the authority of the Father. Jesus said, “The words I say to you *I do not speak on my own authority*. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work” (John 14:10). The Father also gave him the authority to judge. Jesus said, “And (the Father) has given (Jesus) authority to judge because he is the Son of Man” (John 5:27).

The crowd at the Sermon on the Mount was amazed because he taught as one who had authority. Matthew says, “When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹*because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law*” (Matt. 7:28-29). Jesus also later said, “But I want you to know that the *Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins*” (Matt. 9:6). He gave his twelve disciples the authority to drive out impure spirits (Matt. 10:1). People were amazed at his power and authority when he cast out demons (Luke 4:36). The Pharisees recognized Jesus had authority. Jesus refused to disclose to the Pharisees by what authority he was teaching, healing, and casting out spirits. The Pharisees said, “Tell us by what authority you are doing these things. Who gave you this authority?” (Luke 20:2). Jesus similarly had authority to lay down his life and authority to take it up again. Jesus said, “No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. *This command I received from my Father*” (John 10:18). Jesus acknowledged in prayer in the garden the Father had granted Jesus authority over all people. Jesus poured out his heart to the Father, saying, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. ²*For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him*” (John 17:1-2). The Father gave the Son authority (exousia) over eternal life for all people. Even though the enemy had authority to rule and reign, the power of life and death was still in the Godhead. There are many other examples of Jesus having authority before his resurrection, when he reclaimed the authority Satan had taken from Adam and Eve. The authority of Jesus before the resurrection was by grant of the Father.

Retrieval Of Authority From Satan

The Lord Jesus spent his pre- and post-resurrection life talking about the kingdom of God. The topic of God's kingdom was by far his biggest area of teaching. Unfortunately, the significance of the kingdom of God is lost on most modern day believers. Jesus' departing words, the thing that could be argued to be of greatest importance to him, are known as the Great Commission. The concepts of *primacy* and *recency* mean the first and last things said are most important and are most likely to be remembered. The first things Jesus said in his earthly ministry were about the kingdom of God in the Sermon on the Mount. Similarly, the last things Jesus said were also about God's kingdom. Since Jesus was leaving earth for a very long time, and had only a few, brief, parting words, surely that which he said would be the most significant and important words. Certainly he would want to leave the best instructions he could for going forward and moving on without his daily presence on earth. Forty days after his resurrection and immediately before his ascension into heaven, Jesus came to the disciples and said,

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matt. 28:18-20)

Jesus' final words on earth were about his full and complete authority over heaven and earth. By his scourging, crucifixion, and resurrection, he had regained the authority that had been given up in Eden. He did not say he had *all authority* until after he was resurrected from the dead. That was not a lifetime teaching for Jesus, because Jesus' authority during his earthly ministry was only from a grant of authority from his Father. During his ministry, the authority Jesus used was not *his authority*.

Jesus is not a man that he should lie. He said after the resurrection he had all authority. *All* means all! Jesus has complete privilege, force, capacity, freedom, mastery, authority, liberty, and right. If he has all authority, that does not leave any authority for our enemy, Satan. Why could Satan lose authority? The answer is because Satan took the authority directly from Adam and Eve. He did not receive authority as a grant from God. Gifts from God are not recallable, but his possession of authority was recallable. Satan did not have it as a promise from God, but based on his trickery and guile and the carelessness of Adam and Eve.

Based on the totality of authority, Jesus commissioned the disciples to go make disciples. The new disciples his disciples made were to be the same manner of disciples that Jesus made. Jesus personally taught the ways of God's kingdom on earth to his first disciples. God's plan and power were to be restored on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus was the final victor. He literally stripped or divested Satan of his ill-gained authority. Colossians says Jesus, "Having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Col. 2:15). Jesus completed his ultimate assignment on earth, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

The totality of authority Jesus ultimately possessed after his resurrection was a combination of authority from two sources. First, Jesus reclaimed the authority from Satan that had been lost in the garden by Adam and Eve. Second, the Gospels also illustrate Jesus also had authority during his earthly ministry from the Father, which would have preceded Jesus thwarting Satan at Calvary. This reveals that the Father retained authority other than what had been given to Adam and Eve. Jesus' grant of all authority was the culmination of the authority retrieved from Satan and the authority retained by the Father.

Since authority by definition is a delegated right to rule, it is impossible for two opposing forces to retain authority over the same thing or realm. Neither could fully possess control of the same area. It can never be said there was any time Satan had *all* authority. He only had that which had been given to Adam and Eve. The Father

only gave Adam and Eve the authority revealed in Genesis. Even though they had only limited authority to give, the authority to “fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over . . . every living creature” (Gen. 1:28) in the hands of Satan was a perilous and desperate situation for the world. That grant of authority put every living creature under the potential dominion of Satan’s rule. Satan could not be left to rule over and subdue every living creature in the world. When the death and resurrection of Jesus were fully completed, the hijacked authority Satan had taken in the garden was fully reclaimed. Therefore, the right to rule over and subdue the creatures of the earth, including humanity, was back in the hands of Jesus.

Additionally, the Father gave to Jesus authority, which the Father had retained, as shown above. Therefore, after the resurrection all authority was under the solitary headship of Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Colossians confirms, “(Jesus) is the head over every power and authority” (Col. 2:10b). Not only is Jesus the head over every power and authority, the conquest is complete. Jesus conquered with an exposed defeat: “In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.” (Col. 2:15, NLT).

Recognition Of Authority

The importance of spiritual authority was demonstrated in the Roman centurion in Matthew 8:5-13. The centurion was a man under authority, and he had men under his authority. He understood better than anyone the significance of Jesus’ authority. The centurion’s grasp of the concept of authority equated to great faith that surpassed the faith of Israel. He sent word for Jesus not to come to his home, but merely to say the word and his servant would be healed. The centurion said, “For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it” (Matt 8:9). Jesus said to the friends of the centurion, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith” (Matt. 8:10). Recognition of authority is faith!

Jesus honored the centurion for his great faith, and for his understanding of the concept of authority generally, and the authority of Jesus specifically. Jesus went on to say many Gentiles would believe in the authority of Jesus, but many subjects of the kingdom, the Israelites, would be thrown out for not understanding Jesus' kingdom authority. Jesus was amazed and said to those following him,

“Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. ¹¹ I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. ¹² But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
(Matt. 8:10-12)

The centurion's servant was healed in that instant. When believers get understanding of the authority of Jesus, miracles manifest beyond great expectation. Following closely on the heels of the passage about the centurion's understanding of authority in Matthew 8, Jesus cast out demons with a word, a single word!

On the same day that Jesus healed the centurion's servant based on recognition of Jesus' authority, a powerful manifestation of the kingdom of God occurred: “When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and *he drove out the spirits with a word* and healed all the sick” (Matt. 8:16). Because of his authority, Jesus cast out demons with a single word. Believers must contemplate why Jesus could drive out demons with a word and heal the sick, but believers do not seem to be able to do so. The day is coming when believers will simply say, “Go, in Jesus' name!” and spirits will flee. There is no need for long deliverance sessions when the kingdom of God is manifested and there is relationship enough to realize Jesus has all authority and Satan has none! In Jesus' name, believers can ask anything, and it will be done. The key is recognition of the authority of Jesus, for when we recognize what it truly means in the kingdom realm, we know that the enemy has no defense and no tactic for victory in the face of Jesus' authority.

The Syro-phonician woman from the region of Tyre and Sidon also demonstrated great faith. She was also reported as being a Canaanite, a people group abhorred by the Israelites. She was not of Jesus' people! She came to Jesus on behalf of her daughter, who was severely possessed by demons. She was obstinately determined to see her daughter delivered and that equated to boundless faith. First, she was ignored by Jesus; then the disciples asked Jesus to send her away; next she was told by Jesus that what he had was for the lost sheep of Israel (and by implication, not for her kind); and finally, she was told it was not right to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs (Matt. 15:21-28). She was on a mission and she would not give up. She knew Jesus had what she needed. Finally Jesus told her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted" (Matt. 15:28).

It is important to note both the centurion and the Syro-phonician woman were imploring on behalf of other people. Both were said to have great faith, and neither was from the lineage of Israel. The servant was healed and the daughter was delivered of demons, but neither one was present at the moment that God's kingdom manifested. At that moment, the dominion of God overwhelmed the kingdom of darkness in the lives of the two people. Believers often feel a person must be present for healing or deliverance, repenting or participating in some way. The two beneficiaries of these blessings were not participants in these events at all. These blessings were pure grace; no merit of those healed was involved! These works were based on the sovereign power of God to overcome the enemy. The reason the recipients were not crucial players in these events is the centurion and the mother knew Jesus, by his authority, could deliver what they sought. They appealed directly to the king on behalf of the others. The kingdom of God manifested because Jesus had authority to overcome the power of darkness.

Likewise, the power of Satan was not a critical issue in the process of these two healings. Because the two advocates (the centurion and the mother) had such belief, understanding, and faith in the authority of Jesus, all they had to do was to beseech him for the answer. We often give Satan too much credit for being able to hold people captive! The reason Satan was a non-entity in these two

scenes is because the advocates recognized the power and authority of Jesus to overcome without so much as a nod to the enemy.

Conclusion

Adam and Eve had authority to subdue the earth, which they gave to Satan. Jesus retrieved that authority with his death and resurrection. Jesus now holds all authority. Satan has no authority over God's kingdom, but he still has power. Coupling Satan's power with his lies, he will make people believe he has authority, even when he does not. Satan will lie to people to keep them in bondage. Satan cannot hold any authority because Jesus retrieved the transferable commodity of authority from Satan. Jesus and Satan cannot possess the same authority! It is a legal impossibility. Satan only had what Adam and Eve had before the Fall. After Jesus took it back, believers have to know and understand that SATAN POSSESSES NO AUTHORITY!

Later, we will address what the believer currently has and does not have in terms of power and authority. We will also address what the enemy currently has and does not have in terms of power. The biggest obstacle for believers to overcome is that they believe Satan has authority and more rights than he actually has. Many believers do not have the revelation that they should be crying out day and night to receive what God has promised, but which Satan has delayed. The Lord said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). When believers do not understand the truth about power and authority, they are often destroyed because they do not understand the power of Jesus' name. Believers should be fervent overcomers of our enemy by the authority of the name of Jesus!

Chapter 4

Hallowed Be Thy Name



The concept of authority cannot be complete without a thorough understanding of the importance of the divine names of God. The name of God is the mark of his authority. The word *name* is mentioned close to 1,000 times in the Bible. There is power in the name of God that surpasses all other power believers have access to.

The name of Jesus, uttered in love and respect out of relationship, will cause miracles to happen, the kingdom of God to be evident, demons to flee, and much more. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray the Lord's Prayer, he began by saying, "Our Father who art in Heaven, *hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come . . .*" (Matt. 6:9). The hallowing of God's name is virtually synonymous with the coming of his kingdom. The word *hallowed* means to make holy, to set apart or consecrate, to venerate, or to honor greatly. When the name of Jesus is called in adoration, glory, honor, and magnification, heaven opens. Through the power of the name of Jesus, access is given to the power of God! Reverence and awe of God invite his presence. The presence of the Lord naturally brings the manifestation of his dominion, including such things as overcoming powers, healing, multiplication, and transformation of nature.

The Name Of Jesus

The name of Jesus is unsurpassed power. In fact, believers cannot even begin to understand the magnitude of the power of Jesus' name. All too often believers have not understood the power of Jesus' name or misjudged the importance of Jesus' name. The name of Jesus is the key to all authority and power of Jesus over the enemy. Jesus told believers over and over again, "And *I will do whatever you ask in my name*, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ You may *ask me for anything in my name*, and I will do it" (John 14:13-14). He also said, "If you believe, *you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer*" (Matt. 21:22). He said, "In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly, I say to you, *my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name*. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. *Ask and you will receive, and your joy may be complete*" (John 16:23-24). The Father will honor requests made in Jesus' name because he said, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last – and so that whatever you *ask in my name the Father will give you*" (John 15:16). John also reported confidence in asking: "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if *we ask anything according to his will, he hears us*. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that *we have what we asked of him*" (1 John 5:14-15). Mark says, "Therefore I tell you, *whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours*" (Mark 11:24). John says, "If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, *ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you*" (John 15:7).

Quoting all these verses may seem to be redundant, but the point is well taken: believers have not understood the power of the name of Jesus! The name of the Lord is the dynamite that blows the chains off of bound individuals. Christians are still called to love, honor, and respect our Lord and ask anything in his name. Believers seem to be consumed with commanding and "authority of the believer." There is a vast difference in commanding in our own authority, albeit in Jesus' name, and appealing to the Lord to supply our needs, whatever those may be. Often when we command, we

address the enemy, instead of addressing the Lord. Asking requires coming humbly before the throne of grace to make our petitions known (Heb. 4:16).

All too often, the name of Jesus is tacked on to the end of the prayer of a believer saying, “I bind you in Jesus’ name.” The “I” is more prominent than the powerful name of the Lord. Authority of the believer will be addressed in the next chapter. In this chapter, however, the desire is that believers will know God by his names in reverence, awe, and respect. The mighty authority and power of the name of Jesus will be evident and recaptured in the hearts of believers.

Relationship Matters

The believer is able to receive the blessing of the authority of the name of Jesus through the relationship the believer has with him. Simply calling on the name of Jesus, like a lucky charm or special chant, is ineffective, and worse, it is evil in the words of Jesus. Jesus said,

Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.²² Many will say to me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy *in your name* and *in your name* drive out demons and *in your name* perform many miracles?”²³ Then I will tell them plainly, “I never knew you. Away from me, *you evildoers!*” (Matt. 7:21-23)

The authority of the believer in the name of Jesus comes from doing the will of the Father, and from relationship (v. 21). Therefore, believers can see the authority of the name of Jesus is not automatic! It is automatic for Jesus, of course; it is just not automatic for a person who wishes to use Jesus’ name like a special tool without a personal relationship. We see that the one who calls on Jesus’ name

but who does not do the will of the Father is an evildoer, meaning wicked or lawless.

The power of Jesus' name literally releases the kingdom of God on earth to the believer. The things that are released on behalf of a believer who asks in Jesus' name are limitless. When one believes in Jesus, all a believer has to do is to ask in the power of his name. Jesus tells believers to ask,

¹²Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even *greater things* than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³And I will do *whatever you ask in my name*, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴*You may ask me for anything in my name*, and I will do it. (John 14:12-14)

What are these greater things Jesus said believers would do? Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, cast out demons, multiplied food, and halted nature in its tracks, to list a few. Jesus said that believers would do these things and more. Why? The greater things believers will do are released from God's kingdom realm by asking in the name of Jesus! When a believer asks *in Jesus' name*, he said, "I will do whatever you ask. . . .Ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."

John 14:12 is often used improperly. In fact, I have used it improperly many times! Historically, I was prone to quote John 14:12, about the great things that believers will do, and completely overlooked the connection with asking in Jesus' name. I was thinking solely about the authority of believers, not about appealing to the King. It is imperative for believers not to quote John 14:12 that believers will do greater things than Jesus, without quoting the rest of the passage. There is a connector that is often unnoticed at the beginning of verse 13, "*AND I (Jesus) will do whatever you ask in my name . . . ask me for anything . . . I will do it*" (John 14:13-14). The greater things come by believers asking in the name of Jesus. Oh, how that verse has been misquoted in the body of Christ, or perhaps only partially quoted. The eyes of the Church have been

closed to the connection between believers doing greater things than Jesus did while he was on earth and Jesus doing what we ask in his name. The authority is in the name of Jesus, not in the power of the believer to do these greater things.

What about the present ability of believers to do greater things now in Jesus' name than Jesus did while he was on earth? Why is that so? Why do believers have the greater potential to see superior, more spectacular miracles and manifestations of God's kingdom than Jesus did? It is, in my humble opinion, because Jesus regained all authority. He took back what Satan had stolen in the garden. Jesus' earthly ministry was in world where Satan still had authority to rule and reign in the lives of creatures. In John 14:12-14, Jesus was speaking in the future tense and he was teaching the disciples at the last supper, just before his Crucifixion. He was talking about a time yet to come. Jesus ministry, however, was lived out under the circumstances that Noah experienced! There was no change of authority from the Garden of Eden until the resurrection! The ability of post-resurrection era believers to experience more of God's kingdom illustrates the change of circumstances. Beginning with the resurrection, all authority was in the Godhead for the first time since the Garden of Eden.

It should encourage believers to know that there "greater things" available because the enemy has no authority. However, it should also cause believers to question why we see fewer miracles now than the first century believers, when we should see more. Jesus said to ask "In my name," many times during his earthly ministry. As believers pray in his name, understanding the significance of that precious name, it is like screeching nails on a chalkboard in the demonic realm. The enemy scatters. The power and the authority of Jesus' name are manifested in the believer when there is a relationship between the believer and the Lord.

Knowing God By His Names

Throughout the history of the Bible, the names of the Most High seemed to be released by God only on a need-to-know basis. Each

name of God was revealed at a very strategic time. Revelation of the names of God illustrated something about God's nature or attributes that were needed at that moment.

In Genesis 1:1, God is identified in the Hebrew word, *Elohim*, which is the plural form of *El* or God. *Elohim* means the Supreme God, because in the Hebrew language making a word plural created a superlative. Therefore, saying *Elohim* instead of *El* was a way of magnifying God. *Elohim*, when used grammatically singular referred to the Most High God, but was not a personal name of God, per se. *Elohim* was a very generic understanding of the nature of God. *Elohim*, when used as grammatically plural and with plural verbs, also described pagan gods. Because *Elohim* was not limited to God Almighty, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it is not a proper name.

God would not reveal his names before their time. In fact, the personal name of God was not revealed in Scripture until the time of Moses. It was a name so precious it was not revealed to God's chosen people from the time of Adam until just before the Exodus. During the burning bush encounter, Moses said to God,

If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you," and they ask me, "What is his name?" what shall I say to them?
¹⁴ God said to Moses, "*I AM WHO I AM.*" And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, '*I AM* has sent me to you.'" ¹⁵ God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, '*The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you*': this is my name for ever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations." (Exod. 3:13-15)

Why did God identify himself at that moment as "I AM WHO I AM," or "YHWH," in the Hebrew language? The divine name, YHWH, means self-existent or eternal. Obviously at that moment Moses and the Israelites did not consider *Elohim* to be the proper name of God. Otherwise, why would Moses ask for the name

of God? When the Lord gave the name YHWH, also called the Tetragrammaton, it was the first time that the Israelites had a proper name for their God.⁵ God was identifying himself as being eternal, the basic meaning of “I AM” – he was, he is, he always will be!

God also identified himself to Moses as the *God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*. God identified himself as one who had made binding covenants with his people and who was now honoring those covenants. God did not cluster the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, together in the naming scenario. He did not say he was, “*the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*.” He intentionally named himself as the God of each one individually, not the God of all three together. As God of Abraham, he was the friend and the God of the covenant. In Abraham he covenanted with a people group that had not yet been created. As God of Isaac, he was the God of the promise. In Isaac there is nothing given God did not promise and supply, even against impossible odds. As God of Jacob, he was the Father of the nation. In Jacob there was transformation in wrestling with God for the blessing.

The Many Names Of God

Since the personal name of God, YHWH, was revealed in Exodus, many names of God have been revealed. There was progressive revelation of who God is in the disclosure of his names. The names of God are keys to opening the kingdom realm because the name of God is the badge of his authority. The names are indicative of areas of victory and power. Satan recognizes the names of the God hold authority and power over a realm, such as health, abundant provision, or fruitfulness. The enemy will not recognize a prayer in the name of a person, or in the name of a false god. Satan will yield to nothing less than the name and full authority of all-powerful God. All prayers must be brought forth in the name of God, for that is the supremacy the enemy acknowledges. He will not be very impressed if a believer should happen to pray in his or her own name.

Hagar called God by the name *El Roi*, the God who sees me. She said, “I have now seen the one who sees me” (Gen. 16:13). Abraham called God *Jehovah Jireh*, the Lord will provide (Gen. 22:14). Moses, called him *Jehovah Nissi*, the Lord is my banner (Exod. 17:15). King David called the Lord, *Jehovah Ra’ah*; the Lord is my Shepherd (Ps. 23:1). There are so many other names of the Lord God that show his attributes and natures.

Jesus In The Old Testament

Jesus Christ also appeared in the Old Testament. Many believe the *angel of the Lord* was the pre-incarnate visitation of Christ on earth. Even the angel of the Lord would not reveal his name before its time. There is a difference between *an angel* and “*the angel of the Lord*,” who appears in the Old Testament. The angel of the Lord appeared to Hagar, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, and Manoah. The angel of the Lord had attributes in common with Jesus because he used “I AM” to refer to himself, accepted worship, acted as judge and avenger of Israel, forgave sins, made special promises, spoke and gave commands with the authority of God, and was seen as God. Furthermore, the appearances of the angel of the Lord ceased after the birth of Jesus.⁶

Two men of the Bible asked the angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Christ, for his name. First, Jacob wrestled with the angel of the Lord and asked his identity. Jacob said, “Please tell me your name.” But the angel of the Lord replied, “Why do you ask my name?” (Gen. 32:29). Then the angel of the Lord blessed Jacob. In a later passage, the angel of the Lord appeared to the parents of Samson. His father, Manoah, inquired, “What is your name, so that we may honor you when your word comes true?” He replied, “Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding” (Judg. 13:17-18). The King James Version says why ask after my name “seeing it is secret?” (Judg. 13:18, KJV). The name was not revealed because it was incomprehensible, wonderful, or extraordinary. Furthermore, it was not the right time for that revelation.

Timing in the release of the name and identity of the Messiah was also critical and according to the plan and purpose of God. The coming Messiah was identified in the book of Isaiah and some of his names were revealed centuries before Jesus was even born. Isaiah 9 says,

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. *And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.* ⁷ Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this. (Isa. 9:6-7)

The revelation of the name of the yet-to-be-born Messiah was additional revelation of the nature and attributes of God. The names revealed who God was and what he wanted his people to know about him at that moment. The revelation of the names that the Father gave to the people about the Messiah was critical at that time in history. The Israelites were about to go in to captivity to Assyria. It would prove to be brutal captivity. The revelation of the names and identity of the Messiah gave the people a future and a hope that God had not forsaken them. The Messiah, the anointed of God, would come in the fullness of time and liberate the people from the bondage of their sins. There was strategy of God in the revelation of the names of the Christ to Isaiah at that time.

The personal name of Jesus was not revealed until his birth was announced. An angel appeared to Joseph and said, “(Mary) will give birth to a son, and you are to *give him the name Jesus*, because he will save his people from their sins.”²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and *they will call him Immanuel*” (*which means ‘God with us’*)” (Matt. 1:21-23). The name Jesus means Jehovah is salvation. Christ, *Christos* in Greek, is

a title meaning anointed of God. Christ in Greek is the same thing as Messiah in Hebrew, both meaning the *anointed one*.

When people understand the Lord by his many names, they understand his ability to gift, his authority, his love, and so much more. The Father releases the identity of the names very strategically, and it teaches believers about the nature of the Father. Some suggest there is revelation of at least one name of God for every day of the year. The Lord acknowledges our recognition of his authority by our use of his name or names during prayer or worship. The names called in prayer reflect faith and belief in the attributes of God and that God is who and what he says he is. Using his names in prayer shows belief that God will do what his name says he will do.

Authority Of *THE* Name

As a purely academic pursuit, engage for just a moment as we investigate the idea that there are names for God that have not yet been revealed. In fact, we know that Jesus has an unknown name (Rev. 19:12). Furthermore, Jesus said, “For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open” (Luke 8:17). Is there one name that denotes the authority or character of the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, which surpasses all the other names? Is there a time coming when believers will need to understand more about of the nature or attributes of God? In other words, is there another name of God of which the body of Christ is yet unaware? Is there a name that will tell believers something about an unknown nature or attribute of God? Is there revelation of an attribute we will need to know in the future, during the end times, perhaps? Time will tell.

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray the Lord’s Prayer, he began by saying, “Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come . . .” (Matt 6:9). When God’s name is glorified, his kingdom is manifested in the presence of the whole earth. The prayer of Jesus said, “hallowed be your *name*,” as a

singular name, not multiple names in the plural. What is the name, when hallowed, that will bring forth the kingdom of God on earth?

In the Great Commission, again we see the connection between the name of God and kingdom manifestation. We have previously discussed Jesus retaking possession of all authority after his resurrection. Jesus said, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the *name* of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). There is something to be understood about the singular way *the name* is designated in this passage. The passage does not say in the *names* of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, even though all three persons of the Trinity are identified separately in Matthew 28:19. There are distinct names for each Trinitarian attribute of the Godhead – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The passage denotes one name, a singular, unified name for all three parts of the Godhead together. In Exodus 3:15 above, God was identified as the God of each of the patriarchs individually. So too here, the members of the Trinity were not clustered together in the naming sequence. The name was identified as being of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, separately identifying each one, but stating that new believers were to be baptized in the singular name for all three together.

The Greek word for *name* is *onoma*, and means authority or character. God is infinite, his nature and attributes are infinite, so would it not stand to reason his names are also infinite? How could believers think everything there is to know about God has been revealed in the few names we know, even if believers know hundreds of names and attributes of God? There are infinite names for God. Scripture revelation of only a few names of God cannot be complete because of his unending vastness. Every name brings more revelation of God and who he is. Believers know about God only because he has chosen to reveal himself to his children, as the need existed. There are names, identities, and attributes of God of which we know nothing about.

This is not suggesting an other-than-biblical understanding of the name of God. If there is such a name, it is hidden in plain sight on the pages of Scripture. There is revelation that has not been made known and will not be made known until the end. The book

of Daniel says, “Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. ⁴ *But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge*” (Dan. 12:3-4). The scrolls of Daniel were rolled up, but will be unrolled at the time of the end. People will scurry to find knowledge, but there is only one source of knowledge, and that is the Lord God, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Furthermore, Jesus has a name, which is written on him, that no one knows but Jesus. Scripture supports that we do not know all of the names of Jesus. Revelation says, “(Jesus) has a *name written on him that no one knows but he himself*” (Rev. 19:12). Jesus also said, “I will write on them *the name of my God* and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and *I will also write on them my new name*” (Rev. 3:12). Scripture reveals a fresh, unused, unprecedented name for Jesus will be revealed at some point.

Jesus never referred to himself as Jesus, but always spoke in third person referring to himself as the *Son of Man*. The phrase Son of Man occurs ninety-three times in the New Testament, with all but seven of those references in the Gospels. The Father referred to Jesus as the Beloved Son, but never as Jesus. The Holy Spirit told Mary to name Jesus by that name: “You will conceive and give birth to a son, and *you are to call him Jesus*” (Luke 1:31). It is also reported to Joseph in Matthew 1:21, “She will give birth to a son, and *you are to give him the name Jesus*, because he will save his people from their sins.” It almost seems as if the emphasis of the name of Jesus was for Joseph and Mary, and by extension for all of humanity. The Godhead did not refer to Jesus as Jesus. I wonder why? Please do not misunderstand, I love the name of Jesus, Jesus is the name that humanity has been given. It is a precious name, the most precious name of all. However, there is obviously more we do not yet know or understand about the names of God.

Additionally, Jesus referred to one name of the Father that was given to the Son when he said, “Holy Father, protect them by the power of *your name, the name you gave me*, so that they may be one as we are one” (John 17:11). This seems to reveal there is a name, a

single name, which is shared by the Father and the Son. It was the Father's name given to the Son, used to protect his children. Jesus went on to refer to the name that was given, but it seems as if it could be talking about something other than the name Jesus: "While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe *by that name* you gave me" (John 17:12).

Jesus also said who ever welcomes little ones, "in my name, welcomes me, whoever welcomes me does not welcome me, but the one who sent me." So here again we see the Father welcomed in the name of Jesus. Thus the name of one of the Trinity is calling forth, welcoming, and honoring another of the Trinity. In Philippians, Paul writes, "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him *the name that is above every name*,¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, *to the glory of God the Father*" (Phil. 2:10). The exaltation of the Son and the confession of the Son's name, Jesus, brings glory to the Father.

It is an academic discussion, but Scripture seems to point to the notion that there is a name for the all-encompassing Trinity, which is different than the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, individually. The name shows the divine natures or attributes of the three persons of the Trinity, as a single entity of the Godhead. The use of the word Trinity is not found in Holy Scripture. The word *Trinity* is clearly humanity's effort at naming the completeness of the Godhead, when the name has not yet been revealed.

Hidden Things

Scripture is very clear there are hidden things that will be revealed only in the timing of God. Everything hidden will be disclosed, and everything concealed will be known and brought out into the open. Jesus said, "*Therefore consider carefully how you listen*. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them" (Luke 8:18). According to Luke, every secret will be made manifest and the lid will be removed.

Those things that have not been known will be known, perceived, understood, and brought into the open.

Jesus goes on to state, “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and *those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him*” (Luke 10:22). This is one of the most exciting passages of Scripture in the New Testament. Believers should pray, “Lord, choose me as one to whom the Father is revealed!” Imagine children on a playground with hands raised, jumping up in the air as the captains choose teams. Everyone strains with excitement as they yell, “Me. Me. Pick me!” Believers should pray, “Lord, please, choose me! Lord, please let me be one of those to whom you choose to reveal the Father. PLEASE, Lord, pick me!”

The passage reveals that the full knowledge of the Father has not yet been revealed, and is partially hidden. Of course believers know that because he is too wonderful for humanity to comprehend. Our capacity in fallen earth is but a thimble-full in the ocean of possible revelations. However, the revelation of the Father is disclosed, revealed, to some whom the Son chooses. In a similar passage the Lord says, “For there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. ²⁷ *What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs*” (Matt. 10:26-27). Those things that have not been made known until now will be revealed. Believers expectantly waiting for hidden things to be made known will be rewarded.

This is *not* talking about secret knowledge, or *gnosis* in Greek, from which Gnosticism is derived. Gnosticism is a heretical school of thought that there is knowledge that is reserved only for a chosen few and it is detestable to God. Rather this is talking about the revelation of the Lord in the appointed time of God. The Lord has not revealed everything to believers in the Word because we know, “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29). Jesus also said during the last supper and just before his crucifixion, “Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language *but will tell you plainly about my Father*” (John 16:25).

He was clearly saying that there would be knowledge about the Father forthcoming at a future time. Since he was going to die in a few hours and not have a significant opportunity to communicate with the disciples, it seemed to indicate that he would be giving post resurrection revelations about the Father.

The name of the Lord brings revelation, “This is what the Lord says, he who made the earth, the Lord who formed it and established it—the Lord is his name: ‘Call to me and I will answer you and tell you *great and unsearchable things you do not know*’” (Jer. 33:2-3). Revelation comes by calling on the name of the Lord! God does conceal things, and it is a blessing to search out a matter and find what God has left for believers in the Word. Proverbs says it best, “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings” (Prov. 25:2). Jesus made believers, “kings and priests to His God and Father” (Rev. 1:6). We are kings, with a lowercase “k,” in the realm of the kingdom of God. We are citizens of God’s kingdom by adoption through the Son. There are secret things of God, which have not belonged to believers yet, but time is coming when hidden things will be revealed. It honors God when believers search them out.

Thoroughly Opened

Even in Scripture, there were times and places that the Lord revealed himself. During the Emmaus road experience, Jesus revealed everything that had been said about himself in the Law and the Prophets. The Emmaus road disciples heard Jesus expound Hebrew Scriptures about himself. How glorious it must have been to have heard Jesus explain himself through the lens of the Law and the Prophets. That would have been the greatest of blessings. Luke says, “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in *all the Scriptures concerning himself*” (Luke 24:27). Believers pray for the revelation that Jesus gave about himself that day to be revealed anew.

Thereafter the disciples had recognition of Jesus in the breaking of the bread, “Then their *eyes were opened* and they recognized

him, and he disappeared from their sight” (Luke 24:31). The Greek word used to say their eyes were opened does not mean merely opened in the common usage of the word. The Greek word used in that passage is *dianiogo*, which means to *open thoroughly*. To thoroughly open is to divide or draw asunder, or to open a mind, to cause one to understand a thing. The Greek word is only used eight times in Scripture. Jesus thoroughly opened the eyes of the Emmaus Road disciples, so they could have fresh revelation of Jesus. Even now, Jesus wants to thoroughly open believers’ eyes, so believers can have knowledge of hidden things. He wants believers’ eyes, the eyes of the heart, to be thoroughly opened! The other scriptural usages of the Greek word *dianiogo* convey the thorough opening of hearts, eyes, ears, understanding, uttered words of God, and written Scriptures. It conveys knowing and experiencing God in a deeper, more intimate way. There are hidden things that the Lord will reveal if we care to search them out! Jesus said, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them” (Matt. 13:11). It is up to believers to be seekers in God’s kingdom to search out the matters of God!

Chapter 5

Authority Of The Believer



This chapter was undoubtedly the hardest to come to peace with because of the prevailing view in the body of Christ about the level of authority of believers in Jesus. Believers do have authority in Jesus Christ. However, a deep, gut-wrenching study of Scripture does not bear out that operating in the authority of the believer is the most effective way to enter into kingdom blessings. This understanding has taken long hours of study, prayer, and seeking God. Believers do not possess all of the authority of Jesus Christ. In the next three chapters, scriptural study will prove that the authority of believers is more limited than most believe. However, actually believers have more than we have previously understood by seeking blessings in the name of Jesus, in what I refer to as *appealing to the King*.

Here is a road map of the next three chapters: First, Jesus has all authority accompanied by unlimited and eternal power. Most of the work of the kingdom is done by appealing to the authority of Jesus as Lord of lords, and Kings of kings. Second, believers have exceedingly great power (Eph. 1:18-19) and delegated authority to overcome the power of Satan and the demonic forces of evil. The authority of the believer is limited to warfare, but not for the purpose of kingdom expansion. Kingdom multiplication only comes by appealing to the King. Third, Satan has power, but no authority over believers because Jesus has all authority. Satan does have a measure of control over the lost and the world.

There are distinct and different words for *power* and *authority*. Even though this ground has already been covered, understanding is critical for this discussion. Believers, and even leaders and pastors, often interchange the words for power and authority. However, power and authority have distinct nuances that make interchanging those two words erroneous. The word translated power, or *dunamis* in Greek, means force, power, violence, might and strength and even mighty or wonderful works. The word authority, or *exousia* in Greek, means privilege, capacity, mastery, or the delegated right to rule and reign, which often accompanies power, but is not only power.

There are two separate ways for believers to experience the manifest presence of God's kingdom. First and foremost, Jesus has given believers the blessing of asking for anything in his name. Our first line of prayer should always be to ask in the name of Jesus, thus appealing to the King for a ruling in our favor. Scriptures quoted in the last chapter illustrated that Jesus said many times to ask in his name, and he will give ANYTHING we ask. That is a blank check on an infinite account. Our second line of kingdom victory is based on authority of the believer in Jesus' name. Jesus has given believers delegated authority for that purpose. The authority of the believer in the name of Jesus is best used when the Lord has called a believer into a battle. Sometimes when a believer runs headlong into a battle he or she has not been called to fight, it results in injury, maiming, or worse.

These two ways to seek victory and kingdom manifestation are for two distinct purposes. The authority of the believer to overcome the power of the enemy is an issue of justice. When a believer overcomes Satan the only gain is taking back that which was stolen from the believer to begin with. A believer will never find grace or kingdom multiplication by overcoming Satan's power. A believer operating in authority that has been given is most effective when the Lord calls believers into the place of overcoming the enemy's power. There is no multiplication to be received here, only justice or reclaiming legal rights.

On the other hand, appealing to the King is for the purpose of advancing the kingdom of God. God's kingdom is advanced by his favor and grace, not in defeating the enemy. This is about mercy:

getting what we do not deserve (blessing), or not getting what we do deserve (punishment). The kingdom of God is so much bigger than merely overcoming Satan. All other blessings come from appealing to the King's grace and mercy. For example, overcoming the enemy may allow a check that had been delayed in the mail to be released. When it is released, it is still what the person was legally entitled to receive in the first place. However, kingdom multiplication by the grace of God my result in release of funds we never knew we had or multiplication of existing funds in a miraculous way. Overcoming the enemy will never result in multiplication; only the grace of God will bring multiplication.

Often, in actual practice the lines between these two positions may be muddled so that believers cannot tell where authority of the believer ends or appealing to the King begins. The point is well taken, however, that our enemy cannot release what he does not have. He cannot give the domination of God's rule and reign because it is not his to give. If we truly want the blessing and favor of God, believers have to look to the King! Failing to look to the King may be why some believers are not walking in the blessing of the kingdom of God now. Some believers are so fixated on defeating the enemy that they do not even know there is more to the Kingdom of God.

It is difficult to understand why believers feel so territorial about *authority* to go toe to toe with the enemy, when believers can appeal for anything in Jesus' name and go to the source of all power. In Jesus' name, work is done that believers cannot muster in their authority. This is not giving the prayerful believer less; it is actually giving the believer more. Jesus has unlimited kingdom resources, in fact. Believers still have the authority we have always had, but this should open up a new level of understanding about appealing to the King for swift victory. In the next few pages, we will study several Bible passages to illustrate the difference in believers using the authority they have been given to overcome the power of the enemy, and appealing to the King by asking for anything in the name of Jesus.

Appeal To The King

Esther: Appeal to the King

The book of Esther is a great example in Scripture to illustrate the concept of how to most effectively battle against our adversary in the kingdom realm. The book of Esther is so rich with lessons and symbolisms that a whole book could be written on the treasures found there. However, in the interest of time and space, we will briefly survey what Esther has to offer. Esther became queen after Vashti, the former queen, was rebellious to the king. After Esther became queen, Haman rose up in power with the agenda to annihilate the queen's people. Esther appealed directly to the king for relief and victory. She did not take authority over Haman, although she could have as the queen of the realm and as bride of the King Xerxes. She appealed directly to the king for relief. Esther was the bride of the king, just as the Church is the bride of our King, Jesus! Lessons from Esther teach believers about how to appeal directly to our King Jesus.

Queen Vashti, who was a type of Israel, was set aside as the first bride of the king because of disobedience and rebellion. Because she broke the law, she was judged under the law and there was no grace for her. The king considered what to do with the first bride: "Since it was customary for the king to *consult experts in matters of law and justice*, he spoke with the wise men who understood the times" (Esther 1:13). The king asked his advisors, "*According to law*, what must be done to Queen Vashti?" (Esther 1:15). The advisors said, "Queen Vashti has done wrong, not only against the king but also against all the nobles and the peoples of all the provinces of King Xerxes" (Esther 1:16). The first bride queen was set aside and the king began a search for a new bride.

The king chose Esther, who represented the Church. Esther is the second bride of the king, just as the Church is the second choice for the bride of Jesus. After Haman hatched his plot to kill all the Jews, Mordachi, a relative of Esther and fellow Jew went to her to approach the king on behalf of her people. At first she was fearful that she would die, but she realized that if she did not make

the appeal, that she would not be spared (Esther 4). Esther said to Mordachi, “Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though *it is against the law*. And if I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:16). Esther went before the king and he was delighted with her. She found favor in his eyes. She was under grace, and not judged under the law.

Haman is a type of Satan, the accuser of the brethren. He concocted a plan to kill the Jews living in the Persian provinces (Esther 3:1-6). Esther was called to appeal to the king for her people. After a time of preparation and readiness, she came before the king. He was pleased and offered her half of the kingdom. Esther prepared a banquet and asked for the enemy Haman and the king to come at the same time. At the banquet the king again offered her half of the kingdom. Esther stated her case for her life and the lives of her people. King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, “Who is he? Where is he—the man who has dared to do such a thing?” (Esther 7:5). Esther answered that the adversary and enemy was Haman. The king was furious.

Haman’s reaction illustrated his understanding of the king’s ultimate authority and Esther’s position: “Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen. ⁷The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden. But Haman, *realizing that the king had already decided his fate*, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life” (Esther 7:6-7). Esther merely appealed to the king and the king instantly gave her grace and mercy. Haman did not even have an opportunity to say a word to the king. However, Haman begged Esther for relief. Even Haman recognized her authority by begging her for mercy after he was discovered. Why would he beg for relief from Esther, if she did not have authority?

Haman actually attacked Esther in the king’s chambers. Do we not see that our enemy would molest the bride, even in the sanctuary of God? When the king saw it, Haman’s face was instantly covered and he was taken away and executed:

The king exclaimed, “Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?” As soon as the word left the king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face.⁹ Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, “A pole reaching to a height of fifty cubits stands by Haman’s house. He had it set up for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king.” The king said, “Impale him on it!”¹⁰ So they impaled Haman on the pole he had set up for Mordecai. Then the king’s fury subsided. (Esther 7:8-10)

Esther as queen could have used her authority to go head to head with Haman and overcome his power with her authority. When believers appeal directly to the King, he will find for his bride and the enemy will not even have an opportunity to make a defense. Esther was prepared before she went before the king, which is very important for believers to know.

By appealing to the king, Esther and the Jews received both grace and justice. Justice in this story looks like the Jews being able to defend themselves against the murderous threat of their enemies. If Esther had used her authority, it seems that this would have been all she could have given: the right keep their lives and to be allowed to fight for what the enemy would have stolen from them. By appealing to the king, they received grace also. Esther was awarded Haman’s sizable estate, “That same day King Xerxes gave Queen Esther the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews” (Esther 8:1). The Jews were also able to plunder their enemies by edict of the king, “The king’s edict granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate the armed men of any nationality or province who might attack them and their women and children, *and to plunder the property of their enemies*” (Esther 8:11). In God’s kingdom, “the wealth of the wicked is reserved for the righteous” (Prov. 13:22). Esther would not have been able to give this, because it was not hers to give.

A parallel can be drawn here to show that as the bride of the King, believers can appeal directly to the King for justice and grace. We *can* battle the enemy, but it is a much more difficult way to

achieve victory. If we achieve a victory on our own authority, all we will gain is what the enemy took or the protection of what the enemy was planning to take. On the other hand, believers can realize that we have been given every answer in the name of Jesus, so we can ask the Lord to intervene on our behalf. It is important to note here that Esther had time of preparation and readiness before going before the king. She was ready and prepared to meet her king. She entered into a time of fasting and prayer before she ever approached him. What that means for believers is that we should enter into a time of repentance and preparation before we appeal to the king. The enemy could not utter a defense because Esther was in a state of preparation and readiness; she was pure.

Paul: Appeal to Caesar

We can also see in other Scriptures appealing to the ultimate authority is more effective than battling the enemy head-on. For example, an appeal to Caesar is a type of asking in the name of Jesus. The Pharisees were challenging Paul with the ultimate plan to take his life. They were bringing unjust accusations against Paul before the lower level authorities (Acts 25:1-5). Paul was being ambushed, “When Paul came in, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him. They brought many serious charges against him, *but they could not prove them.*”⁸ Then Paul made his defense: “I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law or against the temple or against Caesar” (Acts 25:7-8). Festus wanted to have a sham trial that would result in a false verdict against Paul. “*Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor,* said to Paul, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?” (Acts 25:9).

Paul answered: “I am now standing *before Caesar’s court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews,* as you yourself know very well. ¹¹ If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. *But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!*” (Acts 25:10-11). Paul also came before the tribunal with clean hands and a pure heart. He knew who should hear his case and it was his king, not a mock

trial before the enemy. The charges were false, so Paul could not be handed over to the Jews. He appealed to his king, who would make a judgment between him and his accusers.

There is also a parallel here with Christians appealing to the King, Jesus. We ought to have our matters settled before our Lord and not in a sham tribunal of the enemy. The enemy will put believers in bondage if he can and will enforce illegal judgments against them. If we are innocent, we will have a judgment in our favor. When we appeal to the king against our adversaries, the demonic forces of the enemy, we are instantly in the heavenly tribunal. Festus declared, "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!" (Acts 25:12).

Paul went straight to the highest court for justice against his adversaries. Paul appealed directly to Caesar before a false judgment was handed down. He could have fought the battle in the lower court and won a victory because he was innocent. Paul and the Pharisees were about equal in stature, but Paul had a measure of authority they did not have because he was a citizen of Rome. This is a type of Christians having authority that the enemy does not have. Paul could have played the authority card and won the skirmish against the Pharisees.

Believers must understand that taking authority is lower-level warfare. Christians who feel that the authority of the believer is the way to win the battle and overcome the enemy have often misunderstood this principle. Battling by taking authority is like skirmishes against the enemy, sparing back and forth to see who will win the arm-wrestling match. It is a much harder way to win the battle directly against the enemy than going directly to the source of all authority and power, Jesus Christ.

Appealing to the King is going directly to the ultimate power and authority. When we appeal to our King in Jesus' name with clean hands and a pure heart, we are the automatic victors in an appeal against our accusers, Satan and his demons. *Because Jesus has already defeated the enemy, those who appeal to the Father in the name of Jesus will win every time. We go to court with a favorable verdict in our hand before we walk into the courtroom, when we appeal to the Father in the name of Jesus.* It is important to be innocent before we appeal to the King. That is why we can ask

anything in the name of Jesus and it will be granted. It is because in him we are already victors. Satan has power; he has no authority. He can bluff outside of the presence of God, but when we appeal to God, the game is over for our adversary.

Many believers do not realize the supremacy of going directly to the King in the name of Jesus. Teaching and preaching the authority of the believer and the power to overcome the enemy has been misunderstood and in error. We do have authority to overcome the enemy, but it not the best weapon of choice as most believers always thought. When lined up against a direct appeal to Jesus, why would we not want to ask him for the victory? It is much more difficult to have fast, lasting victory by battling with the enemy and enforcing the authority of the believer, rather than appealing directly to the King.

Authority Of The Believer

The first question that believer's must ask is what authority do believes have since the resurrection. Authority is a *transferable commodity*, for lack of a better phrase. Since the beginning of this book, we have traced the line of authority since before creation. God had it all. He gave a measure of authority to Adam and Eve to rule over the planet and subdue all living creatures. The Father retained kingdom authority and authority over life and death. Jesus came to earth and walked in the authority of the Father. Jesus did not walk in his own authority while walking on the earth as we have seen. Jesus gave a measure of authority to believers to overcome the power of the enemy. Jesus won back the authority that Satan had taken from Adam and Eve, and then Jesus had all authority. After the resurrection, Satan had no authority. The important question is this: did believers retain the authority they had been given to overcome the power of the enemy in Luke 9:1 and 10:19? I believe so, because the gift and calling of God is not recallable (Rom. 11:29). The disciples received the grant of authority to overcome the power of the enemy directly from Jesus.

Another critical question is what did Jesus do with the authority that he stripped from Satan to rule and reign over the living creatures? When Jesus took authority away from Satan, he did not turn around and give the same authority back into the hands of humanity. Jesus was vested with all authority after his resurrection. During his earthly ministry, Jesus gave believers the limited authority to overcome the power of the enemy. In Luke 9:1-2, “When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them *power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases*,² and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” Correspondingly in Luke 10:19-20, Jesus sent out seventy-two and said, “I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to *overcome all the power of the enemy*; nothing will harm you.²⁰ However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

Notice Jesus talked about the enemy’s power, not his authority. The only authority bestowed on believers was to drive out demons, cure diseases, trample snakes and scorpions, and overcome the enemy. There was no authority to rule and reign as had been given to humanity in Eden. The only grant of authority to believers was under the authority of Jesus when he sent them out.

In Eden, God specifically told Adam and Eve, who were in his image, to “. . . fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over . . . every living creature . . .” (Gen. 1:28, selected portions). After the resurrection, Jesus did not say, “I have all authority, I’m giving it to you. It is yours.” There was never a gift or conferral of authority in the same level that had been given in Eden. The authority football had been tossed around since Eden, but it was never tossed back into the hands of humanity after the resurrection. Jesus’ commission to his Church was, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to *me*. Therefore . . . go and make . . . baptize . . . and teach . . .” (Matt. 28:18-20, selections). The Great Commission was a plan for multiplication of the kingdom of God, not a grant of authority. Jesus is the victor and he has all authority, but his instructions were to make disciples, baptize, and teach them.

The Great Commission has teeth, but it was not the *carte blanche* blanket of authority that had been given to Adam and Eve! What

Jesus *did not say* is perhaps more important for understanding authority of the believer than what he did say. He did *not* say you are to “. . . fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over . . . every living creature . . .” (Gen. 1:28, selected portions). In fact, even Noah, after the flood, did not have the same level of authority Adam and Eve had (Gen. 9:1-7).

Jesus did not fully release the recaptured authority. All any believer needs is the authorization to ask anything in Jesus’ name out of relationship with him. In fact, the book of Acts reports that Jesus said after his resurrection that the disciples would receive power, but he did not mention authority. Jesus said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority (exousia).⁸ But you will receive power (dunamis) when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” After the resurrection, the Holy Spirit gave power, but not authority. Jesus did not give up authority once it had been regained!

Jesus did not give the authority in the Great Commission to rule and reign over anything. Earlier, disciples were given authority over the power of the enemy. Because believers have only the limited authority to overcome demonic forces, they do not have the same authority as Adam and Eve. In Eden, Adam and Eve had and then gave to Satan the right to rule over and subdue all living creatures. As given in Luke 9 and 10, believers have authority over spirits; spirits do not have authority over believers, because if Jesus has all authority that does not leave any authority for Satan.

Many believers may say, “I have seen believers attacked by the enemy.” That is true, because he does have power, but no authority, which will be addressed in Chapter 7, “The Tools Of Our Enemy.” In fact, believers have no authority that Satan or his demonic spirits could steal and possess, other than subjugation of spirits, which would do them absolutely no good whatsoever.

Widow: Acting In Authority Of The Believer

Jesus told his disciples a story about a widow who was persistent with an unjust judge, to illustrate persistence in prayer. This passage

teaches much about the authority of God, believers, and Satan. Jesus spoke these words,

In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. ³And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’

⁴“For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, *5yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!*’”

⁶And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷And will not *God bring about justice for his chosen ones*, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸I tell you, he will see that *they get justice, and quickly*. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:2-8)

The widow pressed in and obtained breakthrough with the unjust judge because of her persistence. Persistence may win against the enemy, but it may take awhile. The judge did not give her justice because she deserved it, but because she was persistent and had the authority of God behind her. The authority she exercised was the same authority found in Luke 9 and 10, to overcome the power of the enemy.

The unjust judge is Satan, the accuser of the brethren. He did not fear God, nor did he respect man. He had power at his disposal, but because he was unjust, he had no right or legal authority. The judge knew there was one who supported the widow who had both *power and authority*. Sound familiar? Satan will accuse and keep believers from what is rightfully theirs simply because he can. He has the power and he has lies. If believers do not know they can force him to give them justice, they simply live in hardship or bondage. Many believers do not understand the authority they have to overcome the power of the enemy.

This woman, however, would not settle for less than God's best for her life. She went to the unjust judge over and over, and demanded rightful judgment against her adversary. Perhaps her adversary was a demon attacking her or her family. The judge finally gave her what she asked. The unjust judge reasoned if she did not get justice she would come and attack him. In Greek, the word for *attack* is *hupopiazō*, and means to beat him black and blue in the face, subdue, buffet or disable. *She* demanded justice against the adversary because she was the chosen one who stood in the authority of God. In godly authority, she would beat the unjust judge black and blue if he did not relent.

The unjust judge said, "And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?" (Luke 18:7). The unjust judge recognized God would quickly bring about justice for his chosen ones. If the judge did not give her justice against the adversary, the heavenly Father would step in and get justice for the widow. The unjust judge gave her justice, not because of his respect for humanity or fear of God, but because he knew God Almighty was her rear guard. God will see we get justice from the unjust judge. In other words, when believers cry out day and night, we will be restored that which is rightfully ours.

The judge knew if he did not relinquish his position, God would intervene on behalf of the one who demanded justice. In other words, the King backed up the delegated authority the widow had to overcome the unjust judge. The judge said he did not fear God, but the passage does not bear that out. The unjust judge gave justice before God stepped in because of the widow's persistence. The necessity of persistence in obtaining justice is indicative of the amount of warfare that believers have to engage in to defeat the enemy. *Believers will win*, but it may be a harder fought battle. The unjust judge reasoned the Lord would come to the rescue if he did not give in to the widow's demands.

What does all this mean for those who sit idly by and do not seek justice from Satan? It means they labor under the weight of injustice. God brings forth justice for those who cry out day and night. The

enemy is very legalistic. He will often hold people in bondage, unless they enforce the right to justice against him. Persistence is critical!

Another important point is that the widow was seeking justice, not mercy. Justice means to vindicate one's rights. Justice is fair administration of the law. Justice is the right to enforce a legal claim against another. Justice is obtaining what is rightfully ours. Mercy, on the other hand, is free grace, undeserved favor, kind or forgiving treatment. We deserve justice from our enemy. Satan has no legal authority to take what is rightfully ours as children of the Most High. The widow's authority was to get justice, or overcome the power of the enemy, to enforce her rightful claim. Believers seek mercy from our heavenly Father. When seeking mercy, believers ask of God in the name of Jesus, who is on the mercy seat. When seeking justice, we command with authority to overpower our enemy to loose what is rightfully ours from his possession. When believers demand justice, we are taking authority over the enemy who would illegally steal what he has no right to steal. When a believer seeks mercy, it constitutes an appeal to the King!

The last verse in the passage is often overlooked. Jesus said, "However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). Jesus died to take back the authority Adam and Eve gave to Satan. If we fail to believe and understand our ability to overcome, the full benefit of the crucifixion is not being realized. When Jesus returns, will he find those on the earth who are enforcing justice in his name against the enemy? Will he find faith of those crying out day and night to enforce believer's rights against our adversaries and the unjust judge? Will the Son of Man find belief in *his authority*?

David: Acting In Authority

David also represented one who exercised his authority to overcome the power of the enemy based on the call of the Lord. David first appeared on the pages of Scripture when Samuel anointed him with oil as future king of Israel. That day the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully on David. God chose him that day. All of his older

brothers were rejected for reasons we do not know, but the Lord called David for a special purpose.

There are lessons to be learned from David. He is a good example of one who operated in authority, and went into battle man to man against the enemy. David went into the battle from a position of faith, relationship, and a desire to honor the name of God. David said, "I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied" (1 Sam. 17:45). David was called and anointed for the battle that he fought with Goliath. In David we see the position of the believer in authority, and in Goliath we see our enemy, Satan.

The army had lost heart, "On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified" (1 Sam. 17:11). To the army of Saul, Goliath was frightening because the warriors did not have the revelation knowledge of the victory of God. Whether their call was not to fight Goliath, or their fear kept them from fighting him, we will never know. They could not fight against him because they were in bondage to fear. They quaked every time he went on to the field of battle. The enemy taunted them day after day. In their eyes, the size and strength of their enemy was larger than their God.

David overheard the king's requests for any man who would stand as the champion of Israel. David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him" (1 Sam. 17:32). Often those who should be the most supportive are the loudest voices of discouragement, especially when the Lord has called and given an assignment. In this case, David's oldest brother was the voice of woe and opposition to him. His brother burned with anger at him and asked, "Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle" (1 Sam. 17:28). After all, how could David possibly overcome the giant of a man, a well-seasoned warrior? He was just a youth.

The reason that the army or his brother could not see the victory was because it was not their battle. Even King Saul was dismayed and terrified. People, even so-called warriors, get hurt by going into

a battle they have not been called by God to fight. Not true for David. There was no apparent fear because he was in the anointing of God. He sought for and gained permission from the king before going into the battle. This is a good lesson for any person going under the authority of the believer against an enemy power. The spiritual head, whether it is God or a spiritual covering, should come into agreement and give approval for the battle lines to be drawn. David had prepared his entire life for this moment. The fear in the Israelite camp speaks to a lack of faith and relationship with the Lord. David went into the battle with the anointing for the fight. It was not as if David has more physical power, for he was just a youth. He did not have more battle experience. In fact, from what we can read, he had no battle experience except to fight wild animals. David was ready for the battle under the anointing of God and that was all he needed.

One who is anointed for the battle can overcome the enemy on behalf of the whole camp. Not everyone was equipped for the battle, but the one who was brought blessing to the whole army. As believers, we must know our level of calling. We are called to go as far as the Lord has called without fear. We are not called to go before him into any situation. Where the army quaked with fear and trembled when Goliath came out every day, David said in faith and confidence,

This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know there is a God in Israel. ⁴⁷

All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands.
(1 Sam. 17:46-47)

Before going into battle, David was pressed to put on Saul's armor. David could not wear someone else's covering (1 Sam. 17:39). He could not take that which fit Saul, and make it his own. He could only go into the battle in his own preparation. He went

knowing and believing God would deliver him. David had to set the parameters of the battle. He could not let anyone else set the battle lines he had been called to fight.

David ran into the battle. David knew and understood God, probably better than any person on the battlefield. He had intimate knowledge of God. David said, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied” (1 Sam. 17:45). Goliath came with battle gear, but David came “in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel.” David was the human running to meet the giant, but the battle belonged to the Lord!

The danger of standing in authority is that sometimes believers begin to think the battle is theirs. They take on more than the Lord has called them to take on. David went against a champion of an opposing army in the name of the Lord. He was victorious in using his authority to overcome the enemy, but he never failed to recognize the importance and power of the name of God.

David let the rock fly and stunned Goliath, but he actually killed Goliath with his own sword (1 Sam. 17:51). The enemy tried to use the sword to defeat and terrify the army of God’s people. The sword the enemy uses against believers acting in authority will be the sword that will cut off its head. Hear this well: Our enemy will try to use the Word of the Lord, which is the sword of the Spirit, to his advantage to trick believers. However, the sword that he would use against God’s people will be the very same sword that will decapitate his kingdom.

After their champion was defeated, the Philistine army turned and ran. They lied. They were supposed to be subject to the Israelites, but they reneged on the promise. Before the battle, Goliath said, “Choose a man and have him come down to me. ⁹If he is able to fight and kill me, *we will become your subjects*; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us” (1 Sam. 17:9-10). After the Goliath was defeated, “When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they turned and ran” (1 Sam. 17:51). That is just like our enemy. They will say one thing to get believers where they want them, but then they will run every time. Finally after forty

days of challenges, in one moment the Lord answered and brought defeat to the whole Philistine army.

Time and again in Scripture, the authority of the believer is to overcome the power of the enemy. The Lord loves believers enough to make sure that there are weapons in the arsenal so that there is authority to overcome. In David's case, it was the anointing of God for the battle. The kingdom of God is about so much more than battling and overcoming Satan. Believers cannot and should not be focused on the devil; the focus must be on God. Have believers become so transfixed on the idea of overpowering Satan that the understanding of living the kingdom life now has been overlooked?

Acting Beyond Authority

It can be dangerous to believers to move outside of the calling of God, especially going into battle with the enemy. Even though believers may have authority, going head to head against the enemy into a battle that one has not been called to fight may not turn out well. A believer does have authority to overcome the power of the enemy. However, if a believer does engage in a battle, it should only be based on the leading or calling of the Lord. In Scripture, God called many servants into battle and then gave them the strategy to win the victory. David, Gideon, Joshua, Moses, and others went against the enemy into battle and were victorious. The Lord gave strategy for that moment. Often those called by God to go into battle won against overwhelming odds.

Occasionally, followers of the Lord lose sight of the call of God, and forge into a battle they have not been called to fight. Those situations are times when believers are exposed and in jeopardy. Even a mature believer can be battered, beaten, and wrongfully imprisoned by going ahead of the Lord into a battle that the Lord has not called forth. We see such a scenario in Acts 16, with Paul and Silas.

Paul: Taking The Bait - Picking A Fight

The story of Paul and Silas begins when they are on the way to prayer in the book of Acts. A girl with a demonic spirit followed them around for days, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved” (Acts 16:17). She was speaking the truth. She did not bait them with a lie, but she was picking a fight nevertheless. She was wearing down their resistance day after day. She was distracting them with her incessant chattering. They just wanted to go pray and she would not be quiet. Sound familiar? They took their eyes off their plan, to go to prayer, and put their attention on the harassing, chattering, demonic spirit. Finally annoyed, Paul lost his cool. The Word says, “She kept this up for many days. *Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around* and said to the spirit, ‘In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!’ At that moment the spirit left her” (Acts 16:18).

Paul was drawn into a fight with a demon when he, “became so annoyed that he turned around.” Believers should never turn from God to give attention to a demonic spirit. He departed from his plan to pray. The demon had a hierarchy of demonic power lying in wait behind it to unleash power on Paul:

When *her owners* realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face *the authorities*.²⁰ They brought them before *the magistrates* and said, “These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar²¹ by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.”²² *The crowd joined in the attack* against Paul and Silas, and the *magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten* with rods. (Acts 16:19-22)

Paul became annoyed, which should have been the first clue that he had just made a big mistake. He was in a state of mind of toil, grief, angst, and irritation. It was an open door to an attack, and

Paul just invited the battle. The bait was out there day after day and Paul finally took it! There was a hierarchy of demonic power unleashed on Paul. The power players going up the chain from the original demonic spirit represent the levels of demonic hierarchy.⁷ The original attacker was a low-level spirit of divination. After the demon was cast out the owners became involved. The owners went to the authorities, and the authorities went, relying on Roman law, to the magistrates. By then the crowd became involved. This snowball was rolling down an alpine slope, picking up speed and momentum with every passing second. Paul and Silas were bound, beaten, and then thrown into jail.

It all started because a low-level demon was picking an incessant fight until Paul wore down. Paul was egged into a battle that he was never called to fight. The Lord did not call him into the battle. He was motivated by the flesh (soulish thoughts by becoming annoyed), and went over the edge. Once the ball was rolling, he did not stop it. He could have appealed to a higher authority any time. He could have appealed to Caesar as he had done countless times before. He could have appealed to The King! The fact of the matter is that in the heat of the battle, it is difficult to formulate a good strategy or escape plan. It is much better not to get into the battle that one has not been called to fight in the first place.

In the meantime, Paul had never appealed to the King (Jesus) for a verdict in his favor. Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into prison without the right to be heard by the one with ultimate authority. Later when they started praising and singing worship songs to the King, it was if they were appealing to the King for a ruling in their favor. As they worshiped from their place of bondage, the chains fell off. Not only did the chains fall off of Paul and Silas, but also there were breakthrough blessings for everyone in the jail. I call those fallout blessings, which we will talk about in Chapter 20. The Lord was blessing them, but in the process there were collateral blessings for all the other prisoners as well.

The next day the magistrates were going to let them go, but Paul was incensed. The magistrates had publically beaten the men, who were Roman citizens, with rods and put them in jail without a trial. Paul was not going to stand for it. This scene represents a

believer battling Satan and the demonic hierarchy. The dark forces had beaten and held a believer without cause. The demonic powers have no legal authority to do what they did and they were without justification. The forces held the believers only with power or brute strength. The magistrates would have had authority over their own people, but Paul was from a higher kingdom. Paul's Roman citizenship is the same as citizenship in the kingdom of God for a believer. The way Paul flashed his Roman citizenship around is the way believers can demand rights of citizenship in the kingdom of God. Believers must learn from Paul that citizenship in a higher kingdom comes with rights and privileges. Believers will not get the rights and privileges without demanding those benefits from the adversary. When the believers appealed to the king, the freedom was instantly granted and the opposition/demonic realm did not say one word in defense to prevent the believers from walking free of bondage.

When the officers reported to the magistrates that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed. They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city.

When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: "Release those men."

³⁶The jailer told Paul, "The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace."³⁷ But Paul said to the officers: "*They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out.*"³⁸ The officers reported this to the magistrates, and *when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed.* ³⁹They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city. (Acts 16:35-39)

The magistrates had no legal right to attack Paul and Silas that way. Paul had a right to be heard by a proper tribunal before judgment was imposed. Similarly, the enemy has no right to abuse

or imprison a believer without a hearing before the King! When a believer appeals to the King, the enemy has no recourse but to loose the bonds and let the prisoner go free. Those *in power*, as in this passage, will be highly alarmed when believers appeal directly to the King!

Unfortunately, most believers do not know how to appeal directly to the King, because believers have been in the position of trying to figure out how to fight their own battles for way too long. Believers fighting in their authority sometimes come out bruised and bleeding just like Paul and Silas.

The Importance Of Relationship: Seven Sons Of Sceva

The importance of relationship cannot be overstated in this discussion. Relationship was briefly discussed in the last chapter. Jesus classified those who attempt to use his name without relationship as *evildoers*. However, there is another important factor of relationship to walking in the authority of a believer to overcome the power of the enemy. Those who do not have relationship will find themselves on the losing end of a battle with a demonic spirit. Without relationship, one may emerge from a battle with serious injuries, battered, and hurting. Where no relationship exists between a person and Jesus, the enemy will not recognize the one calling on the name of Jesus. Jesus' name is recognized, of course, but the authorization of the one calling on Jesus' name is recognized only in relationship.

The importance of the last sentence of the Great Commission is almost universally unnoticed. Jesus said, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:20b). He will never leave us or forsake us. Believers can call on his name, which is the benefit of *his authority*. Believers can appeal to his authority and where there is relationship, he will not leave or forsake believers.

In Acts 19, however, we see that the seven sons of Sceva were not in relationship with Jesus:

Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits
tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those
who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the

name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.” ¹⁴ Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. ¹⁵ One day the *evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?”* ¹⁶ Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and *overpowered them all*. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. (Acts 19:13-16)

The sons of Sceva tried to apprehend the use of Jesus’ name without having a relationship. Jews were trying to drive out evil spirits in the name of Lord Jesus but only had a third party understanding of him. The only relationship they had was through the understanding of Paul’s preaching. In other words, they had *heard* of Jesus through Paul, but they did not know him personally. They would say, “In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out” (Acts 19:13b).

Another important factor is that the sons of Sceva did not understand the authority of the believer when they wanted to personally cast out the demon. The absence of a personal communion with Jesus meant they did not understand power and authority. New King James Version says, “Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “*We exorcise you* by the Jesus whom Paul preaches” (Acts 19:13, NKJV). The sons did not understand authority, and appeared to take too much credit for themselves. When they said, “*We exercise you,*” and used Jesus’ precious name as a special tool, they were exposed and open to the demonic realm. God does not have grandchildren; he has only children. People cannot have a relationship with Jesus on the coattails of another. When Sceva’s sons tried this, the evil spirit answered and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?” (Acts 19:15).

Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and *overpowered them* all. This is crucial! The Word says the evil spirit “overpowered them.” They were overwhelmed with a greater power. They are not out-classed by a higher authority. The demon could only use power, not authority. The seven sons of Sceva were overcome

because they did not know Jesus, and accordingly they did not have authority as believers. This was a power-versus-power match, and the demonic spirit had greater power. They did not understand the authority of Jesus by the power and benefit of his name. If they had been in a relationship with Jesus, they would have known Jesus' authority would overcome the power of the enemy. They would have walked in authority as believers.

The Smoking Gun on Authority

Throughout the process of writing this book, the Lord frequently gave new revelation. Those revelations often lead to the prayer, "Lord, show me the smoking gun." A smoking gun is slang for conclusive evidence or irrefutable proof that something is true. Finding a person with a smoking gun in his or her hand makes it difficult to refute the belief that he or she just pulled the trigger. In this case, the smoking gun I was looking for was clear biblical proof to support the understanding that believers' first line of overcoming the enemy is to appeal to the king, rather than use the authority of the believer to attack the enemy head on. The cry was for clear and convincing scriptural evidence to show that what was being seen and understood was actually supported by a direct statement from the Word. I prayed, "Lord, show me the smoking gun." The Lord spoke to me and said, "Read John chapters 14, 15 and 16" and I did.

John 14 is the smoking gun, so to speak, with regard to the authority of Jesus and the authority of the believer. Clear and convincing evidence emerged that believers' first line of prayer should always be to appeal to the king, rather than to stand in his or her authority, unless directly called by Jesus to do so. This is what I found:

First, Jesus' work on earth was solely in the authority of the Father. Never was it seen in Scripture that Jesus claimed to have his own authority during his earthly ministry. In an earlier chapter, many Scriptures were quoted to illustrate that Jesus did not have authority to call his own during his earthly ministry, but rather stood in the authority retained by the Father. John 14 is the clearest passage to

illustrate authority was vested in the Father while Jesus was on the earth. Similarly, that same passage illustrates that for the most part (except to overcome the power of the enemy), all current authority is vested in Jesus while we are serving him on the earth. Jesus did not work in his own authority, but rather the authority of the Father. Jesus said,

¹⁰ Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you *I do not speak on my own authority*. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, *who is doing his work*. ¹¹ Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the *evidence of the works themselves*. ¹² Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and *they will do even greater things than these*, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ And *I will do whatever you ask in my name*, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ *You may ask me for anything in my name*, and I will do it. (John 14:10-14)

It is crystal clear Jesus neither spoke nor acted on his own authority during his earthly ministry, but only on the authority of the Father. The Father did the Father's work with the Father's own authority, through Jesus. Jesus said, "*I do not speak on my own authority*. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, *who is doing his work*" (John 14:10). This is crucial because it illustrates Jesus, as Son of Man, did not have authority of his own while on the earth. Jesus was speaking in the present tense in John 14:10. The authority made available to the Son was the result of the relationship between the Father and the Son. Jesus said the works he had been doing were evidence of the Father being in the Son and the Son being in the Father. Jesus' work on earth was a result of the authority retained by the Father. This is significant because it sets the stage for understanding what believers have after Jesus regained all authority, and then ascended to the Father.

The nuance is very important: He who has authority is he whose work is being done. Jesus did not claim his own authority at the time while he was on the earth. In this passage it was God's authority and God's work through Jesus. Later it would be Jesus' authority and Jesus' work through believers. If Jesus would not claim *carte blanche* authority during his earthly ministry, by what right do believers have to claim more authority than Jesus did when he walked on the earth? Since the ascension of Jesus into heaven, Jesus in his own authority does his work by the power of the Holy Spirit through the vessel of the believers.

Believers' authority, except as previously stated, while here on the earth is solely the authority of the Son. Believers do not have more than Jesus has given us, just as Adam, Eve, and Satan did not have more than they were given. Understanding this concept is important for living in the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. John 14 illustrated the importance of the Father, Jesus, and the believer being in each other, which signifies relationship. Jesus said, "On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you" (John 14:20). This was a present tense statement.

Second, Jesus then said of believers, "*They will do even greater things than these.*" Notice this is a future tense statement. Jesus was talking to disciples just before his crucifixion. He was telling them that because he was quickly going to the Father, they could ask anything in his name so that the Father would be glorified in the Son. Jesus did not yet have *all authority*. After Jesus' resurrection, believers would do more than Jesus did, because at that time Jesus would be possessed of all authority! He would not have only what the Father retained, he would not have only what the enemy took; he would have it all. The culmination of all authority would then again wrapped up in the Godhead.

As Jesus was speaking about the post resurrection future when believers "would do even greater things than he did" by asking in his name, it would be the first time that all authority had been under one head since the days of creation. Even the Father did not have all authority after the garden, because he had delegated it and it had been carelessly given to another. It was unprecedented on earth,

since before the days of the Garden of Eden, that all authority was in single control. That is why Jesus said in future tense time – from the time before the crucifixion – believers would later have even greater capacity to do more than Jesus did. Was there a synergistic effect of the future reunification of all authority under one head?

Third, authority and blessing is born in relationship. John 15, Jesus said, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. . . .⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. *No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me*” (John 15:1,4). John 14 was about *being in relationship*, but in John 15 the encouragement is *to remain in relationship* with each other. A believer can do nothing apart from the Lord. Jesus went on to say,

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; *apart from me you can do nothing.*⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.⁷ If you remain in me and *my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*⁸ This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. (John 15:5-8)

Relationship is essential, “*If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*” Two conditions exist. First, the believer must remain in Jesus, and second, Jesus’ words must remain in the believer. If those two things occur, then the believer *may ask for anything* and it will be done!

The *words* referred to above which are to remain in the believer are the rhema words, or the utterances of God.⁸ The Greek word, *rhema*, is the Word spoken or uttered word of God into the heart of a believer. The rhema comes through relationship, because believers do not hear rhema words without knowing the voice of the Shepherd (John 10:10). The rhema is the connection to the relationship of Jesus and his authority. When disciples abide in the Son, it brings

glory to the Father. Believers hear the uttered word of God, and bear much fruit.

The question arises, is a disciple – a learner or student – elevated higher than the master? While the Master was on earth, he was under authority of the Father. Now that the Master is in heaven and the disciple is under the master, does a disciple have more authority than the master had while he was on earth? Jesus said, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that *whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you*” (John 15:16). Fruit bearing is tied to asking in Jesus’ name, not commanding the enemy to overpower him.

Fourth, this passage illustrates that fruit bearing is a function of the kingdom of God, not a warring against the enemy. Multiplication is not warfare, but kingdom grace. If we limit our activities to “authority of the believer,” all we will be doing is overcoming the enemy, not producing any fruit. Multiplication (fruit-bearing) is kingdom advancement. Believers undoubtedly have authority to overcome the power of the enemy. It is readily apparent that many people are not bearing fruit or multiplying because the focus is limited to overcoming.

Finally, if the kingdom works of Jesus on earth were the works of the Father, how much more evident is it that the kingdom works of believers on earth are the works of Jesus? Likewise, if the kingdom labors of Jesus on earth were done in the Father’s authority, how much more so that the kingdom labors of believers on earth are done in Jesus’ authority? He said, “Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. ²¹ *They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me*” (John 15:20-21). The enemy backlash is against the name of Jesus – the badge of his authority. Why would a believer think that he or she had more on earth than Jesus did when he was here?

In John 16, as Jesus was preparing to depart, he was giving his disciples understanding about asking in his name. They had never done that before, so they needed to be educated on the authority of

his name. Jesus said, “In that day you will no longer ask me anything. *Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.* ²⁴ *Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete*” (John 16:23-24). Believers had not asked in his name, because he had no kingdom authority to call his own at that time! Only the Father had kingdom authority at that time. Again Jesus distinguished between his earthly ministry and the time that was rapidly approaching for his disciples, the time when he would no longer be with them in a physical body. He said,

“Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father. ²⁶ *In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf.* ²⁷ No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. ²⁸ I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.”
(John 16:25-28)

Jesus spoke about the time when he would no longer be with the disciples: When believers ask in the name of Jesus, Jesus will not intervene for them with the Father. That would not be necessary because the Father loved the disciples because they loved Jesus (speaking of relationship) and believed Jesus came from God (having faith in who he is). Furthermore, at the future time when they were asking the name of Jesus, he would then be vested with all authority – granted from the Father and taken from Satan. Jesus was preparing the disciples for his departure and he gave a dissertation of understanding the power of the name of Jesus as the basis for tapping into the authority of the Godhead as it would be at that time.

Comparison Of Appealing Versus Overcoming

As a teen, I would sign my mother's checks with her permission for the things I needed to buy. The action was done by the power of her name, but she still controlled the checkbook. Her name was representation of her authority to draw on the bank account. In that instance I had power, but no authority. Her name was a symbol of her right and authority over the checkbook. The checking account was not mine; the authority was not mine. I was only using her name because I had my mother's permission to write the checks on her account.

The name of Jesus is like drawing on his account. Believers have permission to write checks on the account of Jesus and sign his name. His account is under his power and authority. Believers sign in his name and the blessing will be drawn out of his account. The only check believers have authority to personally co-sign with Jesus and in his name is one to overcome the enemy.

Believer's authority is given as a gift and calling of God. It is for a useful purpose in the kingdom realm. The Lord has given his followers the opportunity to walk in a superior position to the enemy. Unequivocally, believers have incomparably great power. Ephesians says:

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹ *and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength* ²⁰ *he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,* ²¹ *far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.* ²² *And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the Church,* ²³ *which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.* (Eph. 1:18-23)

This passage is critical for believers to understand their access to the exceeding greatness of the power of God. It is not simply power, it is not simply great power, but it is exceedingly great power. That is huge. It is also the mighty strength that raised Jesus from the dead, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion. All things are under Christ, and as his loving followers call on his name, believers become his ambassadors of power and authority.

However, the difference in appealing to King Jesus and asking for anything in his name, versus commanding with the believer's own authority to overpower the enemy in Jesus' name, is almost beyond comparison. For example, appealing to the King is like calling on the power, influence, and authority of the most powerful world governmental leader, while relying on the authority of the believer is like calling on the authority of the local dogcatcher. Both are governmental officials and both have authority. Both took an oath of office to faithfully perform the duties of the office. The dogcatcher may have governmental authority to catch vermin, but if one needs a monumental action, the authority of the dogcatcher will not get the job done. If one needs a monumental miraculous action, he or she should go to the top, go to the one with all authority. Believers may also have authority to catch vermin, but when looking for a monumental action, one should appeal to the King!

When believers stand in authority, the most he or she can hope to gain from Satan is justice. Believers can get grace from the Father. Justice is a low-level blessing. Grace is everything else. We cannot get grace from the enemy. Satan has nothing to give believers other than what he has stolen from them to begin with. God is mercy – appeal to the King. Kingdom provision, resources, blessings, discernment, manifest presence of God and all that entails, come from the King, and not from our enemy. Believers must realize that the kingdom of God is so much more than taking back what the enemy has stolen from them.

The only thing the archangel Michael said when contending with Satan for Moses' body was, "The Lord rebuke you!" (Jude 9). We can go *mano-a-mano* with the enemy and prevail in the authority we have in Jesus' name to overcome his power, but the kingdom is about so much more than merely defeating the enemy. "God opposes the proud, but shows favor to the humble" (James 4:6). Gideon had little

or nothing of his own to rely on. The boy David said, “The God of Israel will give the victory.” John the Baptist said, “He must become greater; I must become less” (John 3:30).

Even great generals of the faith diminished the personal importance of the work they did and turned all the glory back to the Lord. Randy Clark says God can use even, “Little ole me.” Every general of the faith is humble, acknowledging that only God working through him or her is the reason they have overcome and prevailed.

Conclusion

Authority and the power of Jesus’ name are largely misunderstood and overlooked by believers. Believers can appeal to the King for anything but have only limited authority to overpower the enemy. Believer’s authority should be exercised based on a call of Jesus to go into a battle. Believers must realize how imperative relationship is to call on the power of the name and authority of Jesus. The enemy will not respond to a person or believer who does not understand the power of the name and the totality of the authority of Jesus. Once believers have that knowledge, they truly will be able to do greater things than Jesus did by asking in his name. Once a believer has the recognition and understanding of the authority of the name and the unlimited power of Jesus, the enemy will respond accordingly. The enemy cannot bluff when a believer knows Satan has nothing to fight with except lesser power and lies. Jesus’ power and authority defeats Satan’s power, so he is left holding an empty bag.

We began the chapter with a road map for understanding authority: Jesus has all authority accompanied by unlimited and eternal power. Believers have exceedingly great power and delegated but limited authority to overcome the power of Satan and the demonic forces of evil. When believers engage in battles they have not been called to fight, it can be ugly! The authority of the believer is limited to warfare, but authority is not for the purpose of kingdom expansion. Authority of the believer is for justice against the enemy. Mercy and kingdom multiplication only come by appealing to the King to open up the heavenly realm for blessings to flow.

Chapter 6

Counterpoints



Dismantling Arguments

Some in the body of Christ would argue that current believers have all the authority that Jesus had after the resurrection. Alternatively, some in the body of Christ may argue that current believers have all authority that Adam and Eve had in the garden. Some passages may even seem to support those points of view based on cursory reading. A closer look at those passages, which seem to suggest higher level of authority, show that authority may not be what believers have been taught or believed. There are some Scriptures that believers stand upon to bolster the greatness of the authority of the believer that do not bear close scrutiny. The authority football was never passed back to believers after the resurrection of Jesus. He is possessed of the authority, and believers only have what has been given by specific grant from above.

A deeper study of those Scriptures will dismantle the arguments that believers have total authority of Jesus after the resurrection or that believers have authority as Adam and Eve did to subdue, rule, and reign over all living creatures. This chapter takes a closer look at some of the Scriptures that have been relied upon to suggest that believers do have a higher level of authority than we actually have. Believers are invited to continue with an open mind and to read these passages with a fresh point of view. At the beginning of each subheading below, there is a stated argument, followed by

a counterpoint. The *argument* supports the view of the superior authority of the believer, while the *counterpoint* presents the position that authority of the believer may have been overstated.

Argument: Peter's Keys To The Kingdom Were A Blanket Grant Of Authority For All Believers

Counterpoint: The Keys To The Kingdom Are Only For Those With Revelation Knowledge

It has been argued that Matthew 16, in which the Lord gave Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven, was a blanket grant of kingdom authority to all believers. Actually, it may be safe to say that is the prevailing view of the Church. A closer look at this passage will illustrate a different understanding. Scripture shows that not everyone has keys to the kingdom of God. The Body of Christ almost universally misunderstands this passage. When studied in context and with the totality of the Scripture, it is apparent that keys are reserved for those with revelation.

The most noteworthy passage dealing with kingdom keys is when Jesus gave Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Jesus asked all of the disciples, not just Peter, who people said he was. They gave a myriad of answers, elaborating on the common understanding of Jesus' true identity: "When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?'"¹⁴ *They replied*, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets" (Matt. 16:13-14).

Then Jesus asked them, "But what about you? Who do you say I am?" (Matt. 16:15). *Peter answered based on direct revelation of God*, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God" (Matt. 16:16). That answer suddenly set Peter apart from the remaining disciples. He was propelled from being a disciple, or student, to being the foundational rock of the Church. Jesus replied,

"Blessed *are you*, *Simon* son of Jonah, for this was not revealed *to you* by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.¹⁸ And I tell *you* that *you are Peter*,

and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*” (Matt. 16:17-19)

Biblical “keys” have to be understood to fully understand this passage. We see in this passage that the keys were given because Peter received revelation knowledge from the Father. Peter’s answer that Jesus was the Messiah came because he received the information directly from God. Keys are given to those who are trusted with greater knowledge and greater responsibility. It was only after the knowledge was revealed to Peter, that Jesus said, “*I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.*” Because of the prophetic revelation of the Father, Peter suddenly found himself as the future recipient of the position of gatekeeper to the kingdom of heaven.

In other places in Scripture we learn more about the notion that keys are tied to revelation knowledge. In Luke 11, Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees and said,

Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your ancestors who killed them. ⁴⁸ So you testify that you approve of what your ancestors did; they *killed the prophets*, and you build their tombs. ⁴⁹ Because of this, God in his wisdom said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.’ ⁵⁰ Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, ⁵¹ from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all. ⁵² “*Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering.*” (Luke 11: 47-52)

Jesus proclaimed woes and judgments against the Pharisees. Jesus said that the Pharisees and their ancestors were responsible for killing the prophets, which means they silenced the voices of those who heard from God and spoke to the people what they heard (Luke 11:47-48). Then Jesus said, “Woe to you experts in the law, because *you have taken away the key to knowledge*. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering” (Luke 11:52). The Pharisees took away the key to knowledge because they killed the prophets from “Abel to Zechariah.” The keys are prophetic revelation leading to knowledge. Keys are given to those who know the master’s voice. When the Pharisees killed the prophets silenced the voices that heard from God, they kept the people from the key to knowledge. So when Peter was given keys to the kingdom, he had the keys of knowledge.

Peter was given the keys to the kingdom because he heard from the Father the true nature of Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus called Peter twice and gave him a new name in the process when he said, “*Blessed are you, Simon . . . you are Peter . . .*” Peter was given a new identity as the rock of the Church and a gatekeeper in God’s kingdom. He had a dual role both on earth and in the kingdom of God.

Did Jesus ever give the kingdom keys to the other disciples? Jesus directly addressed Peter as “you” seven times in the passage from Matthew 16:13-20. The other disciples, who did not have revelation knowledge from the Father, were not given keys to the kingdom of heaven. They were not called out by name, as was Peter. They were not renamed with a new identity and character, as was Peter. The address of Jesus was specifically to Peter. The Lord said to Peter, “I will give *you* the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 16:19). Not everyone is trusted to be a gatekeeper. The Lord specifically limited the grant of kingdom keys to Peter.

The conferral of keys was not a blanket grant of authority to the other disciples. By extension, the keys were not given as a blanket grant of authority to the Church. Jesus did not make a general release like he did in the Great Commission. God is no respecter of persons, but some people have grown in wisdom and maturity that they can be trusted with greater responsibility. Salvation is free, but discipleship is not. Simply stated, Peter received keys, when the

others did not, because he had the revelation. Keys are revelation from the Father. Peter recognized the voice of God; he knew the voice of the shepherd.

Gatekeepers have access to the precious things that are kept under lock and key. Scripture reveals that gatekeepers can open a door that cannot be shut and they can close a door that cannot be opened. In both Isaiah and Revelation, ‘the key to the house of David’ is mentioned. It is tied to a position of trust and authority. Isaiah says, referring to one in a position of trust, “I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open” (Isa. 22:22). That is why Peter, as holder of the keys of the kingdom, could bind and loose. What he bound and loosed on earth, would be bound and loosed in heaven. In other words, what he shut would remain shut, and what he opened would remain open. Later in Revelations the one holding “the key to the house of David” is none other than Jesus himself. Jesus said, “To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open” (Rev. 3:7).

Those with keys are the gatekeepers. John 10 says, “The gatekeeper opens the gate for the shepherd, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice” (John 10:3-4). Gatekeepers work with the shepherd and open the gate for the shepherd, but the relationship is based on knowing the voice of the shepherd and responding to it. In other words, gatekeepers act on revelation knowledge. In John 10:6 Jesus said, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. . . . ⁹ I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture” (John 10:7,9).

In Matthew 25:1-13, the parable of the ten virgins illustrates the door will not be opened for those who do not know the Lord. The wise virgins with oil in the lamp (oil of Holy Spirit with light of Christ shining brilliantly) went into the wedding supper. The foolish virgins who went to buy what could not be purchased: knowledge

of the Lord by personal relationship. Jesus said, “But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.¹¹ “Later the others also came. ‘Lord, Lord,’ they said, ‘*open the door for us!*’¹² “But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, *I don’t know you*’” (Matt. 25:10-12). Those without relationship will find the door shut that will not be opened.

In the Old Testament, there were 212 gatekeepers from the Levites, the priestly tribe. First Chronicles says, “The gatekeepers had been *assigned to their positions of trust* by David and Samuel, the seer” (1 Chron. 9:22). Only by oversight of the king and the prophet were the gatekeepers established. They were in charge of guarding the gates of the house of the Lord day and night. There are different levels of gatekeepers (1 Chron. 9:22:32). Some lower-level gatekeepers were stationed at the thresholds. In addition, there were the four principal gatekeepers, who were higher-level gatekeepers: “But the four principal gatekeepers, who were Levites, were *entrusted with the responsibility* for the rooms and treasuries in the house of God.²⁷ They would spend the night stationed around the house of God, because they had to guard it; and *they had charge of the key* for opening it each morning” (1 Chron. 9:22:26-27).

There were thousands, even hundreds of thousands of Israelites, but only 212 gatekeepers from the tribe of the Levites, and only four principal gatekeepers. Not all Israelites had keys to the gates. Only four of that number had keys to the internal chambers and treasuries. Those who were chosen were assigned to the position because the king and the prophet trusted them. Gatekeepers walked in higher authority because they were trustworthy.

The same is true for current believers. Not every believer is a gatekeeper with a higher level of authority. It goes without saying that keys unlock or lock. Kingdom keys are only given to those who are trustees in the kingdom. Keys are given to those with prophetic revelation and knowledge who can lock and unlock God’s kingdom at God’s command. The mission of the gatekeeper with the key is to guard and protect. Gatekeeping is not a mission of overpowering the enemy; gatekeeping is a function of minding the kingdom realm for the King. Keys result from hearing and acting on prophetic utterances

of God. Gatekeepers have more responsibly in the kingdom of God because they hear and instantly respond by doing the will of God.

Herein lies the problem: non-gatekeeping believers have been binding and loosing, *carte blanche* and without discrimination, when in fact many times they are operating above their level of gifting and authority and without the keys. Jesus gifted Peter with the keys when he said, “Blessed are *you*, Simon . . . revealed to *you* . . . I tell *you* that *you* are Peter . . . I will give *you* the keys . . . whatever *you* bind . . . whatever *you* loose . . . (Matt. 16:18-19, selected portions). This passage could not be more specifically addressed to one person, and not to the group of disciples who were there. Jesus did not gift the others who did not have revelation knowledge with keys. In that moment, the grant of special authority was only for Peter. There was nothing universal about that passage in which Jesus gifted Peter with kingdom keys.

However, Peter is not the only gatekeeper. There are undoubtedly some believers who have kingdom authority to bind and loose. The picture that we see in the Old Testament of 212 gatekeepers among the thousands of Israelites may be a type of the gatekeepers in God’s kingdom who possess keys. If the Old Testament is a type of the church, it appears that gatekeepers are a rarity among the body of believers. They are the generals of the faith, who have risen to high level of trust and responsibility in the kingdom realm.

Many believers may not have risen to the maturity and trust level to be entrusted in that way by the Lord. That may be why people who are binding and loosing without the keys may not see what they expect to see happen in the kingdom realm. Some people bind and loose and then see nothing happen. They may even begin to question the power of the Lord to overcome. They may even say that some terrible situation is the “Lord’s will,” because they attempt to bind and loose without the proper authority and then see nothing happen. The reason they do not see things bound and loosed is that they do not have the keys to bind and loose. That is why our enemy is not listening. It is not a limitation of the power or authority of Jesus, but rather the authority of the believer to do what they are doing.

In fact, disciples or apostles never bound or loosed anything in Scripture. The only time, other than when Jesus gave Peter the keys

in Matthew 16, that binding and loosing are mentioned in Scripture is in Matthew 18:15-19. That passage is about church discipline when a brother or sister sins, not about spiritual warfare or kingdom advancement. Matthew 18 is not about overcoming the power of the enemy based upon the authority of the believer. Matthew 16 and Matthew 18 are not dealing with the same things. In Matthew 16, Jesus was talking to Peter about revelation knowledge from the Father, overcoming the gates of hell, and keys to God's kingdom of heaven. Matthew 16 is clearly talking about heavenly realm matters. On the other hand in Matthew 18, the entire chapter is dealing with forgiveness against a brother or sister in the faith. Matthew 18 is about church relations, forgiveness and discipline, and has nothing to do with heavenly realm matters. Two or three together can agree to hold a brother or sister accountable, but that is not the same thing as the keys to the kingdom of God! Matthew 18:15-20 says,

If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over.¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'¹⁷ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.¹⁸ "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."¹⁹ "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven."²⁰ For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.

Believers, listen! Do not be discouraged! Even if every believer is not given the level of authority that Peter had in having kingdom keys, all believers may ask for anything in Jesus' name. Jesus has promised to hear a believer's prayers that are asked in his name accordingly! Even if a believer does not possess the kingdom keys,

he or she is not left as an orphan! Jesus has all the authority. Every believer, keys or no keys, has the opportunity and blessing to appeal directly to the King, which is not less! It is so very much, exceedingly, surpassingly more!

Authority Makes Believers A Target

After Jesus gave Peter the promise of the future keys to the kingdom, he told Peter the gates of hell would not prevail against, or overpower, the Church. Once again we see the notion that the demons have power, they do not have authority. Peter was promised kingdom keys, which was an advancement or promotion; it was an authority grant to one with revelation. The Father had given him an important and powerful revelation, Jesus promised him the keys, but then he was immediately subject to the attack of Satan. Peter rebuked Jesus for talking about his death: “Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ‘Never, Lord!’ he said. ‘This shall never happen to you!’” (Matt. 16:22). Jesus said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns” (Matt. 16:23).

Satan was laying a trap or snare, again tempting Jesus with earthly gain, tempting him with life. Had Jesus fallen to the trap to avoid the cross, he would have been missing the greater things of the kingdom of God. This was the same temptation Satan tried on him in the wilderness: gain the world; gain life. When Christ promised Peter the keys, he quickly became a target of Satan to use as a tool against Jesus. That is exactly what happened with Adam and Eve. Once they had the authority, Satan wanted what they had. When Peter was singled out for promotion in the kingdom, immediately Satan was trying to use him to thwart the cross, the mission of Jesus. That is why keys are for mature ones, trustees, and not for everyone. Not everyone can handle the keys. Not everyone can be a gatekeeper – it is for those who are trusted.

Is that why Jesus said he would give him the keys in the future? Peter had to grow and mature even beyond where he was at that moment. Because Peter was called to hold the keys, he was also

subject to strong discipline. The Lord harshly rebuked him for thinking about worldly things, and not being kingdom-minded. Jesus said to Peter,

“Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.²⁸ “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.” (Matt. 16:23-28)

Peter was the only disciple that Satan asked to sift like wheat. Jesus said, “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. ³² *But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail.* And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:31-32). Jesus prayed for him that he would not fail. What would total failure have looked like? It would have been reminiscent of the garden. Peter denied Christ; it was a failure, but not total, irreversible failure. Peter was restored, and he was the rock that the Church was eventually built upon. Was the sifting part of the testing to see if he could handle the keys?

After Peter fell by denying Jesus three times, he was once more addressed as Simon. When Jesus restored him by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus called him Simon three times, indicating that the transformation into his new identity was not yet complete (John 21:15-17). Jesus told Peter, the rock of the church, how much the future discipleship was going to cost him, ““Very truly I tell you, when you

were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.’¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, ‘Follow me!’” (John 21:18-19).

What most people do not realize is that with greater levels of authority come greater requirements or costs of discipleship, and greater attacks. There is more at stake for Satan to gain by pulling down one who has been trusted with kingdom keys. We only know that Peter was trusted with more, and he was targeted. When the Lord gives keys, are they delivered with Jesus’ prayers for the recipient to withstand the attack that may come, just like for Peter?

Argument: The Armor Of God Is Indicative Of The Authority Of The Believer

Counterpoint: The Armor Is Protection In The Day Of Evil

Another argument in favor of more prevailing authority of the believer comes from Ephesians 6. Some believers argue the armor of God shows believers have the authority of God. In other words, the grant of the armor to believers is a grant of authority from God. The armor of God found in Ephesians 6 is not a grant of authority. The armor of God *is not about* subjecting the enemy to dominion or rule of the believer in the name of Jesus. The armor of God *is about* the believer being in protection mode. It is about having what is needed to *stand* in the heat of a battle. The armor is protection for when the day of evil comes. Every element of the armor is about protection or defense. The only accouterment that could be perceived as offensive is the sword, which can actually be both an offensive and defensive weapon. Read carefully, the armor is not about advancing the kingdom of God, or even taking ground for that matter. The armor is about withstanding attack:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your *stand* against the devil’s schemes.¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the

rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, *so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground*, and after you have done everything, to *stand*. ¹⁴ *Stand* firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Four times in the passage is the believer told to stand. Again, standing is not the same thing as taking ground. Standing means not losing ground or retreating. It is about protecting a beachhead. The passage about the armor of God tells the believer how to survive. It reflects power versus power in a fierce skirmish. “For our struggle” in verse 12 does not equate with exercise of authority. Struggle denotes two powers wrestling for supremacy. Actually, the Word says humans are lower than the angels, but the Lord gave the disciples the authority to overcome the power of the enemy, Satan. Believers’ against the enemy’s power, but with the authority of Jesus means that believers overcome. One in authority does not wrestle for the upper hand. Armor is to withstand, not to overcome. Everything about this passage suggests hunkering down for the battle in the day of evil, not advancement of God’s kingdom.

Furthermore, believers are to put on the full armor of God, *so that when the day of evil comes, the believer may be able to stand his ground!* Armor is for a specific time: a battle time in the day of evil that will be fierce.

Argument: Authority Is A Continuing Partnership With God

Counterpoint: Authority Is Transferable And Not Retained Unless Protected

Some proponents say believers have the total authority of Jesus and suggest that believers have somehow retained the authority of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. That argument has been previously dismantled in earlier chapters. Adam and Eve gave it away. Believers could not have received it directly from generation to generation because our ancestors did not have it to give.

However, another counterpoint is if the grant of authority in the garden were eternal or permanent, how could Adam and Eve have given it to Satan to begin with? The grant of delegated authority was obviously transferable. Remember also that two opposing parties cannot have the same authority at the same time. If it were a permanent grant of authority, how could Jesus take it back again? Trace the path: Adam and Eve had it, they gave it, Satan had it, and Christ took it! Furthermore, Jesus never gave it back again!

If believers somehow retained the authority of Adam and Eve, the most believers could possibly have is authority and dominion/rule over all the creatures on the earth, nothing eternal and nothing of God's kingdom. All the enemy could overpower was the temporal, not the eternal! The enemy is a created being with limited power. Principalities, also known as authorities, cannot possibly have any authority unless the Lord gave it to them because he has all authority. False authority is not authority at all, it is power veiled as authority. Satan's power will be discussed in the next chapter.

Another Scripture that some say supports believers in continuing authority of Adam and Eve with God is Psalm 115:6, arguing that verse reaffirms the earth belongs to humanity. It says, "The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth he has given to mankind." The totality of this passage is not speaking in the context of authority; in fact the totality of the passage is talking about the supremacy of God. It is also talking about a location as opposed to a grant of authority as was seen in Genesis 1:26-28. The whole passage in context says,

Not to us, LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.² Why do the nations say, "Where is their God?"³ Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him. . . .⁹All

you Israelites, trust in the LORD— he is their help and shield.¹⁰ House of Aaron, trust in the LORD— he is their help and shield.¹¹ You who fear him, trust in the LORD— he is their help and shield.¹² The LORD remembers us and will bless us: He will bless his people Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron,¹³ he will bless those who fear the LORD— small and great alike.¹⁴ May the LORD cause you to flourish, both you and your children.¹⁵ May you be blessed by the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.¹⁶ *The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth he has given to mankind.*¹⁷ It is not the dead who praise the LORD, those who go down to the place of silence;¹⁸ it is we who extol the LORD, both now and forevermore. Praise the LORD. (Ps. 115,1-4, 9-18)

Simply because we have the earth as a dwelling, we still have only that which the Lord has given us, and that is the ability to ask for anything in his name and to have authority to overcome the power of the enemy at his direction or calling.

Similarly, some believer say that Psalm 8:4-6 affirms a continuing grant of authority from the Garden of Eden. Psalm 8 says in pertinent part,

LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens. . . .⁴What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? ⁵ You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor.⁶ *You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet: 7 all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, 8the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.* ⁹LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

The bookends of this passage are the glorification of the majestic name of the Lord! In the middle is the statement that humanity is lower than the angels, but they have rule over the creatures. Of course, believers do possess authority to overcome the power of the enemy, but not to subdue, rule and reign. Those who rely on the statement that all things are placed under the feet of the believer (saying that believers have ongoing authority of Eden) must look in Ephesians, because it says all things are placed under Jesus' feet,

That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰ he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² *And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,* ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. (Eph. 1:19-23)

Some also rely on James 4:7 to show ongoing authority/partnership of the believer with God because the enemy will flee from the believer who resists him, "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). However, the first portion of this is the believers are called to submit to God first. That means totally yielding to the authority of the Lord, not the supremacy of the believer's authority. According to Deuteronomy 10:14, "To the Lord your God *belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it.*"

Argument: Believers Have The Authority Given In Eden

Counterpoint: There Was Never A Renewed Grant Of Authority

Where does the Bible say after the resurrection of Jesus that believers were given authority again over all the earth? It is not there. The first opportunity to reinstitute the grant of authority would have been after the resurrection. Before that time Jesus did not have

authority of his own to give because everything he did was based on the authority of the Father. Also before that time, Jesus had not reclaimed the authority possessed by Satan. After Jesus was given “all authority,” never again is there a grant of authority like Eden.

If believers could again possess the authority to rule and reign the earth reclaimed by Jesus, then we could give it away again just as Adam and Eve did. Jesus has won the final victory. If Jesus gave that level of authority for believers to use or disperse, AND if believers gave it away or were tricked again by Satan, then the recapture of authority would not be complete! Rhetorically and academically speaking of course, would the work of Christ be to do over again if Jesus gave believers the same level of authority as Adam and Eve, and believers gave it away again to Satan? That could be the logical argument if we possessed all the authority of Jesus, or at least possessed the authority of Adam and Eve based upon a renewed grant of authority. Jesus is the final victor! The battle is won, but we are still putting down the last of the resistance to the throne of God. Satan can never again stand in the place of authority because Jesus said, “It is finished!” The totality of authority to rule and reign on the earth is firmly in the control of our Lord or lords and King of kings, our Savior forever, Jesus, the Christ, Anointed of God, and slain before the creation of the world! Satan can never again regain the recaptured authority! It is unavailable to him, but he can wield power to thwart the will of God on earth and steal as many souls as he can. Jesus has all authority! The authority of Jesus is beyond all power of the enemy. Satan will never again possess that which Jesus has taken from him! The defeat was absolute and unconditional.

Here is another question to ponder in the greater scheme of authority: Could it be after Jesus garnered the authority from Satan, that he loves his people too much to put in their hands that which would make them again the target of the enemy? Could that be why he did not put the blanket authority of Eden into the hands of humanity? Authority is the crown, critically important to kingdom rule and reign. The authority of God is protected from theft, because Jesus retains all, but delegating a measure of authority for the believer to overpower the enemy. Jesus also gave keys to Peter, but apparently withheld keys from the other disciples. Jesus gives the

full use of his name and everything is done through his name. It is the authority of Jesus.

Conclusion

There are some Scriptures which appear, upon shallow reading, to give believers a greater level of authority. Some believers may have greater levels of authority such as Peter and others with revelation that possess keys, but it is more likely that most do not. After much study, one thing is sure: our most gracious way to overcome the enemy is based on the authority of Jesus Christ and appealing directly to our King. Believers should ask themselves, how is the world doing with so many believers seeking to be in combat with the enemy relying on their own authority, albeit in Jesus' name? Are believers seeing prayers answered? Sometimes, . . . but that is not what Jesus promised in his word. The fact is many believers are attempting to use authority other than for that which it has been given.

How would the world be different if believers fully understood the gift of asking anything in Jesus' name? Satan is still running amok. Understanding this concept may allow the breakthrough the Church has been seeking to overcome the power of the enemy. Authority amounts to overcoming the power of the enemy, while every other petition asked in Jesus' name will be granted according to the Word of God. Believers do not know what they hold in their hearts in the name of Jesus. The name of Jesus is the access to the unsurpassed universal power and authority. Believers get hung up emphasizing their own authority when the name of Jesus in relationship is more than they need. The magnification is in his name.

Chapter 7

The Tools Of Our Enemy



Authority Versus Power

There is great confusion in the body of believers about the nature of Satan's power and authority. The issue must be categorized into what power and authority does the enemy have over three groups: believers, the lost, and the world. Scripture supports that Satan has no authority over believers! That fact has been long misrepresented. Make no mistake, he does have power and he knows how to wield it to look like authority. Satan does have a measure of control over the world and the people of the world who are lost, those who have not received Jesus as a personal savior. They are firmly planted as citizens in the domain of Satan. This chapter will investigate in Scripture exactly where believers stand against our enemy and exactly what tools he has to work with against the Church of Jesus Christ.

Principality Versus Kingdom

Jesus is King of (all) kings, and Lord of (all) lords, including Satan. Satan is the head over a demonic principality. The term principality generally refers to the government of a small sovereign state with a ruler of lesser rank than a king. Satan is a demonic angel who fell from grace. He was cast out of heaven to earth, and he took one

third of the heavenly host with him. He has an army behind him in the reign over his principality; it is hard to be a leader without anyone to follow.

Just before Jesus went to the cross, he made several comments about Satan, as the prince of this world. He said, “Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the *prince of this world will be driven out*” (John 12:31). Satan will be driven out of this world like he was driven out of heaven. Jesus also said, “I will not say much more to you, for the *prince of this world* is coming. He has no hold over me” (John 14:30). Satan stands condemned even now for Jesus said, “about judgment, because the *prince of this world* now stands condemned” (John 16:11).

Ephesians 6 illustrates the hierarchy of Satan’s principality. It says, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12). New King James Version says, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against *principalities*, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” *Rulers* are chief powers of the principality; *authorities* are those with influence, right and jurisdiction; *powers* are those with might, and *spiritual forces of evil* are the foot soldiers. All of these hierarchical levels are stationed in the high places, the heavenly realms.

In a few Scriptures, Satan’s domain is referred to as a kingdom: “If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand?” (Matt. 12:26). Predominantly, however, Satan is referred to a prince, making his dominion a principality. An interesting question is arises: If he were in fact a king, who would have crowned him King? Perhaps he was like Napoleon, who crowned himself! Where is the authority in that scenario? Jesus called him a prince; there is only one true King! Jesus Christ, King of kings!

No Authority Over Believers

The authority of Satan's principality has no hold over believers. In Ephesians 6, the first thing that Paul says when talking about the armor of God is, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power" (Eph. 6:10). The strength of the Lord overcomes the power of the enemy. But even more importantly there is a huge clue that is often overlooked in this passage, being overshadowed by other parts of the passage that demand more attention. Paul shows that Satan's ploy to struggle with the believer is just a sham based upon lies. Paul wrote, "Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand *against the devil's schemes*" (Eph. 6:11). Another version says, "stand against the wiles of the devil" (KJV). The devil's schemes or wiles include cunning arts, deceit, trickery, or travesty, a miscarriage of justice. Paul was telling believers that everything that the devil wants to pull out of his bag of tricks is a lie! In other words, his lying ploy is to convince believers that he can do something that in actuality he cannot enforce. He cannot force a believer into bondage without his or her consent.

Satan has no access to a believer who has proclaimed Jesus as a savior other than what God allows him to have (primarily in response to ongoing sin). For a believer walking in purity, the Lord will not give Satan permission to attack a believer based on promises of the Word. Satan will do everything that he can to make believers think that he has authority. Satan has no authority in the kingdom of God, nor does he have any authority over those who are in the kingdom of God. Jesus said, "I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. *He has no hold over me*" (John 14:30). Jesus told Pilate, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above" (John 19:11). God acknowledged Satan's ability to attack Job, which was post-Fall, but pre-resurrection, but God set the parameters. After the resurrection, when Jesus reclaimed all authority, there was no possession of authority by the enemy. There is no authority that believers have that Satan can steal. There is no authority of Jesus that he can access. He has no authority.

Some believers may say there is evidence of Satan holding believers in bondage. This is the difference: Satan can and does

exercise *power* over people who believe in Jesus. The truth is people who have accepted the atoning sacrifice of Jesus cannot give Satan authority over them, because they have no authority (to rule and reign) to give him. Believers can only make themselves subject to Satan's power. People, even believers in Jesus can be in bondage, but bondage to Satan is subjugation to his strength and brute power, not his authority.

Hear this well: Any person in Jesus Christ who is in bondage to Satan can be free at any time he or she chooses to recognize Satan has only power, but no authority. With repentance and the desire to come to Jesus, a person can walk away from the power of Satan at any time. If Satan had true spiritual authority, people could NOT get free from him because he would have a legal right to hold them. For example, a person who is legally detained in prison cannot walk out at any time because there is *power and authority* to support the incarceration. However, a person who is illegally detained in prison can walk out any time they appeal to a higher authority to command release. There may be power in the incarceration, but there is *no legal authority*. As soon as a believer in Christ, who is bound by Satan's power, appeals to Jesus' authority Satan has no choice but to turn the person loose. If Satan had true spiritual authority, he could keep people in bondage forever. It is impossible for two opposing forces to hold the same authority. Satan exercises power; he does not hold authority because Jesus has all authority over his kingdom.

Repentance does *not* sever Satan's legal authority as many believe, but rather, repentance puts a person in agreement with Jesus, the true holder of all authority. We have too long given Satan more credit than he deserves. Only Jesus has *all authority*. All means all . . . everything. There is nothing left over. Satan has *no* authority over God's kingdom or anyone in God's kingdom! Jesus does not have a higher authority than Satan. He has all kingdom authority. Jesus trumps Satan's power with a higher power, but more importantly, Jesus trumps Satan's power with all authority.

Believers have said for too long that Satan has authority because that seems to be the only way that we can explain why believers are in bondage. That is a misnomer. Theoretically, current believers can walk away from affliction, addiction, or bondage anytime they

want to be fully in God's kingdom and that does not constitute legal authority! Simply because some people, even believers, remain in bondage, that does not mean it is God's kingdom plan. Sometimes even Christians find it easier to live with illness, alcoholism, or financial hardship, rather than praying to the king, pressing in, or taking authority. Sometimes believers get comfortable in brokenness. Jesus said he would give believers anything we ask in his name. Either scripture is true or it is not . . . and it is!

This discussion is not coming from the perspective of what is seen on a daily basis on the earth. This discussion is coming from the perspective of the possibilities and truths of God's kingdom. We see people, even Christians, get devastating diseases and die. But we also see people press in for the promises of God and get healed. If it can happen one percent of the time, it can happen one hundred percent of the time. God is no respecter of persons, giving good gifts to some, while withholding gifts from others. If the bondage of Satan can be broken for one, it can be broken for all. If Satan lacks authority to hold one, he lacks authority to hold all. If one person can find freedom, every person can find freedom. Simply because most believers have not seen the evidence of this discussion, that does not mean that it is God's plan. If a person has a choice, or even grace by appealing to Jesus, to walk away from the dark kingdom, then there is no authority in that kingdom. If a person can appeal to Jesus to heal a devastating disease, and the person is healed by Jesus, (and therefore delivered from Satan's grasp) then the authority CANNOT rest with Satan, because the person came to freedom without Satan's acquiescence. Authority is the lawful and delegated right to rule and reign. A true ruler, one with genuine authority, can prevent his subjects from leaving. Satan cannot prevent any living person from leaving his domain if they choose to get up and go to the Lord, just like the prodigal son.

Finger Of God

The strong man of Matthew 12 controlled by power, not by authority. When Jesus cast out demons, the Pharisees said he was

casting them out by Beelzebul, the lord of the flies or the prince of demons. But Jesus said, “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt. 12:28). In other words, when Satan is overcome, it is by the dominion of the King, Jesus. Likewise, the rule and reign of God over Satan enforced the expulsion of demons from a person. The authority was with God!

Jesus’ next statement in the strongman passage of Matthew 12 is fundamental to understand power versus authority. He said, “Or again, how can *anyone* enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house” (Matt. 12:29). With authority anyone can enter against a stronger man and plunder his house. It does not say Jesus himself enters and ties the strong man. It says *anyone* can enter. When a believer enters in the authority of the dominion of God, anyone can plunder hell. It is by the Spirit of God that the strong man is overcome. Overpowering the enemy is one area where believers have continuing authority since the New Testament era. If a believer ties up a strongman to plunder his house, what does he have? Justice. Justice is taking back what Satan stole in the first place.

A parallel passage is found in Luke 11 addresses a kingdom divided against itself. Jesus said,

“Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall.¹⁸ If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebul.¹⁹ Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges.²⁰ *But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.*

²¹ “When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe.²² *But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up his plunder.*” (Luke 11:17-22)

The Luke passage illustrates more insight into the ease of Jesus to cast out a demon: “But if I drive out demons *by the finger of God*, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Luke 11:20). It is not a stretch for God, in all his authority, to cast out demons. The arm of God is a symbol of His power, his strength exercised on behalf of his children.⁹ The hand of God was most often used to represent his activities of service.¹⁰ How much more does the finger of God illustrate that by the smallest effort God can overcome the power of the enemy?¹¹ As one would use a finger to flick away a gnat, so too will the finger of God cast out demons. It takes less effort than the might of his arm or the service of his hand.

Luke 11:22 is also important because Jesus relates that there is one stronger than the strong one! In Christ Jesus we are stronger and can overpower the enemy. We can take away his armor, his tools and weapons, and then we divide his plunder.

Satan’s Ploy Against Believers: Threaten And Release

In the types of Scripture, believers can see and understand how our enemy can bluff his way to appear to have more than he does. We see a prime example of this after Peter and John were instruments of God’s healing in Acts 3-4. Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer in Acts 3:1-10. They encountered a man who was lame from birth. He begged every day from those going into the temple courts, and he asked them for money. Peter and John looked straight at him, and said, “Look at us!” It was if Peter wanted to talk to *the man*, not the spirits of infirmity or poverty that had the man bound. Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk” (Acts 3:6). They helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong.

Notice what Peter *did not say*, “I take authority and bind spirits of infirmity and poverty in Jesus’ name.” They appealed directly to the King and relied on the authority of his name. The man went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. All the people recognized him as the same man who used to

sit begging at the temple gate and they were filled with wonder and amazement. Peter used the opportunity of the spectacle to proclaim the name of Jesus. He said, “*By faith in the name of Jesus*, this man whom you see and know was made strong. *It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him* that has completely healed him, as you can all see” (Acts 3:16).

After all that, then the enemy began to raise an ugly head. The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day (Acts 4:1-3). The rulers did their lying deeds in the cover of darkness.

The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. The Pharisees, rulers, the elders and the teachers of the Law, and even the priest and the temple guard from the day before, were representatives of the hierarchy of the kingdom of darkness. They had Peter and John brought before them and began to ask them: “By what power or what name did you do this?” (Acts 4:7). The enemy was upset people believed in the salvation of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, identified them: “Rulers and elders of the people!” Make no mistake; they represented the enemy’s camp. Taking the apostles into custody the night before was backlash because something good happened for the kingdom of God. The enemy wanted to shut down the tide of kingdom manifestation.

The leaders questioned them, but they answered with boldness. Peter said, “It is by the *name of Jesus Christ* of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed” (Acts 4:10). Then he said, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there *is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12). Peter had appealed to the power of the name of Jesus, and the faith in the name.

Next the leaders and rulers were rendered speechless: “But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, *there was nothing they could say*” (Acts 4:14). In the

underlying story, because Peter called on the name of one with all authority, Jesus Christ, the other side could not even make a defense. We can almost see the wheels in their heads turning as they ordered the apostles to withdraw from the Sanhedrin so they could confer. The rulers and others wanted to do something to the apostles, but they were powerless because the apostles had invoked the name of Jesus. They counseled for a while to see what they could do because they had power but no authority. They were desperate to stop the spread of the Gospel message, so they did all they could do under those circumstances. They said, “We must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in *this name*” (Acts 4:17). The rulers could not even say Jesus’ name; this is another clue that they are from the enemy’s camp.

They called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, “Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! ²⁰ As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.’ *After further threats they let them go*” (Acts 4:19-20). This is significant! The rulers, representing the enemy’s camp, brought threats against them and let them go! They had no authority; they only had power. When Peter and John appealed to the authority of the name of Jesus and the faith in the name of Jesus, the enemy was shut down. Peter told them to judge, knowing the enemy was well aware who has authority and who has only power. A threat is merely menacing speech! If they could have done more, they would have. Face it, the rulers wanted to do more to the apostles, but the authority of the name of Jesus stopped them in their tracks.

The story does not end there. After Peter departed, he met with the believers and prayed, “Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰ Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus” (Acts 4:29-30). They appealed to Jesus to consider the threats of the rulers and find for the disciples, allowing them to do the work of the kingdom with holy boldness! They asked God to do more signs and wonders! After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was moved by the Holy Spirit, “After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God boldly” (Acts 4:31). They appealed to the King, and he answered on their behalf in a mighty and powerful way!

Revelation 12 also illustrates that Satan cannot accuse the brothers and sisters. He may make lying accusations against them, but, “They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony” (Rev. 11:12).

The enemy may threaten and release, but believers are not to threaten him. The enemy has no authority, but even so the only thing that believers need ever speak or address to the enemy is found in Jude. It says, “But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, ‘*The Lord rebuke you!*’”¹⁰ Yet these *people slander whatever they do not understand, and the very things they do understand by instinct*—as irrational animals do—*will destroy them*” (Jude 9-10). Slandering the enemy and picking a fight has the potential to destroy. Jude says that even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” Michael is the most powerful archangel, the strongest angel in God’s kingdom of which we are aware in Scripture. If he would not slander Satan, then neither should believers. Only with the name of the Lord do we put off our enemy, but with no slandering words. We have a strategy as found in Scripture; believers must follow the directions.

Power Over The Lost

Those who have not chosen to be in the kingdom of God are in the enemy’s camp by default. They have not aligned themselves with the one who has all authority, Jesus. Most believers have John 3:16 memorized, but may be unaware of what follows. The passage says,

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not

perish but have eternal life.¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but *whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.* (John 3:16-18)

The lost of the world are in the enemy's camp, whether they know it or not. This passage is why decent people who rely on their good deeds are in Satan's domain. Unbelievers are lost in his clutches and they may be oblivious to that fact. Paul writes, "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.⁴ *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers*, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4). The fact that the "god of this age has blinded unbelievers" illustrates that unbelievers are subject to his control as long as they stay in his kingdom.

Ephesians also places the lost under the dominion of the evil one. It says, "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of *the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient*" (Eph. 2:1-2). Disobedient, *apeitheia* in Greek, means disbelief, and is from the root word that means unable to be persuaded or resistant to authority. Satan is at work in those who are rebellious to God. The ruler of the kingdom of the air is the ruler over the unbelieving lost world, not over believers.

The Pharisees were of the enemy's camp and they were under his authority. Jesus put them firmly in the family of the enemy, "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). The Pharisees followed the plan and bidding of the enemy. The Pharisees could not hear the truth of Jesus: "Why is my language not clear to you? *Because you are unable to hear what I say . . .* If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me?"⁴⁷ Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. *The reason you do not hear is that you do*

not belong to God” (John 8:43, 46b-47). Those firmly in the control of the father of lies cannot hear the truth. Indeed, they are unable to hear the truth according to this passage. Jesus was speaking truth to them! The important point is that Jesus was proclaiming truth to them. When Jesus calls, it is up to those of the world to listen and respond. The Pharisees did not hear the truth of Jesus.

Control Over The World

The whole world is under the control of Satan because the Word says so, “We know that we are children of God, and that *the whole world is under the control of the evil one*” (1 John 5:19). But even though that is true, that does not impact believers. The preceding verse in context says,

We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the One who was born of God keeps them safe, and *the evil one cannot harm them*.¹⁹ *We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one*.²⁰ We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. (1 John 5:18-20)

The evil one cannot harm the believer who does not continue to sin! (v.18). The Word clearly says the evil one cannot harm them! However, it is true that a believer can allow harm by continuing to sin, but otherwise Satan has no right to harm a believer. He can exercise power over a believer, but the believer has authority to overcome him if the believer knows his rights and privileges as a citizen of God’s kingdom. Why do believers think that our enemy has more extensive rights and powers over the body of Christ than he actually does? Because he is a liar!

Believers are in the world but we are not of the world (John 17:15-16). The world is under the control of Satan. Believers are

not of the world, meaning that the kingdom of the world is not the kingdom citizenship of the believer, even though believers function and live in the world. Believers are merely sojourners in the world, just passing through. Jesus said, “I have given them your word and the world has hated them, *for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.*”¹⁵ My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one” (John 17:14-15).

In Jesus’ final prayer in the garden, he said, “*I am not praying for the world,* but for those you have given me, for they are yours” (John 17:9). Jesus did not pray for the world, which is an illustration that the world is the dominion of the enemy. Even so, the heart of Jesus still cries out for the world, “Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me.”²⁶ I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them” (John 17:25-26).

End Of Days

Daniel saw a prophetic vision of Jesus being awarded all authority and power. Daniel said he saw, “One like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.”¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (Dan. 7:13-14).

Eventually, even the power that our enemy has will be taken away and given to the holy ones. Daniel shows a great prophetic vision of what will come. He said, “But the court will sit, and his (Satan’s) power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever.”²⁷ Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him” (Dan. 7:26-28). The court that will sit is the court of God, the Ancient of Days. Satan’s power will

be stripped completely and it will be handed over to Jesus and it will be an eternal kingdom.

In Revelation, those serving the Beast will attack the Lamb, but they will not prevail. The enemy cannot prevail over the Lord, “They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers” (Rev. 17:14). In the final battle the followers will be with Jesus, but the outcome is predetermined from the beginning of time. In the end, Jesus will hand the kingdom back to the Father.

Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after *he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.*²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death.²⁷ For he “has put everything under his feet.” Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ.²⁸ When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all. (1 Cor. 15:24-28)

This passage is full of insight regarding kingdom authority. First, Jesus will reign until every enemy is under his feet. That means that all enemies are subjugated to the rule and reign of Christ. The enemy exercises control over the lost and the world. That still makes him an enemy of Jesus to be subdued. Second, the verb tense is interesting. In verse 25 it says Jesus must reign until he has put everything under his feet (a future event), and in verse 27, it says for Jesus has put everything under his feet (a past event). Both verb tenses are accurate. Satan is defeated, but he is still running amok. When believers get full revelation of his (lack of) rights and authorities, we will not let him get by with what he has been able to accomplish by his deceptions. He has no authority over the kingdom of God. The power he does have to rule over the kingdom of darkness will be stripped from him. What ever he has will be given to God’s holy people.

Part Two:
**Experiencing The Kingdom
Of God Here And Now**



Chapter 8

God's Kingdom: The Grasp Of Understanding



The kingdom of God is his rule and reign in heaven and on the earth. When God is exercising dominion, there is no disease, sickness, death, poverty, jealousy, etc. Those troubles and woes are manifestations of the principality of darkness. Satan has been defeated, but he still is the god of this age with power. He continues to fiercely battle against the will of God being seen in all situations at all times. When God reigns there are no limitations, hindrances, nor thwarting of the all-encompassing plan of God. With the manifest presence of God, his blessings flow. We now begin to turn away from the discussion of authority, and instead turn our attention to investigate the full manifestation of God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. We begin to think about kingdom living.

Kingdom Come: Miracles

The ultimate plan is for God's dominion to fully encompass the earth at all times, in all places. However, at least at the present time, we do not experience full kingdom manifestation. Because we live in a fallen world, we see temporary or intermittent manifestations of the dominion of God in the natural realm. When those temporary or intermittent manifestations of the kingdom occur, miracles happen.

They are miracles because they are outside of typical occurrences in the natural realm. Nature behaves in a certain way without the direct intervention of God. C.S. Lewis defined a “miracle” as an “interference with nature by a supernatural power.”¹²

Most people believe in miracles. They also believe God can break into human reality, but most people do not understand how or why miracles happen. Some can believe the miracle accounts of the Bible, but struggle with the present-day reality of such stories. Miracles occur on about every page of the Gospels and Acts, as well as many other parts of Scripture. There are a few generalizations that can be made about all miracle accounts.

First, every time there is a miraculous event on the pages of Scripture or in real life, the spiritual realm has overtaken the natural realm. Something happened outside of the expected, normal course of life. Miracles can be brought forth by the kingdom of God, but miracles may also be brought forth by demonic realm as well. In fact, in Exodus during the first few plagues the dark power of Satan through the magicians brought forth miraculous events just as God did through Moses and Aaron. Exodus 7 shows, “Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts” (Exod. 7:11). Eventually, the magicians of Pharaoh could not match the miracles of God. Matthew also illustrates that all miraculous signs are spiritual, but they are not all from God: “Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in *your name perform many miracles?*’”²³ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Matt. 7:22-23). Not every miracle is from God. Every miracle is from the supernatural realm, albeit by God’s power or by Satan’s power.

Second, when a miracle of God takes place, the perfect will of God is manifested on earth because the power and dominion of God has supplanted the natural realm and the kingdom of darkness. Jesus came to preach and teach on the kingdom of God. It was the main purpose for which he was sent. Jesus showed the potential of grace (favor and multiplication) when he said, “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent” (Luke 4:43). Another mission of Jesus, to get

justice from the enemy, is stated in 1 John 3:8, “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.” As he ministered, preached, and taught about the kingdom of God, he performed many signs and wonders. Even Nicodemus came to Jesus in the night because he knew that the signs meant Jesus was from God, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him” (John 3:2). Jesus came proclaiming God’s kingdom, showing people a God of power.

I have a friend who often states during evangelistic jailhouse meetings, “We will show you *a real God*.” In other words, “We will teach and show you a God who is a God of power, strength, and who can deliver you from your bondage.” A huge portion of the modern day Church does not believe in signs, wonders, and miracles, and therefore, does not seek and does not see God’s kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. When believers take the kingdom manifestation out of Christianity, they may only see the justice of overcoming the enemy. Worse yet when believers take the kingdom manifestation out of Christianity and the authority to overcome Satan’s kingdom, they may only see powerless, toothless, and ineffective faith. They only see the destruction of Satan’s power. There is so much more.

The Lord’s Prayer

The Lord Jesus taught the disciples to pray, “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). Jesus was not telling believers to pray a small part of the will of God be done, but rather the full, perfect will of God be brought forth on earth. The coming of the kingdom on earth is God’s rule overtaking the power of darkness and allowing people to live in wholeness, perfect peace, and provision. Sometimes the kingdom is manifested in the body: the kingdom of heaven is within. Sometimes the kingdom is manifested externally: when things happen in the natural world and the world, with all its natural laws, makes way for the rule and reign of God’s kingdom realm. Times may be coming where our very lives depend on prayer for the kingdom of God to manifest.

At times God has sovereignly moved in the natural realm and caused the kingdom purposes to be loosed on earth. In other instances, humanity sought the kingdom of God to be released. We understand God wants his kingdom to be fully manifested on the earth as it is in heaven so his will and purposes can be accomplished. The only way we will see the manifest presence of God's will on earth as it is in heaven is to become a living sacrifice to him. Romans 12:1-2 states,

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, *to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God*—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will *be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*"

Offering ourselves as a perfect sacrifice is a true act of worship. Only when we offer ourselves to God and refuse to be conformed to the world's mold will we be able to prove God's will on earth.

God's Kingdom Is A Government

God's kingdom is a government, which means order, authority, and benefits of being under the government of God. The government of God rests with Jesus, who is the King with all authority, and he bears the responsibility of God's government. Isaiah 9 says of Jesus, "And the government will be on his shoulders . . . ⁷Of the greatness of his *government and peace there will be no end*" (Isa. 9:6a, 7a). Another version states, "of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end" (Isa. 9:7, KJV). The government of God is the kingdom of God! The kingdom of God just keeps expanding and growing. He enlarges his domain and rule throughout all unending eternity.

There are benefits of kingdom citizenship on earth even now. Citizenship in general bestows rights, privileges, and protections of that kingdom or government. Paul had benefits of Roman citizenship, which he flaunted every time he found himself in a tight spot. He waved his citizenship like a banner. On more than one occasion, when he was being questioned or flogged, when his interrogators heard he was a Roman citizen, their attitudes abruptly changed. On one occasion in Acts 22, as the soldiers had Paul stretched out to flog him, when Paul said to the centurion, “Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn’t even been found guilty?” (Acts 22:25). Paul knew full well the implication of his rights as a Roman citizen. Those in charge did not have a legal right to bind, chain, or flog a citizen who had not been found guilty of a crime. We see the same things as citizens of God’s kingdom. The enemy cannot legally chastise a follower of Jesus until there has been a judgment granting him the right under Jesus’ rule and reign. The enemy will never be given that right against a believer who is walking in faith and purity with God. Of course, Satan will lie about it and do whatever he can get away with, but it will be without legal justification.

When Paul started asserting his rights as a citizen, suddenly things changed. When the centurion heard Paul’s claim of citizenship, he immediately went to the commander to report Paul’s claim (Acts 22:26). The commander investigated Paul’s citizenship and then the commander mentioned he had to pay for his citizenship. Paul confirmed that he was a citizen by birth (Acts 22:28). Abruptly everything changed, “Those who were about to interrogate him *withdrew immediately*. The commander himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put Paul, a Roman citizen, in chains” (Acts 22:29). This is the reaction of our enemy, when we proclaim we are citizens of God’s kingdom.

We are citizens of the kingdom of God even now. The opposing forces cannot put citizens of the king’s dominion in chains without a guilty verdict. They will try of course, but they cannot bind those who know who they are citizens of God’s kingdom. Those who are in God’s kingdom cannot be found guilty of a crime for which the enemy can hold them. Ephesians says, “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus

Christ, ²¹who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so they will be like his glorious body” (Eph. 3:20-21). For Paul, everything stopped when he appealed to the authority of Rome. Everything the enemy will throw against believers will stop when pure citizens of God’s kingdom appeal to the authority of Jesus.

Citizenship Of The Prodigal Son

Even those in the Father’s kingdom may voluntarily bind themselves to another kingdom. We see this is true of the prodigal son. As we study his citizenship and the citizenship of the one to which he was joined, it is evident that there is a back-story here about voluntarily joining with the enemy’s camp. Jesus began the story of the lost son:

“There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.¹³ “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵*So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs.* ¹⁶He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. (Luke 15:11-16)

The beloved son voluntarily left his father’s house. He decided to walk away from the rights and privileges of sonship. He was in a foreign county where he was impoverished and starving. He hired himself out, or put himself in bondage, to a citizen of a different kingdom. His job was to feed pigs, the most unclean thing an Israelite could do. He subjugated himself to a new master, a citizen of a different kingdom. However, the foreign master, a type of Satan,

did not have authority to hold the son when he decided to get up and go home. Jesus said,

When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father. (Luke 15:17-20)

He just came to his senses and he got up and went to his father. He was a citizen of his father’s country even though he voluntarily left his home for a while. He willingly bound himself to the power of another kingdom. This is a picture of what happens when believers bind themselves to another kingdom, Satan and his demons. A believer cannot be bound by Satan’s power unless they agree or acquiesce to it in some way. A citizen of God’s kingdom can come to his senses and just get up and go back to the Father! There was no lawful authority for the master of the other kingdom to hold the prodigal son *when he decided* it was time to go home!

His master had no hold on him to prevent him from going home. In fact, the master from the other kingdom is not even mentioned in the story at all, except to say that the son put himself in bondage to that citizen. The son made the contract with the master to bind himself. The master did not bind him even from the beginning. Likewise the master could not keep him from going back to his father when he was ready and made the decision. Also notice in the story that even the servants in the father’s kingdom were in abundance, they had food to spare. That is how it is in God’s kingdom.

Citizenship comes with access to certain entitlements non-citizens do not have. As with the prodigal son, citizenship came with automatic admittance back into the country. He was not denied when he came to his right mind and wanted to go home. Believers have rights to enforce citizenship in God’s kingdom. Believers can also appeal to a higher power, just like the widow with the unjust judge

as we saw in an earlier chapter. When believers appeal to the higher power, there is an appeal to the throne room of heaven for justice and mercy.

It is the Father's pleasure to give his children the kingdom of God. Luke 12:32 says, "Do not be afraid little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom." The Father *wants* his flock to share his kingdom. It is his greatest desire, and that is why he sent the Christ to redeem what was lost. God said, "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). We have not understood the kingdom, authority, citizenship, or his ever-increasing government. It is time for that to change.

Jesus said, "There is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought into the open" (Luke 8:17). Jesus reveals the Father: "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Matt. 11:27). My constant prayer is, "O Lord, please choose me to reveal the Father and to reveal the kingdom." He knows intimately every person that is and has been and will ever be. He knows everything. People want to hide from him, but he knows everything. There is nothing hidden that will not be revealed.

Kingdom Matter

Kingdom of God is vast beyond our understanding. The Lord is vast. If we travel billions of light years to the end of the universe, he is still greater. What we can fathom of God is a mere speck or crumb compared to the infinity of his vastness. On the other end of the spectrum, however, God is also the Lord of the smallest atom and particle of matter.

What does matter, physical mass, have to do with God's kingdom? Miracles are a matter of matter, or perhaps deliverance of matter from natural limitations. Generally speaking, *matter* is the substance that makes up physical objects. Matter is anything that has mass and takes up space. In the natural realm, matter behaves

in certain ways. There are certain natural laws, such as the law of gravity, that specify that when an object is dropped from the roof it will fall to the ground. However in the kingdom realm, matter does not behave as it would with natural limitations.

Matter is for the benefit of the kingdom of God; the kingdom is not for the benefit of matter. Matter is for the benefit of God's kingdom because everything that is eternal is of the spiritual realm. God is spirit. What does he need from the world? The world was created long after the kingdom of God was in place, and even the earth was without form and void in the beginning. God does not need matter to be God. He was God before matter existed, and he will be God after matter ceases to exist, if it does.

Humans are spirit beings clothed in natural body. The part of an individual that will last into eternity is not the natural body, but the spirit. Ecclesiastes says it well, "As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labor, which he may carry away in his hand" (Eccles. 5:15, AKJV). Job says, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised" (Job 1:21). Human beings interact with the natural world through the physical body. A person comes into the world with nothing and will depart world with nothing.

Our enemy is also a spirit. He was able to interact with the natural realm by possessing the body of a serpent. As he was cast down, God made a fire come out of him and consume him, reducing him to ashes (Ezek. 28:18). He had no form in which to engage the natural world without possessing a body. On earth, spirits seek matter to interact with the natural world. That is why demonic spirits are constantly looking for a natural body to inhabit. The book of Jude says, "But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'" (Jude 9). Satan wanted Moses' body. Moses was one of great authority in the heavenly realm.

When miracles occur, the natural laws of matter yield to the spiritual realm – either the kingdom of God or the other principality.

In natural laws, there are certain things we understand will naturally happen in a given set of circumstances. In the natural realm, for example, when a heavy object is dropped into a body of water it sinks as the water is displaced by the heavier object. We can drop coins in the lake and they will sink one hundred percent of the time, short of miraculous intervention. That is what happens in the laws of nature. Given a certain set of circumstances, matter will always respond in the same way in the natural realm. A heavy object can only float if a natural law yields to the supernatural.

In the kingdom realm, however, matter may be displaced, changed, created, or moved. Jesus walked through a wall, but yet the disciples could feel the scars in his hands. Jesus hid himself from the eyes of the crowd when they wanted to throw him off the brow of the hill. Matter was created at a word from the Lord. Weak limbs were restored and eyes appeared. A servant's ear was reattached instantaneously. Food appeared, storms ceased, and people were moved from here to there in an instant. Chains fell off and locked doors opened. All these miracles are evidence of the supernatural taking dominion over the natural realm. There are many more examples on the pages of Scripture.

A prime example of the natural realm of matter yielding to the supernatural realm occurred in 2 Kings 6. A borrowed axe head dropped into the water and was lost. A son of the prophets called for Elisha in great distress. Elisha cut a stick and threw it where the piece had fallen, and made the iron float. "'Lift it out,' he said. Then the man reached out his hand and took it" (2 Kings 6:7). Matthew Henry's *Complete Commentary to the Bible* described what was happening:

(Elisha) was a man of great power; he could make iron to swim, *contrary to its nature* (2 Kings 6:6), *for the God of nature is not tied up to its laws*. He did not throw the helve (handle) after the hatchet, but cut down a new stick, and cast it into the river. We need not double the miracle by supposing that the stick sunk to fetch up the iron, it was enough that it was a signal of the divine summons to the iron to rise.¹³

God created the laws of nature, but those laws do not bind him. In God's dominion, matter (substance/earth/flesh/mass) is subject to the power and authority of the kingdom of God. The rule and reign of God is greater than the power of the laws of nature. That is why in the kingdom realm iron floats.

The laws of nature also yielded when Jesus walked on water. Jesus had just spent time with the Father in prayer, and then he simply went to the disciples even though they were a great distance away from shore (Matt. 14:23-24). The Scripture says, "Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, *walking on the lake*" (Matt. 14:25). It is impossible in the natural realm for a flesh and blood man (which Jesus was) not to displace water, without some outside power. Under natural circumstances, humans have some buoyancy but not enough to be completely on top of the water unless the kingdom realm supplanted the natural realm. Lest we think this is just for Jesus, in his divine capacity as the Son of God, we also see Peter step into the kingdom realm. Peter got out of the boat and "*walked on the water and came toward Jesus*" (Matt. 14:29).

We know the rest of the story . . . when Peter lost sight of Jesus for a moment he came into agreement with fear and began to sink. Peter lost sight of the kingdom realm and looked at the natural realm of wind and waves. We learn a very important lesson about the hindrance or loss of the kingdom reality in the words Jesus uttered next. As Jesus reached out his hand and caught Peter, he said, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matt. 14:31). We may experience temporary kingdom manifestation, but it may be lost by virtue of fear, doubt, or lack of faith. We will address this more in Chapter 18.

Peter gets bad press for lack of faith and sinking in the sea. It could be argued the other disciples were not even in the kingdom realm to begin with. Only Peter *asked* to come to Jesus. Only Peter could *envision the possibility* that a human being could operate in the kingdom realm. Only Peter had the revelation by the Father and only Peter was granted the future privilege of having the keys to the kingdom of Heaven.

Multiplication: The Potential Of The Pit

Another very important aspect of the kingdom is that of multiplication. The kingdom is not even on the level of simple multiplication, but exponential growth. The growth of the kingdom is to the *n*th power. It goes on and on, for infinity.

The kingdom of God is like a bowl of cherries. They are visible, but yet there are parts that are hidden. The life of the cherry is in the pit. The pit is not visible when observing the fruit. In fact, one can see a single cherry and not realize the potential. Only after the pit is exposed can it come to fullness and fruitfulness. The pit does not look like much to the untrained eye. It looks like a hard little ball, but treated properly and given the proper environment, it can yield more and more and more. The yield is exponential times infinity. One pit yields one tree, which yields numerous pits each year. That tree continues to produce pits upon pits, year after year. Each one of those pits can produce a tree that can produce an exceedingly large and exponential number of life-giving pits. In a very short time, the end of the pits cannot be seen or experienced. The kingdom of God is the same way. What we have seen of the kingdom of God is the exposure of but one pit from a bowl of cherries. There is so much more. In fact we do not have the capacity to understand the vastness of God's kingdom. The Lord will teach those who are willing and will expand our capacity to understand. In one season the pit from one tree is exponential, but in two seasons, three seasons . . . the increase will never cease. Each pit holds the power of exponential multiplication. We hold one pit! Provide a place for the pit to grow. Thus is the vastness of God's kingdom.

Chapter 9

Opposite Value



Believers must think about the kingdom of God with an opposite understanding. It is like reading Scripture as if believers are looking at an X-ray. Seekers see what is not visible to the naked eye, what is hidden. Kingdom seekers look beneath the surface, so to speak. An X-ray machine seems to do the impossible: it captures images through clothing, flesh, and sinew. When searching for God's kingdom, believers look for things that are there all along, but things that are not readily apparent because they are hidden from view. For example, if the Scripture talks about light, believers must think about what that means for the darkness. The kingdom is revealed to those who diligently seek. Being a detective and looking at every clue with an inquisitive mind may allow believers to think and explore the kingdom of God in new ways.

In Mark 12, a widow brought in an offering of two mites. Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were given and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts (Mark 12:41). As Jesus watched, a poor widow came and put in two very small coins, worth only a few cents (Mark 12:42). We might even use the example of two pennies. Some would say two pennies are hardly worth the effort to pick up off the ground. Years ago, a piece of bubble gum could be purchased for a penny or two, but now even that is not so. What can a person buy for one penny these days? The value is so negligible it is hard to even equate it with a physical object having the same

value. Her gift was least, but in the kingdom it was considered the greatest because of the value to her.

Jesus called his disciples together to give them a kingdom object lesson. He said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow *has put more into the treasury than all the others*. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, *put in everything—all she had to live on*” (Mark 12:43-44). Proportionally, she gave more because she had less. In fact, she gave more than all the others.

Her meager amount was of greater worth to the kingdom of God because of the cost to her. Kingdom giving is based on a value system. The value to the kingdom is the measure of sacrifice it costs the giver. The kingdom is not measured in numeric rank or importance but in worth, value to the donor. How much was it worth to the widow to give two mites? Jesus said it was worth everything; it was all she had. What was the value to her to put in such a small amount? It was a great sacrifice to her. It was all she had to live on. Think about that. We could compare that with a last meal, or the last bit of insulin for a dependent diabetic. Her gift equaled the totality of what was sustaining her life. That makes it different. She gave her very life by giving her last two mites to the kingdom.

What was the value to the wealthy to put in large offerings? Not much. The value in giving a large amount was not as great and did not mean as much to them because they were wealthy. The value to the kingdom of God is a function of the *cost to the person*. In the kingdom of God, it is not a numeric computation based on the most as it is in the natural, but the overall worth to the person.

I want to share about Sadie Bernard, a lady who lived in my neighborhood when I was growing up. Sadie will never be found in the pages of history, because in the larger scheme of the world she was completely unknown. Sadie was a widow who did not have much of worldly value and lived a very meager lifestyle. Sadie would occasionally babysit with me when I was a small child. She always brought her Bible and she loved to talk about Jesus more than anything. Looking back, I wish I had appreciated the wisdom I could have gleaned from her at that time. I know she prayed for me as she sat in the chair with her Bible on her lap.

When I married my husband, Sadie gave us a memorable gift. Her wedding gift was a lovely five-pound bag of white sugar that she bought with her money. She went to the local market and then walked to my house, where she handed me the unwrapped bag of sugar at the back door. It was a gift from her heart. We received many fine gifts in honor of our wedding, but years later I remember that gift. It was undoubtedly the gift that cost the least of any gift we received; yet it cost *her* more than any other gift. Tears came to my eyes as I realized even in that event the Lord was teaching about value in his kingdom. I am a slow learner, he taught me way back then, but I just gained understanding of the lesson years later.

Sometimes believers do not recognize the precious value the Lord places on such gifts. There have been times when I have seen coins left in the offering plate, as if they were not worthy to pick up. It broke my heart that an offering precious to God was distained by those who saw only in the natural. The change may have been the offering of greatest value to God's kingdom, because it probably cost the most to put in. One day I looked over and observed a homeless young man, who had struggled with drug addiction in the past, put a few coins in the offering plate. My heart melted as I realized that he had probably put in everything of worldly value he had to his name. I was filled with thanksgiving for his offering to the Lord. The next night he put in a piece of candy. A piece of candy will not pay the light bill, but it pleased the heart of God because of the sacrifice. The Lord can take care of the light bill. Less than a week later, I talked to the young man and learned that he had a job and a place to live. God blessed what looked like a meager offering to the world, but was precious to the kingdom. What a perfect example of opposite value!

What is the thing of greatest value believers can offer to the Lord? Each person must decide what costs them the most. If I give Jesus all I am, I have nothing else to give. Each person must decide what costs him or her value I can offer Jesus? That which will cost me everything! I have several friends who pastor churches in foreign countries. I have several friends who travel in ministry for the greatest part of the year, sacrificing time with family and the comfort of being at home. What is offered is of great worth – great value to the kingdom. They have suffered for what they have given

to God. They have given up time with family, lifestyle, and comfort. They have paid a dear price to serve the Lord. Others may have not suffered at all or have even been put at ease. Some have secured their comforts first. Many may not have put much value into the kingdom of God. What has been the cost? It is a hard question to ask. Each person must personally answer that question.

As David said, “I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing” (2 Sam. 24:24). When the owner of the threshing floor found out David wanted to make an offering to the Lord, he offered to give the threshing floor and the oxen for the sacrifice to David without cost. David refused to take the gift and insisted on paying the full price, because he wanted the blessing of giving God something of value. It seemed to please God because, “Then the Lord answered (David’s) prayer . . .” (2 Sam. 24:25). Will believers offer God that which cost them nothing? Will believers give up friends for the Lord? Yes! That is value! Will believers give up family for the Lord? Yes! That is value! Will believers give up family heirlooms for the Lord? Yes! That is value! Are believers willing to suffer for the kingdom of God? Yes! That is value!

The natural realm is fueled on the loving costs of those who will give opposite or sacrificial value into the kingdom realm. The widow loved God enough to give everything she had, which did not look like much in the natural world. In the kingdom it was a precious treasure and the most valuable gift of all. It is not about dollar for dollar in God’s kingdom. It is about value. The kingdom of God does not run on numeric growth because God owns everything. He does not need our money or wealth; he wants our heart. When believers die, our spirits will depart from our earthly bodies and will take no substance. We have nothing to offer God but that which is precious to us.

Little Is Much With God!

In Judges 6, Gideon was asked to go into battle against the Midianites. He was to cull the army from 32,000 fighting men to 300 men. Gideon’s army of 300 was more powerful than an army

of 32,000 because that way the Lord was sure to receive the glory. Gideon was the least of the least among his kinsmen. Gideon was from the smallest tribe, and the smallest family in that tribe. He was insignificant, but God used him. When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon the first time, he said, “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior” (Judg. 6:12). What did the angel of the Lord see that the rest of the world did not see? The value of the least was more than the value of the greatest. The kingdom value of 300 was greater than the human strength of 32,000.

In the New Testament, the disciples argued about who was greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Believers must be like little children to enter the kingdom of God. The Lord called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. Jesus said: “Truly I tell you, *unless you change* and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me” (Matt. 18:3-5). The opposite value in God’s kingdom is to be the smallest and the least are the greatest. Becoming valuable to God’s kingdom means that diminishment must come to some believers.

A little given wholeheartedly is greater than much given without effort or heart. The value of humble Mary was greater than the worth of 10,000 princesses. Peter, Andrew, James, John and other unlearned men gave great value to the kingdom of God, but the Pharisees would not give wholeheartedly. The Pharisees had natural ability and stellar training in matters of religion, but they had no heart for God. All the unlearned men in the kingdom of God were of greater worth than the ones who had studied a lifetime to learn the things of God. They gave more because they gave all they had. Paul was not worth much to the kingdom of God as long as he relied on his natural abilities and human knowledge. Only after he was stripped of his credentials as a Pharisee could he be of great value in God’s plan.

I love a song by Nic and Rachel Billman, titled “Beautiful to You.”¹⁴ There is a lyric speaking from the Lord’s point of view that says, “It is not what you bring, it’s how you bring it; it is your heart that I want.” That line says it all. Little is much in the kingdom

when it is brought with a whole heart. Wholeheartedness brings multiplication in the kingdom. Multiplication is evident with the widow with the oil and flour (1 Kings 17:12), or the boy with the fish and loaves (John 6:9). They brought all they had. They did not hold anything back for themselves. The widow was literally giving her last meal in preparation for starvation. In the natural, she gave the only thing that stood between her and death.

In another scenario, Ananias and Sapphira sold land and brought in a portion of the price and presented it with guile as if it were the entire price (Acts 5). If they chose to do so, they could have withheld it all. Even Peter said, “Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal?” (Acts 5:4). It was not about the money they brought or did not bring to the Lord. Their hearts were black, filled by Satan. They had no faith for the Lord to provide for their needs, and they were filled with greed. They lied to God. They held on to what they could not keep, and gave up something of far greater value that they could not hold. It is not that God is against wealth. There were plenty of very wealthy people in the Bible. It is not the provision of God that is the problem; it is the value a person places on it in his or her heart.

On the other hand, consider the rich young ruler. He came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?” (Matt. 19:16). Jesus replied with a list of commandments that the young man should follow. “‘All these I have kept,’ the young man said. ‘What do I still lack?’” (Matt. 19:20). Jesus answered, “‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’ When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth” (Matt. 19:21-22).

He looked great on the outside, doing everything that appeared to serve God, but he brought no value. He brought no part of himself to offer the King. He had something on the throne of his life, and it was not the Lord Jesus. After the rich young ruler went away sad, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven.²⁴ Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God” (Matt. 19:23-24). It is impracticable for a rich

man to enter the kingdom realm because his value system is tied to things of the world, not to the things of eternity. The kingdom calls for opposite understanding.

In the same passage after Jesus finished talking to the rich young ruler, Peter chimed in and said, “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?” (Matt. 19:28). Jesus answered with the blessing for those who give all to follow him. He said,

“Truly I tell you, *at the renewal of all things*, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹ And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰ But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first” (Matt. 19:28-30).

It comes down to opposite value for the kingdom. The more someone has, the more will be required to give value to the kingdom. “For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more” (Luke 12:48, NKJV). Is it also stated in another version as, “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked” (Luke 12:48, NIV). When believers have been entrusted by God to use his resources for the good of his kingdom, so much more will be demanded. Giving out of wealth is easy, but giving sacrificially out of wealth is very difficult, especially when someone has been given much. It is very hard to get to the level of sacrificial giving when one has a lot in the bank.

Moses realized the principle of kingdom value. The wealth and comfort of this world were useless in God’s kingdom. Hebrews 11 says,

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. ²⁵ He

chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ *He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.* (Heb. 11:24-26)

Moses gave up a position as prince on the stage of the world powers for the sake of disgrace to serve God. For him, disgrace in Christ was greater gain than all the riches of Pharaoh in Egypt. The author of Hebrews said Moses regarded dishonor for the sake of Christ as of greater value than all worldly gain. It cost Moses something to follow the Lord. Moses was looking ahead to his reward. He was not serving for earthly gain; he was serving for kingdom value! Moses chose a hard life on earth rather than a soft life of sin. He left the palace to wander in the wilderness. He was served, but gave that up to become a servant. He had position, but he became lowly. He valued the suffering for God more than the bounty of Egypt's abundance. He was seeing the things of the kingdom of God.

Worldly understanding has appeared to overshadow understanding of God's kingdom in the Church. Some in the body of Christ are consumed with the idea of bigger, better, and more, but they may be missing the understanding of God's kingdom value. Seek the kingdom of God, and the numbers will come, but seek numbers, and the world will come. That is why, in God's kingdom, believers must be the least, but in the world, people seek to be the greatest. Different kingdoms are at stake – the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. It is easiest for the least to offer the greatest value in God's kingdom. It is difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of God because they have to give more to offer value to the kingdom. In the dark kingdom of the world's system, bigger is always better. That is apparent in the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness.

The Lord does not need our money. He values our hearts, more than he needs our wealth. My husband and I walk on a lane that passes by beautiful pastureland with Black Angus cattle. One day we were walking and praying about provision. I prayed, "Our Father owns cattle on a thousand hills," and my husband immediately responded

with, “and he owns the hills, too.” We have prayed many times since that day, “Lord, you own the hills, too.” We often recount that to remind ourselves that the Lord is not impoverished. What believers bring to him will be multiplied back if believers bring it with the right attitude. It is not what is brought; it is how it is brought and what it costs. Bring the offering to the Lord with joy, thanksgiving, faith, love, devotion, and he will take care of the rest.

Chapter 10

Life! Instructions In Healing



Healing: God's Kingdom Come

Healing is the manifestation of the Lord's kingdom. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught believers to pray for the kingdom of God to come and his will to be done on earth *as it is in heaven*. It is inconsistent to suggest God's will on earth includes disease, illness, affliction, infirmity of any kind or even death, because there is no disease or death in heaven. The enemy wants to bind the people of God on a personal level. Physical illness, disease, infirmity, and death are manifestations of the dominion of the enemy. Any time our bodies are not perfect as they would be in the kingdom of God, it is borne of demonic oppression. There is no illness or death in God's kingdom. There is no lack of perfection in heaven.

Scriptures teach healing is the coming of God's kingdom on earth because it defeats the work of the enemy. Every time someone is healed, the dominion of God defeats the power of the enemy in a person's life. Jesus frequently connected healing, deliverance, and raising the dead to kingdom manifestation. Jesus sent disciples out and said, "As you go, proclaim this message: 'The *kingdom of heaven has come near.*'⁸ *Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons.* Freely you have received; freely give" (Matt. 10:7-8). Jesus also said, "And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name . . . they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:17-18). Jesus went throughout the

region of Galilee, “teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the *good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people*” (Matt. 4:23). He also, “went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, *proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness*” (Matt. 9:35). Jesus healed the sick and cast out demons, and the people wanted him to stay but he said, “I must proclaim the *good news of the kingdom of God* to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent” (Luke 4:43). Jesus traveled about from one town or village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God (Luke 8:1-2). Jesus sent his disciples out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick (Luke 9:2). He also said, “*Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you’*” (Luke 10:9). The crowds learned where Jesus was and followed him. Then the Word says, “He welcomed them and spoke to them about *the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing*” (Luke 9:11). Healing as evidence of manifestation of God’s kingdom is a common theme in the Gospels. In fact, it was taught more by Jesus than salvation! The dominion of God was seen in healing and liberating people from physical bondage and affliction. Healing equaled the coming of the kingdom of God!

Effects Of The Fall

Some believers may suggest that not every illness is from the Satan based on a passage in John 9. The disciples asked Jesus the origin of lifelong blindness of man: his sins or his parent’s sins (John 9:2). Jesus replied in a curious way, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, ‘but this happened *so that the works of God might be displayed in him.*⁴ As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.⁵ While I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (John 9:3-4). Some read this to say that God put blindness on this man for his future glory, and that this blindness was not the result of Satan’s activities on the planet.

The statement that the man was born blind is a type of the status of humanity at birth. We come into the world blind because to the status of the fallen world. Jesus was the light of the world. He came to allow this man, who was in the dark, to experience the light. The man was healed and allowed to “see” for the first time. The man was cleansed by washing in the pool of Siloam, which is representative of salvation of the believer. After he was cleansed, he came home seeing. The man said, “So I went and washed, and then I could see” (John 9:11).

Later the Pharisees questioned the man and his parents intently on how he came to have sight. They said the man was steeped in sin from birth: “To this they replied, ‘You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!’” And they threw him out” (John 9:34). The Pharisees stumbled into the truth: the man *was* steeped in sin at birth. Every person is steeped in sin at birth. The word *steeped* means wholly or completely. John 3:18 says, “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but *whoever does not believe stands condemned already* because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” People are born steeped in sin just as the Pharisees said.

A newborn infant, at the moment of birth, has no sin to call his own. The completeness of humanity’s sinful condition is the result of being born into the fallen world and the result of Adam and Eve’s loosing sin into the world. The truth of this Scripture is that the man was blind as a result of living in a fallen world, where Satan’s objective is to keep men blind. This man was not blind because God wanted him to be blind. Specifically, Satan’s goal is the blindness of humanity: “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, *so that they cannot see the light* of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor. 4:4). In the state of perfection of Eden, there was no affliction of any kind. In the fallen world, people are bound in physical bondage and spiritual blindness. In this case the physical blindness was indicative of spiritual blindness and bondage from birth.

The will of God was that this man should be liberated and set free from the affliction of blindness, not that God put it on him. The totality of Scripture supports the truth that Jesus came to destroy

the works of the devil (1 John 3:8), not to participate with them. If the works of God were displayed in his healing, then the works of God would not be displayed in his continued blindness. The deeper reading of this passage would say that *God was not glorified by his continued blindness*. How true that is! God is not glorified by our continued labor under the affliction and bondage of Satan while living in a fallen world.

The specific origin of an illness or disease may not be known, but if the kingdom of God is manifested in overcoming illness or disease, then illness and disease did not originate in God's kingdom. There are only two choices for its origin, God's kingdom or Satan's kingdom. Illness or disease may come from personal sin, a curse, an open door from an ancestor or simply by living in a fallen world where Satan is the god of this age. In Scripture there were people like Miriam, the sister of Moses, and Gehazi, Elisha's servant, who had leprosy brought about by disobedience and rebellion. Ananias and Sapphira died in rebellion for lying to the Holy Spirit. But those conditions were not because God wanted to "zap" someone because he did not like their hair color or for some other random reason. Those people were in physical bondage to disease and death because they aligned themselves to Satan and came under the reign of his kingdom of darkness. The overall teaching of Scripture supports the notion that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, and to set the captives free. He did not come to put people in bondage to disease or blindness. John 3:17 says, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

There may be times ahead when there will be no medical help for those in the Lord's kingdom. Believers may be cut off from using goods and services because they do not have a mark or a chip or other identifier. Believers need to know how to appeal to the King for healing. Knowledge and discernment are huge factors in kingdom healing. When believers have revelation in their minds of how and why the kingdom of God manifests through healing, it is easier for them to invite the manifestation of the kingdom of God into their bodies.

Paul teaches, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Rom. 12:2). Being conformed to the pattern of the world is accepting a state of mind of illness and death. Acceptance of illness and death are rampant, even among the body of Christ. However, being transformed by the renewing in one’s mind leads believers not to accept the destruction of Satan in the physical body. Testing God’s will means believers appeal to the throne of grace and watch as the Lord gives the victory. To overcome the destructive power of the enemy, believers must discern that personal illness is not from God’s kingdom, but from the kingdom of darkness.

The kingdom of God has suffered attack from the enemy. The book of Matthew says, “From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, and violent people have been raiding it” (Matt. 11:12). If believers want to see the manifestation of God’s kingdom, believers have to kick the enemy out and not agree with his destructive tendencies. Jesus drove out demonic spirits with a word and healed all the sick (Matt. 8:16). If Jesus drove out demons with a word, then believers are able to do the same, for even greater things than he has done, believers will do in his name (John 12:14).

The Body Is God’s Temple

The believer’s physical body is the temple of God. Why would the Lord afflict his own temple? Why would he bring disrepute to his kingdom by attacking himself or the place for his name to dwell? The Word says, “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand” (Matt. 12:25). In Scripture, the enemies of God’s people frequently attacked the temple of God. If God were to attack the body that he has chosen to set up as an earthly residence, is that division within his members? It is like the moneychangers who made the temple a den of thieves (Matt. 21:12), or Nebuchadnezzar who sacked the temple, stole the articles, and left the temple in

disarray (2 Chron. 36:7). The gates were burned and broken down. The temple was built for the name of the Lord (1 Kings 3:2), and is a place for his name (1 Kings 5:3). The Lord's temple may be a building or a body. The temple is the place where God resides on earth, a place where his name can dwell. Either way, the enemy will try to attack the temple of God.

When Jesus found people defiling the temple, he took action. He drove out the defilers. Believers should drive out the defilers as well. The Pharisees asked Jesus by what authority he cleared the temple and Jesus said,

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." ²⁰ They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" ²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken. (John 2:19-22)

The body of Jesus was the temple of God on earth. The Pharisees could not destroy Jesus' body. He laid it down, but it was not taken from him. In God's kingdom, neither should our enemy should be able to destroy our bodies. The temple is the house of God! When Solomon prayed to dedicate the temple in 1 Kings 8, he prayed for God to vindicate the people who came to the temple to seek the Lord. He asked the Lord to judge between any wrongdoer and God's people. The Lord will vindicate the innocent. He prayed,

When anyone wrongs their neighbor and is required to take an oath and they come and swear the oath before your altar in this temple, ³² then hear from heaven and act. *Judge between your servants, condemning the guilty* by bringing down on their heads what they have done, and *vindicating the innocent* by treating them in accordance with their innocence. (1 Kings 8:31-32)

Our enemy seeks to steal, kill and destroy, as well as injure, maim, debilitate, and crush. When that happens in God's temple, that is our bodies, believers can appeal to the King for judgment! We ask the Lord to vindicate the innocent and condemn the guilty. The body is not a place where illness can live when a person has kingdom revelation and is innocent before the Lord. Personal purity is critical. Where Jesus is fully enthroned, there will be no demonic victory over the human body. Jesus is enthroned on the praises of his people.

The problem is that people enthrone other things in the body that allow Satan to rule and reign in the physical members. 1 Corinthians 6 says, "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). The throne of darkness shall be overturned when people appeal to Jesus, the King. The Word says to ask anything in his name and it will be done for you.

Here is a word of encouragement: Believers must remember simply because something has not been seen, that does not mean it is beyond God! In the coming days, there will be unprecedented incidents of people being healed and the dead being raised. In those days, it will be common, even though now it is an anomaly, at least in First World countries. Kingdom people will invite the manifestation of the kingdom in the physical body, seeking to overthrow all injury, illnesses, diseases, and death. If believers can overcome death by seeking God's kingdom first, they will see and experience victory over all other afflictions in the body as well.

Death

When believers talk about healing, most can believe for healing of the physical body for minor or short-term conditions. At least believers can muster up a good prayer for healing of simple situations. Believers seem to struggle to have faith for healing in serious illnesses, diseases, or injuries. However, when it comes to death, most believers cannot even fathom that the dead can be raised. The

belief that the kingdom of God could manifest and that the Lord could raise the dead in the current age is challenging for most. The last enemy to be defeated is death (1 Cor. 15:26). If Jesus and others could see victory over death in the days of the Bible, the dominion of God over the enemy death can be seen in the current age.

Everything other than death, including all sicknesses, diseases, infirmities, and injuries seem to be a lesser degree, and thus easier to overcome. Jesus did not give believers authority to overcome the power of the enemy, excluding death. The Word of God does not say to appeal to the King for minor problems only. If death can be overcome in Jesus' name, then the body of Christ can overcome any illness. After all, when a person is still alive, he or she can at least exert some desperation for God's kingdom and self-will to seek healing. There is no will to live nor desperation for Jesus after death, the person is beyond the capacity to intervene for him or herself.

Believers seeking God's kingdom should go for the gusto! The bottom line is that if we can have faith for death to be defeated, then seeing a person with life-long paralysis, devastating brain damage, or blindness will seem easy in the kingdom realm. Why do believers want to stop at a sore throat when we can appeal to the King for a life to be restored! All death is of the enemy, because in God's kingdom there is no death. Anything short of life, even on earth, is of the enemy. Adam and Eve would have lived continually in the garden, even though they were human, if sin had not entered the world and the curse of death had not been released on earth.

We tend to think of death as an insurmountable defeat for the kingdom of God. However, if believers can dismantle the idea that death cannot be defeated, it should build faith for kingdom manifestation in all other areas of illnesses, disease, accident, injury and attacks on the body. If believers see the dead raised, the faith for everything else will explode.

Because of the forgoing reasons, this chapter will approach healing from the position of seeing the dead raised in Jesus' name. While in prayer one day I heard the Lord say, "If they can have faith for the dead being raised, then nothing will be too hard for them."

Death Is Defeated

The most powerful example of the defeat of death is when Jesus rose from the dead on resurrection morning (Matt. 28:5-8; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:5, 6). Jesus laid down his life, and he had authority to take it up again (John 10:18). What does this say about the authority of the believer? Death could not hold Jesus; the grave could not keep him! The women went to the tomb, and an angel met them to give a message. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him” (Mark 16:6).

Although the grave did not hold the dead body of Jesus, the tomb was technically not empty. It held the messenger who proclaimed the life of Jesus and by implication the resurrection of the dead. The angel wanted the women to come and see the place where he had been laid (Matt. 28:6). And he asked, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶He is not here; he has risen!” (Luke 24:5-6). The women had to see the empty grave for themselves. They went into the place of the dead, but it was empty of the one who was in God the Father. Jesus was not dead, but alive! Scripture reveals in several passages, “He is Risen!” He went up! He had been lifted up to the Father as a sacrifice in the crucifixion, taken down and put in the hole in the earth. He was lifted high in offering to God; he was lifted high in life! He is Exalted! He is enthroned! Death could not claim a victory over Jesus!

Not only was Jesus the victor over death. Many holy people who had previously died were raised to life the day Jesus died on the cross. Those resurrections are rarely discussed. It was incredible! Many saints rose from the dead and came out of their graves at the resurrection of Jesus. When Jesus died, saints were released from the bonds of death. Death was defeated when Jesus became the sacrificial lamb. It is just liked the kingdom of God to do such an opposite thing: Death brought the life. Losing life brought freedom from death. Matthew reports,

And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.⁵¹ *At that moment* the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split ⁵² and the tombs broke open. *The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.* ⁵³ They came out of the tombs *after* Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people. (Matt. 27:50-53)

At the moment of Jesus' death, the temple curtain was torn. The verb was passive, indicating action by an outside actor – God. There was no more separation between God and his people. Believers can enter directly into the throne room of God, to the throne of grace, to receive victory over the enemy!

The earth quaked and tombs opened and life was restored to many holy people. But then an interesting thing happened. Resurrection came to the holy ones when Jesus died, but they did not come out of the tombs until after Jesus' resurrection. Jesus was the first fruit of the resurrection. Death had been defeated! Why did they not come out? Where were they? What were they doing? They were holy, according to Scripture, pure people who had died and been raised to life. After Jesus rose in the resurrection, then they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

Since the resurrection of Jesus, believers are encouraged to enter the throne room, "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Heb. 4:16). Mercy and help waits in the throne room. The last enemy to be defeated is death. Death was defeated on the day Jesus died. The dead in Christ rose, and there was victory over death. Scripture says the dead in Christ shall rise first, pointing to the Second Coming of Jesus, but that was true in this incident as well. When Jesus gave up his spirit, their spirits were restored. His death brought their lives, even before Jesus was resurrected.

No Stronger Enemy

If death is the last enemy to be defeated and death has been defeated, then there is no greater enemy that can prevail against the kingdom of God. God is for us, and if he is for us, who can be against us? No one or nothing! Paul wrote, “If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns?” (Rom. 8:31-34). No one condemns. The Father did not spare his own Son that he might die so that all could live. The evidence of that came when the holy dead were released from death when Jesus died. Believers are not condemned!

Jesus is our savior and intercessor before the Father. Christ is at the right hand of the Father constantly interceding and nothing will separate believers from the love of Christ. Paul said, “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:37-39). Death, demons, or powers cannot separate us from the love of Christ! God is love! (1 John 4:8).

Appeal to the King: Death Will Not Prevail

The Bible has many occasions where the dead were restored to life. Current believers will learn the strategies of God in every instance for overcoming death in Scripture. We will survey all of those situations to see what we may learn from them, but there are some general lessons that may be gleaned from them all.

First, in every situation where Jesus raised someone to life, he simply commanded the deceased person to get up and they did. Second, we also see that disciples and prophets were used as instruments of God to see people raised from the dead, so this was not just

for Jesus. Third, in every case where a prophet or disciple interceded for life to be restored he appealed to God, and did not address a demonic spirit.

There was not one occasion where a disciple or prophet stood in the *authority of the believer to overcome the power of the enemy* death. They simply appealed to the King. God was full of grace, and restored the life back to the body. God always retained authority over life as we saw with Adam and Eve, in the days of Noah, and with the temptations of Christ. The enemy may *steal life* (John 10:10), but God has rightful authority to give it back. Stealing means unlawful taking. The enemy may unlawfully steal, but believers may appeal to God for lawful restoration.

The first incidence of healing was when Elijah was used to raise the son of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:17-22). This was the same widow who was preparing a last meal for herself and her son before they died in the drought and famine. She honored the prophet and first prepared him bread. She and her entire household were fed through the entire drought. Some time later, the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing. Elijah said, "Give me your son," He took the boy from her arms, carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his bed. Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and *cried out to the LORD*, "*LORD my God, let this boy's life return to him!*" The LORD heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived. Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth." The woman had been fed by an endless supply of oil and flour that had not run dry during a severe famine, but after death was defeated by the power of God, she said, "Now I know that you are a man of God." Elijah appealed to the Lord; he did not battle death on his own authority. The widow knew he was from God by the miracle. She saw God's kingdom come on earth and she believed.

Elisha raised the son of the Shunammite woman from the dead (2 Kings 4:32-35). The boy became sick and died. She went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, then shut the door and went out. Gehazi, the servant, went ahead and laid Elisha's staff on the

boy's face, but there was no sound or response. So Gehazi went back to meet Elisha and told him, "The boy has not awakened." When Elisha reached the house, there was the boy lying dead on his couch. "He went in, shut the door on the two of them *and prayed to the Lord*" (2 Kings 4:33). Then he got on the bed and lay on the boy, mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands. As he stretched himself out on him, the boy's body grew warm. Elisha turned away and walked back and forth in the room and then got on the bed and stretched out on him once more. The boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes. The boy was delivered from death as the prophet appealed to God on his behalf. It also appears that it took some time to see this miracle come to pass.

A man was also raised from the dead when his body touched Elisha's bones (2 Kings 13:20, 21). Elisha died and was buried. Moabite raiders entered the country every spring. Once while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders; so they threw the man's body into Elisha's tomb. When the dead body touched Elisha's bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet. Scripture is full of examples of physical objects that carry the anointing of God. Elisha had an anointing of God for seeing the dead raised during his lifetime.

There are also examples of the dead being raised in the New Testament. Jesus raised the son of the widow of Nain from the dead (Luke 7:11-15). Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. As Jesus approached the town gate, the body of the only son of a widowed mother was being carried out. And a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, *his heart went out to her* and he said, "Don't cry." Jesus was full of compassion for her, so he went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. I wonder what the man said as he began to talk. All the people were filled with awe and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "*God has come to help his people.*" This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country. The kingdom of God had come on earth! He stepped in to restore the son on his own

initiative because the Lord saw the mother with compassion. Jesus simply spoke to young man to get up!

Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead. The girl was sick and her father came to appeal to Jesus to come to his home to pray for her. Someone came from the house of Jairus, who was the synagogue leader and said it was too late:

“Your daughter is dead,” he said. “Don’t bother the teacher anymore.” Jesus said to Jairus, “Don’t be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed.” When he arrived at the house of Jairus, Jesus did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child’s father and mother.⁵² Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. “Stop wailing,” Jesus said. “She is not dead but asleep.”⁵³ They laughed at him, knowing she was dead.⁵⁴ But he took her by the hand and said, “My child, get up!”⁵⁵ Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat.⁵⁶ Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened. (Luke 8:41, 42, 49-56)

Jesus excluded the scoffers, the unbelievers who laughed at him. He took in only his inner circle and the parents of the child. Jesus simply said, “Get up!” and she did. Jesus said she would be healed, *sozo* in Greek, meaning she was made whole or all together. After Jesus took her by the hand and told her to get up, “Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up” (Luke 8:55). In the sleep of death, her spirit had separated from her body. In making her whole, the spirit of the girl returned. As a spiritual question: why did the spirit depart her body in the first place? That is purely a kingdom question and not an inquiry about the physiology of illness and death. God retained authority over life.

Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-44). Lazarus was sick and he died. Jesus delayed in going so the disciples could learn from the situation. Jesus called Lazarus to come forth from the grave and he did. Jesus also said Lazarus had fallen asleep, but meant he

was dead in the natural. There was no question that he was dead, as we understand death. “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up” (John 11:11). There is a difference between natural sleep and supernatural sleep, “Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant *natural sleep*” (John 11:13). What is the significance of supernatural sleep? Even Martha realized the sleep of death was not an insurmountable problem for Jesus when she said, “But I know that *even now God will give you whatever you ask*” (John 11:22). Supernatural sleep is not final death! Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26). Jesus used the word die in two contexts: natural death in the first instance, spiritual death in the second instance.

There is an important point from Lazarus’ story that is often overlooked. Some in the crowd said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?” (John 11:37). They make the point, which is well taken, that healing, raising from the dead, or opening blind eyes, are all the same to Jesus. Also, as was discussed earlier in this chapter when talking about the blind man who was steeped in sin, if Jesus could remove his spiritual blindness (dead in sin from birth), he could have kept this man from dying. Jesus came to keep people from dying eternally. Either way, it is the authority of God’s kingdom overcoming the power of the enemy. Believers tend to quantify miracles and works of God. We can believe for some things, but have difficulty getting past unbelief for other things. It is all the same to God! A rash is the same thing to Jesus as picking up a man’s ear from the ground and supernaturally sticking it back on his head.

Not only did Jesus act as the instrument for manifestation of raising people from the dead, Peter and Paul did as well. Dorcas was a woman of service to others. She became sick and died (Acts 9:36-41). Peter went to where her body was in an upstairs room. Peter sent everyone out of the room; *then he got down on his knees and prayed*. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, “Tabitha, get up.” She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. Peter did not rail against the enemy who was doing this to her. He got down in a

position of humility before the throne of grace and appealed to the Lord on her behalf.

Eutychus was raised from the dead with Paul acting as the instrument of God (Acts 20:9, 10). The young man fell asleep in an upstairs window. He fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead. Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “He’s alive!” The young man went home alive and was greatly comforted. There is a lesson to be learned here about believers falling into spiritual slumber, literally falling away to the point of death, and having to be restored by a brother. We must not get sleepy!

Not one of the people who were used as instruments of God’s work in overcoming the enemy talked about the believer’s authority to overcome death. They all appealed directly to God. Perhaps believers could stand in the authority of the believer to overcome the power of the enemy, but that is not evidenced in scripture. They took the matter before the Lord so he could bring a victory in his name. Even as Jesus commanded them to get up, he addressed the person, not the demonic spirit.

Victory In Jesus!

Christ was resurrected; therefore the body of Christ will be resurrected. Resurrection of others in Scripture teaches about Christ and the power to overcome death. Many of those who were raised died premature deaths, representing lives stolen by the enemy. In Scripture, there is no report of a failed attempt to raise the dead. Death did not defeat Jesus, the prophets, or his disciples when they appealed to the King!

Any time a person dies, they suffer the effects of living in a sinful world. We see death at work in our everyday lives because of the Fall of Adam and Eve. My great-grandmother was ninety-six years old when she passed away. She had been in the living room reading the newspaper. She walked to the kitchen for lunch, but she never made it. She died on the way. Most believers would think that was a blessed way to live and die: no infirmity, mental faculties sharp,

and living a productive life until she literally drew her last breath. Yes and no! Yes, because she lived a productive life and did not suffer on earth in her physical body, so that was a blessing of God! No, because any death on earth is not God's original plan. Living a long and productive life is a blessing of God, but even so it was not God's original plan in his kingdom realm. Death is in the realm of the kingdom of darkness. There was no death mentioned until Genesis 2:17, when the Adam and Eve were vowed to be cursed if they ate. Even the fathers in Genesis lived hundreds of years after the Fall. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve lived in the kingdom realm where there was no death.

God limited the years of a man in the post Fall world. "And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years⁵ And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth (Gen. 6:3,5). That was not the original plan of God in Eden. As long as we live in a fallen world, death will most likely be a factor for us. The intended understanding of this topic is that death is not God's original kingdom plan. Death has already been defeated. Manifestation of God's kingdom thwarted death even on the pages of Scripture. We can seek the manifestation of God's rule and reign to overcome the last enemy, especially when he steals, kills, or destroys!

The majority of those raised in Scripture were children or youths. Lazarus and Dorcas appeared to have reached adulthood. If we can get the revelation that death is not God's plan, and we can seek God to overcome the power of the enemy in death, other avenues of overcoming him will be easy – so to speak. Listen to the words of Jesus to Mary and Martha, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" (John 11:40). Listen to the words of Jesus to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed" (Luke 8:50). Listen to the words of Jesus to the widow of Nain, "Don't cry" (Luke 7:13). In other words, Jesus may have been saying to be filled with joy! The prayer is that believers get the revelation that the resurrection power of God is available even now. Ephesians 1 says,

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order *that you may know the* hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people,¹⁹ and *his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength*²⁰ *he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,*²¹ *far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.*²² And God placed *all things under his feet* and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. (Eph. 1:18-23)

Exceedingly great power is available for those who believe and to appeal to the King to thwart the plan of the enemy. All things are under his feet. The human body is a worldly need. We interact with the world through our human bodies. After the Fall, our bodies decay slowly over time through aging until life cannot be sustained and death occurs. The enemy, death, attacks the body until there is no resistance left, and the body, the earthly shell, cannot be supported any longer, and the body dies. The spirit does not die; the spirit lives on throughout eternity in heaven or eternal damnation. Even aging is a function of living in a fallen world. Believers are encouraged seek kingdom manifestations in ways never considered before by seeking kingdom life and seeking kingdom health.

We approached healing through the avenue of seeking the Lord to overcome death. If we can seek God for that, we can surely seek him to overcome cancer, deafness, diabetes, injury or major illness. Death, the last enemy, has been defeated! Therefore, we know the other enemies have been defeated as well. We serve a powerful God! We have victory in Jesus!

Chapter 11

Extravagant Provision



The Lord is God of unlimited resources. His kingdom is without end; therefore his treasuries are without end. Everything in Scripture supports the idea that God is a loving heavenly Father who desires to lavish on his obedient children good gifts and extravagant provision. Everyone can believe that when believers arrive in heaven, abundant provision, even superabundance will be available. There is no need that is not met in the presence of God. In heaven there is no lack of any kind, no need, and no want.

Sufficiency is an adequate amount, enough to get by on. *Abundance* is a massive quantity, more than enough. *Superabundance* is excessively colossal abundance, an exceeding surplus. *Superabundance* describes the kingdom of God. It is God's will that believers have the provision of heaven here and now on earth. Part of realizing superabundance on earth is remembering we live in an opposite kingdom. Jesus taught in the Lord's Prayer that God's kingdom and God's will would be brought forth on earth as it is in heaven. Why then do Christians have such a hard time understanding God's blessing and provision are for now? What loving parent, when a child asks for a gift or something to eat, would not do what he or she could to see that the needs are met? Scripture shows God is a more loving parent than his followers could ever hope to be. How much more will he give good gifts to those who ask?

Everything I Have Is Yours

In the parable of the prodigal son, the older brother was lost in the shuffle of joy when his prodigal brother came home (Luke 15:11-32). He was faithful and always served the father, but he received bad press because he was sullen at the celebration his brother received for coming back to the father. The father, a type of God, says, “My son, you are always with me, and *everything I have is yours*” (Luke 15:31).

The estate was divided between the two sons, “The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ *So he divided his property between them*” (Luke 15:12). When the younger prodigal son demanded his inheritance, the father divided his estate between both sons. The father gave the older son half of his estate, but he continued to labor like a servant in the field: “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing” (Luke 15:25). He chose not to live in the provision and blessing the father had already bestowed upon him. He fussed over the slaughter of one calf for his brother, when the father had already bestowed on him everything the father had. He said, “Look! *All these years I’ve been slaving for you* and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!” (Luke 15:29-30). The young man had it all! He longed for the gift of a young goat, in a poverty mindset, when he had abundant provision at his fingertips. He simply chose to ignore the fact that the father had already bestowed all gifts upon him. He never asked his father for anything. He could not enjoy the celebration on the occasion of his brother’s return because of his anger over lack and jealousy that someone else was receiving from the father.

This should speak to believers about our understanding of kingdom resources. How many believers choose to live in poverty when we have abundance available for the asking and seeking? Everything our Father has is ours! Why are we ever in lack? Why do we ever feel the pinch of mounting bills, or no food in the

refrigerator? Our Father is an extravagant God. Honestly, we do him a disservice when we are content with lack. The Father is not a pauper that he cannot take care of the needs of his children.

God's Math

Esther, the bride of the King Xerxes, came before the king when she had not been summoned. She could have lost her life for the presumption of coming uninvited, but instead the king received her. When he saw Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out the golden scepter in his hand. The king asked her, "What is your request? Even up to half of the kingdom, it will be given to you" (Esther. 5:3b). The king later repeated, "Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted" (Esther. 7:2b). The king loved his bride and he was exceedingly generous with her.

Our King loves his bride too! He will give the bride up to half of his kingdom. What is half of an immeasurable kingdom – an immeasurable amount! It is God's math, he can give each one half, and there is still an immeasurable amount. Believers need to understand we receive gifts in keeping with who the King is, not in keeping with who the recipient is. Jesus said, "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13).

How can God give up to half of the kingdom blessing and still have an incalculable amount? God's kingdom is a kingdom of multiplication. What people give into God's kingdom is multiplied back. Humanity is made in the image of God. Can we then say and deduce that when God gives, his gift is multiplied back to him? God's kingdom is perpetually increasing. The increase of God's kingdom shall be without end! His government is continually expanding throughout all eternity. The more we give, the more he gives to us. Could it be that the more he gives, the more he has? Isaiah says:

For 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. ⁷*Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end*, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. *The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.* (Isa. 9:6-7)

It is often said, “You cannot out-give God!” Can God out-give himself? Or does it mean the more he gives, the more he has? “There will be *no end to the increase of His government* or of peace” (Isa. 9:7, NASB). The increase of his kingdom just keeps perpetuating. When God gives to his children, is it measured back to him? How God’s kingdom continues to forever expand is a mystery that has not yet been revealed. We do not know how, but God’s dominion continues to grow and grow and grow!

Give to Receive

In God’s kingdom, receiving is often a direct result of giving. Jesus said, “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Luke 6:38). In 1 Kings 17:7-24, Elijah was fed by a destitute, starving woman. The Gentile woman was chosen by God to be the vessel of Elijah’s salvation from starvation, but her participation was necessary! What she gave was multiplied back to her. Elijah was fed by kingdom provision from a poor widow woman who was about to die from lack. God could have fed Elijah without the involvement of the widow. In fact, God had already fed Elijah by the ravens before that time: “You will drink from the brook, and *I have instructed the ravens* to supply you with food there” (1 Kings 17:4). God did not need the widow to feed him. God could have taken care of Elijah’s

needs in some other way. However, hear this: *the widow's blessing* came from giving away what she had so God could give her more.

God can use anyone whom he chooses, and it is not usually the most likely person. The widow was not a wealthy patroness of note. She was not even an Israelite. She was a destitute pagan who was preparing to die. God told Elijah to go find her and she would feed him, "Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. *I have instructed a widow* there to supply you with food" (1 Kings 17:9). When Elijah asked her for a little water and bread, "As surely as the LORD your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal *for myself and my son*, that we may eat it—and die" (1 Kings 17:12). The woman had already heard from God! He had already instructed her what to do. The choice was up to her whether to be obedient or not. The word of the Lord came to Elijah and he told her:

"Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But *first* make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and *then* make something for yourself and your son. ¹⁴ For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD sends rain on the land.'" (1 Kings 17:13-14)

Elijah addressed her fear first. Fear is from the kingdom of darkness and often hinders believers from following the direction of God. She had faith to believe the voice of God and the word of the prophet.

After obeying the Lord and acting with a generous heart toward a stranger, not only did she have sufficiency, she had abundance. Amazing! The Scripture says, "She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for *the woman and her family*. For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the Lord spoken to Elijah" (1 Kings 17:15-16). Not only were the widow and her

son fed, but her entire household was fed as well. The Lord loves a generous heart. To those who give sacrificially, he overflows with abundance! She was willing to share her last meal with a stranger, but instead the kingdom realm manifested and she *and her family* were fed in a drought for an estimated two years with provision of oil and flour that was not used up! Generosity and obedience move the heart of God.

Jesus Looked to Heaven

Probably the most notable provision of the kingdom of God was the miraculous feeding of the 5,000 men. We often fail to notice just before this miracle that Jesus, “Welcomed them and *spoke to them about the kingdom of God*, and healed those who needed healing” (Luke 9:11). Then the disciples, who apparently did not understand the kingdom message that Jesus had just preached, asked Jesus to send the people away so they could be fed. I love this story because the Lord Jesus told the disciples, “*You* give them something to eat” (Matt. 14:16). I wonder if he were thinking something like, “I have just taught you about the kingdom of God, now you seek the kingdom manifestation and feed them. *You* can ask for yourselves for the kingdom to manifested here and now!”

Their thinking was still limited to the natural. They could only envision handling the situation of feeding 5,000 hungry men by natural means. The disciples were worried about breaking the bank in the natural by attempting to feed so many, even if they had that much money available. Then everyone would have received only a morsel: “Philip answered him, ‘It would take more than half a year’s wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!’” (John 6:7). Jesus was saying the disciples had the opportunity to ask for kingdom provision and feed the people from the Father’s storehouse.

Kingdom provision usually seems to take something that is offered to God and multiply it. Jesus used what a lad offered: two small fish and five loaves of bread. He took what was offered and he looked up to heaven. He gave thanks, and gave it to the disciples

to distribute. He was seeking the kingdom manifestation from the Father, who held all kingdom authority at that point. He merely asked God by holding the offering up to him to bless it with abundance. It was an awesome opportunity for the people to experience the manifestation of God's reign in their midst. The superabundance of God was seen: everyone was satisfied and ate until full with a huge surplus left over.

Wouldn't it have been wonderful to know exactly what Jesus taught them about the kingdom of God before he demonstrated it with such power? In the kingdom of God there is no scrimping. Each person ate and was fully satisfied (Mark 6:12). There was such abundance they gathered up twelve baskets so nothing would be wasted. I have often wondered if the boy with the original offering went home with twelve baskets of leftovers. That is how it usually works in the kingdom – a person offers what he has for the good of others and then goes away with abundance!

Feed My Lambs

The Lord said to Peter, "I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:19). Jesus gave Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven because he had revelation from the Father about the true identity of Jesus as the Messiah. Later, Peter had a colossal failure when he denied Christ three times. However, Peter had a gift and a call. He had a special grant of kingdom authority like no other. He was named as the future gatekeeper for the kingdom of God. In the Old Testament, the king and the prophet assigned the gatekeepers. We already know that there were four principle gatekeepers, who were entrusted with the responsibility of the chambers and treasuries of the house of God (1 Chron. 9:26).

After the resurrection, Peter was restored by Jesus and was given the mandate three different times by Jesus, "Feed my sheep!" As the gatekeeper, he opens and closes the doors of the kingdom of God. Does Peter, as principal gatekeeper of the kingdom of God, manage the treasuries of heaven? Is that what the Lord meant when he said,

“Feed my sheep?” Does Peter, as keeper of the keys, feed the sheep out of the storehouses of heaven?

In the last days the Lord will feed his sheep. When times have been tough, the Lord has fed his people and those who love him. For years I have told my children that if things get bad in the natural world, the Lord will take care of his people. I have told them to read the Word of God literally, and it will teach people how to survive. The Lord wants his people to be in a position to survive until the end. The scrolls of Daniel were sealed until the end and now they appear to be opening so people will have the revelation they need. The Lord fed people physical food many times in the Bible. There were many feeding miracles to teach believers.

One of the biggest feeding miracles occurred in Egypt when the Lord set up kingdom food distribution of mammoth proportions. He caused the abundance of the pagan Egyptians to feed his people, Israel. In Genesis chapters 37 to 50, the story of Joseph unfolds. Joseph was sold into slavery at the hands of his brothers and later placed in prison on false charges. He was eventually elevated to the position of prime minister over all of Egypt, second only to the Pharaoh himself. As part of God’s plan, the superabundance of Egypt was stored so that the people of God could be sustained in a terrible famine.

The wealth of the wicked was stored up for the righteous (Prov. 13:22). It is never reported in Scripture that Jacob or his family ever asked God to supply their need in Canaan before they sought the provision of Egypt. This is one area of concern for Christians in times of great distress and need. The Israelites heard Egypt had food so they took the path of least resistance and went to Egypt to have their needs met. Believers should learn from Israel’s mistakes. During a famine, seeking to be fed by a governmental powerhouse, as Israel did with the Egyptians, eventually led to slavery. The food they received looked good at the time. It looked like a blessing. The Egyptians even gave them land and other provisions, but in the end it led cruel bondage and harsh slavery for 400 years. In seeking the food and provision of Egypt, God’s people subjugated themselves to a government that worshiped false gods.

It is merely a rhetorical question: Was it the mistake of Israel to get comfortable in the pagan surroundings after the famine and drought were over? What would have happened if Israel had received the abundance of Egypt as God prepared, then turned to God, or returned to the Promised Land when the threat of famine was over? This rhetorical question is more for the future preparation of the body of Christ, rather than speculation about historical events. If God's people had trusted him in the beginning, God had superabundant provision to feed them. Think about the provision that came when they left Egypt: When Israel walked out of the bondage of Egypt in reliance on God, they were fed in the wilderness for 40 years. God provided! Would he have provided in the first place if they had sought him? It is purely an academic pursuit, but it is a valid inquiry for future concerns more than speculation about what has past.

There were so many other miracles of provision. Jesus turned the water into wine, based on the undeniable faith of Mary, who would not take "no" for an answer. She kept seeking until she got her way (John 2:1-11). In the Old Testament, man brought twenty loaves of barley, along with some heads of new grain to feed one hundred men. The LORD said: "They will eat and have some left over" (2 Kings 4:43). The Israelites ate manna in the wilderness (Exod. 16), new bread every day. This is a sign that new bread of the Word of God is needed every day. Yesterday's bread will not satisfy hunger today. Believers must eat the Word anew everyday. There were miraculous harvests of fish (John 21:1-14). God is not in lack and he will feed his people who seek him.

Conclusion

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matt. 5:6). Many read this spiritually, some read it in the natural, and I read it as both natural and spiritual. For those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, they will be filled in the Spirit. They will have blessing and abundance in relationship with the Lord. Also when we hunger and thirst for righteousness, meaning that we are seeking the purity of God, he will fill

and provide for physical needs. The Lord preached in the Sermon on the Mount, do not worry about what you will eat or drink, or what you will wear in the future tense. The Lord said,

Therefore I tell you, *do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear.* Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. *Are you not much more valuable than they?* ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? ²⁸ “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and *your heavenly Father knows that you need them.* ³³ *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Matt. 6:25-34)

Jesus said, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matt. 6:33). When believers seek his kingdom first, the Lord will feed and take care of the needs of our earthly bodies and our spirits. Jesus also said his food was to do the will of his Father. The disciples went to get sustenance for the physical body, but upon their return, Jesus said, “I have food to eat you know nothing about . . . My food is to do the will of him who sent me” (John 4:32, 34). Jesus had a physical

body, but his needs were met by serving God. John 6:35 says, “Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” In the kingdom realm, believers will literally and spiritually have superabundant provision by doing God’s will. The Lord is teaching believers in the Word how to have abundant provision in the natural from a supernatural source, the rule and reign of God.

Chapter 12

Kingdom Power Of The Sounds Of Heaven



I began serving as pastor of a small United Methodist Church a few years ago. The church was in severe decline with average attendance of ten to fifteen members each week. The church agreed to my appointment there because the members believed they did not have much to lose by accepting a new, untried pastor. I believed that a once-thriving church does not significantly decline without serious spiritual oppression. Upon entering the doors, the church had immediately recognizable spiritual harassment and heaviness; it was palpable. Three weeks after arriving as the pastor, I sought the release of the oppression through prayer and fasting.

As I prepared to end a three-day fast, I went into prayer. During prayer, the Lord directed me to go to the church to pray. I reasoned with the Lord, “I can pray just as well from home,” but the Lord was very firm about directing me to go to the church. I acquiesced and drove seventeen miles to the church to pray before breaking the fast.

I called another prayer warrior to meet me at the church. We began to pray and take authority against the spiritual oppressors. I was called by God to go there and I felt led to stand in the authority that he had given me as spiritual head of the congregation. I had what can only be described as a *holy yell* rise up within me. I did not have a shofar (ram’s horn trumpet) at that time, or I would have blown it. The yell would not be denied, and it came out as a war cry

against the enemy. It seemed to me the Holy Spirit was directing me to call the angelic heavenly hosts to war with me against the enemy oppressing the church. It could have been humorous, because right across the street from the church was a little country store, a virtual hot bed of activity in the farming community. I was a new pastor in town as I was standing by the front door of the church. I released a “Tarzan yell.” I am sure that if they heard me they would have wondered what I was doing. Sometime obedience to God looks like foolishness to the world (1 Cor. 2:14).

We had prayed through the first floor, anointing the building with oil as we went. We had moved into the basement. Prayer and seeking the Lord had gone on for more than an hour. The time of prayer was intense as we sought the Lord for the freedom and deliverance of the church from the grip of the enemy. Suddenly there was breakthrough! My prayer partner and I simultaneously discerned a shift in the spiritual atmosphere of the building. The oppressive spirit had lifted and departed. In unison, almost as scripted from above, we turned to each other said, “It’s gone.” We became jubilant with thanksgiving and praise. The heavy feeling of the atmosphere was immediately transformed and the Spirit of God was present in the place.

The spiritual breakthrough at the church led to growth and maturity in the congregation. With the casting out of the invisible, spiritual hindrance, the church began to thrive. A year or so later, the Harry Denman Evangelism Award for the Kentucky United Methodist Annual Conference was awarded. The award does not mean anything in the kingdom of God, but I share this so the magnitude of the transformation may be seen and all glory given to God. The evangelism award honored a remarkable or exceptional effort in Christian evangelism. The little church that had almost been to the point of closure had the highest ratio of conversions to attendance in the Kentucky Annual Conference. The little church had the most overall conversions in the Kentucky Annual Conference out of over 900 churches and over 800 pastors. The little church had more evangelistic conversions than even the very large churches in our conference. The average attendance grew four to five hundred percent in two years. That is kingdom power at work. Something

happened in the kingdom realm when the Lord directed me to go the church to actually take ground. I was walking in authority as believer, but it was upon the Lord's direction. Something happened in the spiritual realm when the holy war cry went out to call for heavenly backup. There is power in kingdom sound!

Sounds Of Creation

Everything that *IS* came from the spoken word of God. Creation of all order as we know it was formed on the building blocks of sound. The actual sounds are the delivery system of the power of God. In the creation, God said and then he saw. For example, it went like this: “*God said*, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. ⁴ *God saw* that the light was good” (Gen. 1:2). The cadence of “God said . . . God saw,” happened six times within Genesis 1:2-25. Finally, when he came to the creation of humanity, the cadence of creation changed somewhat, “God said . . . God blessed . . . God gave . . . and then God saw” (Gen. 1:26-31). In other words, God spoke created order into existence before he ever saw that it was good. He did not form anything with his hands; he merely spoke everything into being.

The earth was formed by the power of the spoken word of God. The Gospel of John in the New Testament also reflects the creation story. In John, it is stated Jesus is the *logos* – the very Word of God. Jesus is the building block of all creation. John says,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the *Word was God*. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; *without him nothing was made that has been made*. ⁴ *In him was life*, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (John 1:1-5).

The word *logos* embodies the power of God's spoken word that brought forth all that was created and even life itself. The very power

of the spoken word of God had been manifest in the flesh in the body of an infant who grew into a man. When John calls Jesus *the Word* of God, *logos* in Greek, he is saying the living, powerful, spoken word of God became flesh and dwelt among us. Logos usually refers to the written word of God. The decree or mandate of God in the spoken word was walking with humanity on earth. This mimics the power of the created order of Genesis 1 in which the Lord God spoke the world and all that is in it into existence. Jesus, God in the flesh, was the power of God's sound in creation within the natural realm.

Selected parts of Colossians 1:15-19 illustrate Jesus was God in the created order of earth and heaven,

¹⁵ The Son is the *image of the invisible God*, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ *For in him all things were created*: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ *He is before all things, and in him all things hold together*. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ *For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him*.

In other words, the Word of God is responsible for creation because in him all things are created and in him all things hold together. When God speaks, power happens. During his life on earth, Jesus spoke things into existence. Jesus and other people in Scripture spoke food, healing, deliverance, and power into existence. Jesus said, "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12). Kingdom authority is released by the spoken word. Jesus often made a point of saying, "I say to you . . ." followed by whatever it was he wanted to say. He just as easily could have said what he wanted to say without the precursor of, "I tell you" or "I say to you." There was something

important about the fact that he wanted believers to know *when he spoke, something was released in the kingdom realm.*

Jesus wants his followers to know and understand the importance of spoken words when believers speak them with kingdom authority and in the name of Jesus. John 14:13-14 states, “And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.” Jesus confirmed two times the power of asking in his name. All power is the factor of love and relationship with the precious Lord.

Other (Not-So-Good) Sounds Of Eden

We talked about the release of the Word of the Lord, which created all things, but there were other sounds in Eden that are worthy of our discussion. The voice of God released life-giving instruction to Adam, “And the LORD God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.’” (Gen. 2:16-17) As we know there was also the sound of the serpent’s voice that enticed Eve to fall into sin (Gen. 3:1-5). Eve spoke to Adam. She gave the fruit to him and he ate it.

The very next sound in Eden was when Adam and Eve, who seemed somewhat surprised, heard God walking in the evening. Genesis 3:8 states, “Then the man and his wife *heard the sound* of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden . . .” Perhaps they had not heard God’s footsteps in that way before because they had always walked in unity with God. They were aware of the presence of God in an external way, hearing him from a distance. After the Fall, there was distance and separation. We do not pay attention to the sound of our own footsteps, but we are always tuned into footsteps we do not know or expect. Adam and Eve were removed from God, but God did not remove himself from them. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve had been together with God in the perfect blending of the natural and the kingdom – God was present with them in unity.

When God removed the blessing and brought forth curses, God chastised Adam for listening to Eve. He said to Adam, “*Because*

you listened to your wife.” God did not specifically chastise Eve for listening to the serpent. Adam received the word of instruction directly from God. Adam’s sin was listening to the wrong voice. He heard sound and instruction not to eat directly from the all-powerful mouth of God, and yet he did. He listened to Eve when he should have been listening to God. The creation of humanity, which had been blessed, made holy, and sanctified unto God was made unholy and cursed. Adam heard all the power of infinity in the voice of God, but he listened to the minute, powerless voice of the woman. That is what happens when we reject the sound of God for the sound of humanity or the sound of Satan.

Listen To Him!

Jesus took Peter, James, and John up on a mount to pray and seek the Father. While Jesus was still on the Mount of Transfiguration, the Father spoke from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!” (Matt. 17:5). Like so many other important parts of Scripture, we quote a portion, but leave out something very important. How many times have I heard or quoted, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased,” without even knowing the next thing God said, “LISTEN TO HIM!” How can we listen to the beloved Son if we cannot hear the voice of the Lord?

Very soon after my oldest daughter was born, both grandmothers came into the delivery room. As my mother held our newborn baby, she began to cry. My husband walked over and leaned over my mother’s shoulder and called my daughter by her name and began speaking to her, saying, “What’s wrong? Daddy is here!” The most amazing thing happened: she turned her newborn head toward the sound of his voice and stopped crying. She was not looking with her eyes. It was her ear that she was training in his direction. It was amazing. She recognized the sound of her daddy’s voice that she had heard even before she was born. We can also hear our Heavenly Father speak and we can know his voice.

Hearing The Sound Of God's Voice

There is a spiritual advantage to hearing God that most people do not understand. The sheep hear the shepherd's voice but do not follow the voice of a stranger. John 10:4-5 states, "*He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.*"⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and *his sheep follow him because they know his voice.*"⁵ But they will *never follow a stranger*; in fact, they will *run away from him* because *they do not recognize a stranger's voice.*"

Many believers listen to God by having mental impressions or thoughts that *perhaps* God has spoken to them, but they have never actually heard the voice of God. I tend to think this verse is often misunderstood because very few people actually hear the voice of God enough to recognize it and distinguish it from the voice of a stranger. I pray everyone who loves the Lord will actually hear his voice. I believe in the times ahead, actually hearing his voice will be supremely important for survival.

I was talking to a mature sister in Christ, a prayer and accountability partner, who actually hears the voice of the Lord. She was talking about the need to discern the spirits in the voice she was hearing. I told her we know the voice of God; we are protected by a Scripture promise that we will not follow the voice of a stranger. *IF* we know the voice of the shepherd, we do not have to discern the spirits, because we will run from the stranger's voice, Satan or an opposing demonic spirit.

My friend and I had an ensuing discussion about knowing (hearing) the voice of the shepherd. She thought everyone actually heard the voice of God. She hears the Lord conversationally, and I hear the Lord conversationally. I knew from personal experience everyone does not hear the voice of the Lord conversationally. She did not believe me, so she decided to do a little covert investigation work by simply asking other believers how they hear from God. She was surprised to learn most Christians do not actually hear the voice of God, but rather have impressions, leadings, feelings, etc., that the Lord wants them to do something or know something. God

is no respecter of persons, he wants everyone to actually hear and discern his voice.

During the baptism of Jesus, the Father said, "Listen to him!" When the relationship with the Lord moves to the place where the believer intimately knows the voice of God, a false voice will stand out like a sore thumb. It is important for believers to know and understand that God wants believers to hear him. Actually, if believers do not hear him and understand, they cannot accurately follow him. It is important that those who hear God teach and encourage other people to know how to hear his voice. The initial step of a believer is to recognize if the voice of God is not heard directly in conversational dialogue, there is more!

For me, the transition from mental impressions, dreams, and visions to actually hearing God's voice was through seeking a deeper relationship with the Lord by wholehearted devotion. Jeremiah 29:13 states, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me *with all your heart*." Jeremiah 33:3 states, "Call to me and I will answer you and *tell* you great and unsearchable things you do not know." Calling on God requires devoted seeking, and hearing God requires attentive listening. God's telling is precious because he promises to tell seekers things they do not know and could not know without his divine revelation. Great things, unsearchable things . . . the things of God! How can believers most effectively operate in the kingdom realm without hearing him? How can we hear him without seeking him?

One of the most precious Scriptures of the Hebrew people is found in Deuteronomy 6:4, called the *Shema*. In Hebrew, the word *shema* means *hear*. I studied the Hebrew language in seminary, and memorized the Shema in Hebrew. (It was worth two points added to the final grade! I was a point hog then, now I just appreciate that I spent hours with several verses of this precious text and learned it in the original language. – Thanks, Dr. Paul Cook!) It says, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one!" In fact, the command to hear the Lord God is so important to the Hebrew people they are commanded to write it on their doorposts and recite it daily. The instruction of God is beyond our understanding in importance. The passage continues,

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵
Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with
all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶These com-
mandments that I give you today are to be on your
hearts. ⁷Impress them on your children. Talk about
them when you sit at home and when you walk along
the road, when you lie down and when you get up.
⁸Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them
on your foreheads. ⁹Write them on the doorframes of
your houses and on your gates. (Deut. 6:4-9)

Everyone should learn to hear God every day. All we have to do
is seek him with wholehearted devotion and he will reveal great and
unsearchable things we do not know. There is power in the spoken
word of God. We have already seen that Peter keys were released by
the revelation of God. God promises disclosure of things that have
been hidden and concealed. The Lord wants to reveal the things that
have not yet been made known, but how a believer listens is critical.
The Word says,

For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed,
and nothing concealed that will not be known or
brought out into the open. ¹⁸ *Therefore consider
carefully how you listen.* Whoever has will be given
more; whoever does not have, even what they think
they have will be taken from them. (Luke 8:17-18)

The Lord will do his part and disclose those things, which have
been promised to be revealed in Scripture, but the believer must
participate and listen carefully. When a believer listens, the one who
seeks and hears will be given more in the kingdom.

Voice Commands: God's And Ours

God speaks and things happen. In the kingdom understanding,
believers speak and things happen, too! There is spiritual power

in positive confession of a believer in keeping with the Word of the Lord. God spoke to people in the Scripture, and the ones who believed him recited the prophetic message. It honors God when we hear and immediately act on what has been said. I recently heard that prophecy is the plan of God for acceleration and getting people to move into his plan. A prophetic word speeds up a person to get in the will of God for their life. The will and plan of God was there all along, but perhaps the person did not know.

Often the current situation in the natural does not look anything like the prophesied coming reality in the kingdom. For example, in Genesis 37, Joseph was a seventeen year-old teenager when the Lord gave him two dreams that his reality in the kingdom plan would result in his parents and his brothers bowing to him. At the time he was the youngest of the brothers and was virtually without power or position. There was nothing in the natural that indicated the dreams were no more than “pizza dreams” or that there was even a possibility of reality. Joseph believed and confessed the dreams orally to his brothers, “He said to them, ‘*Listen* to this dream I had,’” and “‘*Listen,*’ he said, ‘I had another dream . . .’” (Gen. 37:6, 9). Joseph’s oral recitation of God’s call offended his father and his brothers, who rebuked him for even speaking the revelation (Gen. 37:10).

The oral confession of God’s call is important, even if no one believes it. It was at least twenty years later when the events foretold in the prophetic dreams actually came to pass. Joseph had been in slavery and prison for thirteen years and then managed the resources of Egypt for another seven. Another important factor of oral confession is the remembrance of the plan and the promises of God. Joseph had a huge call on his life. Keeping the call of God before his mind undoubtedly helped Joseph when his life did not reflect what God said it would look like. In other words, when Joseph was a household slave and a prisoner, remembering God’s call on his life may have been the only thing that kept him going.

God called Abraham the “father of many nations” and told him to circumcise every male in his household. Abraham promptly did exactly what God said to do (Gen. 17:10). He was ninety-nine at the time and by the time he was one hundred years old he was the

father of his new son, Isaac. His son was born of the union with his ninety-year-old wife. The bottom line is that when people believe God and repeat his prophetic call, it is tremendously powerful in the spiritual realm. The book of Romans speaks of Abraham and says, “As it is written: ‘I have made you a father of many nations.’ He is our father in the sight of God, *in whom he believed*—the God who gives life to the dead and *calls into being things that were not*” (Rom. 4:17). When we speak those things that are not as though they are in existence, there is spiritual power in the release of those words. Oral confession is potent in the kingdom realm.

God wants his followers to emulate his vocal commands to bring things into existence at his direction. In Exodus, God commanded Moses to strike a rock and God promised to make the water flow in the wilderness. Exodus 17:6 states Moses did exactly what the Lord commanded him to do, “‘I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.’ So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel.”

Later, however, God called Moses *to speak to the rock*, and he promised water would again flow in the wilderness. Moses did not follow the command of the Lord, and instead of speaking to the rock, he struck it again. Numbers 20:8 states, “Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. *Speak to that rock before their eyes* and it will pour out its water. *You will bring water out of the rock* for the community so they and their livestock can drink.”

There are some very important issues here. First, Moses was to demonstrate kingdom power by speaking to release water from the rock. Potentially, brute force of striking the rock could release the water by natural means. However, water does not begin to flow by a voice command unless the supernatural kingdom power of God has been manifested in the natural realm. Second, the Lord told Moses, “You will bring the water out!” The Lord God was not going to do it. Moses was going to release it with the power of his words at God’s command. Moses was called to demonstrate before the assembly that a human being could bring the manifest kingdom of God into reality in the natural realm by speaking when God directed. (Wow! This was a demonstration that the Lord loves abundantly and gives

his children keys to the family car to take out for a drive . . . metaphorically speaking.) He gave Moses the power to do on earth what he does in the manifest presence of his kingdom! Finally, why did the Lord tell him to take the staff with him? He had it there by God's command. The staff was the rod of God's power but it was misused when Moses disobeyed God and struck the rock. What a great plan to introduce the people to the power of God because it was supposed to be done before their eyes! Unfortunately, Moses did not do what the Lord asked of him:

Then Moses *raised his arm and struck the rock* twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank.¹² But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did *not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites*, you will not bring this community into the land I give them. (Num. 20:11-12)

Moses disobeyed the Lord. He struck the rock twice. He was angry; he called the people *rebels* (Num. 20:10). He did not trust God. He did not honor God. After decades of service to the Lord, Moses blew it. He publically dishonored God and because of that he was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. The punishment may seem harsh, but there is something bigger going on here. Moses did not speak and expect something to happen because he had unbelief. He was angry and his emotions took over. He was acting in the desires of the soulish flesh and not in faith, belief, and devotion to God. Remember in an earlier chapter when Paul became angry and acted without the leading of the Lord? He cast a demonic spirit out of a girl and then was instantly attacked by a hierarchy of demonic power.

Moses dishonored God because God was going to display his power in a miraculous way, but Moses took it upon himself when he struck the rock. The Lord wanted to teach Moses and the people the power of the spoken word. The Lord wanted the people to learn this lesson also, lest he would not have had Moses gather the whole assembly. What would the future outcome have been for the

Israelites if they had learned the lesson of the power of the spoken word before entering the Promised Land? Words have authority and power. Whether it is God speaking or humanity speaking with the authority of God, there is power. Moses had God's authority to utter the words. He was going to overcome, but it was God's calling for him to speak. The Lord gave him a direct command to speak and demonstrate the power of God.

The Israelites are symbolic of the Church of Jesus, the future body of believers. The rock is symbolic of Jesus: Moses and the Israelites "drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4b). Moving in faith, belief, and understanding, the Lord wants believers to speak kingdom power when he says to do so. Jesus said, "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The *words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life*" (John 6:63).

Jesus spoke more things than he acted upon. In healing, Jesus always spoke, although he did touch on occasion. Jesus often said, "Truly, I tell you . . ." He was illustrating that it is important to speak out the truth orally. Proverbs 18:21 illustrates the truth that oral confession of has power to shape lives, "The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit." Either way, life or death is in the power of the tongue.

Trumpet: Calling The Kingdom

The trumpet is an authoritative image of the voice of God. The Hebrew word for trumpet is shofar. The shofar is rich with meaning for the ancient Israelites in biblical history and for the current believer. The trumpet sound is very often associated with the voice of God calling the people to repentance, followed by the mercy of God. The trumpet is also associated with the Lord giving warning before judgment comes upon the people. The shofar is used to call the people to assembly or to call the people to war. The release of its sound has kingdom power to confuse the enemy and often causes defeat in the enemy's camp.

Scriptural trumpets were usually made of rams' horns, but occasionally the instruments were made of silver. The ram was significant because it was a substitutionary sacrifice in Scripture when God provided the ram to be offered in place of Isaac. Genesis 22:13 states, "Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a *ram caught in the thicket by his horns*; and Abraham went and took the ram and *offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son.*"

The trumpet is the sound of the voice of God. Exodus 19:16-19 states, "On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a *very loud trumpet blast*. Everyone in the camp trembled.¹⁹ As the *sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.*"

Time and again, Israel was called to battle by the sound of the trumpet blast. When the shofar sounded it was a reminder that God was fighting the battle, "When you go into battle in your own land against an enemy who is oppressing you, *sound a blast on the trumpets. Then you will be remembered by the LORD your God and rescued from your enemies*" (Num. 10:9) and "Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. *Our God will fight for us!*" (Neh. 4:20). When the trumpet blasted, the sound reached the highest heaven and the Lord remembered his people.

The shofar was sounded at the enthronement or coronation of kings. It will be heard at the enthronement of Jesus, King of kings and Lord of lords. The presence of God is seen when the trumpet is blown. Even when the ark was brought to Jerusalem with shouting and the sound of the trumpet: "So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet" (2 Sam. 6:15). Solomon was enthroned to the sound of the horn, "Blow the trumpet and shout, 'Long live King Solomon!' . . . Then they sounded the trumpet and all the people shouted, 'Long live King Solomon!'" (1 Kings 1:34, 39).

The shofar was a reminder that God is sovereign, "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet" (Ps. 47:5). The shofar was a call for God and a call to God. John was caught up to heaven with the sound of the trumpet: "And the voice I had first

heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this’” (Rev. 4:1).

Many end-times events are marked by the trumpet blast. The Day of Judgment will be punctuated with the sounds of the trumpet: “Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, *for the day of the LORD is coming*” (Joel 2:1). Also Revelation says, “And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. *And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets . . . And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound*” (Rev. 8:2, 6). The angels blowing their trumpets one at a time and releasing six judgments on the earth will follow. The seventh trumpet is sounded at the enthronement and worship of Jesus,

The seventh angel *sounded his trumpet*, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.”

¹⁶ And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷ saying: “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. ¹⁸ The nations were angry, and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your people who revere your name, both great and small and for destroying those who destroy the earth.”

¹⁹ Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm. (Rev. 11:15-19)

The end result is this: The trumpet represents the voice of God. The sound of the trumpet releases the power of God. What happens in the natural realm is often parallel to what is happening in the spirit realm. The voice of God represents mercy, protection, and even judgment. When believers sound the trumpet or shofar, there is a call in heaven for angelic hosts to minister to the needs of the people or to even draw the attention or blessing of the Lord in our time of need. Trumpets are powerful instruments of war in the hands of one in relationship with the Lord. The blast of the trumpet releases spiritual power.

Chaos Of The Enemy At The Sound Of God

The sounds from heaven cause chaos in the enemy's camp. The most notable evidence break through sound is seen in the fall of Jericho, Gideon routing the Midianites, or Paul and Silas praising God, which shook the foundation of the jail. Godly sound, anointed worship, and warfare sounds of the shofar all have the capacity to scatter the enemy and send them into chaos. The Lord gave the plan to Joshua for the capture of Jericho. The LORD said to Joshua,

See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. ³March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. ⁴Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. ⁵When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the *army will go up, everyone straight in.* (Josh. 6:1-5)

We see later after the Israelites had followed this strange and strategic plan of God that the city wall collapsed. Joshua 6:20 states, "*When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so*

everyone charged straight in, and they took the city.” What about this set of events caused the city walls to simply fall down? First, it was the plan of the Lord. Second, all the trumpet blasts were calls for angelic reinforcements. Third, the sound from the trumpets and shouts, at God’s direction, created chaos in the enemy’s camp. The breakdown of Jericho’s fortress was a kingdom of God event manifesting in the natural world, not simply a natural event. The walls fell because something changed in the kingdom realm by the trumpets and by the holy yells of the Israelites. God did this in the kingdom realm because it suited his purposes. The Israelites were obedient to follow the strange and strategic commands, and their faith moved God’s heart. The Israelites were a bunch of ex-slaves who had been freed by God. He gave them the blessing of the Promised Land, but they had to conquer it.

Jericho was the first battle of the conquest and settlement of the Promised Land. I think God was saying something like, “I have this. If you will simply trust me, I will give you the land. You have to do your part, but your part is to be obedient to whatever strange thing I tell you to do and follow my commands. When you do that, I will send kingdom help and the walls will fall before you.”

There were other biblical instances in which kingdom sound brought chaos to the enemy’s camp. Gideon had a large contingency of fighting men. The Lord did not want them to take credit for the victory, so he directed Gideon to cull the forces from 32,000 fighting men down to three hundred men (Judg. 7:2-6). The Lord gave Gideon very specific instructions about how to defeat the enemy. They did exactly what the Lord told them and,

The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, “A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!”²¹ While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled (Judg. 7:20-21).

Gideon's minute fighting contingency created confusion in the colossal camp of the enemy. The enemy consisted of multiple armies that had joined forces against Israel. The victory could only be considered a kingdom victory; there is no other way any human endeavor could win with such odds.

In another kingdom victory, King Jehoshaphat triumphed against three opposing armies in 2 Chronicles 20. It is also a prime example that the Lord will destroy the works of the enemy before his people when God's people seek his face. Jehoshaphat and his people endeavored to seek the Lord, offer worship, and praise. The Lord decreed it was his victory. Jehoshaphat appointed men,

To sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: "Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever." 22 As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated. (2 Chron. 20:21-22)

As the people brought praise to the Lord, their enemies rose up against each other and destroyed each other so there was not one left alive. The praise of God brought anarchy in the camp of the enemies! After the victory, all Jehoshaphat's people had to do was go out to gather the plunder from the dead bodies. They returned home praising God the whole way.

Another miraculous breakthrough was with Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail in Acts 16. They had been cruelly scourged, unjustly thrown into prison, but responded in a way that caused bedlam in the enemy's camp. They praised God and worshipped and sang. "About midnight Paul and Silas were *praying and singing hymns to God*, and the other prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. *At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose*" (Acts 16:25-26). Their praise released kingdom activity that opened the prison doors and loosed everyone's chains.

The foregoing events honored God and released pandemonium in the enemy's camp. The kingdom sounds were evidence of faith, radical trust, and praise of God in each situation. The people of God could not be victorious without the direct manifestation of God's kingdom in their midst. In each of these passages, sound was the instrument of defeat of the enemy. In the natural realm, the destruction epitomizes the destruction of the devil's kingdom in the spiritual realm. Satan was defeated in the spiritual realm by the actions in the natural realm that release the blessing, favor, and power of God. The enemies of God often destroyed each other when confusion arose. The trumpets called the angelic forces to come to the battle to war for the children of God. It caused things to happen in the natural that were manifestation of the spiritual.

The Sound Of Silence

From the beginning of time, the sounds of praise have been constantly heard in the heavenly realm. In Isaiah 6 we see the angels flying and calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.' At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke" (Isa. 63:4). In the beginning of Revelation, John relates there is constant praise and sound, "From the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices . . . ⁸The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And *they do not rest day or night, saying: 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!'*" (Rev. 4:5, 8). Other scriptural throne room scenes give similar interpretations of the sound and activities of heaven.

We usually do not think of heaven as a place of silence, but there is one time in history when heaven will be notably silent. The most noteworthy evidence of silence in heaven is when John reports during the Revelation that the seventh seal is broken. The breaking of the last seal sets the stage for the blowing of the seven trumpets we discussed earlier (Rev. 8-11). The trumpets release harsh judgments

on the earth. After the seventh seal is broken there will be complete silence in heaven for a half-hour.

The silence after the constant joyful sounds of praise, worship, the awe-inspiring voice of God coming forth to create, guide, counsel, will be fearfully deafening. I think this is noteworthy because every glimpse we have in heaven is one in which sound is readily apparent and carries the power of God. There is no other reference to heaven being silent.

Is that the only time heaven is silent? Why do the angels cease their praise? Why the symbolism of half an hour? The commentators and scholars have long tried to determine the meaning of the utter quiet in the heavenly realm. I will weigh in on the debate and invite you to “chew the meat and spit out the fat.” In other words, if this does not ring true, spit it out and move on.

The silence in heaven may be a response to the greatness of the suffering of the people when the seventh seal is broken. The trumpeters are ready to sound and release horrible judgments on the earth. God is the God of love. Even if the children deserve the just punishment, no loving parent wants to harshly discipline their children. God does not seem to be any different. Could it be God has great anguish in anticipation to the judgment released on the people? God loves! Judgment hurts. Even though it is just, will God be grieved that people are lost and judgment will be released? Job 2:13 suggests silence may be a proper response to intense suffering. Job's friends came to him and scripture says, “Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. *No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was.*” Job's friends saw his anguish. The only appropriate response was to sit with him in silence, being there but not diminishing the gravity of the situation with glib words. It is always right to interpret the Bible with the Bible. Could it be that no sound will come forth from heaven at that time because of the horrific suffering? God will not be creating, guiding, bringing forth with his thunderous voice. Everything will be silent. After an eternity of sound . . . silence.

There was another time in Scripture when God was notably silent, but this time on the earth, not in heaven. Praises and activities in heaven may have been still going on as usual, but there was no

sound from God released on the earth. The inter-testamentary period was the era between the last prophetic word of the Old Testament, and the birth and presence of John the Baptist in the New Testament. There was a four hundred-year period when the Lord did not release any prophetic words to come forth. John the Baptist was the last prophet of the old covenant, even though he was in the New Testament. The new covenant was instituted with the death of Jesus. It is very hard for the people of God not to hear from the Lord. We do not know why there was no prophetic word, but God's people will need to hear him to survive until the end.

There are even times when humanity is silent against the commands of the Lord. Many times, fear leads people to be quiet or leads them into silence. After the study into the power of sound, believers should never be cowed into silence. Sometimes it is counter-intuitive to make noise, even kingdom sound, when in fear. In times of fear, often people do not want to draw unnecessary attention, being content to hide in the background. Fear says to keep silent, but there is spiritual power in sound. Sound creates, destroys, and can be the instrument of judgment or mercy. Kingdom sound can request or release angelic backup. Believers overcome with the power of sound. When believers proclaim the Word of God, the sound triumphs over the enemy. The Holy Spirit moves in direct response to the release of the Word of God. This is well summed up in Isaiah 55, "So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will *accomplish* what I desire and *achieve* the purpose for which I sent it" (Isa. 55:11). The Word of God WILL NOT return empty. The power and purpose of God are accomplished and achieved by the release of his word. *Accomplish* and *achieve* are words of action and power. This is what happens when the Word of God is released.

Conclusion

The presence of sound is powerful in the kingdom realm. Sound is the delivery method of God's power. Sound is an instrument of warfare against our enemy. Sound is the building block of the universe. The first thing ever released from God in creation was the

sound of his voice. Many times in Genesis 1, God said, and then God saw. In essence, there was nothing to see until God spoke creation into existence first. Sound can create, build, or tear down. It is the energy of God. God has given the authority to appropriate sound to do the work of the kingdom. It carries the power of God. Sound was important in the beginning and it will be important in the end.

Satan's plan is to distract and deafen the people so they cannot hear the sound of God. Believers should diligently seek to be able to hear the sound of God. Believers should fight to be able to release the sound, which will release kingdom reality into the natural world. Speaking the multiplication of food into existence may be vastly important for the end times. Sound brings the Lord's protection. Angelic forces are called to war for God's people by the power of sound. Sound glorifies God; it mimics creation. Creation was an act of love.

There is power in the sounds of the kingdom realm. When God speaks, power is released. The sounds of heaven carry power, which is hardly recognized in our culture or even in humankind. Kingdom sound is spiritual energy that produces reality! Sound, just like everything in the kingdom realm, is rooted in love. Kingdom sound is released because of the great love of God. Everything God does and allows his followers to do in the kingdom is because of love. There are times ahead when all believers will need to understand every power of the kingdom. It is important to understand the power of the spoken word.

Chapter 13

The Heavenly Realms



First, Second, And Third Heavens

When believers understand the heavens, it gives a backdrop for understanding the operations of the spiritual realm and why believers sometimes do not experience breakthrough as expected. In this chapter the heavenly realms of God and our enemy, known as the first, second, and third heavens will be discussed. Paul said, “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the *third heaven* . . . And I know that this man . . . was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell” (2 Cor. 12:2-4, selections). Paul used the word *heaven* to describe three distinct strata of the heavenly realm. Paul also demonstrates three heavenly realms in Ephesians, which will be addressed below.

Heaven describes first, the atmosphere surrounding the earth; second, the location above the earth where the stars and planets are located; and finally, the highest heaven, the throne of God. In Genesis 1:1, the Bible says God created “the heavens and the earth,” meaning multiple heavens but one earth. Nehemiah 9:6 refers to different strata of heaven, “You alone are the Lord. You made *the heavens, even the highest heavens*, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the *multitudes of heaven* worship you.”

The first heaven is the atmosphere around the earth. In Genesis 7:11 when the flood of Noah was coming, “the windows of *heaven* were opened,” to bring rain on the earth. Deuteronomy 11:17 states, “Then the Lord’s anger will burn against you, and he will *shut the heavens* so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce.” Deuteronomy 28:12 states, “The Lord will *open the heavens*, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands.” Furthermore Judges 5:4 says, “O Lord when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the land of Edom, the earth shook, *the heavens poured, the clouds poured down water.*” Finally Acts 14:17 shows, “Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by *giving you rain from heaven* and crops in their seasons.” It is abundantly clear the first heaven is the atmosphere of earth. This is the primary abode of humanity, but also a location for angelic and demonic activity.

The second heaven is the place beyond the atmosphere of earth. It is what we would consider outer space per se, the place of the stars, sun, moon, and planets. The second heaven is also the primary location of powers and principalities, of angels and demons. It is also the place where high-level spiritual warfare takes place. Exodus 32:13 is one of many biblical references to “the stars of heaven.” Stars are beyond the earth’s atmosphere. Psalm 19:4, 6, “In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun. . . . It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other.” Jeremiah 8:2 clearly illustrates the second heaven: “They will be exposed to the *sun and the moon and all the stars of the heavens* which they have loved and served.” Finally Isaiah 13:10 says, “The *stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light.* It is apparent the second heaven is the place of the planets and constellations, and the place of the abode of the heavenly hosts, as we will later see.

The third heaven is the place of the enthronement of God, although God is not contained in the third heaven. 1 Kings 8:27 states, “But will God dwell on earth? The heavens, *even the highest heaven, cannot contain you.*” Paul mentioned the third heaven when he conveys someone, probably himself, was caught up to the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2-4). Paul called the third heaven paradise in verse four, where inexpressible things were shared. *Paradise* is the

same word used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, for the Garden of Eden.

John revealed in Revelation 4:2 God's throne is in heaven, "At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne *in heaven* with someone sitting on it." First Kings 8:30 says, "then hear from *heaven, your dwelling place . . .*" or Psalm 2:4 says, "the *One enthroned in heaven laughs*; The Lord scoffs at them." According to Deuteronomy 10:14, "To the Lord your God *belong the heavens, even the highest heavens*, the earth and everything in it." The third heaven refers to the location of the throne of God. It is also readily apparent the third heaven may be visited by those who still have natural lives in physical bodies, such as Paul and John and many others in Scripture. We will talk at length about humanity moving in the Spirit to heaven in Chapter 14, "Here and There."

Heavenly Realms

Heavenly realms are mentioned five times in the book of Ephesians, which was written by Paul. The three heavens are visible in those five passages. First, Paul says, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). Notice the passage is written in the past tense, meaning believers have already been blessed in the heavenly realm with these spiritual blessings. This clearly is not a future event.

Second, the heavenly realm is also seen to be the place of Jesus, seated at the right hand of the Father. Paul said,

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people,¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength²⁰ he exerted *when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms*,²¹ far above all rule and

authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. (Eph. 1:18-21)

The realm is far above all rule and authority. Believers may inhabit this same heavenly realm as Jesus in the third heaven, even while we inhabit the first heaven, the earthly realm. We have incomparably great power; the same power that raised Christ from the dead. The power would be of no use to believers if it were only available when we make the third heaven a permanent home after death of the physical body. This can only be significant if we have the power now while we live on earth in natural bodies.

Third, every believer in Jesus Christ may experience life in the heavenly realms as we experience life in the physical realm. Paul went on to say, “And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:6, 7). Here again we see the raising up and seating with Christ in the past tense, while showing the incomparable grace in the coming age. We have already been raised up and seated in heaven with Jesus.

Fourth, Paul illustrated through the Church; the wisdom of God will be shown to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realm, the demonic powers in the second heaven. Paul said,

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,¹¹ according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.¹² In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. (Eph. 3:10-12)

We can approach God with confidence through the faith in Jesus. We are also called to function in the heavenly spiritual realm with a certain degree of confidence and familiarity. We are called to live in the different heavenly realms at the same time. We truly are citizens

of the kingdom of God now. The book of Daniel, discussed below, clearly illustrates that these events take place in the second heaven.

Finally, believers are called to recognize the armor of God is our authority to stand against the powers of the enemy in the second heaven. Paul said, “*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms*” (Eph. 6:12).

The heavenly realms of Ephesians conceptually reflect all three heavens, but do not call them by name, per se. Scripture makes it abundantly clear the word heaven refers to different locations of spiritual activity.

Host Of Heaven

The *hosts of heaven* may be seen in the first, second and third heavens. The term may also have further meaning, which bears further investigation. The phrase “host of heaven” has two basic meanings in Scripture. First, host of heaven can mean heavenly bodies such as the sun, moon, stars, or second, it can metaphorically mean God’s angels or demonic fallen angels. These two meanings may coincide when angels are sometimes also referred to as stars. Judges 5:20 says, “From the heavens *the stars fought*, from their courses they fought against Sisera.” Sisera was the commander of the Canaanite army (Judg. 4-5). Job 38:6-7 states, “On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone while the *morning stars sang together, and all the angels shouted for joy?*” In these passages inanimate objects (stars) are taking action (fighting and singing), which clearly illustrates these are metaphors for angels.

Luke uses the words “heavenly host” when describing heavenly beings who announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds. This happened in the vision of the shepherds and would most likely be seen in the first heaven. Luke says, “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” (Luke 2:13-14) The clearest statement that the

lights of heaven are angelic hosts in the heavenly realm is found in Revelation 1:20, “The *mystery of the seven stars* that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: *The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches*, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.” Lest there be any misunderstanding, I want to clearly distinguish the difference between constellations and stars in the natural realm and the angelic hosts manifesting as stars in the kingdom realm. When Jesus Christ returns he will bring with him a heavenly host or “armies” from heaven (Rev. 19:14).

As a point of further clarification, the host of heaven can also refer to evil angels. In 1 Kings 22:15-22, the struggle between the evil King Ahab and the godly prophet Micaiah, the host of heaven standing before God on his right and his left were God’s holy angels or demonic angels. This passage illustrated evil angels are in the heavenly realms. We can even see in the book of Job, God called an assembly of angelic hosts and Satan was among them in the throne room: “One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them” (Job 1:6).

Heavenly Battle

Spiritual activity seen in the three heavenly realms impacts humanity. The book of Daniel publishes clear revelation about what happens in the first, second, and third heavens with one of the most direct biblical explanations of the heavenly realms and the activities which take place there. In chapter 10, Daniel prepared himself to inquire of the Lord. Daniel sought the Lord by mourning (fasting) for three weeks, during which time he ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched his lips; and he used no lotions (Dan. 10:2-3).

After twenty-one days of prayer and fasting, a heavenly messenger came to Daniel and said, “Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have *now been sent* to you” (Dan. 10:11). Then he continued, “Do not be afraid, Daniel. *Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to*

them” (Dan. 10:12). Daniel prayed and fasted for three weeks, and his intercessory prayers were heard on the first day. Why were his prayers not answered immediately?

The heavenly messenger said, “The prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia” (Dan. 10:13). The heavenly messenger may have been the angel Gabriel, who is otherwise mentioned in Daniel by name (Dan. 9:21). The messenger was delayed in the second heavenly realm fighting the demonic opposition. The Prince of Persia was not an individual, but rather the head of a demonic principality. The messenger could not get through the realm of the second heaven with the message until godly angelic reinforcements came to give aid.

The second heaven is the place of intense spiritual battles and demonic warfare. Of course spiritual battles can take place in the first heaven, or earth’s atmosphere because Satan is the prince of the power of the air. The higher-level powers of the prince of darkness are in the second heavenly realm, with demonic activity also taking place in the first heaven or earthly realm. The angels of God’s kingdom, including high-ranking angels, are seen in the first, second, and third heavens.

The heavenly messenger who carried the answer of God to Daniel could not break free until Michael came. Michael is the archangel of highest rank in the kingdom of God. He came and took up the battle with the king of Persia, probably Satan, who was described as a higher-level demonic figure than the prince of Persia. Both Lucifer and Michael would have high ranking in the kingdom of God before the fall of Lucifer. The battle between Michael and the king of Persia would have been a fierce battle with the highest-ranking angelic forces of both kingdoms. Michael was victorious because the purpose of God was fulfilled with the message being delivered to Daniel.

If Daniel had not been persistent would the messenger have come or would he just have continued to battle in the heavenly realms? The angel explained his prophetic message about what was going to happen to Daniel’s people in the future. The angel gave the message

and strengthened Daniel, and then he said, “Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come; ²¹ but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. No one supports me against them except *Michael, your prince*” (Dan. 10:20-21). The angel was going back to resume the heavenly battle with the demonic principalities that prevented the message from getting through in the first place. Michael is the angel who is assigned to the principality over Israel, which is why the messenger called Michael *your prince* when speaking to Daniel, an Israelite who loved and served God.

This story is so insightful about why intercession is important to breakthrough and why breakthrough can sometimes take a while. The Lord heard and sent the answer the first day Daniel prayed, but the answer was delayed. This is a great snapshot of what is happening in the midst of the spiritual battle of the heavenly realms.

Seeing Three Heavens: Rooftop Breakthrough

When believers become aware of the concept of the three realms of heaven, it becomes evident in the back-story of many biblical accounts and events. For example, the three heavens are evidenced in the healing of the man on the mat, who was carried to Jesus by friends in Luke 5:17-26. Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there (Luke 5:17). The Pharisees were not sitting at Jesus’ feet with bated breath to see what they could learn. They may have been there to trap Jesus. They had come from every village of Galilee and Judea, and from the city of Jerusalem. They actually formed a barrier around Jesus.

The Scripture teaches, “The power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick” (Luke 5:17). About that time four men carried a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. They could not get to Jesus because the Pharisees, representing demonic hindering forces, were blocking the way. The anointing of God was on the Lord, and people who legitimately wanted to get into the presence of Jesus for healing could not get in the house.

When the friends could not get through because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered the paralyzed man on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus (Luke 5:19). The book of Mark says, “Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by *digging through it* and then lowered the mat the man was lying on” (Mark 2:4).

The friends could not get the man to Jesus by going straight in the door because of the opposition. Sometimes believers can go through the enemy with the authority we have to overcome the power of the enemy, or at times believers can go straight to the heavenly realm and to seek the blessing and breakthrough directly from the Lord. If we take our case to the heavenly realm, we bypass the opposition, spiritually speaking. Because these men chose to go up instead of going through, they were able to get to Jesus without a fierce battle.

This story represents the three heavens. In the first heaven is the house where the opposition was blocking the way to Jesus. The friends could have muscled through the opposition, but it would have been a harder battle. Instead they went above the roof, which represents the third heaven. The third heaven is the throne of God. They got there by having great faith and belief in the authority of Jesus. Jesus was in the power of the Lord that day to heal. They were desperate to somehow go through or above the opposition. Either way they had to get there. There was a blockade going through, so they went up. Their faith allowed them to go up!

Once they were up, they could easily break through the barrier to get around the opposition. The roof itself represents the second heaven, which is always a place of breakthrough. Breaking open the roof from above was like breaking through the second heaven in the book of Daniel. Notice the friends had to go through the structure of the roof. The roof could be broken from above. They could not get through the roof, through the second heaven, from below from the place of opposition. They went around the opposition. From above, they just dug through it and lowered the man from a higher position.

They lowered him to right in front of the one in authority. At that point the Pharisees did not interfere in any way when the man was lowered in front of Jesus. Jesus did the work of healing without

the enemy being a factor at all. The Pharisees did not speak or try to dissuade in any way. The Pharisees challenged Jesus' authority after the fact, but they were without speech or recourse during the event of the healing.

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

²² Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? ²³ Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? ²⁴ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." (Luke 5:21-24)

(This reminds me of Queen Esther, discussed in another chapter, when Haman did not say a word when Esther appealed directly to the king.) Because they went up, and came down from above, they completely removed the barrier of the demonic guard that would keep the man from getting to Jesus.

How did they get the man to the roof? The story does not reveal how they got him there. The friends pressed in urgently. They would not take "no" for an answer, like the Syro-phonician woman. When Jesus saw *their* faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven" (Luke 5:20). It was their faith that carried the day, literally and figuratively. They carried the man to Jesus, they carried him to the roof and they carried him above the barrier to find his place of healing.

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Luke 5:21). They were being very legalistic, just like the enemy who is always legalistic. Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'?" (Luke 5:22-23). Jesus said, "But I want you to know the *Son of Man has authority on earth to*

forgive sins.' So he said to the paralyzed man, 'I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home'" (Luke 5:24).

The Pharisees begin legalizing the discussion with questions of law. Jesus cut right to the heart of the matter. He dropped the authority bombshell on them. He had authority of the Father. The Pharisees never said a single word. The gig was up. Jesus had the trump card; he had authority. They had power, but their power play to keep the man away did not work that time.

The man stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today" (Luke 5:26).

Directional Words: Up, Down, Through, and Out

There are certain words that have spiritual meaning that are often lost because they are scattered throughout Scripture. These words are directional words that express movement toward or away from something. These words are relative, meaning that they speak from the point of beginning, and move toward the point of the end, and express a relation between two locations. It is difficult to see the connection between them when they are dispersed throughout Scripture, however patterns emerge with study. The words give tremendous insight into what is happening in the bigger picture of Scripture. The words are *up*, *down*, *through*, and *out*. Of course, there are many other such words with special meaning, which may not be readily apparent, but these words are particularly relevant to this discussion. When I started looking at these words, a general meaning began to emerge and take shape. They are more than generic prepositions, which is a part of speech that indicates the spatial relationship of one thing to another. Of course with such common words, not every usage is in keeping with this theory, but a pattern emerges that will give some insight into the bigger picture of Scripture. These words are metaphors for the heavenly realms, as well as the nether world or hell.

Up in Scripture seems to represent connection and encounters with the Father, even the third heaven. Jesus often went up. Sometimes he went up alone (Mark 1:35), sometimes he took others up with him (Mark 9:2), sometime he was followed up (Matt. 5:1, 15:29), and sometimes he called up those he wanted to be with him to come up to him (Mark 3:13). Traveling to Jerusalem involved going up (Matt. 20:17). Of course, Jerusalem represents the temple of God and the place of the throne of God. Jesus was taken up into heaven when he ascended (Luke 24:51).

Joseph went up to Bethlehem where Jesus was born, a place in the near vicinity to Jerusalem, representing the throne of God (Luke 2:4). Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Jerusalem to offer him to God as an eight-day-old infant (Luke 2:22). As a twelve-year-old boy, Jesus went up to Jerusalem and he stayed as his parents went down. He said they should have known he would be in his Father's house (Luke 2:42-49).

Down represents the place of the first heaven, the place where Jesus spent his earthly life and preformed most of his ministry on earth. Down is also the abode of humanity. Jesus came down from the mountainside (Matt. 8:1). Jesus often went down to Capernaum, Nazareth and Galilee (Luke 4:31, John 2:12). It is the place of the Holy Spirit's work on earth. The Spirit came down and descended. John the Baptist recognized Jesus as the one that the Holy Spirit came down and remained upon (John 1:33). As a twelve-year-old boy, after leaving the temple with his parents, Jesus went down with them to Nazareth and was obedient (Luke 2:51). The royal official implored Jesus to come down before his son died (John 4:49). Jesus came down from heaven (John 6:42). Jesus is the bread of heaven, which came down so people could eat and not die (John 6:50).

Sometimes the concepts of up and down are seen together in a passage. For example, Satan took Jesus to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone'" (Matt. 4:5-6). Up is the highest point in the temple, which represents Jesus' position in the third heaven, the kingdom of God. Down represented

the worldly offering of Satan, the first heaven. Of course, the angels of the second heaven would be in the middle between up and down, which would have been in a position to catch Jesus.

On the cross, Jesus was lifted up as an offering to God, but the mockers wanted him to come down with the offering to save his life. He could have handed over the up position of the kingdom of God, to come down and have physical life in the temporal world. Zacchaeus was also transformed by going up and he came down a new man (Luke 19:8). Jesus went up to the Mount of transfiguration to encounter God, but came down to heal a boy the disciples could not heal. Jesus rebuked the demon and it came out of the boy (Matt. 17:1-18).

Through is used to represent the second heaven in two distinct ways. First, through is the place of demonic opposition, the hardship believers have to fight through in the second heaven opposition. Second, through represents Jesus as the way to pass through that second heaven realm without any opposition. There are two choices to go through – the way of hardship battling the demonic opposition or in the narrow, but unopposed, way of Jesus.

First, for example, demons that have been cast out go through the arid places seeking rest, but finding none they go back from where they came (Matt 12:43). Wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction and many enter through it (Matt. 7:13). In the story above, the carriers of the mat could not get through the demonic forces that hindered the way to Jesus. The four friends dug through the roof from above to bring the paralyzed man to Jesus (Mark 2:4).

Second, Jesus represents passage through to the place of opposition to get from the first heaven to the third heaven to the abode of the Father. We enter through a narrow gate (Matt. 7:13). Jesus is the narrow gate, between the place where we are and the place where God is in the third heaven. When the Pharisees wanted to throw Jesus from the brow of the hill, he walked through the crowd unseen (Luke 4:30). Jesus said it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God (Mark 10:25). Jesus also said to make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many will try to enter and will

not be able (Luke 13:24). Through Jesus, all things were made (John 1:3). Jesus came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe (John 1:7). Jesus was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him (John 1:10). The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17). Paul says in the book of Romans,

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be *saved from God's wrath through him!* ¹⁰For if, while we were God's enemies, we were *reconciled to him through the death* of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be *saved through his life!* ¹¹Not only is this so, but we also boast in *God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.* (Rom. 5:9-11)

Through the Church, even the demonic realm will know the wisdom of God's will. Paul said, "His intent was now, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence" (Eph. 3:10-12). It is through Christ that we may even come before the throne of God!

One example of up, down, and through was when Jesus encountered the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus was leaving Judea, the region of Jerusalem (up, third heaven), and he was going to Galilee (down, first heaven). John states, "Now he *had* to go through Samaria (through, second heaven)" (John 4:4). In other words, to get from up to down Jesus had to go through. It was imperative for him to pass through that region. I have often wondered about that passage, because most "good Jews" would not be caught dead in Samaria. Samaritans were the most abhorred type of people, and most Jews would walk around Samaria (taking the wide road, perhaps?), rather than go through it. That is why the Samaritan woman said, "'You

are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?’ For Jews do not associate with Samaritans” (John 4:5).

The through place is the place of demonic opposition; through Jesus there is a gate. The Samaritans were worried they could not get to Jerusalem to worship (up). Jesus told the woman, “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is Spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24). In the through place, the fields were white with the harvest (John 4:35) and many believed because he stayed with them for a time.

Please forgive a silly metaphor, but I almost see Jesus, the narrow gate, as a straw in a glass. The liquid is down. The mouth is up. The straw is the narrow gateway to get from one to the other. The liquid is all around the straw, but it will not be able to travel to the divide from where it is to the mouth without going through the straw. The liquid cannot easily make passage any other way but through the straw. Jesus is the gateway, and no one comes to the Father except through him. Jesus said, “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” John 3:17. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

Jesus is the door; he is the way through. “I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture” (John 10:9). We enter through Jesus. He said we could come in and go out with ease. What are we entering as we go through the gate? It is clear Jesus is the bridge, the way from where we are to where God is. Metaphorically, Jesus gets believers through the great divide to where God is enthroned. Going through Jesus is going through the second heaven, and entering the third heaven. In John 10:9, Jesus said believers would come in and go out and find pasture. Traveling between the first and third heavens, through the second heaven passage, Jesus. Traveling from the heavenly realms to the places where the kingdom of darkness reigns is only by Jesus and with the authority that he gives us. This means that moving in and out of the heavenly realms is something that believers can and should participate when Jesus allows and facilitates.

Out represents the place of outer darkness, the place of the lost, or the place of the demon-possessed. Out is where the kingdom of darkness is ruling and reigning in the world. Out is where believers go to encounter the lost world. Out is where the seeds are sown. Jesus asked the disciples to follow him and he would send them out to fish for people (Matt. 4:19). He would send them out as sheep among wolves (Matt. 9:38). Jesus gave them authority to drive out impure spirits just before he sent them out for ministry (Matt. 10:1, 5). Authority was for out, the place of overcoming the power of the demonic realm. Demons are driven out or cast out. Believers are called to gouge out an offending eye, which causes one to stumble. The unforgiving servant went out. John the Baptist was out in the wilderness (Matt. 11:7) The Pharisees went out to plot to kill Jesus (Matt 12:14). Farmers went out to sow seed (Matt. 13:3). The virgins go out to meet the groom. The ones who were ready went in, but the ones who were not ready were locked out (Matt. 25:1-14). The wicked servant who did not increase his master's holding was thrown out into outer darkness with weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 25:29-30). Temptations of Jesus were out in the wilderness (Mark 1:12). Jesus called Lazarus to come out of the tomb (John 11:43). Satan was driven out of heaven, and the moneychangers were driven out of the temple. There was no place in the third heaven for the enemy; he was driven out. The landowner went out and hired workers throughout the day. All workers who came in were paid the same wage (Matt 20:1-16). Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden. They were destined to roam out of God's paradise. Judas went out into the night to betray Jesus (John 13:30).

A prime example of Jesus going out to encounter the lost, hurting world is when he went to encounter the demoniac among the tombs. To fully understand this story, some background information is needed. Jesus was in the place of believers and followers in Galilee, where he did, most of his earthly ministry. Jesus and the disciples crossed over the Sea of Galilee to "the other side" (Matt. 8:28). As Jesus crossed over the lake, it is like he was crossing over the great divide of those who are out of his kingdom. It was a boundary from the kingdom of God to the kingdom of darkness reigning in a region.

He went out and performed a healing miracle and instantaneously delivered the possessed man.

Legion, the chief demon among many, begged Jesus not to send them out of the area (Mark 5:10). The demon did not want to go “out of the area” because that was their area, the place of the demonic habitat commonly referred to as “out” in Scripture. The demons were on their home turf, where the kingdom of darkness was ruling. Luke 8:31 says the demons asked not to be sent to the abyss, the deep bottomless pit. Legion begged to be sent into the herd of swine. Jesus gave them permission to go into the pigs and they did. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. The demons, via the pigs, ran right into the metaphoric abyss, the great crevasse between the heavenly realm of God and the demonic realm. They asked not to go there, but it seems they had judgment anyway.

We see from the story that people of the region tried to bind the man, but the people could not do it. He had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet (Mark 5:2-3). No one was strong enough to subdue him, indicating he was subject to great demonic power. The demons could not be subdued in the region because it was power verses power, and the power in the man was stronger than the power in the people. The people of that region did not have the power and authority of Jesus to overcome the demons. The enemy possessed power, but no authority. In a power-versus-power showdown, the one with greater power wins. The people were residents of “out”; therefore they were under the influence of the kingdom of darkness. Only Jesus, operating in the authority of the Father, could cast out the demons. The man was later seen sitting at the feet of Jesus, a representation of learning at the feet of the Master. Luke says, “When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus’ feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid” (Luke 8: 35).

Subsequently, the people came to Jesus and begged him to leave the area, which he promptly did. The people of the region were filled with great fear (Luke 8:37). The Lord does not give a spirit of fear (2 Tim. 1:7). There was a demonic stronghold of fear operating in the

region. Fear often keeps people from gaining freedom they could have in the authority of Jesus. Jesus went out to the region, healed one man, and left. He did, however, leave the man as a voice in the out region to testify about the merciful deliverance of God and what he had done for him.

If the lake is representative of the crevasse between out and where God is, what does it say that Peter got out of the boat and walked on water for a period of time until he lost faith? If Jesus bids a believer to come, can he or she go to Jesus? Of course! Stay tuned for more discussion of going to Jesus in the next chapter.

Conclusion

The fact is some of the healing work and kingdom manifestation happened in the up position when people went to Jesus on the mountain, or in the third heaven. Most of the miraculous works of Christ occurred when he was in the down position, the place of his earthly ministry in the first heaven. Some healing and works of mercy occurred when Jesus or other disciples went out to the place where people were separated from God and living in the control of the demonic realm. Sometimes we receive the manifestation of the kingdom in the first heaven. In the place of out, people see the power of the kingdom of God come upon them and it causes them to come to the Lord. Sometimes people go to him in the heavenly realms in the third heaven, as we see with Paul, John, and even the men with the mat. Understanding the bigger picture will help believer navigate the kingdom realms with greater ease and comprehension.

Chapter 14

Here And There



Typically, my husband and I wake up, hold hands, and pray the first thing every morning. One morning I played “possum,” because I was awake but did not let the fact be known. An opossum will roll over and feign death as a defense mechanism and strategy. I was seeking God in prayer. In fact, I had been in prayer for about two hours. After my husband left the room, I had an experience in which I went in the Spirit to a place above the world. I could see the earth as clearly as if I were viewing it from the space shuttle. I could see landmasses, oceans, and clouds. When I had understanding I was looking at the earth, I began moving closer at a high rate of speed until my vision became blurry. I had the feeling that I was being carried, but I did not see the Lord or an angel. I stopped to regain clarity of vision. This happened more than once. Then I saw a country I did not recognize, but memorized its distinct features and geographic outline. As I moved even closer, I saw a particular place within that country. The country turned out to be Thailand.

From time to time, I have had visions, usually after I have been in prayer and seeking the Lord for an extended time. Although I cannot state with certainty, I actually believe the event was not a vision, but I was actually taken in the Spirit and shown a place that will be pivotal in my ministry in the future. This experience is very similar to what happened with John when he found himself moved in the Spirit: “*At once I was in the Spirit*, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it” (Rev. 4:2). I share this

personal experience to illustrate the concept that believers we can go places in the Spirit when the Lord wants to teach, commission, or allow them to be strategic in kingdom matters. When the kingdom is served, the Lord can take believers any place he wants. It was very common in the Scripture and it can be common for current believers as well. Believers must remember if it happened in Scripture, it can happen even now.

In Scripture, people were sometimes moved by divine intervention for kingdom purposes, whether it was in the Spirit or in the body. The Bible reveals kingdom “travel” happened in several different ways:

1. God allowed some people to simply peer into the heavenly realm while they were still physically and spiritually present on the earth.
2. Some servants of God journeyed in the Spirit to another earthly location for spiritual reconnaissance.
3. The Holy Spirit actually physically moved some people to a new geographic location on the earth.
4. Some people actually traveled (probably in the Spirit only) into the heavenly realm for revelation and commissioning for a divine assignment and then returned to earth for active duty.
5. There were limited instances in which a very few people were simply taken to heaven without physical death, for God’s unknown purpose, without returning to earth.

The Bible tells of many occurrences where people were translated, or moved, for God’s will and plan. What was possible for the people of Scripture is possible for believers today. God does not change. He is the same as he always was and will always be. He is not a man that he should lie (Num. 23:19). He is faithful to his promises (Ps. 33:4). He does not change on a whim just for kicks. Simply because a believer may not have experienced translation in any of the ways shown in Scripture, does not mean that will not or cannot happen, especially if it supports God’s mission on earth. There are many different circumstances and characteristics of the

people of Scripture who were translated from one place to another, either by physical movement of the body or in the Spirit.

Typically, most people think the word *translate* means to render a written or spoken word into a different language. However, the word has lesser-known meanings that are important to our discussion. A dictionary definition of the word *translate* also includes the following: “*To change from one form, function, or state to another; convert or transform . . . To transfer from one place or condition to another . . . Ecclesiastical (relating to the Church of Jesus Christ) meaning: To convey to heaven without death.*”¹⁵ This definition was obtained from a free, online, secular dictionary, not a Bible dictionary. Even the world understands the word *translate* has godly or spiritual meanings.

Translation means to change from one form, function, or state to another. What does it mean to go from one state to another? Can a believer go from the bodily state to the spiritual state in the spirit realm without dying? In Scripture, God’s kingdom was manifested when the people of God were physically transferred from one place or condition to another by supernatural means. For example, when Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration, he was translated from one condition to another. He was transferred from his condition as human, flesh and blood, to the condition of being in his heavenly form. Matthew says, “There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light” (Matt. 17:2).

By definition, translation can mean to convey to heaven without death. We see in several people in the Bible: Enoch, Isaiah, John, Paul, and others were taken to heaven, usually for divine commissioning for a job or task the Lord had for them on earth. Translation is a very important concept for believers, but one that is not often discussed or studied.

1. Looking Into Open Heaven

There were certain people who were allowed to see into the kingdom realm apparently without actually going there in spirit or

body. In reality, this technically does not qualify as translation in the sense people were not moved in body or in spirit. These occurrences are open heaven experiences and they are accompanied by the blessing of God. In Revelation 3:8, the Lord said to the church at Philadelphia, “I know your deeds. See, *I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut*. I know that you have little strength, *yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name*.” John saw an open heaven in Revelation 4:1, which states, “After this I looked, and there before me was a *door standing open in heaven*.”

Every time someone is actually translated to heaven, it starts with an open heaven. These openings in heaven are called open doors, or gateways. Everyone who experiences an open heaven becomes anointed from the experience. Open heaven gives entree to God at a new level; people are forever changed when they go into the presence of God in that way. Open heaven releases authentic worship of the Lord; people cannot help but worship when they have seen or come into the heavenly realm. We will see open heaven or throne room visitation always brings revelation. People with these experiences always walk in a new level of authority. Faithfulness brings open heaven. Malachi 3:10 states, “‘Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, there may be food in my house. Test me in this,’ says the LORD Almighty, ‘and see if I will *not throw open the floodgates of heaven* and pour out so much blessing there will not be room enough to store it.’”¹⁶

Open Heaven Lessons From Jacob

One of the most dramatic scenes of peering into open heaven occurred in the book of Genesis. Jacob was sleeping at night, and in a dream he saw a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reached into heaven. On the ladder he saw the angels of God ascending and descending. Jacob saw the Lord standing above the ladder and he said, “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac” (Gen. 28:13).

At this point in his life, Jacob had not illustrated stellar moral dealings or a strong character of righteousness with his family members.¹⁷ At that moment, Jacob was on the run from his older

brother, Esau. Jacob had just swindled Esau's blessing, birthright, and inheritance (Gen. 27-28). God was calling Jacob to be what he created him to be (the father of the new nation of Israel), not what he was at that moment (a lying cheat). In the experience of the open heaven, Jacob was allowed to gaze into an unknown realm and hear the voice of God tell him of great blessings that were coming:

I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. ¹⁴Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. ¹⁵I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. *I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.*" (Gen. 28:13b-15)

Even Jacob recognized the holiness of that place. He said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it" (Gen. 28:16). It is interesting to note the Lord was there all along, but Jacob did not know it until God revealed himself. What a good lesson for believers. Jacob set an altar to the Lord and memorialized the place by renaming it Bethel, house of God.

Bethel was pivotal in Israel's history. Often places where God opened the heavens carry the continued blessing of God. It is common for people to go back to the places of open heaven and blessing of past generations to hear a fresh word from the Lord and to receive continued blessing from God. In studying the geography of the Bible, Bethel and other places of blessing or open heaven experiences were significant in biblical history over and over again. They may have been renamed, but the location holds significance in the connection between the heavenly and earthly realms.

Jacob also proclaimed, "How awesome is this place. This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven!" (Gen. 28:17). We must stop and ponder what it means that Jacob called Bethel *a gate of heaven*. It is a portal of the heavenly realm – a gate into direct communication with the God of heaven. The ladder is

none other than Jesus as revealed when Jesus talks to Nathaniel: “Very truly I tell you, you will see ‘heaven open, and the *angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man*’ (John 1:51). Jacob was in the first heaven and was looking into the third heaven. For Jacob and a few others in Scripture, open heaven was a place in which it was possible to see into the heavenly realm. Somehow, Jacob and others saw directly into the throne room of God without translating through the atmosphere.

Open Heaven Lessons From Stephen

Stephen also had the opportunity to see into heaven. He was in the process of being stoned to death as the first Christian martyr after the death of Jesus. Even so and regardless of his circumstances, he was full of the Spirit of God! Acts says, “But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.” (Acts 7:55). *His response* to what was happening to him opened heaven. He gazed into an open heaven and saw the glory of God; his life at that moment reflected the glory of God. He saw Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father. Steven saw into heaven and Scripture states he “*was in the Spirit*” in the midst of very cruel torture with no anger or recourse against those who were taking his natural life. It is a critical point that must not be overlooked!

He had given an honest discourse about the gospel message and the crowd intentionally closed their ears and carried him out to the place where they would later kill him. When Stephen called to the Lord to receive his spirit, he laid down his life in forgiveness of those who had done those horrible things to him (Acts 7:59-60). He revealed what he could see but no one else could see. The murders could not see it because their lives had not reflected the glory of God.

Stephen was highly respected as a leader in the church, and was a willing servant to the Lord and to the people. He possessed the qualities of Jesus that allowed him to gaze into the supernatural heavenly realm. Stephen was chosen from among his peers to be in servant leadership. Stephen was of good reputation, full of faith, and the Spirit of wisdom (Acts 6:3). He was a man who was blessed to

serve God in distributing food and administration, what most would consider mundane, menial duties. Often believers do not want to do those things because they are tedious, lowly tasks. Stephen was anointed for kingdom works among the people: “And Stephen, full of faith and power, did *great wonders and miracles among the people*” (Acts 6:8). However, even so Stephen was willing to serve food for the kingdom of God. Most believers want to be in the heat of battle when serving God. We do not want to serve food, but this man was a servant who was blessed to be a slave to God in every way. God opened heaven for him!

Open Heaven Lessons From Nathaniel

Nathaniel was also allowed to see into the kingdom realm because he was a man who was pure in heart. John 1:47 states, “When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, ‘*Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.*’” His purity came with a promise to see heaven opened. John 1:49-50 states,

Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.”⁵⁰ Jesus said, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that.”⁵¹ He then added, “Very truly I tell you, you will see *‘heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on’ the Son of Man.*”

Jesus is the way through! He is the gateway to the throne of God. Scripture does not state if Nathanael actually experienced open heaven, but Jesus said heaven would be opened to him. It was true because of his purity. Purity is necessary to see God. I think people often mistake the Scripture term “seeing God” for some future revelation about God or of going into the presence of God upon death of the natural body. However, the Word speaks of either a current circumstance or a future circumstance. Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:8 where it says, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”

Psalm 24 makes it clear no one will go to the holy place of God unless they are pure. It says,

Who then dares to climb up into the presence of the Lord? And who has the right to enter into the holy place where He dwells? *It will be those who are clean, and whose works and ways are pure; whose hearts are true and who are sealed in the truth. Those who never deceive, and whose words are sure. Those who live like this will receive the Lord's blessing, And the righteousness given by the Savior God. They are the very ones who will stand before God. For they seek the pleasure of Jacob's God by seeking his face. (Ps. 24:3-6, Passion Translation)*

Conversely, Psalm 51:9-11 illustrates sins and iniquities will remove one from the presence of God, "*Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.*"¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. ¹¹ *Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.*"

2. True Reconnaissance: Translation In The Spirit

Sometimes people in the Bible were taken in the Spirit only to another earthly location for kingdom purposes or were allowed to have knowledge by the Holy Spirit. We see this happened at least twice with the prophet Elisha, in 2 Kings. Elisha was taken in the Spirit to uncover the lies of his servant Gehazi, who had taken money and items and then lied to Elisha about it. 2 Kings 5:26-27 reveals,

But Elisha said to him, "*Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to take money, or to accept clothes, olive groves, vineyards, flocks, herds, or menservants and maidservants? Naaman's leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever.*"

Then Gehazi went from Elisha's presence and he was leprous, as white as snow.

Elisha also gained information about the king of Syria and used it for strategic warfare. Elisha knew what the king of Syria spoke in his private chambers. Elisha gave the information to his king. In essence Elisha was spying in the Spirit and then giving strategy to the king of Israel so the Israelites would not be caught in an ambush (2 Kings 6:8-12). The king of Syria wanted to know who was the traitor among his men. They replied there was no traitor among them but rather, "Elisha, the prophet *who is in Israel*, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom" (2 Kings 6:12). Elisha was in Israel in the physical body; he knew what he knew by the power of Holy Spirit.

Others in Scripture gave testimony about traveling in the Spirit. Paul also announced several times he was with his churches in the spirit. He told the Corinthians,

Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord. (1 Cor. 5:3-5)

Additionally, Paul talked about being with the Colossians in the spirit, "For though I am absent from you in body, *I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is*" (Col. 2:5). Paul seemed to know things, like the orderly way that the church did business. Lest you are thinking Paul was receiving reports from his disciples, this communication is distinguished from the times when his brothers in faith did report to him. He did not say that, he said, "I am present with you in the spirit!"

What conclusions can we draw from all of this? This may be very critical in the future when the body of believers may need to be

very strategic to know the movement of enemy forces. Even now in some parts of the world, believers do not schedule Bible or worship meetings. They just say, “We will meet where the Spirit leads,” so those who would infiltrate the meetings to persecute or imprison them do not know where to go. Obviously the Spirit of God knows the hearts of the people and directs only the true followers of God to the meeting at the proper time and place. We will learn to rely on the leading of the Holy Spirit and learn to operate in the kingdom realm now and in the days ahead.

3. Geographic Movement Of People

Sometime people were physically moved from one geographic location to another for kingdom purposes. Jesus was translated many times in bodily form to alternative locations, but there were times Jesus just walked, under the covering of the Holy Spirit, out of the midst of people who were seeking to take his life. At the very beginning of his ministry, he angered the people in the synagogue and they wanted to throw him off the cliff, but he escaped from an angry mob by just walking away. Somehow supernaturally he just left their midst. Luke 4:28-30 states, “All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. ²⁹ They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. ³⁰ But *he walked right through the crowd* and went on his way. In John 8, Jesus was speaking truth to the Pharisees. They became so enflamed that they picked up stones to kill him. Jesus cloaked himself, “At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but *Jesus hid himself, slipping away* from the temple grounds” (John 8:59). Jesus supernaturally concealed himself so the Pharisees could not see him.

Also Philip was a disciple after the death of Jesus at time when Christians were already being persecuted. Philip was called to be radically obedient when an angel of the Lord said, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza” (Acts 8:26). Philip met an Ethiopian who had gone to Jerusalem to

worship. The man was converted and asked to be baptized. What happened afterward is what is important for this discussion,

Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the *Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away*, and the *eunuch did not see him again*, but went on his way rejoicing.⁴⁰ *Philip, however, appeared at Azotus* and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea. (Acts 8:38-40)

Philip was moved in the body to another location. He was called to go south on the road, and ended up on a long-term ministry trip preaching in all the towns. I wonder what people thought happened to him. He just suddenly left home one day and then found himself on an extended ministry and mission trip of unknown duration. That is obedience.

In a similar incident, the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water toward them. They were frightened, but Peter went out to meet him. The disciples were willing to receive Jesus into the boat, which means they let him come into their midst and be with them. John says, “Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and *immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading*” (John 6:21). They had been on the lake for a long time, not making any progress, and had not reached their destination. When they invited Jesus into the boat, they were immediately at the shore where they were heading. Immediately means *at once* or *forthwith*. Immediately means immediately! There are other words that mean *in due time* or *in a little while*, but those words were not used here. The word used means “now!” He came on board with them and immediately they all were translated to the shore on the other side. The whole group moved by kingdom means to the other side of the lake. The boat was moved too! This may be a good thing to know.

That was not the only time an entire group was translated by God. In Exodus 24, the Lord told first Moses that the elders could come up but Moses alone was to approach the Lord and the others

were to worship at a distance. The Lord specifically said that the others could not come near. The LORD said to Moses, “Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. You are to worship at a distance,² but Moses alone is to approach the LORD; the others must not come near. And the people may not come up with him” (Exod. 24:1-2). x Verses 9-11 reveal the nuance of what is happening there after the time of preparation, “Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel *went up*¹⁰ and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as bright blue as the sky.¹¹ But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank” (Exod. 24:9-11).

Moses and the elders went into the throne room of heaven to be in the presence of God. They were seeing God in heaven with lapis lazuli under his feet. God specifically said that they would not come on the mountain with Moses, but they suddenly see the Lord high and lifted up in the heavenly realm. It is reported in Ezekiel that there is lapis lazuli in the throne room of heaven when it says, “Above the vault over their heads was what looked like a throne of lapis lazuli, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man,” (Ezek. 1:26) and “I looked, and I saw the likeness of a throne of lapis lazuli above the vault that was over the heads of the cherubim” (Ezek. 10:1). Ezekiel was looking up at the throne with lapis lazuli over his head. The seventy leaders saw the lapis lazuli as pavement under their feet. It appears they were seeing the throne room from different perspectives.

In Exodus 24:9 Moses, the leaders and seventy elders “went up.” There is evidence in the uses of the Hebrew word for “went up” which illustrate that the word was used for spiritual translation. The Hebrew word for *went up* is *way·ya·‘al*. It occurs 110 times in the Old Testament and is used to convey travel as in “going up” from one location to another, or even to ascend a mountain to offer a sacrifice. It is important to note that *way·ya·‘al* is also used to convey the idea of movement in the Spirit into the heavenly realm. In 2 Kings 2:11, when Elijah was taken away without death, he went up or *way·ya·‘al* to heaven in a whirlwind. In Ezekiel 11:23, the Spirit of the Lord *way·ya·‘al* and left the city. These instances in which

that word *way·ya·‘al* was used to convey that there was something happening other than just physical travel in the natural. The elders saw God in his glory!

4. Commissioned For A Kingdom Assignment

Several notable people in Scripture were taken to heaven for a direct commissioning by the Lord. The times of being caught up to heaven were so formative in their lives that they were changed forever. After the revelations of their throne room experiences, they became mighty warriors in the kingdom battle. Isaiah, Paul, and John gave huge segments of the Holy Scripture from revelations received by being in the presence of God. They were prolific authors of Scripture. Jesus quoted Isaiah more than any other Old Testament author. Paul gave the body of believers about two-thirds of the New Testament, forming the Scripture by his obedience to the Lord. John was taken into heaven from a place of exile on the island of Patmos, and then penned the book of Revelation, the most direct prophetic statement of end-time events in Scripture.

God commissioned each of them for a kingdom task. The writings of Isaiah, Paul, and John were very strategic. Without their writings, believers would not know how to operate in the kingdom of God. Followers could stumble around for a long time without fully moving in the will of God. In other words, because they were translated into the presence of God, they were commissioned to teach future believers how to follow God and be strategic for God’s kingdom.

Consequently, the same thing is true for current believers who are caught up into the presence of God. When individuals are translated to the throne room of God, strategy in kingdom warfare is released. I do not believe people are called up to be with the Lord for a walk in the park or because they are “good Christians.” People are called up for a very specific kingdom purpose of a direct prophetic download like no other. It seems as if only in times of critical advancement of the kingdom will people be called up to be commissioned directly from the Lord himself. The call and commissioning of these mighty

men from Scripture reveal what believers need to know about the strategy of God.

Isaiah

Before Isaiah could receive the commissioning, he had to be cleansed and prepared. Anyone who has ever been called into service by the Lord has most likely gone through a time of intense cleansing of the stain of the world and a purification process. That is what happened to Isaiah. The fire of God first purified his mouth to make him holy and acceptable. The mouth of Isaiah was symbolic of him being the spokesperson of God. God was going to use the mouth for his service. The sins of Isaiah were revealed in the holy presence of God.

In the year that King Uzziah died, *I saw the Lord*, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” ⁴ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

⁵ “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and *my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.*” ⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.” ⁸ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!” (Isa. 6:1-8)

Isaiah recognized his impurity as he was fully shown in the purity of God. He was an impure person, but God used him anyway. God can take that which is impure and make it pure and useful to him when a person is willing. Isaiah was willing. God is always looking for willing people, even if they are not the most likely, most equipped, or most pure. GOD NEEDS WILLING PEOPLE! God can do a lot with people who are willing and ready to serve him, even if they are impure at the outset! In history and in Scripture, the Lord often picked people out of the gutter to be his most passionate spokespersons. Believers do not come to the Lord qualified; he qualifies them!

God asked, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” to which Isaiah answered, “Here am I. Send me!” (Isa. 6:8). The Lord will never send an unwilling person to do his work, especially a very difficult task. As in the case of Jonah, the Lord had a way of making him willing to do what was asked. The will of a person must be fully engaged to be useful to God. God needs willing people much more than he needs perfect people. Too often people think they are not good enough to be used by God, but God equips and prepares those he calls. The biggest factor is the faith to say, “Yes!”

Paul

Paul was also dramatically called on the road to Damascus and he was commissioned to a life of service. The Lord told him at the outset he was going to suffer much because of the name of Jesus. Much later, Paul wrote about an experience of a man being caught up to the third heaven. Most people believe Paul was talking about himself, but did not want to boast. This is what he said in 2 Corinthians 12:2-7,

²I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was *caught up to the third heaven*. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows.

³And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—

⁴*was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible*

things, things that no one is permitted to tell. ⁵ I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. ⁶ Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say, ⁷ or because of *these surpassingly great revelations.* (2 Cor. 12:2-7)

The man who was caught up to the third heaven did not know if it was in the body or out, but it does not matter for this discussion. He was caught up for a specific purpose: revelation and commissioning. He came back to implement the revelations he had been given. Paul reports in 2 Corinthians 12:4, one he knows was “Caught up to paradise and *heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell.*” He heard deep revelations from God, ineffable things. Paul further stated the disclosures were “*surpassingly great revelations*” (2 Cor. 12:7). The person, who was probably Paul, went to heaven for a specific purpose and that was to receive revelation from the throne room of God.

Paul’s level of anointing was incredible and his level of understanding was by divine inspiration. Paul did not have the New Testament as a point of reference to understand the will of God. He had the Old Testament and the Holy Spirit to teach him. The incredible understanding of Paul came from God himself. Paul wrote, “I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, *I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ*” (Gal. 1:12). The Lord taught Paul so Paul could teach us! There is a divine purpose behind the actions of God in humanity. We will be translated to the throne room of heaven for a purpose that suits the will of God for the needs to advance his kingdom.

John

The Apostle John was translated to heaven for revelation. The Revelation of John was a tremendously rich word from God. The first thing the Lord tells John to do is to write everything he sees on

a scroll. “On the Lord’s Day *I was in the Spirit*, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,¹¹ which said: “*Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches* (Rev. 1:10-11).

John was caught up into heaven for a specific purpose, as a scribe and recorder of those things God deemed important for future generations to know. John was directed to write on a scroll what he saw. The next thing John was directed to do was to “send it.” Revelation like that does not come for the edification of the person who receives it, but to build up the body of Christ.

5. Living But Gone To Heaven

There were instances in which some people were simply taken to heaven for God’s unknown purpose without ever returning. Enoch was translated into heaven without dying; he was just taken up by God. We actually know very little about Enoch, compared to other leaders in the Bible. He is in the direct line from Adam to Noah, being Noah’s great-grandfather. Scripture shows twice that Enoch walked faithfully with God. The fact his faithfulness is mentioned twice is significant for our discussion. Faithful people please the heart of God. We see Enoch was taken from life without death by faith. He lived on earth 365 years, a relatively short period of time in comparison to those in his ancestral line (Gen 5:23). He is sandwiched between his father Jared, who lived 962 years, and his son Methuselah, who lived 969 years, longer than any other person mentioned in the Bible.¹⁸

Enoch is also mentioned in Hebrews 11, also known as the faith chapter. Hebrews 11 is a “Who’s Who” of faithful people in the Bible, and Enoch is right there among them. Hebrews 11 speaks of Enoch:

By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: “He could not be found, because God had taken him away.” For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God.

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that

he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. (Heb. 11:5-6)

Hebrews 11:6 is a pivotal passage of Scripture for many people. I often hear people say we cannot please God without having faith in two things: first, that God exists, and second, he rewards those who earnestly seek him. It shames me that I have never connected that passage about pleasing God with Enoch's faithfulness before. Enoch, who is almost without notice in Scripture, is in the faith hall of fame. Notice the connector "and" between verses five and six, "By faith, Enoch . . . *And* without faith"

We also know Enoch was a prophet of God. He heard God and was fearless about relating what God told him. Jude, the brother of James, who was the brother of Jesus, said this about Enoch,

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones ¹⁵ to judge everyone, and to convict all of them of all the ungodly acts they have committed in their ungodliness, and of all the defiant words ungodly sinners have spoken against him." ¹⁶ These people are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage. (Jude 14-16)

The crucial questions are: what does all this have to do with Enoch being taken up to God without facing death, and why is that important to us? He was obviously precious to God, faithful and bold. When Genesis 5 relates he walked with God it means that he and God were in agreement.¹⁹ Amos 3:3 says, "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" Enoch knew God and God knew Enoch. He communed with God, agreed with him, fully trusted him, or he would not have pleased God as it says in Hebrews 11.²⁰ He was righteous and could clearly see the future of those who were not faithful to God. He was the first man to be taken up without dying, which ultimately reflects the ascension of Jesus. This also reflects

the fact there will be a generation that will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.²¹ In the kingdom realm, there is life without dying!

Elijah was also taken up to God without facing death. We do not know a lot about why Elijah was taken up. He had been a powerhouse of God's strength against the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 17). He later became despondent and in fear and was taken into the wilderness to be ministered to by the Lord. The Lord gave him instructions about what to do to pass the mantle of his ministry to others:

The LORD said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, *anoint Hazael king over Aram.*¹⁶ Also, *anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet.*¹⁷ *Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu.*¹⁸ Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him. (1Kings 19:15-18)

After Elijah had done what the Lord commanded he was ready to be taken. The fact of Elijah's going up was well known in advance by two companies of prophets from Gilgal and Bethel. Both groups told Elisha his master, Elijah, was to be taken from him that day. Additionally, fifty prophets from Jericho were apparently watching with anticipation as Elijah was taken to heaven on a chariot of fire in a whirlwind. Elijah dropped his mantle and Elisha picked it up and used it to demonstrate the transference of power from Elijah to Elisha (2 Kings 2).

Conclusion

Translation is being caught up to heaven or to another geographic location in the Spirit or by actual movement of the physical body. These supernatural movements in the Spirit are for the purposes of

God, just as with any other manifestation of the kingdom realm. The things that move the heart of God to open heaven are faith, purity, or worship. Other times people were translated for their own protection. Psalm 18:2 states, “You are . . . my mountain of hiding, my pathway of escape, my tower of rescue when none can reach me, my secret strength and shield around me, you are salvation’s ray of brightness shining on the hillside, always the champion of my cause.” But in other instances, heaven was opened with the possibility of faith, purity, or worship.

In the case of John, it is important to note the heaven opened with the invitation for John to “come up here.” This and other passages give the understanding we are in some ways in control of going up. The call came first, but it was accompanied with an invitation for John to do something. John was called and he went. Only faith will allow humanity to move in the realm of the kingdom of God and experience the kingdom manifestation. Worship moves the heart of God and we see that especially with John, who was worshipping in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day.

In the last days, kingdom principles such as translation will be significant for people to understand. Believers must have the revelation of the entire Word of God and read the Word literally. In time, travel may become difficult or impossible by natural means. This information will be critical for every believer. These gifts are not just for a few people; they are for everyone.

Chapter 15

Animals, Vegetables, Or Minerals



When I was a child riding in the car with my family, we played a game called Twenty Questions. The “*It*” person would come up with a secret and the people in the car would try to figure it out in twenty leading questions, which could only be answered by “yes” or “no.” Before the beginning of the game, the person would declare if the answer were an animal, vegetable, or mineral. It was a great way to while away the time during a long road trip. Even then, my interest may have been sparked to search out hidden things.

This chapter makes me think of that game declaring, “Animal, vegetable, or mineral.” Even the livestock and wild beasts, plants, and substances of the earth are subjects of God’s kingdom. In the kingdom realm, those things are blessed in the manifest presence of God. In the natural, however, they are under the curse of the Fall, just like humanity. Living creatures, growing things, and elements of the earth respond to the authority and power of the Most High. Every part of nature is subject to the kingdom of God.

Animals in the Kingdom of God

Animals are subject to kingdom reality in miraculous ways. God uses living creatures in his kingdom plan to give warning, to provide sustenance, and be instruments of punishment and judgment. Animals were blessed at creation, just as Adam and Eve were.

The provision of Eden would have also supplied for the needs of the animals. God saw the creation of birds and aquatic life, was good and he blessed them. He created the land creatures and God also saw it was good (Gen. 1:21, 22, 25). They were subject to the rule and dominion of Adam and Eve. Animals were not created as food for humanity; they were created for companionship of Adam. The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”¹⁹ Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky” (Gen. 2:18-19). Of course no suitable helper was found for Adam among the animals, so God took a rib from Adam’s body and made the woman. Their creation was for the fellowship with humanity, not to be food or chattel.

After Adam and Eve ate from the tree, all of that changed for the animals. In Genesis 3:14, the Lord said to the serpent, “Cursed are you *above all livestock and all wild animals!*” The serpent was cursed first and foremost, but *all the other animals were cursed* in the Fall as well. As part of the curse, an animal was slain to cover the sins of Adam and Eve. The first bloodshed and loss of life on earth was that of the animal God killed to cover their sin. Adam and Eve could not adequately cover their sins with leaves, so something had to die.

In the days of Noah, the vast majority of the animals were destroyed in the flood, The Lord said, “I am going to bring the floodwaters on the earth to destroy *all life under the heavens, every living creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on the earth will perish* (Gen. 6:17). In the ark, Noah was to bring two of every kind of bird and animal and every kind of created animal was protected from extinction by the grace of God in the ark. The animals suffered tremendous loss of kingdom blessing, but God made provision for them to begin anew with Noah and his family. They were given the opportunity to live in kingdom fruitful multiplication.

The prophet Isaiah foretold of a day when the animals would be restored on the earth. In a Messianic time to come, when the root of Jesse is raised up, the animals will be delivered from the effects of the curse of the Fall. Isaiah said,

The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. ⁷The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. ⁸The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. ⁹They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. (Isa. 11:6-9)

The crucial part about this portrayal of restoration is found in Isaiah 11:9, which states, “They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, *for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.*” The water covering the sea represents total filling of knowledge of God. When the kingdom reality is fully restored, these things will take place in the new course of nature. In other words, when the knowledge of the Lord is at its fullest to the extent the waters cover the sea, or the kingdom of God is fully manifest, then there will be restoration of all natural order. Did you ever contemplate how water covers the sea?

In the meantime, we see animals are subject to the intermittent manifestation of the realm of the kingdom of God, just as any other part of creation. God used animals and other created order supernaturally when it fits into his plan. When the kingdom of God manifests, animals do not respond as they normally would in the natural. By looking at the following passages, we may get a glimpse of what Eden was like for the animals.

Balaam's donkey spoke to Balaam in an audible voice because Lord opened the donkey's mouth. The kingdom realm manifested in the mouth of the donkey. The donkey was actually a prophetic seer who saw in the spirit realm! Specifically, the donkey saw the angel of the Lord was there with sword drawn to oppose Balaam. Three times the donkey turned away and was beaten for his trouble (Num. 22:27-31). Without the warning of the donkey, the angel would have

killed Balaam. The animal was more in tune with God's kingdom realm than was the prophet Balaam.

The Lord sent a giant fish to swallow Jonah for his disobedience (Jon. 1:17). When Jonah repented, the fish literally vomited Jonah out on the shore (Jon. 2:10). The Lord did not immediately judge Jonah for his disobedience, but instead gave him some time to think about his actions in a very harsh environment. Some people may diminish this as a children's tale, but imagine the terror of being inside a fish awaiting death. Although it may not have seemed like it at the time, the fish swallowing Jonah was an act of mercy by the Lord. It allowed Jonah a second opportunity to do what the Lord had commanded him to do.

In Daniel, the Lord closed the mouths of hungry lions in the den. Daniel was not harmed because he was innocent before God. Daniel reported to the king the next morning when he came to check on Daniel, "My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight" (Dan. 6:22). The favor of God was with Daniel. Had the kingdom of God not come on earth to be manifested in that lions' den, Daniel would have surely perished. The usual course of events in the natural was superseded by kingdom purposes. Short of divine intervention, hungry meat-eaters will not forego a meal presented to them. Daniel's salvation was truly a statement of the kingdom of God coming on earth as it is in heaven. The supernatural superseded the natural. Daniel's accusers were thrown into the lions' den the next day and they were overpowered and crushed before they reached the floor (Dan. 6:24).

There were numerous other events in Scripture illustrating the kingdom coming on earth through the animals. Kingdom money was found in the fish's mouth for the temple tax for Jesus and Peter (Matt. 17:27). They had no money and Peter was obedient in faith to do the strange thing Jesus asked him to do, and the money was received in a miraculous way. The fish was the courier of God's kingdom blessing. Similarly, the ravens fed Elijah as instruments of God's blessing (1 Kings 17:2-6).

Creatures were also seen to be the instruments of God's judgment. Bears mauled forty-two boys who had jeered at Elisha (2 Kings

23-25). King Herod was eaten by worms and died when he took the Lord's glory (Acts 12:23). Living creatures were a significant part of the plagues of Egypt in Exodus 7 to 12. The Lord sent plagues of frogs, gnats, flies, and locusts. The livestock of Egypt was stuck with a plague and died. In the wilderness, snakes were the instruments of God's judgment against grumbling Israel (Num. 21:6).

The enemy can also distort and subject animals the kingdom of darkness. Satan is the God of this age. For example, Satan inhabited a serpent in Eden. Bulls and calves are the objects of false worship. The swine, considered unclean animals, received the demons from the demoniac among the tombs and promptly ran off the cliff and died (Matt. 8:31-32).

Gardening, Anyone?

God gave every fruit-bearing plant in the whole world to Adam for food except one. The only tree off limits was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But for his disobedience surrounding this tree and consumption of its vile fruit, there would be the perfect joining of the natural and the kingdom. After the Fall, even the plants suffered the separation from kingdom reality.

As the Lord made proclamations after the Fall, the first thing he said was that the ground was cursed. He did not technically proclaim the curse on Adam, but the curse was on the land. Of course Adam and Eve were banished from the garden of God. Plants in the field would have to fight for nutrients against the thorns and thistles. The Lord God said to Adam,

Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life.¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return. (Gen. 3:17-19).

Looking at the list of curses in Deuteronomy, disobedience result in the curse of vineyards being planted but other people enjoying its fruit (Deut. 28:33). The Lord also said, “You will plant vineyards and cultivate them but you will not drink the wine or gather the grapes, because worms will eat them.⁴⁰ You will have olive trees throughout your country but you will not use the oil, because the olives will drop off” (Deut. 28:39-40) and “Swarms of locusts will take over all your trees and the crops of your land” (Deut. 28:42). Fruit bearing was cursed by the separation from kingdom reality in the Fall.

However, in God’s blessings for obedience listed in Deuteronomy, the Lord blesses the barns and everything the obedient one puts his hands to (Deut. 28:8). He even said, “The LORD will grant you abundant prosperity . . . (in) the crops of your ground—in the land he swore to your ancestors to give you” (Deut. 28:12). In the blessings of God the Lord says, “I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe” (Mal. 3:11).

The curse on the land may be reversed by obedience. George Otis, Jr., produced a documentary movie called *Transformations*.²² In that movie, Otis showed transformations in various cultures around the world when the people dedicated themselves to repentance, prayer, worship, and praise of God. People were transformed; even the land was transformed when the people dedicated themselves to prayer and to seek God. The kingdom of God was powerfully manifested when people pleased God and moved his heart. The transformation was beyond compare in the natural realm, but not in the kingdom realm. The produce of fruits and vegetables was rapidly accelerated, and the size of the produce was outside of all expected norms. The blessed land, with the curse of the Fall apparently having been reversed, produced carrots literally the size of a man’s forearm. Radishes, formerly produced in ninety days, produced in one-third of the time. The kingdom of God manifested in a magnificent way as the land was blessed.

In Scripture, the land and vegetation were being blessed and cursed for God’s purposes. Jesus exercised the kingdom dominion over the fig tree, when it was found to be without fruit. The fig tree,

representative of Israel in other places in Scripture (Hosea 9:10), was cursed by Jesus and withered (Mark 11:14, 21). The tree did not wither because of anything that happened in the natural, but only by something that happened in the spiritual/kingdom realm. It had no fruit when fruit bearing was its intended purpose. The same is true with the vine that grew in Nineveh to give shade to Jonah. The next day the vine withered. The Father called it forth, and the Father caused a worm to come and devour it. Jonah 4:6-7 states, “Then the *LORD God provided* a leafy plant and *made it grow* up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. ⁷ But at dawn the next day *God provided* a worm, which chewed the plant so it withered.” For God’s plan, the plant came forth with accelerated growth and it was destroyed in the same way. God used the vine to teach Jonah an object lesson about priorities. Jonah appeared to care more about the vine than he did about the inhabitants of the city of Nineveh.

Minerals: Kingdom Plan For Earth’s Natural Resources

God likewise used precious metals and gemstones in his kingdom plan. However, these have also been thwarted and distorted by the enemy. They often represent worldly wealth and prosperity. The refining process represents what happens to believers when the fire of God comes on them and they are purified.

Precious metals are often seen as the blessing after a supernatural victory. For example, when the Israelites were leaving Egypt after a miraculous deliverance, they were told to ask the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing. The Egyptians gave them what they asked and Israel plundered the Egyptians (Exod. 12:35-36). When the Lord gave King Jehoshaphat miraculous victory over the triple-threat armies of Moab, Ammon, and Mount Seir, all he had to do was see the defeat and collect the plunder for three days (2 Chron. 20).

In Exodus 28:21 the Lord ordained precious stones to be used in the making of the breast piece of the High Priests’ garments. Zechariah 9:16 says the Lord’s people will be like jewels in a crown.

In Revelation 21:19-20, John names twelve stones that adorn the foundation of the New Jerusalem. Redeemed in the heavenly realm will walk on streets of gold.

In the natural realm, metals, pearls, and fine jewels are precious, beautiful, rare, and expensive. In the realm of God, they are common and because there is no lack or shortage in the kingdom of God. Even as precious as they are, the bride of Christ is more precious. “An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels” (Prov. 31:10). The bride will be adorned with all that is precious as is seen in the selection of Rebekah for Isaac, “Then the servant brought out gold and silver jewelry and articles of clothing and gave them to Rebekah” (Gen. 24:53). So too will it be for the Bride of Christ.

In the kingdom realm, metal and jewels are subject to the will and direction of the Lord. Peter’s prison chains supernaturally fell off (Acts 12:7) and the iron gate leading to the city miraculously opened (Acts 12:10). Yet in a twist of irony, in the natural Peter could hardly get the door opened where people were praying for him (Acts 12:13-16). The prison doors holding Paul and Silas flew open and chains fell off (Acts 16:16). Iron signified slavery, imprisonment, and affliction. The chains of the enemy cannot withstand the manifest power of the kingdom of God.

In conclusion, everything that was created is subject to the blessing and provision of God. Everything that was created is also subject to loss of blessings and the curse. All created order will be restored in the days when the kingdom of God is fully manifested.

Chapter 16

Burn The Clock While The Wind Blows



This chapter is about fire, time, and weather. These natural occurrences are subject to use and manipulation by God, and even by the enemy on occasion. God often intervenes in the natural to manifest himself for kingdom purposes. In the kingdom of God on earth, we see God showing himself in things that could never happen according to the natural laws. Three Hebrew youths thrown into a dazzling hot furnace do not walk out unsinged unless there has been supernatural intervention in the laws of nature (Dan. 3:27). The sun does not stand still for a day without supernatural intervention of power (Josh. 10:13). The rain does not come on demand, or the wind stop blowing in the midst of a violent storm, unless there is intervention by God.

Weather

My friend, Vickie went on a medical mission trip to a third world country. The team set up a table under a thatched roof and set out some medical supplies. A large crowd gathered, and by the end of the day a very long line had formed. As the day wore on, some people had been standing in the sun for hours. The supplies began to dwindle and the crowd started to grow restless. My friend talked

to the doctor in charge, and they realized the situation was quickly going from bad to worse. They were growing concerned, but tried to maintain outward composure. They were completely surrounded by people who wanted help and the supplies were about gone. They did not know how they were going to extract themselves without causing a riot. They feared if they tried to pack up, the people, already agitated, could become violent. They prayed for God to intervene. In a very few minutes, the sunny sky turned dark with heavy clouds and opened up with a heavy rain. The crowd scattered. The team quickly gathered their things and departed. It rained hard for about ten minutes, just long enough for them to get out of their tight spot. They gave glory to God for his intervention into the affairs of humanity and for saving them from a rough situation.

God often uses weather for his purposes. Throughout Scripture, God used the weather to reward, punish, redirect, and bring judgment. Satan, as a supernatural being, also seemed to have power over the weather. Job is reported to be the oldest written material in the Bible (not first in time, just the first recorded). If that is true, we see weather is used in the battle of the kingdom from the beginning of recorded biblical history. From the beginning, Satan used the violent wind to eliminate Job's children. The Bible is clear that Satan caused the weather anomalies (Job 1:12). Job's messenger came to him and said, "Suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you!" (Job 1:19).

Genesis is full of weather events too. The flood of Noah was a colossal weather event of the magnitude of God! Up to that point in the history of the earth, it is believed there had never been rain before (Gen. 2:5, Heb. 11:7). Noah listened to God and built the ark. At the right time, the fountains of the deep opened and the rains fell and water covered the earth (Gen. 7:11). The waters covered even the top of the tallest mountain. Later, in a corresponding weather event, the Lord sent the wind to dry up the rain (Gen. 8:1). Both rain and wind showed the manifest presence of God in the weather. We could even say the earth, full of sin, was washed or baptized in God's baptismal waters. It reemerged cleansed from the vileness of sin that had taken over the planet. The wind represents the Holy

Spirit again hovering over the planet as he had over the face of the deep before creation (Gen. 1).

Even prophets prayed in Scripture to impact the weather. Elijah proclaimed there would be neither rain nor dew for three-and-a-half years *except at his word* (1 Kings 17:1). By his prayer the heavens opened after he prayed seven times to the Lord (1 Kings 18).

Jesus rebuked the wind and waves and calmed the sea. The disciples were trying to get to the shore, but they were making no progress. When Jesus came to them on the water, he rebuked the storm. We can assume the Father did not cause the storm, because Jesus would not have rebuked the Father! In this we see the enemy using the weather to discourage and delay the disciples. On the other hand, the Lord can bring the wind. “He caused his wind to blow, and the waters flow” (Ps. 147:18) and “Behold, I will raise up against . . . them that rise up against me, a destroying wind” (Jer. 51:1). In the book of Jonah, the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up (Jon. 1:4). Later God prepared a scorching east wind to blaze on Jonah’s head (Jon. 4:8).

God sent snow, cold, and frost. “He destroyed . . . their sycamore trees with frost . . .” (Ps. 78:47). The Lord also said, “To the snow, be thou on the earth . . .” (Job 37:6). God controls the lightning, “He directs . . . his lightning unto the ends of the earth” (Job 37:3) and “He shot out lightning and discomfited them” (Ps. 18:12-14). In Jeremiah 10:13, is it said, “He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; he makes lightning . . .” The Lord can also cause hail, and frost when it suits his purposes. In Isaiah 30:30, it says, “And the Lord shall cause . . . with the indignation of his anger . . . and tempest, and hailstones.”

There are laws of nature that can control the weather, but weather may also be at the disposal of God, and also subject to the manipulation of the enemy as seen in Job. The prayers of people may change weather, as we saw with Elijah.

Fire Of God

The fire of God is a realm of wonder and amazement! When God's fiery presence comes, people cannot even stand in his glory. The glory of God is sometimes seen in fire when his presence manifests on earth. The fire of God is often associated with hell, so people may think fire is from Satan or is destructive. Actually, fire represents the purity of God's presence.

When Jesus came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, his entire countenance was changed and the people reacted to the presence of God in and on him. "As soon as all the people saw Jesus, *they were overwhelmed with wonder* and ran to greet him" (Mark 9:15). They were utterly astonished by his countenance. Jesus came down from the mountain, and the people beheld him and were utterly astonished. They ran to him to pay him honor or salute him. The countenance of Jesus in his heavenly form is often shrouded in the dazzling of brilliant fire. "His head and hair *were* white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire" (Rev. 1:14). The Word says, "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light" (Matt. 6:22). The eyes are the windows to the soul, and Jesus' eyes are the blazing purity of fire, because he is pure!

Throughout biblical history, the fire of God was released, present, and even overwhelming at times. God was the fire. The kingdom of God was and is often manifested in the fire. For example, the judgment of God against Sodom and Gomorrah came by fire from heaven. God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, a natural object that was not consumed by that which would normally consume it. In Exodus, the pillar of fire guided the Israelites by night and stood as sentinel between Israel and the pursuing Egyptians. It was the light in the darkness to show the way.

The manifest presence of God was seen when Elijah called forth the fire of God. The power of God overwhelmed with spontaneous fire as the sacrifice and altar were consumed. Why were the stones of the altar and the water consumed as well? The water was a precious offering. Elijah poured twelve jars of water on the wood at the end of a three and one half year drought. Water was life itself. Elijah offered to God the greatest sacrifice in the pouring out of water to

the Lord, and God then offered it back in the form of rain from above. In the fire, God proved himself to the Israelites.

In another unrelated event with Elijah, Ahaziah's two groups of fifty soldiers each were consumed by fire. The captain of the third group of soldiers begged for mercy, which he received and the soldiers were not consumed by fire (2 Kings 1:11-18). When the enemy sent forces against God's man, they were consumed. Elijah had an anointing to call down the fire of God. He walked in powerful anointing after the showdown on Mount Carmel mentioned above.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, three contemporaries of Daniel, were thrown into the furnace because they would not bow to an idol. The men were thrown into the blazing furnace so hot the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. King Nebuchadnezzar saw four men in the fire instead of the three they had thrown into the fire. The four men walked around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looked like a son of the gods. Nebuchadnezzar shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" (Dan. 3:21-26).

The fire purifies. That is why Shadrach and the others were not burned in the fire. They would not bow to a false god or idol. The only things burned from them were the unholy bonds of Nebuchadnezzar. The clothing they were wearing was not singed. They did not even smell of smoke, but the ropes of the unholy bondage were destroyed in the purity of God (Dan. 3:27). Yet even so, the men who threw them in could not withstand the strength of the fire and died. The enemy often tries to mimic the Lord, and that may have been why the furnace was so hot. The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot the flames of the fire killed the guards. That which was unholy could not withstand the purity of the fire.

During the conquest and settlement of the Promised Land, polluted and impure things were burned before the Lord. Even if they had usefulness, defiled items offered before other gods were destroyed (Josh. 6:24). The Israelites often burned the whole city and everything in it. However, the Israelite Achan saw, coveted, and took defiled things in the plunder. His possession of defiled items brought judgment on Israel. Many Israelites died because of Achan's

sin. Joshua retrieved the unholy items and spread them out before the Lord. The community stoned Achan and his family, and then the items and the remains of the dead were burned in the fire. Israel was purified by the swift and decisive action of Joshua against sin in the camp. The fire purified Israel.

On the day of Pentecost, tongues of fire rested on each of the disciples, signifying the fire of God would inhabit each individual. Tongues of fire can be a blessing, as in Acts 2, “They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them” (Acts 2:3). Tongues of fire can also be the judgment of God, “Therefore, as tongues of fire lick up straw and as dry grass sinks down in the flames, so their roots will decay and their flowers blow away like dust; for they have rejected the law of the Lord Almighty and spurned the word of the Holy One of Israel” (Hosea 11:9).

God in his holiness is jealous. Deuteronomy 4:24 says the Lord is a consuming fire, a jealous God. Also Hebrews 12:28-29 confirms by saying, “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,²⁹ for our “God is a consuming fire.”

Hades is the eternal lake of fire; evil is not purified will be subject to the fire for all eternity. It will burn forever. Revelation 20:14-15 says, “Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.” Matthew 18:9 says, “If your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.” The lake of fire in the book of Revelation was prepared for Satan and his demons. It is a place of torment forever. It was not prepared for the souls of humanity. Unfortunately, there will be some people who will experience the eternal fire. Matthew shares the fate of those who do not serve the Lord now and illustrates they share the same fate as the demonic realm. Matthew 25:41 states, “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, *into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.*’” Likewise Matthew 25:41 shows the end of the cursed, “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and

his angels.” Satan is often seen as a counterfeit of God’s will and plan. When Manasseh was king, he sacrificed his own son in the fire, practiced divination, sought omens, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the Lord, arousing his anger. Fire is of God, but like most things, the enemy can distort it.

Time

Time is another important concept of the kingdom of God. Our Lord is outside of time, meaning God was before time as we know it, and he will be after time, as we know it. Time, as humans understand it, is chronological or sequential. God is multidimensional, so the chronology of time is not a limiting factor for God. God can see the end from the beginning. Isaiah says, “I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, ‘My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please’” (Isa. 46:10). God can be in every moment of time at the same time. He is eternal, everlasting, all present, so there can never be a period of time he did not, cannot, or will not inhabit.

God has a time for everything. There are times in the will and plan of God that if missed, may be lost forever. *Chronos* is the Greek word for chronological time; *kairos* is the Greek word for ordained moment of God for a special purpose. Chronos is sequential time: such as first, second . . . last. Kairos time is the right or opportune moment, a moment of special significance because the conditions are favorable to create an intended outcome. Kairos is a NOW moment! As Solomon was seeking to find the meaning of life, he shared these words from Ecclesiastes 3:1-8:

There is a time (*chronos*) for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:
 ² a time (*kairos*) to be born and a time to die,
 a time (*kairos*) to plant and a time to uproot,
 ³ a time (*kairos*) to kill and a time to heal,
a time (*kairos*) to tear down and a time to build,
 ⁴ a time (*kairos*) to weep and a time to laugh,

a time (*kairos*) to mourn and a time to dance,
5 a time (*kairos*) to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time (*kairos*) to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
6 a time (*kairos*) to search and a time to give up,
a time (*kairos*) to keep and a time to throw away,
7 a time (*kairos*) to tear and a time to mend,
a time (*kairos*) to be silent and a time to speak,
8 a time (*kairos*) to love and a time to hate,
a time (*kairos*) for war and a time for peace.

In Solomon's discourse, there is a *now* moment for every event under the sun. The times for all events reflect the right or opportune moments of God. This passage was originally written in the Hebrew language, but was later translated to Greek in the *Septuagint*, the Greek Old Testament. The Greek rendering of the word *time* in this passage is the word *kairos*,²³ meaning a special moment of God, rather than *chronos*, the chronological, sequential ordering of time. There is indeed a special time of God for all of these things. Believers are fallible humans, and if not paying close attention to the Lord, may miss the opportune times of the Lord! Satan will also attempt to delay or distract to hinder the timing of God.

Humanity is bound by time. Everything we do is limited by time, from the appointed day of our birth to the appointed day of our death. Humanity functions within time. Because God is not limited by time, the kingdom may be served by God circumventing time for his kingdom purposes. God can compress time; he can enlarge time, "For thus says the High and Lofty One, Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy" (Isa. 57:15). He lives in all eternity: "A thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night" (Ps. 90:4) or "Beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. 3:8).

The Father has ordained the time of the end that only he knows. Jesus said, "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."³³ Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come" (Mark 13:32-33).

All time is in his hands, “My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me (Ps. 31:15).

Certain things happen in the fullness of time. Jesus was born in the fullness of time, “When the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law” (Gal. 4:4). To be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ (Eph. 1:10). Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders, make the most of every opportunity (Col. 4:5). Redeem the time, by buying up or ransoming it.

Can we add time to our lives by obedience? Hezekiah added fifteen years to his life by calling out to God. The Lord told Isaiah, “Go and tell Hezekiah, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will add fifteen years to your life’” (Isa. 38:15). It seems we can certainly shorten our lives by disobedience. How many people do we know who have died in a drunk driving accidents? Is that death considered to be in God’s will? It is more likely that the enemy stole a life and killed, although the person may have presented the opportunity. The Word says, “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, ¹⁶redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:16, NKJV).

For Joshua, the sun stood still at his request. Technically, this may not be a delay of time, but rather halting the sun and moon in their tracks. The result was that the day was twice as long as it should have been in the natural. Habakkuk 3:11 says, “Sun and moon stood still in the heavens at the fling of the flying arrows, at the lightening of those flashing spear.”

Conclusion

The Lord can use all things for his glory and for the benefit of his kingdom. Everything is subject to the use by God or the manipulation by the enemy. God may change things based on the prayers of humanity. In Scripture, God brought forth weather events and fire based upon the prayers of his servants. Believers are citizens of God’s kingdom living in a natural world. Everything is subject to change, even the natural laws.

Part Three

**Believers Living In
The Kingdom Realm**



Chapter 17

Because I Said So!



After pressing in to learn about the Kingdom of God Christians must decide, “Where do we go from here?” Copious evidence has been presented to illustrate the operation of the kingdom of God on the earth, at least a miniscule part that believers can understand. Part One talked about kingdom of God theological foundations for understanding the Kingship of Jesus (leading to grace) and the authority of the believer (leading to justice). Part Two showed exceedingly clear biblical evidence of supernatural occurrences in the natural realm. Kingdom miracle manifestations occur in the reality of humanity on earth. Part Three will delve into the practical applications of kingdom living by believers

All of the previous revelation and information will prove to be useless information if believers do not learn to appeal to the King or step into authority to function in the realm of God’s kingdom. Believers learn from the Lord for the purpose of equipping other believers and advancing the kingdom of God on the earth. If Christians gain kingdom knowledge and do nothing useful with it, has God been honored?

Knowledge and information are given for a useful purpose. The purposes are to do the work of God on earth and to be his hands and his feet on the planet. Jesus came primarily for two stated purposes: to proclaim the kingdom (Luke 4:43) and to defeat the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). All other biblical purposes come under these two very general headings. Salvation, healing, multiplication,

deliverance, operating in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, worship, praise, and all other specific gifts and calls fall within one of these two categories. The reason that everything comes under these two general headings is because the work of believers should be the work of Christ to advance God's kingdom or overcoming the other kingdom. There are only two kingdom choices. These purposes enthrone Jesus and work with him to defeat Satan's ongoing activities on earth.

My friend, Neroy, heard the Lord say one day in prayer, "I do not make assignments without success being built into them." The Lord equips everything he calls forth. The work of the Christian is to invite the rule and reign of God on the earth as it is in heaven, and work with the Lord to defeat the enemy on earth. God is the victor, but as a result of living in a fallen world, our enemy is still fighting for dominion in the hearts and lives of humanity. *Kingdom Citizenship Now!* was written to illustrate that believers in the King of kings, and Lord of lords may experience more of God's kingdom on earth than most have ever believed or imagined!²⁴ There is so much more believers may experience in God's kingdom realm here and now. Christians do not have to live in the brokenness of the world without working with God to see his dominion on the earth. The Lord has given believers many tools and opportunities to thwart and overcome the enemy, as well as to appeal to the King for kingdom dominion and advancement on the earth. He has shown the value of his realm is different from the world system. Jesus came to teach and advance God's kingdom on the earth and believers following his stated purposes will do that as well.

When I was a child, my parents would ask me to do chores. Sometimes I would ask my parents, "Why?" Often my parents' would respond with something like, "Because I said so!" Sometimes believers ask, "Why, Lord?" when we should say, "Yes, Lord!" Whatever, whenever, or however the Lord says to do something should be good enough for us. If the Lord says to do something, it means there is a reason we should respond, . . . immediately. When the Lord says go, we should do so promptly. It is not necessary that believers understand. In Scripture there were many strange and unusual assignments, but they were for a purpose. Those who followed were rewarded for their obedience.

The kingdom of God is like a beautifully invisible realm that is at work all around at all times. What happens in the natural may be a mirror image of what is happening in the kingdom and vice versa. Daniel's delay in getting a response from God was caused by the delay in the heavenly realm, for example (Dan. 10). We experience the kingdom of God on earth by seeking to experience the kingdom. The kingdom of God is always present, but those who have no vision for the kingdom may not know the spiritual realm even exists. The parallel reality of kingdom life is sadly lost on many who are caught up in the natural realm that they have no understanding or conceptualization of kingdom reality. Jesus said the kingdom is within, the kingdom is near, the kingdom is at hand, and the kingdom is here. The reality is the kingdom of God is in the hearts of saved believers, but it is also external. The internal reality of the kingdom is true for every believer, but the external reality *could be* true for every believer.

Many believers equate the kingdom of God with heaven. The unfortunate truth is that many believers think the kingdom of God is something to be enjoyed upon death of the physical body, but Jesus came to bring the kingdom reality on earth. God's rules and reign and victory over the kingdom of darkness are to be experienced now . . . and later, too. Jesus taught believers to pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Jesus invited the kingdom now, not upon death when a believer is found in heaven. Christians are citizens of the God's kingdom in this moment, as much as in the heavenly realms later. Part three is about how to be true citizens of God's realm now.

Everything is Possible

When Jesus descended from the Mount of Transfiguration, he came into the middle of an argument (Mark 9:15). The scenario is a very familiar one. A father brought his demon-possessed son to the disciples for deliverance. The son's age was unknown but he had been in that condition since he was a child. The disciples could not

cast out the demon, and the father brought the son to Jesus. Jesus dealt with the unbelief before the son was actually delivered:

“You unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”

²⁰ So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

²¹ Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?”

“From childhood,” he answered. ²² “It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.”

²³ ““If you can’?” said Jesus. “*Everything is possible for one who believes.*”

²⁴ Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” (Mark 9:19-24)

Jesus was not nearly as concerned about the demon-possessed son as he was about the “unbelieving generation.” That was first thing that came out of Jesus’ mouth when it was reported the demon could not be driven out. Jesus did not first show compassion for the boy, but rather exasperation that the disciples could not cast out the demon. Jesus was nearing the end of his earthly ministry. He must have thought something like, “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” In other words, “I can deliver this son, and one person is set free. Or I can teach this generation to set people free and the whole world will walk in freedom.” His deliverance of the son was important. Jesus came to destroy the devil’s work, and a huge part of that is by believers walking in authority to overcome the power of the enemy. Jesus wants every person free from the influence of Satan, but his primary mission was to restore the kingdom on earth and that meant his people should do their part to overcome the dominion of the

enemy on earth. The kingdom of God always involves multiplication, and when the disciples learned how to do kingdom work, the increase was exponential.

Jesus said something very important to build faith and belief in the authority to prevail over the enemy. Jesus said, “Everything is possible for one who believes” (Mark 9:23). This was stated in the context of overcoming the power of the enemy, because that is what the disciples were trying to do at that moment. Dissection of that sentence truly illustrates the importance of what Jesus was saying. First Jesus said, “*Everything . . .*” which means everything, all, whole, every kind, or complete. There is nothing that could not be done without belief. *Everything* is all inclusive without limitation.

Second, Jesus said, “*Everything is possible . . .*” In a culture of unbelief or weak faith, a possibility is something that *could* happen: maybe it will, maybe it will not. However, when believers look at the original Greek that was used in the New Testament, we see something much more powerful than a mere likelihood we often associate with the word *possible*. The original Greek word translated possible is *dunatos*, meaning able, strong, mighty, and powerful. It is a cognate of the word *dunamai*, meaning “I am powerful, have power, I am able, I can.” This is the same word the English word *dynamite* is derived from. It is a word conveying great explosive power, might and strength. So when Jesus says all things are possible, he is saying power is available to overcome all hindrances. Possibility with Jesus is not a mere likelihood something may occur. *Possibility is the power to change the impossible into reality.*

Third, Jesus said, “*Everything is possible for one . . .*” It does not take an army when the power of God is available. One person can overcome the enemy; one person can cast off a long-standing demon or host of demons when the dynamite power of God is present. The impossible becomes reality when just one person has the revelation and understanding of the possibility of God! Most Christians believe that all things are possible for God, but this verse does not say all things are possible “for God.” Jesus said everything is possible “for one . . .” He is saying that believing humanity can walk in the power of God? We can bring the impossible into reality with God’s power.

He is cheering the disciples on and saying something like, “You can do this!”

Finally, Jesus said, “Everything is possible for *one who believes*.” This is faith and belief. In a nutshell: belief is being persuaded. The Church of Jesus has watered down the understanding of faith and belief according to the cultural understanding. I am an attorney and when I was in law school, we talked about the “art of persuasion.” Namely, how does one take a set of facts and convince a judge or jury of a certain position regarding those facts? Being persuaded means the one has confidence in a matter, one is convinced! So being *one who believes* is the same thing as being one who knows for sure.

Indulge a paraphrase of Mark 9:23, and instead of saying, “Everything is possible for one who believes,” consider my translation or rendition from the Greek into English: “All impossible things come to pass in the power of God for the person who is convinced.” The Amplified Version says, “All things can be (are possible) to him who believes!” Yes, all things can be to him who believes!

Nothing Is Impossible

Later in the same chapter the disciples asked Jesus why they could not drive out the demon. Jesus replied, “Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. *Nothing will be impossible for you*” (Matt. 17:19-20). Jesus turned around the statement everything is possible, to say nothing is impossible. *Everything* and *nothing* are words of totality. Both words do not leave room for any exclusion! Jesus is saying everything; all, ALL, demonic forces are subject to disciples in the authority of Jesus to overcome. Nothing can escape the authority of God in a convinced believer.

Jesus' Commission: Multiply

The great commission is to make disciples, teach, and baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Boiled down, the call of the Great Commission is to multiply. Believers make disciples by doing everything Jesus told the disciples to do when he was with them.

It comes down to doing. Jesus said, “Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever *practices and teaches* these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:19). It is dual effort on the part of the believer to both do and teach others to do. Practice means actually doing what Jesus said to do. Some people say they are not worthy to heal or do other things the Lord has asked in the Word. To say such a thing is to call Jesus a liar! In actuality, those people are operating under a lie of Satan. Christians are called to put the things Jesus taught into practice. We are also called to teach others to walk in the kingdom realm. Teaching is to show others how to do the same things, formally or informally. It may be by testifying to the things seen or learned in the Word. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17).

Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Keeping the commands of Jesus begins with recognizing what they are. Jesus also said, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33). “When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, ² and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick” (Luke 9:1-2). They came back and reported what they had done.

Kingdom Of God Is Often Misunderstood

As a pastor, I visited several times a man who hated Jesus. His son had died and he turned all of his hurt and anger against the

Lord. He was a man who knew Scripture. He had been a worker for the Lord, but Satan distorted his beliefs. I would go to visit to comfort, minister, and witness to him about Jesus' love for him. He would debate the Bible with me for an hour or more. It was hard to debate with him because he knew a lot of Scripture. He would quote a particular Scripture to show that the Bible was not accurate. He would read the Scripture that said, "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they *have seen the kingdom of God come with power*" (Mark 9:1). Unfortunately, at the time I did not have a good understanding of the kingdom of God, so I could not give him an answer. In fact, I had no understanding of God's kingdom come on earth with power at that time. He thought because Jesus had not returned for the Second Coming, based on that verse, that the whole Bible was false. After all Jesus was talking to the disciples 2000 years ago, and he still had not come, so it all had to be a lie. I would have a better answer for him if that discussion were to take place today. The kingdom of God did come with power for some of them standing with Jesus, before they tasted death in the natural. The book of Acts is proof of the kingdom of God coming to the disciples with power! The kingdom of God is manifested in power for those who will just seek it. Believers are called to teach and practice! If the kingdom of God came on them with power, it will also come on current believers with power, for the Lord does not respect or love one more than the other.

Use the Talents

Jesus has put tools at our disposal for the multiplication of his kingdom. He gives seeds with which to start. They are gifts, talents, and resources. What one does with those things is up to the believer. Some use and multiply, others hoard and do not multiply. Failure to produce in the kingdom is a sin. In Luke 19:12-13, the master called the servants: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas (one coin each). *'Put this*

money to work,’ he said, ‘until I come back.’” First, the master called ten “servants,” meaning that this parable is talking about believers who are servants/workers in the harvest field, not unbelievers. The master said, “Do business until I come” (Luke 19:13, NKJV). In other words, they were to be about the master’s business while he was away. But when he came back, there would be an accounting.

In this parable, only two out of ten servants actually produced increase. One said, “Master, your mina has earned ten minas” (Luke 19:16). The next one said, “Master, your mina has earned five minas” (Luke 19:18). The two who produced were blessed by the graciousness of the master: “Well done, good servant. Because you have been faithful in a very little, have authority over (ten, five respectively) cities.” Those who increased were honored and blessed by the master and given more with which to be faithful. They were given one coin to begin with, but their faithfulness earned a city for every coin earned for the kingdom. So the exponential growth (a city) was multiplied from their growth (the number of coins they earned), not what they started with (a single coin).

There was one servant who put his mina in a safe hiding place and protected it without using it while the master was gone. When the master returned, he brought back exactly what the master had given him before he left. “Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow” (Luke 19:20–21). His master replied, “I will judge you by your own words, *you wicked servant!* You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? ²³Why then didn’t you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?”²⁴ Then he said to those standing by, “Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas” (Luke 19:22–24).

He produced no increase for the kingdom. He was judged, and called a “wicked servant” for not being productive (Luke 19:22). What he had was taken away from him and given to the servant with ten minas. The servant with ten minas had already been given ten cities, so what was a mina to him? It was a new seed to grow into another ten minas, so he could be given another ten cities. This

was the potential for multiplied exponential growth of the kingdom of God! From the unfruitful servant, however, it is discerned that having a gift from God and not using it is deplorable to the Lord! The unfruitful servant had something of value, but he refused to “do business” until the master returned.

Since ten servants were each given a mina, what happened to the other seven who were each entrusted with one mina from the master? He came back for the report from his servants and only three reported. The other seven servants, who also received a mina each, did not come to report. Where were their reports and their faithfulness? Did they squander their mina and have nothing to report? The one servant, who reported that he had not done anything with his mina but had protected it from theft, was called a wicked servant. What is worse than being a wicked servant? Not being a servant at all!

The Lord gives his followers assignments to do in the kingdom realm, primarily to multiply what he has given to begin with. The crux of the matter is the nature of responsibility of the believer in the kingdom realm. The Lord told the servants to do business until he returned and most did not. What was the business the servants were supposed to be doing? It seems that the business to be attended to was that of increase and fruitfulness. The master was very pleased with increase. Small or large, both fruitful servants were rewarded for the increase. As believers labor for the kingdom of God, the master is very pleased with kingdom multiplication. The servants with increase were rewarded with greater responsibility, and even a charge of exponential multiplied stewardship. He who is faithful with a small amount in the kingdom will be entrusted with more, much more. Believers are called to be about the Lord’s business while it is still day, for night is quickly approaching.

Chapter 18

Hopelessness And Doubt: Devastation To The Kingdom Plan



Faith Overcomes Doubt

Doubt and hopelessness are devastating to the manifestation of the kingdom of God. Hopelessness hinders the kingdom, doubt hinders the kingdom, and fear hinders the kingdom. If the enemy can separate or blind believers from hearing the will of God, or convince them to believe that the will of God will not come to pass, hopelessness abounds. The biggest factors in the manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth are the faithful belief and oral recitation of the kingdom promises. When people fall into despair and fail to believe that God is who he says he is or that he can do what he says he can do, the kingdom will not be brought forth into the natural realm.

Sinking in Doubt

Peter walked on water, which is completely against the laws of nature. He experienced the manifestation of God's kingdom in Matthew 14:25-31. When Jesus walked on the lake to meet the disciples in the boat, they were terrified. Jesus immediately said to them, "Take courage! It is I. *Don't be afraid*" (Matt. 14:27). Peter then

asked to come to him, and in response Jesus called him. “Come,” he said. Then Peter climbed down out of the boat, walked on the water, and came toward Jesus (Matt. 14:29). At that moment, Peter was operating in the realm of the kingdom of God. He was still in his physical body. He was still on earth, but the natural realm yielded to the supernatural kingdom realm. He was beyond the laws of nature and he was doing something that could not be done in the natural realm, except when the kingdom of God was fully present.

When Peter saw the wind, he was afraid, and he began to sink. He cried out, “Lord, save me!” At that moment, the kingdom power and manifestation was gone from his reality. Of course, Jesus was still in the full manifestation of the kingdom realm. The invisible power of the kingdom of God was still there, but Peter no longer experienced it by reason of his fear and doubt. Immediately, Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “*You of little faith,*” he said, “*why did you doubt?*” (Matt. 14:30-31).

The doubt that arose within Peter landed him squarely under the control of the natural realm again. Sinking, sinking . . . sinking. Jesus saved him, but if he had not doubted, he would have continued in the manifestation of the kingdom of God that was present when he believed. Peter brought the kingdom manifestation into his reality by *his* faith. The kingdom was not manifested for Peter by the faith of Jesus. If the kingdom were manifested in Peter’s life by the faith and power of Jesus, Peter would not have begun to sink. Jesus did not have fear or doubt.

The manifestation of kingdom power is available to all believers, but it is not automatic! The kingdom realm was still there, Peter was not able to participate in it because his fear and doubt. While Peter was sinking, Jesus was still experiencing the manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth. Jesus did not sink. That is why two people sitting side by side in a room can have completely different spiritual and supernatural experiences. Peter could have continued on as before except that fear and doubt rose up within him. The Lord wants the kingdom to manifest in the lives of believers, but faith and expectation are necessary components. If Christians can get beyond hindering thoughts and interpretations, then the kingdom, which is right there all along, may be experienced.

Doubt: Least Among the Kingdom

In Luke 7, Jesus went to the village of Nain, and there he saw a burial procession carrying the only son of a widowed mother. Jesus had compassion on the mother and raised the son back to life. This event caused the news of Jesus to spread throughout the whole region. After the widow's son was raised from the dead, John the Baptist sent his disciples to question if Jesus were the one they were expecting or if they should be expecting another (Luke 7:18). Jesus told them to report to John what they saw: the blind receive sight, the lame walked, those who had leprosy were cleansed, the deaf heard, the dead were raised, and the good news was proclaimed to the poor. Jesus went on to say blessed was anyone who did not stumble on account of him (Luke 7:23).

Jesus confirmed that John was the messenger who was sent to prepare the way for him. Then Jesus said a fascinating thing about John, "I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (Luke 7:28). John was greatest among men, but even the least in kingdom was greater than he. What was it that made this servant of God least in God's kingdom?

First, there is the issue of doubt that hinders the kingdom of God. It is impossible to please God without faith (Heb. 11:6). John had waived in doubt that Jesus was who he said he was. He *knew* that Jesus was the Messiah! He was at the baptism of Jesus and saw the presence of the Holy Spirit and heard the voice of God. How could he later doubt the identity of Jesus as the Messiah?

Second, and perhaps more importantly, John never operated in the kingdom realm. He never sought or saw the manifestation of kingdom miracles in his ministry work. John had a one-note song. His primary message for his entire ministry was, "Repent!" Matthew says, "In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea ² and saying, '*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near*'" (Matt. 3:1-2). He spent his entire ministry proclaiming the nearness of the kingdom of God without ever experiencing it. He prepared the way for the kingdom, but he did not operate in the kingdom. John never performed a kingdom sign, wonder, or miracle.

The book of John says, “*Though John never performed a sign, all that John said about this man was true*” (John 10:41).

Is that why John was the least among the least in the kingdom of God? He was in doubt; he was suffering from a lack of faith and unbelief about the identity of Jesus. Maybe he was least because he preached the kingdom of God was near, but did not seek to find the kingdom of God or to see its manifestation. The disciples of Jesus operated in the kingdom realm, seeing miracles brought forth. They saw and experienced the sick being healed, demons being cast out, multiplication of food, weather changes, and much more. When Jesus sent his disciples out, they came back reporting that which they had experienced: “So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and *healing people everywhere*” (Luke 9:6). Later other disciples returned and said, “Lord, even the *demons submit to us in your name*” (Luke 10:17). The disciples of Jesus walked in kingdom manifestation and authority while Jesus was still on earth. John could have seen the manifestation of God’s kingdom on earth as well if he had sought the kingdom of God. Do these things place John in the position of least-ness in God’s kingdom? There is a lesson to be learned here for the body of Christ. The Lord seems to desire kingdom multiplication among his followers.

The Will Of Doubt

“Doubting Thomas” was not with the disciples when Jesus came to them after the resurrection. Thomas would not believe that Jesus was resurrected without clear and convincing proof. What a terrible nickname to have for all eternity? Jesus conveyed the devastating significance of doubt to Thomas and the other disciples in John 20:24-29. When the other disciples told Thomas they had seen the Lord, he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, *I will not believe*” (John 20:25). Thomas’ statement is one of self-will. He was determined by the force of his personal will not to believe what his friends said. He was not subjugated to God’s will at the moment. His will was firmly in control.

A week later, the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. Jesus came and stood among them and called for them to be at peace. Jesus confronted Thomas for doubt and failure to believe the testimony of his fellow disciples:

Then (Jesus) said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. *Stop doubting and believe.*”²⁸ Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”²⁹ Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; *blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*” (John 20:27-29)

Thomas was not in a position to receive the blessings of God because of his doubt and unbelief. Insistence on seeing to believe is a hindrance to the manifestation of the kingdom realm. Only those who believe without actually seeing will be blessed. Think about everything we have discussed so far. The blessing comes from seeing beyond the natural. It means that those who believe in unseen things will be blessed or favored, that God will care for and protect or provide for them in a supernatural way. Those God blesses are set apart to be divinely cared for. When God blessed for obedience in Scripture, people experienced prosperity or happiness, had divine protection and preservation, and were favored. Those who believe without seeing put themselves in a position to receive the benefits of kingdom citizenship now. Those who will not believe without seeing will not have those blessings. Believers have a choice: exercise the will to believe, or exercise the will to doubt.

Basically, a person who doubts God is saying, “I am uncertain about God,” or “I do not have confidence that what God said will happen.” Why would the Lord bless those who do not believe that he is who he says he is, or that he will do the things that he said he will do? Heb 11:6 states, “And without faith it is *impossible to please God*, because anyone who comes to him *must believe* (1) that *he exists* and (2) that *he rewards those who earnestly seek him*” (Numerals added for emphasis). He rewards those who earnestly seek him – that is kingdom favor!

In Mark 11:22-24, Jesus told the disciples, “Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ *and does not doubt in their heart* but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. ²⁴ Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” The example that Jesus uses of telling a mountain to uproot, go to the sea and jump in is beyond our imagination. Was Jesus lying or exaggerating? Neither, he was saying the natural realm is subject to the kingdom realm *if* there is belief. There will be a time in the future that the mountains will be made low and the valleys will be built up. “Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. *And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together.* For the mouth of the LORD has spoken” (Isa. 40:4-5). This is part of preparing the way for the Lord’s return. The mountains being made low and valleys raised up are for the glory of the Lord to be revealed.

Doubt is a sign of the curse of God, not the blessing of God. In Deuteronomy 28:66-67, the curse of doubt is evident,

Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life. ⁶⁷ In the morning you shall say, ‘Oh, that it were evening!’ And at evening you shall say, ‘Oh, that it were morning!’ because of the fear which terrifies your heart, and because of the sight which your eyes see.

There is no peace in doubt. Doubt will not take believers to the place of blessing of God. WOW, doubt means no blessing, no kingdom provision, no healing, . . . nothing. Doubt is not worth the cost that one pays for it. Doubt is devastating to the manifestation of God’s kingdom on earth.

Doubt was the first weapon to derail God’s kingdom plan in the Garden of Eden, “(Satan) said to the woman, ‘*Did God really say . . . ?*’” (Gen. 3:1). Are you sure that is what he said? Maybe God did not say that . . . maybe God meant this. The first thing Satan ever did on the earth was to spew doubt on the word of God.

Doubt is kryptonite for the kingdom, not for God of course, but for the believer. Kryptonite was Superman's greatest weakness; an Achilles' heel to an otherwise superhuman power. Kryptonite in his presence rendered him completely powerless against enemy forces. Believers are powerless when in doubt. When in belief, believers walk in the kingdom power of God, but when in doubt believers are rendered powerless and ineffective. Kingdom power will not be available to doubters.

James 1:6-8 states, "But when you ask, *you must believe and not doubt*, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, *blown and tossed by the wind.* ⁷ *That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.* ⁸ Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do." Doubters will not receive anything from the Lord. Doubters never find peace or rest. Psalm 95:9b-11, Passion translation states, "Your ancestors *challenged me over and over with their complaining*, even though I have convinced them of my power and love. Yet *they still doubted my care for them . . .* They will *never enter the place of rest* I've planned for them." Faith, belief, and seeking God with wholehearted devotion will help believers find a place of rest reserved for the faithful ones.

The devastation of doubt is indisputable to the manifestation of the kingdom realm. The very important question then becomes: how do believers overcome doubt? Stay in the Word of God and continue to seek the Lord's presence through praise and worship. Praise brings God near and drives the enemy away. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). We walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). These things will help believers make the right decision when our minds are confused or in doubt.

Go Now!

In some situations there is no time for doubt. Fast reaction to the call of God is critical for the kingdom plan. When the Lord gives marching orders to his earthly troops, obedience and timing are often essential. Some people may miss an important opportunity because they are tentative or slow to act. Sometimes people spend

a lot of time wondering if they are hearing the Lord correctly, and the prime moment is gone. It does not mean that there will not be other moments, but the moment that God has in mind may be lost. God has an infinite number of plans, but sometimes things are on a *kairos* time schedule: it is a *now moment* in the kingdom realm. It is the opportune time for something to transpire for the benefit of God's kingdom. There are times when the Lord is asking believers to do something that immediate and instantaneous obedience is necessary or we miss the opportunity to faithfully serve him. At other times, immediate obedience may be for our own protection. Doubt, delay, and faithlessness are devastating to the plan of action in the kingdom realm.

Times are critical when the Lord says, "Go now!" It is an imperative to jump at that moment and there is no time for doubt. For example if Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus, had doubted he was hearing from an angel of the Lord, the enemy could have decimated his family. An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and *escape to Egypt*. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."¹⁴ So he got up, took the child and his mother *during the night and left for Egypt*" (Matt. 2:13-14). Because of the warning Joseph made haste during the night to depart for a foreign country. The words, "escape to Egypt" had a connotation of urgency, so Joseph thrust his family out into the night and fled for safety. What did the friends and relatives of Mary and Joseph say the next day? They may have questioned his motives or sanity, but he was just being timely and radically obedient. Had doubt gripped his thinking, the opportunity to go at that moment could have been lost.

I have heard many testimonies of urgency to go that resulted in lives being saved. Pastor Surprise Sithole, who did not know the Lord at the time, wrote about being awakened and called to leave his house in the middle of the night. He did what the voice was telling him to do. He was saved, but the rest of his family was annihilated.²⁵ Timing is not always so critical, but being rapidly obedient to God always honors him.

I have had several "go now" moments in my life. Those are the times that if a person does not act in the moment, it is lost forever. I

have had opportunities to testify or witness that I timidly missed, only to regret as soon as the opportunity had passed. Each time I missed a *kairos* moment of God, it strengthened my conviction to press ahead the next time. I have learned to put away my own personal feelings of fear or pride in those moments that the Spirit is pressing me. I have never regretted it, even if it was hard in the moment.

There have been other times that “go now” has had special meaning and motivated me into action. On one occasion the Lord told me to go and talk to a certain person. In the natural, it appeared there was no way to get through the throng of people surrounding the man. The Lord said “Go Now!” and when I stood up and took the first step, it was if the Red Sea parted. I walked straight to the person without any hindrance or opposition. I have personally seen and experienced many miracles like that. I have learned that when the Lord says, “Go now,” he does not mean in five minutes – that will be too late! Learn to listen for the “go now” moments. Cultivate hearing so that when it comes, there is clarity. Put all doubt and fear aside and, “Go now!”

Hopelessness

There are many causes of hopelessness at work in the lives of believers. People suffer hopelessness for any reason that Satan can magnify to defeat the purposes of God. The manifestation of the kingdom realm is devastated by hopelessness just as much as it is devastated by doubt.

Hopelessness is often overcome with joy in the Lord. Romans 15:13 states, “May the *God of hope* fill you with all *joy and peace* in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may *abound in hope.*” Wait on the Lord and he will refresh and renew. Isaiah 40:31 states, “But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” Jeremiah 29:11 states that God’s plans are filled with hope and not despair, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, *to give you a future and a hope.*” Romans 12:12 shows that

that joy is the way to overcome hopelessness, “*Rejoice in hope*, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.” Furthermore, “Hope deferred make the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life” (Prov. 13:12)

Desolated Kingdom

Hopelessness and doubt actually divide the kingdom of God from within and make it ineffective to overcome in the natural realm. Matthew 12:25 says, “But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.’” The kingdom of God must be strong and united against the outward enemy. When there is doubt and hopelessness, the kingdom of darkness prevails. In the verse above, Jesus knew their thoughts, and he knows our thoughts as well. Believers may fool other people when thoughts of hopelessness and doubt abound, but the Lord will never be deceived.

Desolation is the end result of every kingdom divided against itself. Desolation is defined as barrenness and unhappiness. It is fruitless and unproductive. Desolation can mean a desert place. In other words, the kingdom in desolation is not producing anything for that kingdom. For the desolate kingdom, one divided against itself, there is no good kingdom work going on. If the kingdom of God is divided against itself by hopelessness and doubt, there is no power, no freedom, or no kingdom manifestation. The Pharisees claimed that Jesus was casting out demons by the ruler of the demons. But Jesus said, “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt. 12:28). When a believer hears the clear word of the Lord with an assignment, but then hopelessness prevents action, the kingdom of God is not fruitful. Hopelessness is a tool of Satan to prevent people from making positive confessions about the power and love of God. Worse yet, if people can be enticed beyond that to agree with negativity, people actually come into agreement with the enemy.

Three opposing armies besieged Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and the situation in the natural was admittedly hopeless. The people of Judah prayed to God, saying, “Our God, will you not judge them? For *we have no power to face this vast army* that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”¹³ All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the Lord” (2 Chron. 20:12-13). They kept their eyes on the Lord in a hopeless situation. When our attention is drawn away from the Lord to the enemy, hopelessness abounds all the more. (We saw this when Peter looked away, focused on the storm and began to sink.) It would have been so tempting for the men of Judah to melt into a puddle of despair, but instead they sought the Lord in the hopelessness of the situation. The response of the Lord reflected that he was pleased with their faith and hope in him. The word of the Lord to Jahaziel, young prophet and son of Zechariah, was as follows:

⁵ He said: “Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: *‘Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army.* For the battle is not yours, but God’s. ¹⁶ Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. ¹⁷ You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and *see the deliverance the LORD will give you,* Judah and Jerusalem. *Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.’*” (2 Chron. 20:15-17)

When the Lord fights the battle, the victory is sure. Jehoshaphat overcame insurmountable odds because he did not try to fight the battle alone. Jehoshaphat did not get into hopelessness and doubt. He did not talk about the magnitude of the opposing force of three armies. He just turned the hearts of the people toward God! The response of Jehoshaphat was to praise the Lord, “Jehoshaphat bowed

down with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the Lord” (2 Chron. 20:18). Worship will always overcome a hopeless situation.

Gideon was in the same situation. He was called by God to fight an opposing army with insurmountable odds. The Lord recognized his fear and told him, “If you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah ¹¹ and listen to what they are saying. Afterward, you will be encouraged to attack the camp” (Judg. 7:10-11). The Lord was with him and gave him strength and tools to overcome fear, doubt, and hopelessness. Gideon was stirred from sleep by the Lord to creep to the other camp and listen to a dream that a soldier had about Gideon. When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, “he bowed down and worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel and called out, ‘Get up! The LORD has given the Midianite camp into your hands’” (Judg. 7:15). His response to the favor of the Lord was to worship and praise.

Scripture Is A Doubt Buster

There are hindrances and limitations that will thwart the full manifestation of the kingdom of God in times of greatest need. The Lord has given believers a battle plan for the kingdom of God manifestation when things are difficult, both now and in the future. It is apparent that doubt and hopelessness may be the greatest hardships to overcome. The Lord is teaching believers to battle against the things that will prevent the kingdom of God from manifesting in the face of very real crisis. Identification of the things that are most destructive to the kingdom manifestation is very strategic and will help believers learn how to successfully battle them.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told his disciples to, “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matt. 6:33). When followers seek God and his kingdom first, everything else will fall into place. The Lord says not to doubt, but to use his Word, the sword of the Spirit to fight the battle, keeping our eyes on him. The Lord will give strategy to overcome the ploy of the enemy. The sword is sharp and it will

divide the doubt-filled, hopeless, soulish thoughts from the godly, spirit-filled thoughts. Hebrews 4:12 states, “For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to *dividing soul and spirit*, joints and marrow; *it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart*.” The Word will lead into all understanding.

The Message translation speaks about using the Word of God to build a solid foundation so that when hardship comes we will be able to weather the storm:

“These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on. If you work these words into your life, you are like a smart carpenter who built his house on solid rock. Rain poured down, the river flooded, a tornado hit—but nothing moved that house. It was fixed to the rock.²⁶⁻²⁷ “But if you just use my words in Bible studies and don’t work them into your life, you are like a stupid carpenter who built his house on the sandy beach. When a storm rolled in and the waves came up, it collapsed like a house of cards.”²⁸⁻²⁹ When Jesus concluded his address, the crowd burst into applause. They had never heard teaching like this. It was apparent that he was living everything he was saying—quite a contrast to their religion teachers! This was the best teaching they had ever heard. (Matt. 7:24-29, MSG)

If the faith of a person is built on a solid foundation, then it will not be easily shaken when storms, tornados, or other hardships come calling. The foundation laid in great toil will be a firmer foundation than the one hastily put down. A firm foundation will weather doubt and hopelessness with greater consistency. Doubt left unchecked impacts everything it comes into contact with. The kingdom problem with doubt and hopelessness is that people get stuck in their natural rut and will not even try to access the kingdom realm. The result is a

defeatist mindset. It is an invisible tether that prevents people from “going for it.”

Conclusion

Elephants often have an entrapment mentality. Once they become accustomed to the pegged rope tether on their ankle, they do not move even though they could easily break the tether with their massive strength. The mindset that keeps the animals in their captivity is the same mindset that keeps unbelieving believers out of kingdom reality on earth. Many people are held captive on their own elephant-tethers in the spirit realm.

Sometimes thoughts of hopelessness and doubt can be the peg and rope, hindering one from seeking the kingdom of God on earth. The invisible tether prevents the belief that greater things are possible here and now. When kingdom thinking is expanded, believers can go after the utmost and highest of God’s kingdom here and now. The Lord’s desire according to his Word is that the kingdom of God will come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10). The Word of God will give power and faith to overcome the destruction of negative words and negative thinking that allow Satan’s reign on earth.

Believers should ask themselves this question: “Am I desperate enough for God’s kingdom on earth that I can press through to overcome hopelessness and doubt?” I live in a rural farming community and I routinely walk by cattle herds on my lane. That usually does not bother me except when there is a bull in the field. Bulls are known to have mean, ugly dispositions. They weigh more than a ton on average and have great strength. I have a healthy respect for bulls because I have known of them to injure, maim, or even kill. The wire fencing would not be nearly strong enough to hold them if they firmly decided they want to escape the enclosure. They usually stay in because they do not know the difference.

One day as I was walking, I found myself walking down the lane where two bulls were having a macho contest. I was walking between them before I realized there was one bull on each side of the

road. They were looking at each other, snorting, pawing the ground, and generally trying to intimidate each other. It was working – I was intimidated! I was worried that they might just become impassioned enough to charge each other and break the fences. Was there was something they wanted more than they wanted to stay in the field? That has to happen with believers in the kingdom realm. There has to be something that believers want more than they want to stay in the field. We have to want the kingdom more than we want to stay in our enclosures of comfort.

Doubt and hopelessness can and, in fact, must be overcome so that the kingdom of God will be manifest here and now! It is a time to press in and seek God so the kingdom of God will prevail. The kingdom manifestation is more than people having an extra benefit. Faith and hope are the tools that are needed to overcome the works of Satan. The kingdom of God is real; seeking it with great conviction is worth it!

Chapter 19

Truth: The Sledgehammer Of Breakthrough



All barriers created by Satan are lies! All bondage is born in deception. Living in a fallen world is part of the inheritance received from Adam and Eve. Believers can discern and observe that the natural realm does not seem to match up with the truths of Scripture. How do we experience the fullness of God's kingdom on earth? How can the natural realm be transformed to line up with what we read in the Word?

Often believers feel the need for breakthrough. Understanding breakthrough has been a huge part of my ministry in the last few years. Typical discussions of breakthrough include an investigation of intercession, authority, worship, the greatness of God, strength and courage, or even being willing to look foolish in the eyes of the world. All those things are true and biblical. However, this book has turned out to be about walking in more efficient ways to experience God's manifest kingdom on earth.

Breakthrough is getting beyond the barriers of Satan to get to where the Lord wants believers to be. I asked the Lord in prayer what I was missing about breakthrough. I sat at my computer with a blank screen and waited for the Lord to teach me about breakthrough in the kingdom realm. He spoke and simply said, "Breakthrough is about overcoming the lies of the enemy with truth." Scripture amply supports this simple statement. People are gullible to believe Satan's

lies, which it makes it easy for them to be tricked. Faith and belief overcome the tricks and traps of the enemy. It seemed so simple, but I had never looked at truth as the way to break through the enemy's barriers. In the past breakthrough was about being in battle mode and hunkering down for the fight until victory was achieved over the enemy. Breakthrough was the believer using authority to overcome the power of the enemy.

Breakthrough

Truth is the sledgehammer for breakthrough in the kingdom realm. Satan lies to people and tells them many untruths. He may lie to people about shame, guilt, anger, jealousy, hatred, sexual perversion, poverty, addiction, lack of intelligence or ability, or even that they are unlovable. His list of lies could fill up a book. Satan has power, but no authority. Believers have both power and authority to overcome his power. Therefore, since he has no authority, he must convince people of lies to keep them in bondage. He has nothing else with which to hold them. Truth is freedom that slices through the lies of Satan like a hot knife through soft butter. Since he has no authority, if believers realize he has no legitimate hold on them, they will shake him off and walk in freedom. Unbelievers may also walk in breakthrough by receiving Jesus as Savior and walking in kingdom citizenship.

If a person is in bondage by a paper chain, but believe the bounds are iron shackles, they may as well be bound in iron shackles. Lies and truth are in the mind and heart. Satan holds people in the mind by perception much more than he holds them in the physical body. Most people who are in bondage have believed a lie. When people walk in truth, they realize all Satan has is a thin paper chain, like the ones kindergarteners craft in art class. Truth is critical for getting through the barriers of the enemy. Truth is faith and belief. The enemy will not be able to bind people with tricks and lies when they know the truth. Romans 12:2 says it well, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but *be transformed by the renewing of your mind*. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will

is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” A mind filled with truth removes the lies of the world, and perceives the will of God.

Typically in breakthrough situations, people want to shout, wage war, or engage in a vitriolic tirade against the enemy. Most believers have probably seen that firsthand or engaged in a little of the battle mode themselves. However, that is not the most effective way to wage war against the enemy. The most effective way to wage war is to simply recognize the truth of God. The easiest way to eliminate bondage is by seeing through the enemy’s lies and getting the revelation of truth.

My husband, Mike, has a favorite mantra: “Work smarter, not harder!” In other words, if he can get the same result in two different ways, he will chose the easier, less demanding path. If one way takes more time, effort, and wear and tear, why should he choose that way? If believers are going to get to the same place in the end, take the easy road. The “easy way” to breakthrough anointing is not warfare or by forcefully expelling the enemy, although Christians can engage in warfare because of the authority given in Luke 9 and 10. The way to break through the barrier of the enemy is to seek the truth and be set free in the process. When a person receives breakthrough by learning and believing the truth, he or she will not be bound again. When a person is delivered by forceful expulsion of a demon, the demon will probably return looking for rest and bring others with it. The difference is that a person who is freed by finding the truth will not fall for the same lies again. Someone who is set free but does not understand the lies and tricks of the enemy may again be soon found in bondage.

I practiced law for twenty years. As a courtroom attorney, I witnessed all kinds of styles and tactics of opposing counsel. Some were verbose or showy, while others were loud and a little obnoxious. There was usually a fair amount of “grandstanding” going on – showmanship for the benefit of the judge or jury. The opposing attorney may have been enraged, incensed, or demonstrating some other flair of emotion to make a point. At the end of the day, however, whoever had the law and the facts on their side was going to walk out with a win. The opposing counsel may try to bluff, but if he

or she did not have a strong legal claim, and we both knew it, there was nothing he or she could do.

If I had the truth of the superior legal position on my side, there were two choices: I could win the full victory or I could settle the case for less than the full amount. Sometimes an attorney or client would settle a case just to avoid the courtroom stress. Similarly, believers may settle for less than God's best because they do not know how to get in the courtroom for a verdict in their favor. All believers have to do is to find the truth, and appeal to the King for a judgment on his or her behalf. Victory in a courtroom is not about anything but truth and justice.

In the courtroom of heaven, the opposing side will not even say a word or put up a fight in the presence of the King for one who is innocent. The victory is already won. The enemy will bluff and lie as long as he is able, but when the matter is taken before the King, the gig is up. Truth wins; superior legal standing wins. Believers are in the superior position for victory. A believer who comes before the King with clean hands and a pure heart will win. Breakthrough is often a matter of overcoming the enemy's attacks and lies. The enemy hinders by lies. People plow through the barrier of the enemy by getting revelation of truth. Jesus said to ask anything in his name. Overpowering by the truth eliminates the lies of the enemy. The courtroom of heaven will result in the enemy being judged and victory declared for the children of God.

The Truth (You Know) Will Set You Free

Pilate said to Jesus, "What is truth?" After he had said that, he went outside and told the Jews, "I find no guilt in him" (John 18:38). Pilate did not recognize that he asked that question to the one who is the totality of all truth. Notice that Pilate declared him not guilty. That is what truth does for believers as well. It allows believers to get a favorable verdict. God does not lie. He will not tolerate lies. Paul wrote to Titus and said God is a "God, who cannot lie . . ." (Titus 1:2). The author of Hebrews also said, "it is impossible for

God to lie . . .” (Heb. 6:18). Even if circumstances look like truth will not prevail, the truth of God will come to pass.

God hates lying because lies are the chains that hold people in bondage. Truth is the way to freedom. Psalms says, “I hate and abhor lying: but your law do I love” (Psa. 119:163). Other passages say, “Lying lips are abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight” (Prov. 12:22), or “A righteous man hates lying: but a wicked man is loathsome, and comes to shame” (Prov. 13:5). The warning about false testimony was important enough for the Lord to make it one of the Ten Commandments: “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor” (Exod. 20:16). The importance of the commandment is tied to understanding that lies of the enemy are the method of his bondage. God hates Satan’s lies because he uses lies to hold God’s people hostage.

The most powerful statement of freedom from bondage in connection to truth comes from the book of John. Jesus said, “*If* you hold to my teaching, you are my disciples. ³² *Then* you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32). There is an important nuance that should not be overlooked in these verses: The truth that brings freedom comes after the believer has received the teaching! There is an *if/then theorem* at work here. The *if phrase* is the condition for the *then phrase* to occur. If one holds to the teaching, the Word of God, *logos* in this case, then the revealed truth will set the disciple free.

John 8:32 is often only partially quoted by people who say, “The truth will set you free.” That is not completely true. It is not the truth that sets people free; it is the truth *they know* that sets them free. The knowledge of truth is the thing that makes a difference in realizing the bond is a paper chain, rather than an iron shackle. Being oblivious to the truth leaves a person still thinking an iron chain binds them. They must first have the truth. Only when a person knows the truth will they be set free.

The book of John has more about truth than any other book of the Bible. John talks about grace and truth together, stating the Son came from the Father full of grace and truth. The book of John says, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the *one and only Son, who came from the*

Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17). Grace is the unmerited favor of God. Grace goes hand in hand with truth, illustrating that truth will indeed set people free. The blessing and freedom of grace is found in the truth! Those who live by the truth, come into the light (John 3:21). True worshipers worship the Father in Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks (John 4:23). Truth is the avenue to grace!

Knowing Truth: Strategies Of God

The Holy Spirit gives all truth. When we listen to the Spirit of God, he will teach believers breakthrough strategies. He is the Spirit of truth (John 14:17). The Holy Spirit came as an advocate, sent from the Father to testify about Jesus (John 15:26). The Spirit of truth guides Christians into all the truth, but he does not speak on his own. He speaks only what he hears, and he will tell believers what is yet to come (John 16:13). Many times on the pages of Scripture, the strategy of God was given to God’s people for breakthrough. When God gives the strategy by the Holy Spirit, his people usually do not have to do much but stand by and watch as the Lord gives the victory. God’s strategy is fail-proof. God gave strategy when Joshua conquered Jericho, when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, when Gideon defeated the Midianites, and many more. The truth of God will lead believers to victory without a bloody battle. The Israelites followed God’s plan to take Jericho and did not suffer a single casualty.

We also overcome Satan by the truth of the Word, “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:17). Believers are set aside for God’s service by walking in truth. The victory comes in truth. In 2 Chronicles 20, Jehoshaphat reminded the Lord of the victories he had given and the promises he had made to his people. Then Jehoshaphat said a curious thing, “Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you” (2 Chron.

20:12). Jehoshaphat pled his case, reminded God of his promises, and then asked the Lord to judge between Judah and its attackers.

All the men, women, and children stood before the LORD. They had asked for judgment in their favor, and then they just waited. They did not scurry around sharpening their swords and spears in anticipation of the battle to come. The Lord answered as the Spirit of the LORD came on Jahaziel. He prophesied and gave the Lord's strategy for the victory: "Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. The battle is not yours, but God's (2 Chron. 20:15). The Lord through Jahaziel said, "You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you" (2 Chron. 20:17). They sought the Lord for strategy, the Lord heard, judged, and gave them the victory. The strategy came by the Holy Spirit through the voice of the prophet.

They did not have to do anything except go and watch the victory the Lord gave them. When we seek the Lord in any battle situation, he will give the answer through the Spirit if we will take time to listen and respond. Time and again the Lord gave strategy by the word of the Holy Spirit to the people. Usually the people of God did not have to *do* anything. The enemy was defeated with the Word of God and with truth. The greatest defeats of believers occur when they fail to listen to the Lord or they fail to follow his strategy. Often believers think that doing something is more important than sitting before the Lord and listening. Doing is "working harder," listening is "working smarter!"

Discerning Lies

Everything about the enemy is false: false accusations, false gods, false prophets, false messiahs, false testimonies, false reports, false witnesses, and false humility. All of those things hold the Church in bondage. Satan deceives by looking like something good.

His demonic servants may also take on a disguise. Paul said, “And no wonder, for *Satan himself masquerades* as an angel of light. ¹⁵ It is not surprising, then, *if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness*. Their end will be what their actions deserve” (2 Cor. 11:14-15). False accusations keep God’s people in oppression and captivity.

Satan lied in the garden but Eve did not recognize the significance of the deception. Neither did Adam recognize the deception. Satan lied to the Lord in the wilderness during the temptations. He lies to believers, and he is the father of all lies. Believers who are intentional about knowing the truth will be better equipped to discern a lie.

The primary line of defense against Satan’s lies is to believe in Jesus, and know the truth of the Word. Satan has power, which means he can work lying signs and wonders. Paul wrote, “The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because *they did not receive the love of the truth*, that they might be saved” (2 Thes. 2:9). The ones deceived by the lying signs and wonders were the ones *who did not receive the love of the truth*. The truth is salvation. Jesus is the truth! Love and hunger for truth so as not to be deceived.

Judgment Of Liars

In the book of Acts there are two stories about people who lie. Swift judgment came to liars in Scripture. Paul, on one of his missionary journeys, met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus. The sorcerer was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the Gospel message, but the sorcerer tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. Paul, led by the Holy Spirit, looked straight at the sorcerer and said,

You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of *deceit*

and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? ¹¹ Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind for a time, not even able to see the light of the sun” (Acts 13:10-11)

Immediately the sorcerer was blinded. When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord. The sorcerer was full of deceit and trickery. By truth, Paul overcame him in an instant.

There was also swift judgment against Ananias and Sapphira. They lied to the Holy Spirit of God about the price received for land they sold. In Acts 5, both fell dead for the offense. They lied and did not reveal the full price, because of deception to make themselves look more generous than they were. This story makes more sense in understanding the Lord’s hatred of lying, because of what it does to the body of believers. The responsibility for the lies is squarely on the back of Satan: “But Peter said, Ananias, why has *Satan filled your heart to lie* to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?” (Acts 5:3).

There is no such thing as a *little white lie*. Every lie puts a believer in league with the enemy. In fact, the concept of a little white lie is a lie from the pits of hell! Scripture does not put degrees on sin. A lie is a lie! Minute or gargantuan, all are the same. Deception that is closest to the truth is the most cunning deception of all. A colossal lie is easy to discern. A little twist of the Word can be challenging to discern. Satan, both in the garden with Eve and in the wilderness with Jesus, engaged in subtle tweaking of the Word of God! In other words, he engaged in little white lies, so to speak.

Liars are listed with the worst offenders in Revelation 22:15, “Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who *loves and practices falsehood.*” Another version says, “and whoever *loves and practices a lie*” Rev. 22:15, NKJV). Believers may not have thought that lying was such a terrible offense, but liars are in company with those who are “outside.” Lying is an abomination to the Lord! It puts people in bondage. We must speak the truth even in those times

when it is hard. When we endeavor to walk in personal purity, it is easier. Bondage comes from lies and gives power of Satan.

Conclusion

The Lord wants believers free from all encumbrances of the enemy. But even more than that, he wants the full manifestation of his kingdom on earth. He wants believers to experience God's kingdom now, "Your will be done, your kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven." We have somehow missed the revelation that we are victorious when we walk in all truth. When we know the truth, we will be set free by the truth. The Lord must weep at the deception of his people. Satan began his sabotage on earth with a lie, and there is nothing new under the sun. He is still lying, and people are still falling for it. The Lord gives the Spirit of Truth. If we will seek him, he will give believers revelation knowledge and strategy for overcoming the power of the enemy. We can try to overcome ourselves, but if we seek the Lord and listen, he will give the victory. It will be fast and painless. He is a God of strategy.

Chapter 20

Breakthrough: No Chickens Here



I have a friend who has a farm. She told me about what happens when a chicken is caught for . . . well, . . . you know, . . . supper. As soon as the chicken is firmly in hand, it puts up no fight. It is very passive. Maybe that is why when someone is *chicken*, he or she is known to be in fear, passivity, or frozen into inactivity. Sometimes when believers are caught by one who wants to put us in a pot to stew for a while, we just wait for the ax to fall. At times, believers put up absolutely no resistance to the schemes of the enemy. Christians are definitely not called to be in fear, passivity, or inactivity. Followers of Christ may contend for manifestation of God's kingdom. All too often, the enemy takes a stand and Christians roll over and play dead.

Believers should seek to appeal to the King, but there are times when we are called to actively resist Satan, not taking what he throws lying down. Believers should be well schooled in overpowering the enemy with the authority we have been granted. David actively resisted and was responsible for liberating King Saul and the whole Israelite army from Goliath and Philistine army. It honors God when believers demand enforcement of that which has been entrusted from the Lord. If I give my children a good gift, do I want to see a bully take it away from them? No, of course not! I understand dealing with a human bully on the playground is different than dealing with a spiritual bully who has opposed God by rebellion in the heavenly realm. The answer is still the same. I do not want to see my children abused by someone who has not allowed them to enjoy what I have

given them, nor hindered them being what I know they can be. I think God is the same!

It does not honor the Lord when believers accept the destruction of the enemy without resistance. Believers are not powerless individuals as the children of God. The King of kings and Lord of lords has called believers to be royalty in his household. To be passive in enforcing the gifts and blessings that God has given dishonors him. God is all-powerful. He is love. Jesus came to defeat the works of the devil. He won back all authority with his sacrifice on the cross and with the power of the resurrection. Believers who sit idly by and refuse to receive what has been given by the Lord do not exalting the magnitude of God. Could we be saying that his power is not enough? That his promises are not true? That he somehow means a promise for everyone else in the world except me? That would make him a liar, saying he *is* a respecter of persons, giving good gifts to some, but not to others.

I am NOT talking about enforcing anything against the Lord, as if we could. I am talking about requiring the enemy to turn loose of that which God desires for his children to have by using the authority he has given. This is not talking about pride or rebellion against God. Christians can walk in humility before the Lord, but yet effectively use the authority he has given against the enemy who would steal our blessings. We are called to stand, resist, and make the enemy flee. Breakthrough comes when Satan knows we firmly understand and know how to wield the authority of God. Lest this seem inconsistent, let me reaffirm that this is best when God gives the plan and strategy and when God calls believers to engage in the battle.

Contending For The Breakthrough

The enemy was in the Promised Land Israel was to possess. That is not a surprise, of course. I thought, “What was the enemy doing in Israel’s promise in the first place?” How did it come to pass that the enemy was occupying Israel’s promise? Israel left the place of God’s promise unoccupied 400 years before. They walked

out and left the promise unattended. When Israel did not occupy the promise, someone else did. When Israel wanted the promise back, they could not possess the promise because someone or something had taken up residence. Israel had to kick the enemy out of their promise before they could occupy it again.

Sometimes Christians cannot possess the promise of God because someone or something already possesses it. We must kick the enemy out of our promise in the name of Jesus. As long as the enemy is occupying our promise or blessing, we cannot occupy it. We have to do our part when God calls us to act.

The Lord said to Joshua, “See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands . . .” (Josh. 6:2). All they had to do was follow the plan. Joshua and the Israelites were going to conquer and settle the land that had been promised to Abraham centuries before. Joshua followed the unusual directions of the Lord. When he crossed over the Jordan River and came face to face with the Lord, *Joshua immediately fell on his face before the Lord!* The Lord wanted to lead the people to breakthrough. The Lord had his sword drawn. The sword is the Word of God. The breakthrough comes through the Word. Jesus is the Word! The sword was out of its sheath and ready to be applied to the situation. The sword brought the breakthrough.

The actions of Joshua and the Israelites were required for the breakthrough God wanted them to have. They needed to believe the Word of the Lord about what he was going to give them and act on it. They had to trust that the Lord would never leave them or forsake them (Josh. 1:5). They had to recognize they could not go alone, but only with the Lord leading the charge. Three times the Lord told Joshua to be strong and courageous (Josh. 1:6, 7, 9). We can never break through filled with fear and disbelief.

The stage was set for the breakthrough, but Joshua still had to do what God wanted him to do. The people of Jericho were not going to make it easy for the breakthrough to happen, just as our enemy will not make our breakthrough easy either. “Now the gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in” (Josh. 6:1). The stronghold looked impervious to attack. Even so, the Lord promised to deliver Jericho to Joshua, “See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king

and its fighting men (Josh. 6:2). Joshua and the Israelites believed the Lord and the Lord gave them the victory.

The Lord led Joshua and the Israelites to miraculously break through the walls of Jericho. Joshua followed the Lord during the entire process, and when the Israelites did not follow the direction of the Lord completely, they found their army defeated with many casualties of war. The lesson to be learned is that when the Lord calls believers to use authority to break through the enemy lines, he will give the strategy. When believers start to formulate their own plans and objectives that is when the blood flows.

Jacob: Wrestling For The Blessing

Jacob had an open heaven dream in Genesis 28, in which the Lord gave him a great prophetic word about his future. The Lord said,

“I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. ¹⁴ Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. ¹⁵ I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” (Gen. 28:13-15)

For the next few years, Jacob’s life did not look like the blessing of the Lord was with him. He served his uncle for seven years for one bride, but the trickster was tricked. He then served another seven years for his first choice. He was not living a blessed life in a foreign land. The prior deception of duping his brother, Esau, was hanging over him also. However, God had made some tall promises. He had a vision of a better day and blessed way.

Years later, Jacob was returning to the scene of his original deception and knew that he was going to encounter his deceived

brother. As he was making the return trip, he sent his family ahead and he stayed behind for the night. He had an encounter that gave him a new identity in keeping with the original word of the Lord years before:

So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak.²⁵ When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man.²⁶ Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."

But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."²⁷ The man asked him, "What is your name?"

"Jacob," he answered.

²⁸ Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but *Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome.*"

²⁹ Jacob said, "Please tell me your name."

But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" *Then he blessed him there.*³⁰ So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."³¹ The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip. (Gen. 32:24-31)

Years later, Jacob was still not walking the plan that the Lord originally conveyed to him at Bethel. In Genesis 28, Jacob had a dream and the dream was a wonderful, powerful word of God, but it had not come to pass. In Genesis 32, Jacob came before the Lord and he wrestled for the blessing. This is a powerful lesson for believers. God had made a promise to Jacob, and Jacob did not turn loose of those words that had been previously spoken over his life. Even years later he was holding on, both literally and figuratively, for the blessings of God! In his wrestling for the blessing of God, he was changed and became a new man.

Hang On!

If believers are pressing in for breakthrough in the promises of the Lord (finances, children, ministry, marriage, or other areas of brokenness) and feel like the battle is too intense to handle, it may mean the point of victory is at hand. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Dan. 3) were walking to the furnace, it probably did not seem like anything good was going to happen. But from the moment of their gravest condition, breakthrough was only moments away. If they had caved in and worshiped the false idol, they never would have seen the breakthrough. They never would have seen the glory of the Lord. They would never have the blessing of walking with Jesus in the purity of the fire. They had to walk to the furnace to get to the breakthrough.

The fact the oven was seven times hotter than normal illustrated the enemy cranked up the pressure and turned on the heat as a last-minute effort to prevent them from staying the course. The enemy will use all efforts to get believers to abandon the battle before breakthrough victory. It does not matter how close one gets to breakthrough if he or she gives up short of the goal! As a child I always heard, "Close only counts in horseshoes and hand-grenades." Close in the battle for breakthrough does not count for much, except being battered and bruised without the victory. When believers are getting close, the battle intensifies. The enemy will pull out every trick to discourage, dissuade, defeat, and deny. It does not matter how close we get to breakthrough if we bail out before the victory. Many people who are in the toughest part of the battle give in when breakthrough is just moments away. The walk to the furnace was a walk to victory. We serve an opposite kingdom. What looks like sure defeat, will probably be the road to victory. Do not give in . . . Fight for victory in the heavenly realms. Hang on. Hang On! HANG ON!!!!

The Surging Waves Of Breakthrough

There is a ripple effect of breakthrough. No, there is a tsunami effect of breakthrough! When believers press in for breakthrough,

surging waves of blessing go out from the epicenter. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego held on in the face of extreme adversity. In fact, I suppose it could be said the harder the barrier to break through, the greater the reward when the breakthrough finally comes! They endured the trials of the king's fury, and were thrown into the oven to cook for a while. Amazingly, when the trial was over, they were promoted and walked in great favor of the king. They went from being toast to being the toast of the town! The king decreed, "That the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other God can save in this way" (Dan. 3:29). It does not stop there, "Then the king elevated Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon" (Dan 3:30). They went from being the objects of the king's fury to being promoted.

The secondary blessing may not get noticed: *all* Israelites were allowed to worship after the victory the three young men won by their bold actions. No one was allowed to say anything against the God of the Israelites. There were three who did not bow to a false idol, so that must mean everyone else bowed the knee to the false idol. Even so, the others were able to walk in the fallout blessing of the three who risked it all. It was a huge turnaround from certain violent death, to extreme favor of God and the king. The situation changed from the name of God being defiled, to the name of God being glorified by an entire nation, and the governmental authority creating a space for the worship of the God of Israel. The three Hebrew young men were forerunners; they plowed the ground for everyone else. They were visionaries who did not care about the cost of following God. They were willing to pay it all. I guess the adage is true, "No guts, no glory . . . for God!"

Another example of breakthrough with fallout blessings include when the woman had the exponential breakthrough with oil and flour, the supply fed her entire household for the remainder of the estimated two-year drought. Blessing and breakthrough always carry exponential blessing and fallout to those around the ones breaking through. We often carry the load for others when we press in for breakthrough. Forerunners can change a whole nation! Press in and

do not give up! The price of breakthrough is personal sacrifice. The blessing of breakthrough is corporate gain. Are we willing to pay the price? Are we willing to pay the price so that others may benefit?

Fallout blessings were a significant part of the story of Joseph and the plenty of Egypt during a great worldwide famine. The story of Joseph is found in Genesis 37 to 50. He had prophetic dreams that his family would bow to him. His brothers were angry and sold him into slavery. While in slavery, he rose to prominence in his master's house and later in the Pharaoh's prison in Egypt. Joseph eventually broke through to get to the place and position where his dreams came to pass after thirteen years of slavery and imprisonment. In his elevation in Egypt, the entire nation of Israel was saved, and the ancestral line of Jesus was saved. But the blessing does not stop there. Because the Lord's plan was to save Israel and his family, the fallout blessing was that all of Egypt was saved as well. The Egyptians were not God's people; they were pagan worshipers of false gods. God was willing that the Egyptians be saved in the drought so that his people would be saved in the process!

The fallout blessings to Israel and Egypt did not come without personal costs. The personal costs to Joseph were high. In fact, the costs to Joseph were an incredibly hard price to pay. What if he had given up in the midst of the struggle? What if he had taken the easy way out? *What ifs* could lead down a winding path, but the point is that his personal sacrifice paid the price for many to be fed during a famine. His brothers lived at home with dear old dad, while Joseph was languishing in a stinky prison. His sacrifice paved the way for life for all of them!

Life in the kingdom of God is not fair! If a person wants fair, they should seek justice. The kingdom of God is all about mercy! People who are undeserving get the fallout blessings! The brothers, who sold Joseph into bondage, were the ones who were fed by his years of sacrifice. In the kingdom of God one person is often called to carry the burden for many. When breakthrough finally comes, the blessings abound. Is not Jesus the perfect example of this? He paid the price for the people of the world; we get the fallout of his sacrifice and pain.

What About Ungodly Authority?

There are times when ungodly authority arises and asks believers to disobey the Word and will of God. I am a firm believer that we should honor those in leadership over us, which is what the Bible teaches. There were times when the Lord allowed opposing armies to rise up against Israel as the rod of the Lord's discipline and judgment. However, what about when the worldly authorities impose actions on believers that put them in direct opposition to the will and Word of God? The question arises: What should followers of the Most High do? There are many biblical examples of people who were blessed by God for taking a stand against an ungodly authority over them.

In Exodus 1, two midwives rejected the word of Pharaoh, the king over them at the time, and did not kill the Hebrew babies. The Pharaoh of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, "When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live" (Exod. 1:16). The Hebrew children were becoming too numerous, so the pagan, earthly leadership decided to kill all the infant boys as a way of population control. In reality it was a demonic attack to take out the one who was born to liberate the people of God, Moses. The Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live.

Shiphrah and Puah acted in disobedience to a direct order from an ungodly authority. They then lied to the Pharaoh when he asked them why they had let the boys live. The midwives told Pharaoh the Hebrew women gave birth before they arrived to offer their midwife services (Exod. 1:16-19). The favor of God was given to them for disobeying an ungodly order, "*So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. 21 And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own* (Exod. 1:20-21). They feared God more than Pharaoh! Their faith gave them the conviction to stand against the ruling authority over them. They lied not for their personal gain, but for God's kingdom purposes. They put the will and plan of God before their personal safety.

There are other examples of people who went against the ruling authorities for the greater good of the kingdom of God on earth. Esther was willing to risk her life for the good of the kingdom of God and the Hebrew people (Esther 4:16). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, referenced above, refused to worship a false god, and instead faced death because of their stand against a prideful ruler (Dan. 3). John the Baptist stood firm against Herod and eventually lost his life because he refused to follow quietly behind a ruler who was in disobedience to God (Matt. 14:1-2). Elijah stood firm against Ahab and Jezebel, at great personal costs (1 Kings 18). Rahab hid the spies of Israel and lied to her own king because she recognized the power of the Lord God (Josh. 2:1). She told the spies the hearts of her people melted in fear because the Lord was God in heaven above and on the earth below.

How do believers decide when to honor God by honoring the ruling authority, or when to honor God by rejecting the ruling authority? It is an incredibly difficult question to answer. The midwives feared God more than they feared man. Exodus 1 shows, “The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live” (Exod. 1:17).

The three Hebrew slaves refused to honor the king. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego said, “We do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter” (Dan. 3:16). They let the Lord be their defender. They knew God was able to deliver them. However, they had firmly committed their personal wills to follow God no matter what happened. They said, “But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that *we will not* serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up” (Dan. 3:18). Esther broke the law. She said, ‘I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish’ (Esther 4:16).

All of these people loved God and wanted to serve him more than they loved their own lives. They were willing to lay down their lives for the greater good of the kingdom of God and for the people of God. The common factor was that they had the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom. Taking a stand against a ruling authority is dangerous in the natural. Taking a stand against a ruling

authority can lead to death. However, believers are called to fear him who can kill the soul.

*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. . . .*³² “Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven.³³ But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.³⁴ “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. . . .³⁸ Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.³⁹ Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it. (Matt. 10:28, 32-34, 38-39)

Had the Revolutionary War against Great Britain turned out differently for our nation, our Founding Fathers would have been branded traitors, and hanged by the neck until dead, or worse. The point is that when one stands against an ungodly authority, death of the physical body is a very real possibility. Jesus said it all, “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28). If I have to choose between an ungodly authority that can kill the body, or the Holy God who can destroy the soul in hell, the choice is an easy one. My body is dust anyway!

Intercession Breakthrough: Appeal To The King

The most beautiful example of intercession is Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane before his crucifixion. He prays for himself first, but then subjugates his will to the will of the Father. He lovingly prays for his disciples, and then he prayed for me! He prayed for all believers, of course. He prayed for every person who

would believe through the disciples' message. He was going to suffer and die in a few hours and he was praying for us!

There is a difference between one called or moved by God to intercede, and those who pray. Intercession is prayer petition to the Lord on behalf of others. Sometimes God calls forth intercession because he wants the breakthrough to occur. Micah 2:13 states, "The One who breaks open the way will go up before them; they will break through the gate and go out. Their King will pass through before them, the LORD at their head."

There are many beautiful examples of breakthrough by intercession in Scripture. Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Moses interceded and proclaimed a willingness to be blotted out of God's book on behalf of the people (Exod. 32:32). Daniel interceded with God when he was very angry (Dan. 9:16). The ruling centurion petitioned Jesus and subjected himself to the authority of Jesus for the sake of his servant (Matt. 8:5). Stephen was dying at the hands of a murderous crowd but interceded for them by asking God to forgive them (Acts 7:59). Esther faced possible death to defend her people before the king, but sought the Lord for her people (Esther 4:16).

Peter was in prison awaiting execution while the believers were earnestly praying for him (Acts 12:5). The petitions of intercession allowed the kingdom to manifest with an angel waking Peter from a sound sleep, chains falling, and doors opening. It was a miraculous breakthrough, apparently because the believers were earnestly crying out for him. After he was released, he was in a stupor for a time, thinking it was all a dream. When he became alert, he went to the house of Mary, where many people had gathered for prayer (Acts 12:12). We are left to wonder if the people expected breakthrough in that way because they did not believe the serving girl, Rhoda, when she told them Peter was at the door.

One of my favorite stories of breakthrough by intercession came in a book by Jim Cymbala, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*.²⁶ His daughter was struggling with long-term addiction. Hundreds of people at a church prayer meeting began interceding and crying out for her. Pastor Cymbala described the atmosphere as the sounds

from a birthing room. Two days later, she showed up at her parents' house, broken and repentant. She asked who had been praying for her. Petitions from the multitude of God's people joined in the intercession moved the heart of God. She was miraculously saved. Intercession is appealing to the King.

Faith And Obedience

One of the requirements for breakthrough was that the people obey the Word of the Lord. At the first opportunity, after entering the Promised Land, one of the Israelites became filled with pride and greed and took articles that were against the command of God. What should have been an easy victory ended as being a sound defeat. Because there was sin in the camp, the favor of God was not with the Israelites. The strong-willed countenance of the people dissolved because they were not in the favor of God. Thirty-six Israelite warriors were killed, an average of three people from each of the twelve tribes. The Lord did not appear to have much patience for Israel in the face of the disobedience and rebellion. This was the Lord's response,

The LORD said to Joshua, "Stand up! What are you doing down on your face? ¹¹ Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions. ¹² *That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because they have been made liable to destruction. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction.* ¹³ "Go, consecrate the people. Tell them, 'Consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow; for this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: There are devoted things among you, Israel. You cannot stand against your enemies until you remove them. (Josh. 7:10-13)

Anyone who is familiar with the story knows neither the Lord, nor Joshua tolerated disobedience among the people. The devoted things referenced above were items used in worship of false gods. There was no breakthrough in the face of such disobedience. There is no favor of God when sin is at work. We cannot go to the place of breakthrough without culling all disobedience out of our lives. After the disobedience was eliminated, the Israelites went and set an ambush for their enemies at Ai and had a great victory. The Lord was with Israel again because they built an altar to the Lord and read the law of God to the people. The people knew the law and they knew the blessings for obedience and the curses for disobedience. Joshua 8:34-35 says, “Afterward, Joshua read all the words of the law—the blessings and the curses—just as it is written in the Book of the Law. ³⁵There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read to the whole assembly of Israel, including the women and children, and the foreigners who lived among them.”

The end result was that Joshua and the Israelites returned to the position of breakthrough out of relationship and obedience. Maybe they were a little smug with the first victory, and did not realize just how much the Lord had done for them against Jericho! Breakthrough depends on being ever dependent on the Lord. Believers learn that a position of breakthrough requires humble relationship with the Lord, radical obedience to the minute details of the Word, and being consecrated or set apart for the Lord. In other words, believers must be as spiritually clean before the battle begins.

Believers often miss the tension between the love and compassion of the Lord versus the fierce strength of the Lord. God is a loving God, but he can be fierce. If the pendulum swings too far toward either side, there is a distorted view of God. Believer must understand and build a relationship with the Lord out of fear (reverent awe and respect) of the Lord. I love the Lord Jesus more than anything, but I believe him. When I believe his Word, I trust he will do what he says he will do. When He gives me a job with a deadline, I believe him and it is important for him that I do my very best to be obedient. Understanding the fierceness of God looses obedience based on the trust of his promises.

Chapter 21

Understanding Kingdoms And Principalities



Kingdom: First Mention

Some biblical scholars think there is significance in the way a word is used when it first appears in Holy Scripture. The theory of *first mention* is that the first use of a word in Scripture sets the definition of a word and is the benchmark of all other later mentions of the word. I decided to check out the word “kingdom.” Kingdom denotes dominion reign, realm, or even a geographic location. I was very surprised to learn the first mention of the word kingdom in the Bible was in reference to the ungodly kingdom of Nimrod. The name Nimrod may not be on a list of well-known people of the Bible, but Nimrod is infamous when his part in biblical history is revealed.

To fully understand Nimrod, we must start with his ancestor, Noah. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham was the father of Cush and Canaan (Gen. 10:6). Cush was the father/ancestor of Nimrod, whose name means *rebel*.

Noah And His Descendants

Ancestral lines in the Bible are very important. The sins of the fathers are visited on the children to the third or fourth generation

for those who hate the Lord (Ex 20:5). It seems that all major people groups who opposed Israel were descendants of Ham, Noah's second son. Noah and his son Ham had a questionable event that may have opened the door to allow Satan to intervene in Ham's family line. In the post-flood narrative, Noah, a man of righteousness and previously stellar obedience to God, had some kind of moral failure. Noah planted a vineyard, and "When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent."²² Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside" (Gen. 9:21-22). Ham saw Noah's nakedness and gossiped to his two brothers. The Hebrew word for nakedness is "er·vat," and can have many different meanings, including indecency, nakedness, and shame, implying shameful exposure. It is also a euphemism for cohabitation or improper sexual behavior. The other brothers walked in backwards and covered their father's nakedness so they did not see his shame.

There has been a great deal of discussion about what Ham actually did to Noah, what they did together, or what Ham saw. Some speculate an inappropriate sexual encounter against Noah by Ham in Noah's drunkenness. That could certainly be implied by the Hebrew word used, but it is not clear. Whatever it was, it was a serious offense. It changed the blessing of God into a curse from Noah. After the flood Genesis 9:1 says, "Then God blessed Noah and his sons . . ." Noah's reaction to this later event was to curse Ham's descendants, starting with Ham's son, Canaan, "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers" (Gen. 9:25). Perhaps Noah would not curse the one the Lord had blessed in Ham, so he began the curse with Ham's son Canaan. Noah blessed his sons, Shem (the line of Jesus) and Japheth, "Praise be to the LORD, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem.²⁷ May God extend Japheth's territory; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be the slave of Japheth" (Gen. 9:26-27).

The later descendants of Canaan, the Canaanites, were often the enemies of God's people in Scripture. They were polluted in their worship of false gods and often brought downfall to the Israelites by polluting their worship as well. The Canaanites were so abhorrent to God that the Lord told Joshua to eliminate them as the Israelites

took the Promised Land. Canaanites were also the settlers of Sodom and Gomorrah. Ham's other sons, Egypt, Cush, and Put, were also against Israel through out history.

After the flood of Noah, the territories of the earth were divided up among Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham and his descendants were basically given the continent of Africa. None of Shem or Japheth's descendants settled there. Some of the descendants of Ham became known as the Cushites (after Ham's son, Cush). Cushites also seemed to be opposed to God and God's people in Scripture.

Shem, the ancestral line of Jesus, settled in the Near East and Middle East, basically what today would be known as the Holy Land and Arabia. Even so, some of Ham's descendants went west to overlap with Shem's line and settle in the area of Babylon, and northeast into Assyria and Nineveh, who later turned out to be the people of the Bible who opposed God and God's people. Furthermore, descendants of Ham's son, Canaan took land in the Near East in what would later be known as the Promised Land, the land of Canaan.

Japheth was the oldest, but he was always listed last (Gen. 10:21). Japheth's descendants settled in the far east of Asia, Asia Minor and what would become known as Europe. After the post-flood land distribution, we see Ham's line of people spread out, in what appears to be an encroachment of the areas of other branches of the family tree. As we have seen, Ham's line spread from Africa to the north to Canaan, and west to Babylon and Assyria, including the regions of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.²⁷ The list of nations in Genesis concludes by saying, "These are the clans of Noah's sons, according to their lines of descent, within their nations. From these the nations spread out over the earth after the flood" (Gen. 10:32). This will be important for later discussions.

Nimrod In Babylon And Assyria

After clarifying the background of Ham and his sons, Nimrod will be discussed. He was the descendent of Cush, the son of Ham, the grandson of Noah. It seems with Nimrod the apple did not fall

far from the proverbial tree of his ancestor Ham. Ham did something so deplorable Noah cursed Ham's line for all generations. He was a bad actor just like others in his ancestral line. Most sons mentioned in generational narratives are given a name-only mention, but not so with Nimrod:

Cush was the father of Nimrod, who became a mighty warrior on the earth. ⁹ He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; that is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD." ¹⁰ The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon, Uruk, Akkad and Kalneh, in Shinar. ¹¹ From that land he went to Assyria, where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah ¹² and Resen, which is between Nineveh and Calah—which is the great city. (Gen. 10: 8-10)

Nimrod was the first heroic warrior on earth (Gen. 10:8). He was the greatest hunter in the world, and his name became renowned. People would say, "This man is like Nimrod, the greatest hunter in the world" (Gen. 10:9). Nimrod built his kingdom in the land of Babylonia, in Shinar, with an apparent desire to expand, "The *first centers of his kingdom were Babylon*, Uruk, Akkad and Kalneh in Shinar" (Gen. 10:10). From Babylon he expanded his territory to Assyria, building major cities including Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria (Gen. 10:11-12). Nimrod is also mentioned as a "mighty warrior on earth" in 1 Chronicles 1:10. It seems Nimrod was a warrior with a voracious appetite for territory and power. His kingdom and influence spread far beyond what was allotted to his family after the flood. He was apparently the first named man who sought to rule the world.

From the Babylonians, we see a great act of rebellion against God in Genesis 11 by the building of the Tower of Babel. Shinar is one and the same with Babylon and the seat of the kingdom of Nimrod. Genesis says,

The whole world had one language and a common speech. ² *As people moved eastward, they found a*

plain in Shinar and settled there.³ They said to each other, “Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. ⁴Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.” (Gen. 11:1-4)

The people of Babel were going to build a name by building the tower. They were overtaken with pride and the lust for power and fame. The tower was made out of inferior building products. Satan often tries to mimic the Lord God but never quite gets there. God always builds out of stone. In fact, Jesus was the cornerstone the builders rejected (Acts 4:11). In many places in Scripture, precious gemstones or uncut stones are used in the God’s building plans. When God builds he lays even the *foundations of it with sapphires, and all its borders with pleasant stones*, (Isa. 54:11-12, Rev. 21:19). The fact Babel was built out of bricks and tar illustrates that it was not a godly building project. The people of Babel wanted to reach the heavens in rebellion toward God. They imitated Satan in pre-Fall Heaven and in the Garden of Eden by wanting to be like God. Isaiah 14:12-14 says,

How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! ¹³ You said in your heart, “*I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. ¹⁴ I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.*

Another act of rebellion in Babel is the people did not want to scatter and fill the earth. God told Noah after the flood, “As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it” (Gen. 9:7). They were given the earth and told to

increase upon it, but in rebellion they chose to build a tower because, “Otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth” (Gen. 11:4). Matthew Henry’s famed commentary says,

It is probable that the band of ambitious Nimrod was in all this. He could not content himself with the command of a particular colony, but aimed at universal monarchy, in order to which, under pretense of uniting for their common safety, he contrives to keep them in one body, that, having them all under his eye, he might not fail to have them under his power.²⁸

The Lord would have none of their foul plan and God thwarted the kingdom of Nimrod. The LORD came down to see the city and the tower the people were building (Gen. 11:5). The LORD said, “If as one people (in unholy unity) speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them” (Gen. 11:6). The Lord confused their language so they could not understand each other and scattered them over all the earth.

What they sought to avoid in their pride (being scattered), actually happened when God humbled them. God scattered them all over the face of the earth. They were unified in an unholy purpose and Nimrod was the apparent leader. In Scripture, it seemed as if all evil emerged from Babylon throughout biblical history. Nimrod was the first king of Babylon. Nimrod later took territory in Assyria and became the builder of great Assyrian cities, including Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria. Nimrod seems to be the founding father of many of the enemies of God’s people.

Israel, Egypt, Babylon, And Assyria

Genesis 10:6 lists Ham’s sons as Cush, Egypt, Put and Canaan. Israel (God’s chosen people) were enslaved by three kingdoms in biblical history: Egypt, Babylon, and Assyria (Satan’s figureheads on earth). To get the full significance of Nimrod’s kingdom, it is necessary to trace the history of Israel, Egypt, Babylon, and Assyria

from the point of the beginning of Nimrod's kingdom in Genesis even to the concluding prophecy in the book of Revelation.

Israel was birthed through the line of Noah's son, Shem. From Shem's line came Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – whose children later became known as Israel, the chosen people of God. Egypt, which descended from Ham, was the first nation to enslave God's people, Israel. Israel went into Egypt for food and was later enslaved. The Israelites started as a *family* under Jacob, but later became a *nation* under Moses after he led them out of the Egyptian captivity. For a time the Israelites were united under one governmental system, known as the United Kingdom. There were only three kings of the United Kingdom: Saul, David, and Solomon. The Philistines tried to rise and conquer them again under the leadership of King Saul. The Philistines wanted to re-enslave Israel after they had been delivered from Egypt. David, who later to become king, defeated Goliath, the champion of the Philistines and the whole Philistine army. What is not largely known is that the Philistines also came from Ham's line through Egypt, "Egypt was the father of the . . . Kasluhites (*from whom the Philistines came*) . . ." (Gen. 10: 13).

The United Kingdom was divided shortly after the death of King Solomon into the northern kingdom known as Israel, and the southern kingdom known as Judah. Israel and Judah were disobedient to God. Israel was very polluted in worship, engaging in the worship of the Canaanites (Ham's other son!) and worshipping false gods. God allowed a rod of judgment to come against the northern kingdom. From 740 to 722 BCE, Assyria conquered the northern kingdom of Israel and took many thousands into captivity to Nineveh. The Assyrian captivity was cruel and harsh and the Israelites were never allowed to return as a nation to their homeland. This resulted in ten tribes of Israel being lost forever and assimilated into the Assyrian culture. The Assyrian captives were not allowed to maintain their national identity in captivity. Nimrod was the first king of Assyria and he built the capital city Nineveh. Ham's line rose once again against Israel.

The southern kingdom of Judah was also disobedient to God and he allowed another rod of judgment to come against Judah. About a century and a half later, the Babylonians attacked and conquered

the southern kingdom of Judah in about 597 BCE. According to the prophet Jeremiah, Judah would be in captivity for seventy years and then freed to return to their homeland and to Jerusalem. This prophecy proved to be true and Judah was eventually released to return home. The temple of Jerusalem, which had been destroyed in the siege against Jerusalem, was rebuilt and Jerusalem was restored. The first king of Babylon was none other than Nimrod, from Ham's line of descendants.

Why Is All Of This Important?

Nimrod was the founding king of both Assyria and Babylon, two of the nations that later conquered Israel on their own homeland. Egypt was different because Israel went into Egypt's territory and was later enslaved. We started this whole discussion about Nimrod because the first mention of the word *kingdom* appeared in relation to the kingdom he set up in Babylon. There appears to be more here than meets the eye in terms of who Nimrod is and why God was so opposed to him. Nimrod is a personification of Satan.

Showdown Between Nimrod And The Messiah

The Prophet Micah names Nimrod in direct opposition to the Messiah. According to Micah, the Messiah will spoil any who would spoil his people, specifically mentioning Nimrod and Assyria. "And (the Messiah) will be our peace when the Assyrians invade our land and march through our fortresses. We will raise against them seven shepherds, even eight commanders, ⁶who will rule the land of Assyria with the sword, the land of Nimrod with drawn sword. He (the Messiah) will deliver us from the Assyrians when they invade our land and march across our borders" (Micah 5:5-6).

The word of the Lord to the Prophet Micah does not stop there. This is what the Lord promises to do to the land of Nimrod in that day,

¹⁰“In that day,” declares the LORD, “I will destroy your horses from among you and demolish your chariots. ¹¹ I will destroy the cities of your land and tear down all your strongholds. ¹² I will destroy your witchcraft and you will no longer cast spells. ¹³ I will destroy your idols and your sacred stones from among you; you will no longer bow down to the work of your hands. ¹⁴ I will uproot from among you your Asherah poles when I demolish your cities. ¹⁵ I will take vengeance in anger and wrath on the nations that have not obeyed me (Micah 5:10-15).

God is serious about destroying the kingdom of Nimrod and the Assyrians. God is serious about destroying the Babylonians. The kingdoms of Nimrod are a front for the work of Satan in the world. Satan wants to take the people of God captive and was in fact allowed to do so because the sin of God’s people opened the door to the captivity of Satan. The work of Messiah, the anointed of God, destroyed the work of Nimrod on the earth and brought the people out of captivity. The Sword of God will defeat Nimrod’s vile kingdoms. The sword of God is the Word of God, and the Word of God is Jesus Christ.

Kingdom: Last Mention

This began as a bit of a fishing expedition. Curiosity was aroused after learning so much from the investigation of the first mention of the word kingdom. The Lord seemed to open scripture and give new understanding about everything he taught above. The last mention of the word kingdom in Holy Scripture held a few surprises as well. The final mention of the word kingdom was also dealing with the kingdom of Babylon! Revelation 17:5 says, “Babylon the Great: the Mother of Prostitutes and of the Abominations of the Earth.” She is riding on the beast of the Revelation. The beast has ten horns, which represent ten kingdoms that will arise for one hour. In the book of Revelation, the angel showing John the revelation explained,

“The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have *not yet received a kingdom*, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. ¹³ They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴ *They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers*” (Rev. 17:12-14).

The final mention of kingdom is the mention of ten polluted kingdoms whose sole purpose is to give their power and authority to the beast. Even though they have “kingdoms,” the Lamb is victorious over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings! Kingdoms of the earth will rise and fall, but the victory is sure in Christ Jesus.

The first and last mentions of kingdoms in Scripture are talking about Babylon, the type for the kingdom of Satan. What a puzzle to unravel! The first mention is the rise of the evil kingdom of Nimrod in Babylon and Assyria, which is the front cover of Satan’s kingdom on earth. Babylon and Assyria were the archenemies of God’s people throughout biblical history. The final mention is also talking about the kingdom of darkness, but it is talking about the utter defeat of that kingdom at the power and might of the most Holy God, Jesus the Lamb of God who is the Lord of lords and King of kings!

In the beginning, the rise of evil kingdoms against God and his people were seen in Nimrod. In the end the evil kingdom is finally defeated and the people of God are fully and finally liberated from Satan and his forces of evil. Since the first Nimrod, there have been many Nimrods who have sought to rule the world and who have sought to bind the people of God. A nod toward the annals of history illustrates many who have sought to capture God’s people and rule the world. Attila the Hun, Genghis Khan, Alexander the Great, and Hitler, along with many others, have walked in the way of Nimrod. The King of kings and the Lord of lords, the anointed one of God, will not allow that to happen because of the work of the cross. The kingdoms of Nimrod will not prevail against the chosen of God.

End Times Understanding

What does all this mean for understanding the kingdom of God in the end times? Ham represents the work of Satan on the earth. Ham's line has tried to enslave the people of God from the beginning. All of the archenemies of God's people came through Ham's line: Egypt, Philistine, Canaan, Assyria, and Babylon. God's people came through Shem, to Israel and down to Jesus. Noah was so distraught that he cursed Ham's offspring. He did not curse Ham himself, perhaps because God had blessed all of Noah's sons, including Ham. However, Noah brought forth a curse on his descendants. The blessings and curses of Noah may help believers to get a glimpse of the end time events.

Noah cursed Ham's son, Canaan, "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers" (Gen. 9:25). Canaan was cursed to be a slave to Shem! What this is saying is that Satan will be a slave to Jesus! Noah also said that Japheth will live in Shem's tent. Japheth represents the nations of the world that will come into the tents of Shem. The nations will come to know Jesus and will reside under his covering. Noah also said that Canaan would be slave to both Shem and Japheth. What this means is that the people of God and the nations of the world will come under one covering of God and the enemy; the enslaved Satan will harass them no more.

The name Shem means *name*. Jesus was born into the line of *name* (Shem). The importance in the name of Jesus has been seen throughout this work! The name Japheth means *opened or expansion*, which is indicative of expanding to bring the nations into the house of God! The name Canaan means *humiliated or merchant trader*. Satan has tried to sell God's people into captivity since the beginning. However, in the end he will be captive for eternity. An interesting thing to note is Noah was uncovered, and just like Adam and Eve, there was an effort by his sons to imperfectly cover his sins by human covering.

Listen to Genesis 9 and indulge for just a moment when the name *Jesus* is exchanged for *Shem*, *the Nations* is exchanged for *Japheth*, and *Satan* is exchanged for *Canaan*. See the scenario of events of the end of time unfold in Noah's words:

When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, ²⁵ he said, “Cursed be Canaan (*Satan*)! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers.”²⁶ He also said, “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Shem (*Jesus*)! May Canaan (*Satan*) be the slave of Shem (*Jesus*). May God extend Japheth (*the Nation’s*) territory: May Japheth (*the Nations*) live in the tents of Shem (*Jesus*), and may Canaan (*Satan*) be the slave of Japheth (*the Nations*).” (Gen. 9:26-27, Expanded by author for understanding.)

The evil line of Ham is defeated and will be enslaved forever and believers will live in Shem’s tents and the line of Japheth will be in the tent with Shem!

Chapter 22

Follow Me



A few years ago I attended an Emmaus Walk, which is a Christian retreat weekend. When I arrived home after the life-changing weekend, I stretched out face down on my living room floor and said to the Lord, “I submit my life to you!” In other words I said, “Lord, I am yours to do whatever you want.” I understood and meant exactly what I said. I never dreamed in that moment the twists and turns my life would take over the next few years. In essence I said, “Lord, from this day forward, I follow you!” There have been a few missteps along the way. However, my overarching desire has been to follow the Lord. Since that time, I left a lucrative career as an attorney, gave up every bit of prestige and clout I had obtained in my career, and traded in my business suits for blue jeans and a computer. Everything I have given up has been insignificant in comparison to the blessings I have received in following Jesus.

“Follow me,” was the first thing that Jesus said to many of his disciples. Following is not as easy as it may sound. When Jesus said, “Follow me,” there was a deeper meaning than simple discipleship. Following Jesus demanded close attention and effort from the follower. The eyes and devotion of the follower had to be transfixed on the leader. Jesus seemed to be saying, “Follow me. I will lead. Keep your eyes on me. Go where I go and stop when I stop.” Following him meant never taking attention off of Jesus and keeping him in the center of vision.

Followers are a designated category of people in Scripture with particular identifying characteristics. The term *follower* has specific meanings apart from the slang usage that most people have given the word. Followers are believers who have given themselves more fully to a life of sacrifice. They are immersed into a life of service and devotion to Jesus. Every follower is a believer, but not every believer is a follower. True followers sacrifice in ways that other believers do not. It costs believers to live the life of a follower.

Jesus words, “Follow me!” constituted an imperative verb, which denoted an exhortation or entreaty. The Greek words, *deute opiso*, meant, “Come! Follow behind me!” This was more than a mere request or suggestion. The disciples followed him immediately; they followed him completely. They went where he went, followed wherever he led, keeping their eyes on him. They traveled near and far. They were by the sea; they went into high places.

At times there were missteps among the disciples. They took some wrong turns or became confused, but Jesus was the loving teacher who corrected and redirected when that happened. In reality, there were times when his correction was a little tougher to take, but the love of Jesus was always present even in discipline. Hebrews 12:5-6 says about discipline,

My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, ⁶because the *Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.* ⁷Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?

When believers follow Jesus, he will lead to places where doors will be opened. Sometimes we get to follow him to exotic foreign locations; sometimes we get to follow him to the country store down the lane. Wherever he leads, he will always be there first! Psalm 139:5, 10 states, “You are always ahead of me to prepare the way, and you follow behind, protecting and guarding me. Your hand of love is upon my life, imparting your blessing to me Wherever I go your hand will guide me, your strength will empower me.”

Follow Him Away From the Old Way

When he said “follow me” to Peter and Andrew, they just got up and followed Jesus. Matthew 4:18-19 states, “As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people.’” There was no long engagement in the art of persuasion to get them to come on board with the newfangled ministry. Jesus was making an imperative, urgent statement, but even so it was up to the disciples if they agreed to follow. They had the choice to follow or not. In Scripture some followed and others did not. It was simple and direct.

It was compelling because the next thing that we learn was that they dropped everything to follow him. Literally Matthew 4:20 states that, “*At once they left their nets and followed him.*” Their radical obedience was instantaneous. Following Jesus meant not only following his lead, but it also implied leaving something behind. They could not follow the Lord and continue to do the same things that they had always done. It was impossible to take up the occupation that Jesus had for them, while not leaving behind the old thing that had occupied their time in the past. Peter and Andrew did not leave for nothing; they left for something. They left the old way for a purpose in the new way. They left the old natural fishing nets to fish for men in the kingdom realm with heavenly nets.

The question is this: Are we ready to leave our old nets – the worldly occupation - for a new call to do something in the kingdom? It is impossible to say, “Yes Lord, I follow you,” without leaving some things behind. The disciples left homes, families, relationships, occupations, stability, and comfort. They basically became itinerates with Jesus to wander in a nomadic lifestyle. If Jesus had no place to lay his head, neither did they. Is Jesus calling believers to a higher level of commitment?

If someone had told me that day I was lying on my living room floor the radical changes my life would take over the next season, I probably would not have thought those changes were even possible. I can honestly say I would not change a thing. I would give up

everything I have given up all over again. If there was one thing I could do over from the last few years, I suppose it would have been to give up more! All I can say is, "Praise God!" Some people who are living with eyes on worldly things have thought me very strange for giving up some of the things I have given up to follow Jesus. Following means leaving some old things behind – plain and simple.

The Cost Of Following

Following Jesus is a calling that asks for more commitment than simply believing. There is a greater cost to following. In Matthew 8 there were two people who approached Jesus about following him, a teacher of the law and a disciple. They approached Jesus from different points of view, but Jesus responded to both about the cost of following. First, "*A teacher of the law came to Jesus and said, 'Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.'*"²⁰ Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" (Matt. 8:19-20). What Jesus was saying was, "You do not know what you are suggesting, because this is a hard life." He did not say that to Peter and Andrew! He just said, "Follow me!" and they did.

This was a teacher of the law, a person trained to teach and apply the Old Testament Scripture. The instruction and traditions of the teachers often went beyond the written law of God. For example, the Lord God said in the Ten Commandments, "You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain" (Exod. 20:7). The teachers added layer upon layer to what God had said to insulate the people from sinning. So to prevent anyone from taking the name of the Lord in vain, they prohibited anyone from speaking the name of the Lord at all. When they did these things, they heaped more and more *religious* responsibilities on the people. The teachers and the Pharisees elevated their words above the written law of God given to Moses. Jesus often condemned the outward showing of religious traditions because they were outward displays with no inward engagement or transformation of the heart. The teachers were often in conflict with Jesus and his disciples.

Jesus did not sugarcoat the cost the teacher would pay if he chose to follow. Furthermore as a teacher, he would have had a permanent place in the temple or synagogue to call his own for worship and teaching. In other words, he was *established*. When Jesus said, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests,” he was saying the cunning have a place to settle, but Jesus was not settled in any religious tradition. He had no home on earth. If the teacher followed, he would have no home on earth either. Jesus was not going to get too comfortable in his religious scenario. The teacher was very quick to declare his willingness to follow, but Jesus knew his heart. He had not counted the cost.

Perhaps he was caught up in the passion of the moment of seeing the great things Jesus had done. Jesus had just healed Peter’s mother-in-law, who rose up from the sick bed and went straight to work. Also just before the teacher declared his desire to follow Jesus, the Scripture states, “many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick” (Matt. 8:16).

Matthew Henry, one of the great historic commentators on the Bible, said, “They that take up a profession *in a pang*, will throw it off again *in a fret*; let them, therefore, *take time*, and they will have *done the sooner*: let him that will follow Christ know the *worst of it*, and *expect to live hard, and fare hard*.”²⁹ Matthew Henry hit the target when he said to let the follower, “know the worst of it, and expect to live hard, and fare hard.” In other words, before making a rash decision to follow, “Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough . . . ?” (Luke 14:28) or “Won’t (you) first sit down and consider whether (you are) able . . . ?” (Luke 14:31) Do not rush in headlong and make a vow that is difficult to keep. Ecclesiastes 5:5 says, “It is better not to make a vow than to make one and not fulfill it.”

In the same passage as the teacher coming to Jesus, *a disciple* came to Jesus with an excuse to delay his call to “follow.” The disciple said to him, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”²² But Jesus told him, “*Follow me*, and let the dead bury their own dead” (Matt. 8:21-22). This person was already a disciple, which meant he was already in the ministry with Jesus. He was already

a student of Jesus. Jesus reminded the disciple of the call he had previously accepted to follow Jesus. Even things that seem good or important to the world must be subjugated to the call to follow Jesus. The disciple had already accepted the call, but then the pulls of the world were dragging him and urging him to go back. His request is not an ungodly request; it is grounded in the law to honor one's father and mother. However, for one called to *follow*, everything . . . EVERYTHING . . . must take a second place to following Christ. Luke 9:61-62 describes the incident a little differently: "Still another said, '*I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.*' Jesus replied, '*No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.*'" Plowing is earthly work, but it is the earthly work that is service in the kingdom of God. The hardships we experience benefit the kingdom of God.

This disciple wanted to follow Jesus but on his own terms. I admit I have been guilty of that in times pasts: I wanted to set the terms and conditions of my obedience. I see the error of my ways in studying what it truly means to follow Jesus as a true disciple. To be "fit for service in the kingdom of God," there is no looking back to see what was left behind. To look longingly at what is behind makes a believer unfit for service as a follower. Servants do not set times and conditions of their obedience to their master.

Although Matthew does not say exactly what happened to the teacher of the law and the disciple after Jesus talked to them about the cost of following him, it is probably pretty safe to assume the disciple remembered his call and indeed followed Jesus. After the exchanges with teacher of the law and the disciple, "Then (Jesus) got into the boat and *his disciples followed him*" (Matt. 8:23). The Scripture specifically says, "his disciples followed" Jesus, so it appears that the disciple would have gone with him also. Furthermore, we know in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed that not one had been lost, except Judas. He prayed, "While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled" (John 17:12). The passage does not say what happened to the teacher of the law. He was not identified as going with Jesus after

he had been so enthusiastic about following him in the moment. Jesus was calling both of them to a hard life.

Many willing people are derailed in their quest to follow Jesus by the apparent good call to put family first and take care of the needs of loved ones. These are lawful things to do, but when they get in the way of following the will of God, believers must first choose following God on high, Lord of lords, King of kings! The disciple's excuse was inadequate for Jesus. His response, "Let the dead bury their own dead," dripped with meaning. The spiritually dead can bury the dead. The Lord had chosen this one to follow and no excuse was adequate to stand in the way of the kingdom plan.

It saddens me to think of those I know who have had the privilege of a call to follow on their lives, but who have never chosen to sever the distractions and pulls of the world to do that which God had called them to do. Christ is very clear to distinguish "the crowd" from "the followers." Luke 14:25-27 states,

*Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ²⁶"If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. ²⁷And whoever does not carry their cross and *follow me* cannot be my disciple."*

A few verses later in Luke 14:33 Jesus said, "In the same way, those of *you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.*" Jesus was talking to the tag-a-long people who were curiosity seekers. They were not serious about paying the cost of discipleship. Jesus spoke plainly to them about the requirements of being a follower. He finished with the familiar statement, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear" (Luke 14:35b).

Jesus demands his *followers* to be fit for discipleship must "hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life" (Luke 14:26). Relatively speaking we must not hold our closest family in competition with Christ and our devotion to him. The call of a follower requires that there be nothing or no one who stands in the way of loving obedience and commitment to Jesus!

Others have answered the call to follow and it was not always easy. Many people who have well known ministries have lived through very difficult situations. Kathryn Kuhlman was a well-known healing evangelist and was used as a dynamic tool of the Holy Spirit. She had a tremendous healing ministry. Kuhlman often related people had no idea of the cost of the call on her life. She said, “I die a thousand deaths before I walk out on a platform . . . I die a thousands deaths because I know that I cannot give it to you. I have no healing virtue. I have no healing power. You and I are dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit.”³⁰ Kathryn Kuhlman died to herself over and over and to anything that would prevent her from being the vessel of the Holy Spirit. Every time I watched her healing ministry, Kuhlman always mentioned the personal cost of discipleship for the anointing she carried.

I have heard of the miraculous call of God on the life of Heidi Baker. Baker was a burned out missionary from Mozambique. The Lord miraculously touched her during the Toronto Blessings in 1994. She was touched by the overwhelming power of God for seven days, during which time she could hardly function. Randy Clark, whom God used to begin the Toronto Blessing, has often said the magnitude of her experience was necessary so she would not question that God had called her. As soon as she returned to Mozambique literally all hell broke loose in her life, in the lives of her family members, and in their ministry. For eighteen months conditions were terrible, with serious physical illnesses, financial setbacks, and ministry hardships.³¹ In his book, *There is More!* Randy Clark said,

It is important to be aware that receiving a prophetic word doesn't mean suddenly everything is going to become easy. More often, the prophetic word is what God uses to strengthen us during those difficult times that are soon to follow. I have noticed that there is often a relationship between the intensity of an experience with God and the degree of difficulty the person will be facing in fulfilling the call of God on their lives. The prophetic word, with its powerful experience in Toronto, would soon be tried. Initially,

it certainly did not look as if the prophetic word from me was true in the natural. Instead, just the opposite seemed to be happening.³²

As I was going through the beginning stages of preparation for ministry in the United Methodist Church, those leading the process often said, “You need to have a firm understanding of the call on your life, or you will not be able to withstand the hardships of ministry.” I do not know how many times in the process of licensure, as well as during years of theological education, I have recounted the times and circumstances of the Lord’s calls on my life. When I review my journal entries, I am reminded the Lord has work for me to do, and my serious attention is required. Reviewing the work God has for me to do is an act of faith and encouragement to stick with the plan of God. When the junk starts flying, people who have been called by God need to be able to remember why they are doing what they are doing. If one is not called, there is usually limited sticking power.

Take Up Your Cross And Follow

Following Jesus implied self-denial in the contexts of most Scripture passages in which Jesus issues a call to follow. However, there is a part of the call to follow that even moves beyond self-denial. Following Jesus may also lead those who follow to take up one’s cross. Taking up one’s cross is over and above self-denial. Self-denial has been addressed, but the idea of taking up one’s cross is an expanded concept to be addressed. The idea of taking up a cross and following Jesus comes from the mouth of Jesus in Matthew 16,

²¹ From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.²² Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”

²³ Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; *you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.*” ²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, “*Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves **and** take up their cross **and** follow me.*” ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶ *What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?* ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then *he will reward each person according to what they have done.*²⁸ “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.” (Matt. 16:21-28)

In this expanded passage, Jesus just told his disciples he would suffer and die. Peter stood in his way by declaring what Jesus had just described would never happen. Peter had just been declared the rock upon which the Church would be build earlier in Matthew 16, then he passionately stood in the way of the very purpose of the life of Jesus. Jesus responded by telling the disciples to take up their individual crosses and follow him. Jesus clearly had kingdom purposes in mind, not earthly purposes. Peter’s bold, albeit misguided, declaration was tainted with personal concerns, not God’s plan. The idea of taking up an earthly cross had kingdom ramifications. Peter was looking with natural eyes, while Jesus saw the bigger kingdom picture. In other words, followers are willing to give all for the greater good of the kingdom of God. The truest sense of the words, “follow me,” in this context means to put the kingdom of God before any personal concern. Following is not without personal costs. Following may mean death to the follower.

Jesus also said in the passage that anyone who wants to save his life will lose his life. Jesus could not save his earthly life without jeopardizing the eternal plan of God. He further says in Matthew

16:26, “*What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?*” Jesus had already been offered the whole world in the temptation of Satan (Matt. 4:8-9). He was offered what he could not keep, in exchange for what he could not lose. He was offered worldly kingdoms of possessions and wealth, in exchange for all power and authority in the kingdom of God for all eternity.

What did Jesus do when he took up his cross? He did the atoning work of salvation. He reconciled sinful humanity to a holy and righteous God. He did the work he knew he would do before the foundation of the world. Revelation 13:8 calls Jesus, “. . . *the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.*” Peter confirms this truth 1 Peter 1:18-20,

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. *He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.*”

The question is what does this have to do with disciples taking up a cross and following Jesus? Obviously humanity is not going to redo the atoning work of salvation. “Follow me,” means to follow him in every way, including suffering the hardship of the cross if necessary. This is only for those who want to be disciples. Not everyone is willing to pay the cost of discipleship and not everyone wants to be a disciple. Matthew 16:24 says, “*Whoever wants to be my disciple . . . take up their cross and follow me.*” The cross for a believer is usually considered a hardship of this world, but will have ramifications in the kingdom realm.

The hardships of this world usually have kingdom consequences that are bigger than what is happening with the individual believer. For example, after Saul/Paul was called on the road to Damascus, the Lord told Ananias to go to him, saying, “I will show him how much he must suffer for my name” (Acts 9:16). Paul eventually ended up in prison as he was writing to the Church at Philippi, but

filled with joy, because he could see the kingdom benefits of his personal hardships.

*¹² Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has *actually served to advance the gospel*. ¹³ As a result, it has *become clear throughout the whole palace guard* and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. ¹⁴ And because of my chains, most of the *brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord* and dare all the more *to proclaim the gospel without fear*. (Phil. 1:12-14)*

Paul saw that because he was in chains, first, the gospel was being advanced; second, his imprisonment was a witness to the palace guard who knew his captivity was for Christ; third, the brothers and sisters were proclaiming the gospel with confidence in the Lord, encouraged by the sacrifice of Paul; and finally, the gospel was proclaimed without fear. Physically he was suffering greatly but the greater good of the kingdom was being brought forth. Paul further says in Romans 8:28, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Paul was following Jesus and there were many great personal costs to his decision to follow Jesus, but he had his eye on the prize of the kingdom of God and the good that was being accomplished in advancing the gospel message.

Even though there may be momentary hardships, even if hardships last a lifetime, they will still be for a finite period of time. We are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus. Present hardships in following Christ will not separate believers from him:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither

death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:35-39)

Blessing Of Following

The rich young ruler went away sad because he was not willing to live the life of dedication to be a follower. He asked Jesus what he must do to be saved. Jesus looked at him and loved him. “‘One thing you lack,’ he said. ‘Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. *Then come, follow me.*”²² At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth” (Mark 10:21-22). Later in that same chapter, Peter proclaimed the obvious devotion of the disciples who were following Jesus. He said they had given up everything to follow,

²⁸ Then Peter spoke up, “*We have left everything to follow you!*”²⁹ “Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel³⁰ will fail to *receive a hundred times as much in this present age*: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and *in the age to come* eternal life.”³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” (Mark 10:28-31)

Jesus said following him - taking the road of true discipleship - results in treasures in heaven. Jesus also said there would be blessings up to one hundred fold of that which was given up in the present age. The blessing they experienced in being with Jesus was beyond compare! The disciples had given up comforts on earth for treasures waiting in heaven. They had all of their needs met and they were blessed. The more one gives up in the natural, the more one gains in the eternal. Following Jesus may cost in this life, but it is great

blessing in the eternal. The first here will be last in the kingdom and the last here will be first in the kingdom.

Followers Hear His Voice

What is it those who follow Jesus have that other people may miss? There are some benefits to being a true follower. Followers actually hear the voice of God and are given insight and discernment into the ways of the Spirit and kingdom. John 8:12 states, “When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, ‘I am the light of the world. *Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness*, but will have the light of life.’”

One day I had an epiphany. I was crying out to the Lord because I was distressed I had not been able to spend time with him. I had allowed busyness to take over my day. The Lord clearly spoke to me and said, “I am in you; I am with you always.” I literally looked around to see who was speaking to me. Since that time, I have heard the Lord with more clarity. The Lord’s sheep listen, which has a whole new meaning after that day. The sheep hear and discern. The Gospel of John states,

³ The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the *sheep listen to his voice*. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ But they will *never follow a stranger*; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” ⁶ Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them. (John 10:3-6)

One of the blessings of hearing the voice of the Lord with clarity is following where he sends because of the recognition of his voice. This is one of the great blessings of both hearing him and knowing with greater clarity where to follow because he leads. The most

wonderful part of this is because we know the real thing, we can easily recognize the voice of a counterfeit. This is one of the great Scripture promises: when we actually hear the voice of the Lord, we will know and run from the voice of a stranger. Those who hear the Lord, “will *never follow a stranger*; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” I call on that promise often and the Lord reminds me of that promise often.

My prayer is that everyone will actually hear the voice of the Lord with greater clarity and will know where to follow. I am praying for people to seek and have the desire to hear God with clarity and understanding. The Lord wants everyone to understand how to hear him in that way. The first step in hearing his voice with clarity for those who have never experienced it before is to know it is even possible to hear God at that level. I pray often for people to gain that level of understanding from the Lord.

Later in the same passage, Jesus again repeats that his sheep know his voice and follow him. In the scenario of hearing and following is the notion of intimacy between the Lord and the sheep. This passage illustrates intimacy is key to hearing his voice,

Jesus answered, “I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father’s name testify about me, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. ²⁷ *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.* ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.”
(John 10:25-30)

Anointed hearing is birthed in intimacy with the Lord. Hearing and following are born out of relationship. Without relationship, there is no kingdom work.

Peter's First And Last Call: Follow Me

Peter was the first disciple to receive the call from Jesus to “follow me.” Peter vehemently announced he would follow Christ to death if need be, and then promptly denied him three times. Peter said to Jesus, “Even if all are made to stumble because of you, I will never be made to stumble.” We are left to wonder if this were confidence or pride? “Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.’ Peter said to Him, ‘Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny you!’” (Matt. 26:31-35). Peter was very assured in his statement only to fall a few hours later.

After Jesus was resurrected he restored Peter by asking him three times if he loved Jesus in John 21:

“Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

¹⁶ Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

¹⁷ The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” (John 21:15-17)

After Peter was restored by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus repeated the call for Peter to follow him. He said,

⁸ Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where

you do not want to go.”¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!” (John 21:18-19)

Peter exercised his own will in the beginning, because he “went where he wanted.” This passage indicates in Peter’s later years he would follow the Lord into hardship because the Lord told him, “when you are old . . . someone . . . will lead where you do not want to go.” The Lord was telling Peter there would be hardship in his life, but the hardships would lead to the glory of God. The final call of Peter after he denied Jesus was the same as the first: “Follow me!” (John 21:19b). The denial of Christ by Peter did not change the original call to follow because the “Gift and calling of God is irrevocable” (Rom. 11:29). Jesus showed Peter that the life of a follower would be a hard life.

Some Are Not Called To Follow

Contrary to what some may be thinking, Jesus did not call everyone to leave everything to be a *follower*, per se. Some disciples (students), who would later become apostles (leaders/messengers), were called to the more sacrificial life of a follower. However, there were many people in Scripture that loved Jesus and believed he was the Messiah, but did not give up everything to take on the itinerate lifestyle of hardship to follow him. For example, Martha and Lazarus were strong believers. Jesus visited in their home, but they were not on the road with him that we ever see in Scripture. It does not appear they were called to follow Jesus in that way. They served him, sat under his teaching, adored him, but they did not go with him where he went. They did not give up everything to follow him like Peter and the others did.

Jesus did not let everyone follow him the way he called the disciples to follow him. In Mark 5, the demoniac who lived in the tombs was delivered from a long-term demonic possession. It is a strange drop-in story. Jesus went to the “other side,” away from Israelites to the Decapolis, a region of ten cities in a pagan land.

Jesus healed the demon-possessed man, who then came and sat at Jesus' feet. Sitting at the feet of Jesus was an indication he sat under Jesus' teaching for a time. After that, Jesus immediately returned to the boat and left the pagan region to go back to the land of the descendants of Israel. Jesus went back across the lake to the land of the Hebrew people where he immediately encountered the Jewish synagogue ruler whose daughter was dying and the "daughter of Abraham" with the issue of blood. What mercy for Jesus to go into the pagan land, accomplish this one thing, and then leave. The former demoniac was so full of gratitude he wanted to follow Jesus, but Jesus did not allow it. He was not without opportunities to serve because Jesus did give him an assignment close to home.

As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed *begged to go with him*.
¹⁹Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."
²⁰ So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed (Mark 5:18-20).

At least in this instance there was a difference between the one that wanted to follow Jesus and the ones Jesus called to follow. The former demoniac, "begged to go with him," but "Jesus did not let him." There is a hardship to "following" not everyone is called to, including the teacher of the law discussed earlier.

Some Cannot Follow

Just as some who love Jesus are not called to follow in the true meaning of the word *follow*, there are some who are prevented from following. Peter and the other disciples could not follow Jesus at the time of Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus specifically said something like, "Not now, but later you will follow."

John 13:33-38 ³³ “My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

³⁴ “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

³⁶ Simon Peter asked him, “Lord, where are you going?”

Jesus replied, “*Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.*”

³⁷ Peter asked, “*Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.*”

³⁸ Then Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!

Often the ones who could not follow are the hard-hearted who have rejected the authority of Jesus. Jesus spoke to the Pharisees and specifically said they could not go where he was going. He distinguished the fact that they were from below and he was from above. Jesus was not of the world they were from, even though he was living on the same planet as them.

²¹ Once more Jesus said to them, “*I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come.*”

²² This made the Jews ask, “Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, ‘Where I go, you cannot come’?”

²³ But he continued, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. ²⁴ I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.” . . . ²⁷ They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father.

Conclusion

Jesus said, “Follow me!” What did he mean when he called someone to follow him? Even more puzzling is why would he direct the concept of following him – with all its scriptural meaning – be included in this book about living in the realm of the kingdom of God here and now?

The first question is the easiest to answer on several levels. A true follower is a person who operates under full and total commitment to Jesus. Other people may love Jesus with their whole heart, but are not living on the front lines of the kingdom battle. A true follower is one who recognizes that hardships may be coming, and is committed to serve Jesus no matter what, even to the point of death. It is a commonly held belief that all of the original disciples died martyrs’ deaths. Followers are people who have a special call to go the extra distance knowing it will be a hard life – literally giving up family, homes, relationships, financial success, or other things of the world that are not necessarily ungodly, but may hinder the complete dedication to the kingdom plan and the Gospel message. Followers are true warriors with kingdom authority, and are front line people who engage in the battle with Satan. In Peter’s case, he had been given the keys to the kingdom of God. The followers enter the fray knowing they may even become casualties of the battle.

John 12:26 sums it up very well, “Whoever *serves me* must *follow me*; and where I am, *my servant* also will be. My Father will honor the one who *serves me*.” The bottom line is this: a follower rises, or perhaps I should say, lowers him or herself to the level of a servant. But for now we must remember not all disciples are followers, but all followers are disciples.

Christians are working under a very distinct advantage. We know the victorious ending of the saga in which our enemy Satan is utterly and completely defeated, but the battle is still raging for supremacy in the hearts of humanity. Christ is the victor, but the deathblow has not been finally welded against Satan. Followers know all this and are willing to move ahead.

The even more interesting query is why would the Lord Jesus give the topic “Follow me” for this book. It actually seemed a

little out of place because it was not outwardly dealing with the supernatural realm like the other issues that have been addressed thus far. Actually, when the Lord called me to write this chapter, I confess I had no idea what I could say for a whole chapter about what I thought was a very simple concept: follow me. I thought, after all, every believer was called to be a follower. I have tossed around the term “follower of Jesus” like water without realizing it was a term of art with a lost or subtly hidden meaning. Who knew followers are actually a distinct people group in Scripture with a particular identity? That elusive nuance was lost without specific study of the Word.

In Scripture, the people who often see the manifestation of the kingdom realm on earth are the followers of God. They are the Abrahams, who walk away from home and family without so much as a look back. They are the Davids, who know they have a kingly call on their lives, but are forced to live in caves and honor God above all else, even when their enemy is delivered into their hands. They are the Ruths who are called to live sacrificially, not knowing the final outcome. They are women of steel, like Rahab, who could hide the people of God, risking certain death if discovered. They are the Esthers who are brave in very frightening situations and put others, even the entire nation, above self, and who will approach a pagan king to plead for her people in the face of certain elimination. They are the prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Elijah, and Elisha, who stand firm against the evil, ungodly powers, and principalities. They hear the voice of the Lord and follow where he leads. They demonstrate the power of God in the face of vile and polluted worship. They call down the fire of God and loose the wrath of God on the godless. They are the Daniels and Shadrachs of the world who are not afraid to face certain death to honor and revere God Almighty. They are the Peters, Pauls, Johns, and others who walked in the power of the Holy Spirit. The anointing they carried was not without cost. Peter was a powerful evangelist who brought thousands to the Lord in one day by his submission and yieldedness to the Holy Spirit.

It is easy to dream of walking in kingdom power that some of these people have walked in without seeing in the hardship. I believe

the Lord wanted to show that paying the cost of being servant/follower is necessary to walk in powerful anointing of the kingdom here and now. I spoke earlier about Kathryn Kuhlman. I found a personal note she had written called *Consecration*. Consecration is setting aside one's life for full service to the Lord. Kuhlman said this:

I made a consecration of my life that I had never made before, when I saw that it was absolutely possible for me to so yield my life, my body, as a living sacrifice - a sacrifice so consecrated to Him that the name of God Almighty may be glorified through the life of a sinner saved by the grace of God. It is through the Holy Spirit empowering Christ's body of believers, His Church, with power for service that the Father is glorified again and again.

The Heavenly Father does not ask for golden vessels. He does not ask for silver vessels. God asks for yielded vessels – those who will submit their will to the will of the Father. And the greatest human attainment in all the world is for a life to be so surrendered to Him that the name of God Almighty will be glorified through that life.

As you read these words, I pray that this shall be the desire of your heart; and I know that the Father will hear your cry, and honor your prayer . . . and take your life, using it for His glory through the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit.³³

The people who walk in the greatest kingdom anointing and power are people who are followers in the meaning ascribed in Scripture. They are Christian leaders who are gone from home more than they are there each year. They are missionaries who are living in extremely hard conditions, but who are seeing the dead raised, the deaf hear, and the blind see. They are people who are not home to see their children or grandchildren play ball, or go to the school play. They live in foreign lands and sacrifice to serve God. They are people who do not wait until all the conditions are

right before they say, “Yes.” They are willing to go all-in for God, like Peter, who dropped his nets in the sand and left them there. They just walked away from all the allure of the world and followed. They are the true followers. They are the people who are entrusted with the glory of God and see the kingdom manifested in miraculous ways. Jesus is calling many to follow. He needs true followers who have counted the cost and are able. He needs people to say as Peter said, “We have left all we had to follow you!”

Chapter 23

Waiting To Come



In our busyness to “do something” we often miss the most important thing - intimacy with the Lord. Relationship cannot be rushed. Intimacy comes to lovers after a long courtship. Intimacy is a function of a long-term relationship, not a one-night stand. Hungry people want to see God. Desperate people long to go to that place of intimacy with Jesus, no matter how long it takes or how much it costs the believer.

Ascending the mountain is a metaphor for going into the presence of God. What does it mean spiritually to wait upon the Lord? There were many people in Scripture who ascended holy mountains to meet with God. The people in Scripture ascended both physically and spiritually. They ascended both actual mountains and they also ascended to Mount Zion, the place of the throne of God. At times seekers would ascend an actual mountain and God would come down from his heavenly abode to meet with his servant who was diligently seeking him. In essence there was movement of both God and man to come to a common meeting place on the top of the mountain. At other times in Scripture it is obvious people actually went into the courts of God in the heavenly realm.

Ascending takes spiritual hunger and a willingness to separate from the things of the world that demand time and attention. In Scripture, those seeking God would actually depart from the camp to go to a solitary place to meet with God. For humanity, separation from the communal place to the solitary place was part of the call

to go where God would come: Moses on Sinai, Elijah on Horeb, or Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Through these examples believers learn about ascending to commune with God.

Moses: Mount Sinai

When Moses was seeking God, he went up the mountain. Moses could only go so far; He could not pass the final barrier to get to God if God did not come down to meet with him. Moses ascended the mountain and waited for the Lord. To get to the glory presence of God in his throne room, the movement by the power of the Holy Spirit is required. Psalm 18:33 states, “*Through you I ascend to the highest peaks of your glory to stand in heavenly places, strong and secure in you!*” We only ascend to the heavenly places through the Spirit of the Lord! We can separate ourselves from the world to seek God, we can get away, but the invitation to come all the way must come from God himself!

God directed Moses to ascend the mountain to come to the glory presence of God in Exodus 24:15-17, “When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, ¹⁶ and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. *For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud.*” Moses went to the mountain as the Lord directed but he waited until the seventh day to be invited into the glory cloud by God. What was Moses doing while he waited? Did Moses ever get impatient for God to move? Notice he was not impertinent enough to attempt to enter the glory of God without an invitation. Proverbs says, “Do not exalt yourself in the king’s presence, and do not claim a place among his great men; ⁷ it is better for him to say to you, “Come up here,” than for him to humiliate you before his nobles” (Prov. 25:6-7). It was only after Moses was there, waiting on the Lord for six days, that the Lord invited him to come into his glory. “To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. ¹⁸ *Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights*” (Exod. 24:17-18).

Waiting Is Preparation For Intimacy

Ascending the mountain is not nearly as important as encountering the Lord upon arrival. Once Moses was in the glory he was not in a big hurry to leave because he lingered there for forty days! Sometimes when we experience the glory of God, there is too much rush to tell people what we have experienced (out of excitement) and we rush away from the glory of God. Do we miss some of what he has for us? When believers encounter the glory of the Lord, the believer should never depart first! If God blesses humanity with his presence, it is an honor to love and enjoy the visitation as long as the Lord will linger.

This conveys that sometimes God calls believers to come near and wait for him to call from nearness into intimacy with him. *Waiting is preparation for intimacy.* Waiting is a time of purification so one can go into the presence of God! Nearness and intimacy with the Lord is something that can happen now, not just in the meeting at death of the physical body. When we wait on God we see his goodness now, “I remain confident of this: *I will see the goodness of the Lord, in the land of the living.*”¹⁴ *Wait for the Lord*; be strong and take heart, and *wait for the Lord*” (Ps. 27:13-14). Furthermore Psalm 25:4-5 says, “Show me your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. *Lead me in your truth* and teach me: for You are the God of my salvation; *on You do I wait all day.*” When we wait on the Lord he will show his way and teach his paths. Jesus is the way, truth and life, and no one comes to the Father except through him. We have to walk in purity and truth to be in that kind of intimate presence with the Lord!

There is something very important about waiting on the Lord. We can only go so far into the relationship with the Lord on our own. Moses walked up the mountain but he could not go into the presence of the glory of God until he waited upon the Lord and he was invited by God himself to come into his glory. On the seventh day *the LORD called* Moses into the glory cloud, then Moses entered and stayed in the glory on the mountain. Psalm 40:1-2 says, “I waited patiently for the Lord; and *He inclined to me, and heard my cry.* He . . . set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps.” Later in that same

chapter it says, “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire — but my ears you have opened— burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require. ⁷ Then I said, “Here I am, I have come— it is written about me in the scroll. ⁸ *I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart*” (Ps. 40:6-8). What he wants more than anything is for believers to want to do his will.

Gifts Come To Those Who Wait

In Acts 1 and 2, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Church came on the day of Pentecost. Jesus gave them a command before his ascension into heaven, “Do not leave Jerusalem, but *wait for the gift my Father promised*” (Acts 1:4). The Spirit came because the disciples were obedient to wait for the gift of God, just as Jesus had said. What if the disciples had not waited? It is pure speculation, but I believe the coming of the Spirit would have been delayed by their failure to wait – in reality, their disobedience. The disciples drew near to the Lord in the upper room. They were united in prayer according to Acts 2:14, which states, “These all *continued with one accord in prayer and supplication*, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.”³⁴ The disciples waited ten days after the ascension of Christ to the day of Pentecost.

We see waiting on the Lord is an important part of hearing from God. Revelation of God often came in Scripture as a result of waiting on God. Why wait? Waiting brings breakthrough: “This is why I wait upon you, expecting your breakthrough, for your Word brings me hope! I long for you more than any watchman would long for the morning light. I will watch and wait for you, O God, throughout the night” (Ps. 130:5-6, Passion Translation). Waiting is an art form. It is almost a lost art form for believers.

Waiting is more important than doing, but doing makes believers feel better (at least temporarily). Romans 8 says even though waiting may take time, it is not entirely passive. Believers are called to “wait eagerly (v. 19),” or to “wait with eager expectation” (v.23). Waiting is an act of worship. Waiting on the Lord was preparation for very important revelations to those in Scripture. Would there

be Ten Commandments if Moses had not waited until the seventh day. What if he got tired on day three and went down the mountain? Where would the book of Revelation be if John had not been to the point of “getting in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day?” (Rev. 1:10, 4:2). I can personally say every important revelation I have had has come as a result of waiting on the Lord. Waiting brings strength, “But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint” (Isa. 40:31).

Waiting For God’s Will

Believers get in the will of God when we wait. God told Noah when to go into the ark and God told Noah when to come out of the ark. Noah went in seven days before the rain. He was also obedient not to disembark from the ark until God told him he could leave. Even though, “*Noah . . . saw that the surface of the ground was dry,*” he did not come out of the ark until the Lord said so (Gen. 8:13). *After* Noah saw the ground was dry did God release Noah to disembark, “Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives” (Gen. 8:17). Then, after waiting for God’s say-so, “Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives” (Gen. 8:18). Noah was a waiter. Even though he could have reasoned it would have been fine to leave the ark when he saw dry ground, he did not go. After having been there for months, Noah was probably ready to get off of the boat, but he waited on God to tell him. Waiting is summed up in Isaiah 30:18, “*Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!*” The Lord God wants his children to be with him, but he is the God of justice. He blesses those who wait on him.

In The Spirit On The Lord's Day

John was exiled on Patmos. First, the angel of the Lord came to him in Revelation 1 and he received a download for the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3. He did not go anywhere in the spirit realm at first because the angel came to him. Later in chapter 4, he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. Had he been waiting on the Lord? We do not have any textual indication the events in Revelation 1-3 occurred on the same day as the events in Revelation 4, except the first few words of the chapter: "After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven" (Rev. 4:1). We do not know how long after, but we do know at some point a door opened in heaven and a voice beckoned him and said, "Come up here!" This is reminiscent of Moses waiting on the Lord, and the Lord inviting him to come into the glory cloud to meet with God. The Holy One issued the invitation and John went into heaven! The phrase "In the Spirit" means to be yielded to the Spirit of God, whether in the body, out of the body, or in some other manner. Being in the Spirit means giving the Spirit complete control.

Guided Up The Mountain

When people truly ascend the mountain to come to the Lord, it is because the Spirit has led them. We see that over and over in Scripture. Even on the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John arrived on the mountaintop by being taken there by Jesus. Matthew 17:1 states, "After six days *Jesus took* with him Peter, James, and John the brother of James, *and led them up a high mountain* by themselves." The inner circle of Jesus only went there because Jesus took them and led them up. Jesus took them; they did not take themselves. Jesus took them because he was physically present with them. Now we do not have Jesus physically with us, our leader is the Holy Spirit. Everything Jesus did, he said we would do also. He ascended to be with the Father in the heavenly realms, and believers can ascend into the heavenly realms to be with Jesus at

his invitation. There are many examples of this in Scripture as have already discussed in the chapter called “Here and There!”

The Loneliness Of The Mountain Starts Here

The mountaintop is typically not a communal place. Each mountaintop seeker usually went alone. In the case of Moses, the Lord specifically told him not to bring anyone with him (Exod. 24:2). On the Mount of Transfiguration, the inner circle of Jesus, Peter, James, and John went for the dual purpose of later testimony and also to learn. Mostly Jesus went to the solitary place to be alone with the Father and that is what we see often in his earthly ministry. Being alone is not an easy place to be. Intentional solitude is to be pared down from all distractions of the world so the mind is well equipped as a clean slate to receive what the Lord has to offer. Moses heard from the Lord, but he was in a period of waiting for several days before the Lord invited him into the glory. Ascending the mountain demands that solitude be a priority, seeking the Lord is the place of God.

Culling Distractions . . . But Getting There Even With Distractions

The only thing the Lord wants from his children is to love him and spend wholehearted time with him. He does not need our work ethic more than he wants our time. If the Lord has an assignment, he will let us know. He loves his people and he desires our love in return. However, neither our work nor our devotion will make him love more than he does already. Our love and devotion will not make him love us more than others who do not love him in return. His love is grace; it is freely given and is not contingent on any particular response. The love of God cannot be earned by good behavior.

Having said all that, I would also say it is time to get serious about being with God and not just serving him. Serving him feels good because it is doing something. Being with him takes effort to

simply wait on him, adore him, and love him. It is easy to get busy doing a job when the Lord gives an assignment, but it is not always easy to just settle in and wait upon him. In those times in which believers have been devoted to the Lord first, the assignment or call is much easier and seems to unfold without much human effort. The times that have not been initiated by waiting upon the Lord, or worse yet begun by rushing headlong to do the work, are much more difficult to complete.

When I was doing master's level work in seminary, there was one semester I had more than a full-time load of classes consisting of a huge number of class hours. The classes were labor-intensive. I was serving a church as a pastor, taking care of a home, and raising three children, tending to my husband, and may have been doing some legal work as well. During that season of my life, I endeavored to seek the Lord and put him first in everything I did. Every morning I would spend about two hours in prayer, Bible reading, and just being with the Lord. After spending time with the Lord, I would get up to do the work I had to do for school, church, and home. Everything else seemed to take less than half the time it normally would have taken. It seemed the papers would flow out after I had been in worship and were well appreciated by the professors. Dedicating the first of every day to the Lord made everything in my life work smoother. The Lord wants his people to come to him.

It is as if Jesus were saying, "I want my people to know they can ascend the mountain and come to me. Most people do not know they can come to me and I want them to come to me. People are going to need to know how to get into my presence even in midst of turmoil and strife." We must seek him in the midst of busyness and activity. He wants believers to be able to get to him in the midst of chaos. Seeking him when it is not easy to seek him may require some training and effort. Being able to get to him when things are loud and active is part of the process of seeking him.

A well-known ministry leader said to hear the Lord in the past he had to get to a quiet place, pray, worship, and meditate for a few days and then the Lord would visit him and show him things the Lord wanted him to teach the people. In an interview, he said there was a shift and things were different. He said he could even close

his eyes in the middle of a busy public place and be in the throne room of heaven. There is hastening in the things of the Spirit. This is what the Lord is looking for. We must seek an ongoing intimate relationship with him so that we can get into the place with him. In other words, in an intimate relationship believers are invited in to the glory earlier, rather than later, because the relationship is well formed and comfortable, like a long-term marriage. The intimacy occurs out of ongoing relationship, not out of lingering courtship that never progresses.

Getting into the presence of the Lord means we have to cull distractions. William Seymour, the great African-American leader of the Azusa Street Revival, would come into the meeting and put a wooden box on his head. After he had encountered the Lord, he would remove the box and stand to minister to the people. It was reported:

He'd (sic) sometimes sit at the meetings with his head in a shoe box, to cut himself off from the hysteria surrounding him, apparently for two reasons: (1) to keep from becoming visually disoriented (he was blind in one eye); (2) so he could concentrate on prayer and thought, so that he would be most open to speaking in the Spirit. The people in attendance were already in a state of excited agitation long before Seymour spoke, thanks to what went on before him each night. When his thunder suddenly struck on such nights, it must've (sic) been more than most people could take.³⁵

Jesus said, "Come . . ." often. The Lord wants people who have the desire to be with him enough to come near and wait for him. When we draw near and wait, he calls us to intimacy. The Lord will speak for the benefit of his body.

Chapter 24

Coming Soon



There are many things the Lord has yet to teach. I believe that there is a Chapter 24 to this book but the time has not yet come. On the other hand, there is urgency about releasing this word now. It is a kairos moment for this teaching to be given to the body of Christ. When the Lord teaches me, by his grace, I will write his teaching and revelation for all to see. The Lord has called to me *to come*, saying there is a door open. I wait.

Epilogue



A spiritual and academic mentor once said something like you can never be satisfied with normal church when you have experienced the kingdom of God. In all honesty, I am not sure at the time if I grasped the significance of what he was said. He was completely correct, and his statement held the promise of a light bulb of understanding. I needed understanding to put into words what I had been questioning for years, but could not put my finger on. The full understanding of God's kingdom eluded me. For years, as I read the Bible and I read over the phrase, *kingdom of God*, I would pause, lift up a prayer and say, "Lord, what is this? I know there is more to understanding the kingdom of God, but I do not know what it is." I prayed earnestly for the Lord to teach me what the phrase "kingdom of God" meant on the earth.

When I was in prayer one day in Brazil, the Lord spoke to me and said I would teach people about the kingdom of God around the world. I knew the Lord wanted me to write a book on his kingdom. At the time, I had a modicum of understanding, but my response was, "Lord, I don't even know what it is! How can I write a book about it?" The Lord spoke to me and said he would teach me in the writing of the book.

Frankly, as I began to write this book, my understanding of God's kingdom was still very weak and limited! At first, the Lord showed me topics to write about. About a year before completion, the Lord would give me a title each week. I was to write the chapter each week, The Lord asked me to set a deadline, which was 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday. The second Wednesday morning I went into my study

to work on what was then chapter one, having not met the deadline. The Lord spoke to me and said, “Laura, you are done, move on!” I closed down that document, and opened another one and started on a new chapter based on the title the Lord gave me. I did that for eight weeks. (Those eight chapters are not the first chapters of the book.) I did eventually go back and finish the first chapter that I started on. The work was more biblical study and research than revelation. I did the work and it was eye opening. I learned a great deal, but to that point I had never sunk my teeth into the supernatural meat of the topic of God’s kingdom.

Finally, I arrived at the point when the Lord spoke to me and said for me not to write another word until he told me specifically what to say. I knew that meant he was going to give me revelation about his kingdom. In fact I knew that without divine revelation, I could not write a book on the kingdom of God. I waited a year with nothing to write about. Some days I would go into my study and just sit there and think about the kingdom, but there was nothing there – my mind was a blank slate. I just waited for the Lord to teach me.

One day in prayer after about a year, the Lord spoke to me again. He said something like, “Laura, the level of kingdom understanding you will receive is tied to the seriousness with which you listen to me.” Admittedly, I had difficulties culling distractions out of my life. Prophetic words came from other sources, saying that for the Lord to what he wanted to do, I had to get away from the distractions of life. That day the Lord gave me a hard deadline of forty days to finish the work. He said the book must be complete in forty days from that day. I knew he needed my undivided attention. I got a calendar and numbered backwards from forty. Every day or two I would look at the calendar, to keep myself in line with the date. The Lord said I should pull away from the world to hear him. It was very difficult to extract one’s self from life for forty days, but that is pretty much what I did. I had two children and a nephew who graduated during that time, but other than that I did not do much of anything else. I separated myself from social media, TV, phone, family and friends. Many understood and some did not. I missed phone calls, a wedding, a funeral and other “important events.” I cooked for my family one time per week during that season. I had to convince myself that I could not let the fear of

man direct my path. I refused to socialize, stayed in my study from early in the morning until late in the evening every day, listening and writing. I was hung up on the issue of authority for over two weeks. Finally, I began to see it. The Lord taught me, and I wrote. I had light bulb moments nearly every day. With trust and assurance that he would teach me, I plowed into writing on the kingdom of God. He was faithful to his promise!

The Lord also said this book will help people survive until the end and, “you are already seeing how it works.” I have experienced the kingdom and am still experiencing new aspects of God’s kingdom every day. I want everyone to understand the message of the kingdom and to know how to fully experience God’s realm now. I have been telling my children for years if things get bad in the natural world, the Lord will take care of his people. I have been telling them to search the Bible for answers – they are there! The Lord will give divine provision; he will heal the sick and raise the dead. He will give kingdom strategy to his people to circumvent ungodly authorities, who are against God and God’s people. He may hide his children in a freak storm or grow up a vine in a day to give shelter.

Believers often talk about the experience of heaven as a future event, but that is not what God intended. When Jesus said the kingdom of God is at hand, it was at hand for those he was talking to. He was carrying the kingdom within. Believers carry the kingdom within also, but many do not know what that means.

The kingdom is the realm where humanity began on the earth, but the automatic blessing of the kingdom was lost to believers. God wants believers to understand the kingdom of God is for the here and now reality of earth. The kingdom is God’s presence on earth. Without a doubt, the kingdom is for those who seek to have spiritual experiences in hearing, seeing, knowing, and perceiving. It is there for all to know and perceive, but only those with the will and desire to force their way into it will be rewarded with understanding. It is hidden and the wise and learned will not see it. Only those who are hungry enough to go for it will see it. My prayer is that you will seek God’s kingdom with all your heart. Seek him with everything in you, so you can have the full blessings and benefits of *Kingdom Citizenship Now!*

Endnotes



- ¹ There was no guile in Nathaniel and he was able to see into open heaven of God. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Matt. 5:8).
- ² We need to learn well from this lesson: We cannot battle Satan with a dull sword. The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. We must have understanding of the uttered word from God to defeat our enemy. In the passage dealing with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God is rendered *rhema* in the Greek. Rhema is the uttered word of God, not the written word of God (Eph. 6:17). If Eve had good understanding and command of what God had spoken, Satan would not have had ease in misrepresenting the conversation.
- ³ The reemergence of evil on the earth through Ham’s line will be discussed in detail in the chapter entitled, “Understanding Kingdoms and Principalities.”
- ⁴ The Greek words *dunamis* and *exousia* are primarily rendered *power* and *authority*, respectively. On rare occasions the Greek words are interchanged, but the overarching predominant meaning in Scripture is as has been described above.
- ⁵ The name of God was considered too sacred to be spoken by the Israelites. Because they did not want to sin by saying or using the name of the Lord in vain, no one was allowed to speak it and the pronunciation was lost to humanity. Therefore, today no one knows exactly how YHWH, the Tetragrammaton, is to be pronounced. The Hebrew language

consists of 22 consonants. The original Hebrew language did not contain any symbols for vowel sounds. Later in Israel's history, vowel sounds were added by placing various dots or small lines around the consonants. The vowel *points* were left off the Tetragrammaton (YHWH) because by the time vowel symbols were inserted into the language there was not even an oral tradition of how to pronounce the name YHWH. Therefore, there is no accurate translation of YHWH. Commonly used pronunciations like Jehovah or Yahweh are just human endeavors at coming up a name from YHWH. Since we do not know the vowels for YHWH, the name is unpronounced except with the vowel pointing of *Adonai* (Lord). Scholars have taken consonants of YHWH and added the vowels of the Hebrew word for Lord and come up with Jehovah or Yahweh. Even though God identified himself at that time, we really do not know what that name is at this point in time.

⁶ David Jeremiah, *Angels: Who they are and How they Help . . . What the Bible Reveals (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 1996)*.

⁷ "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12).

⁸ There are two Greek NT words translated "word." Very simply, "logos" is the building block, or frame upon which everything hangs. Logos is typically used to describe the written word of God. "Rhema" is the utterance of God, the spoken word or the thing said. Rhema is a "now" word given by the Lord to speak or actually utter into a current situation. We cannot have one without the other. The logos is the bridge to the rhema. They are two sides to the same coin. Having logos without rhema means the Lord is silenced in all current situations. Having the rhema without logos opens the door to distortion because all utterances must line up with Scripture. God will never contradict himself. Jesus is the building block but his Spirit is also the one who gives

utterance. The Word of God is living and active, both in the Bible and in the utterance of God.

⁹ The strength of God’s arm is revealed in many passages for example, “Your arm is endowed with power; your hand is strong, your right hand exalted” (Psa. 89:13), and “To who has the arm of the Lord been revealed” (Isa. 53:1), and “Therefore my own arm brought salvation for me” (Isa. 63:5).

¹⁰ The work of God’s hands is often a service to humanity, for example, “His hand laid the foundation of the Earth, and My right hand spanned the heavens” (Isa. 48:13), and “The Lord has sworn by His right hand, and by His arm of strength” (Isa. 62:8), and “The Lord’s hand is not shortened that it cannot save” (Isa. 59:1), and “And the vineyard which Your right hand has planted, and the branch that You made strong for Yourself (Ps 80:15).

¹¹ The finger of God is first seen when the magicians in pharaoh’s court could not match the word of God for the first time in the plague of the gnats. “But when the magicians tried to produce gnats by their secret arts, they could not. Since the gnats were on people and animals everywhere,¹⁹ the magicians said to Pharaoh, ‘This is the finger of God’” (Exod. 8:18-19a). God inscribed the Ten Commandments by the finger of God, (Exod. 31:18, Deut. 9:10). Finally we see the finger of God casting out demons.

¹² C.S. Lewis *Miracles*. London & Glasgow: Collins/Fontana, 1947. Revised 1960. (Current edition: Fount, 2002.

¹³ Matthew Henry, Complete Commentary to the Bible, http://www.studylight.org/desk/?q=2ki+6:6&t=en_nas&sr=1 (accessed 11/17/2013).

¹⁴ Nic and Rachel Billman, “Beautiful to You,” Produced by Shores Music, LLC, Copywriters 2012 Nic & Rachael Billman.

¹⁵ <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/translate>, (accessed 11/20/2013).

¹⁶ <http://www.prophetspen.org/PP2/GregCrawford/GCWT1/GCWT2/GCWT3/gcwt11.html>, (accessed 11/27/2013).

- ¹⁷ See Genesis chapters 25 to 33 for the complete story of Jacob's life.
- ¹⁸ There are Hebrew words for days, months, years, eras, seasons, etc. When the bible says they lived over nine hundred years, I believe it meant actual years, as we understand them. A year is a year: one revolution of the earth around the sun. It was the same then as it is now.
- ¹⁹ Ervin N. Hersheberger, *Seeing Christ in The Old Testament: The Jewish Scriptures*, (Harrisonburg, VA, 2000), 83.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Ibid., 84.
- ²² *Transformations*, directed by George Otis, Jr., The Sentinel Group/TransformNations Media, 2002, movie portions dealing with Cali, Columbia.
- ²³ The Greek for time in this passage is rendered *kairos* (a special moment in the timing of God), except for the first use of the word time in this passage, which is rendered *chronos* (sequential time).
- ²⁴ There is a school of thought that suggests that Christians will succeed to bring about the full restoration of God's Kingdom without the second coming of Christ. This book is NOT saying that believers will thwart the second coming of Christ, which may happen relatively soon in the course of human history. Only the Father knows. What this teaching conveys is that there is so much more believers may experience in God's kingdom realm here and now.
- ²⁵ Pastor Surprise Sithole, *Voice in the Night*, (Chosen Books, Bloomington Minnesota, 2012) 15, 27, 44.
- ²⁶ Jim Cymbala, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*, (Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 59-66.
- ²⁷ Egypt came out of descendants of the line of Ham. The Egyptians also enslaved the Israelites, God's people. Thus, all three of the major historical captors of Israel came from Ham's line.
- ²⁸ <http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/genesis/11.html> (accessed 4/14/14).

- ²⁹ <http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/matthew/8>. (accessed 12/15/2013).
- ³⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ocW5ovSXpZw> (accessed 12/17/2013).
- ³¹ Randy Clark, *There is More! The Secret to Experiencing God's Power To Change Your Life* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 2013), 64-66.
- ³² Ibid, 66
- ³³ <http://kathrynkuhlman.com/consecration.html> (accessed 12/18/2013).
- ³⁴ Just as an aside: Jerusalem is also a mount high and lifted up! Psalm 125:2 says, "As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people both now and forevermore." is why travelers, "Go up to Jerusalem." Even though it is south of most of important Bible locales, it is highly elevated.
- ³⁵ <http://www.spirithome.com/pentecostalist-history2.html> (accessed 12/30/2013).

Other Works By Laura Henry Harris

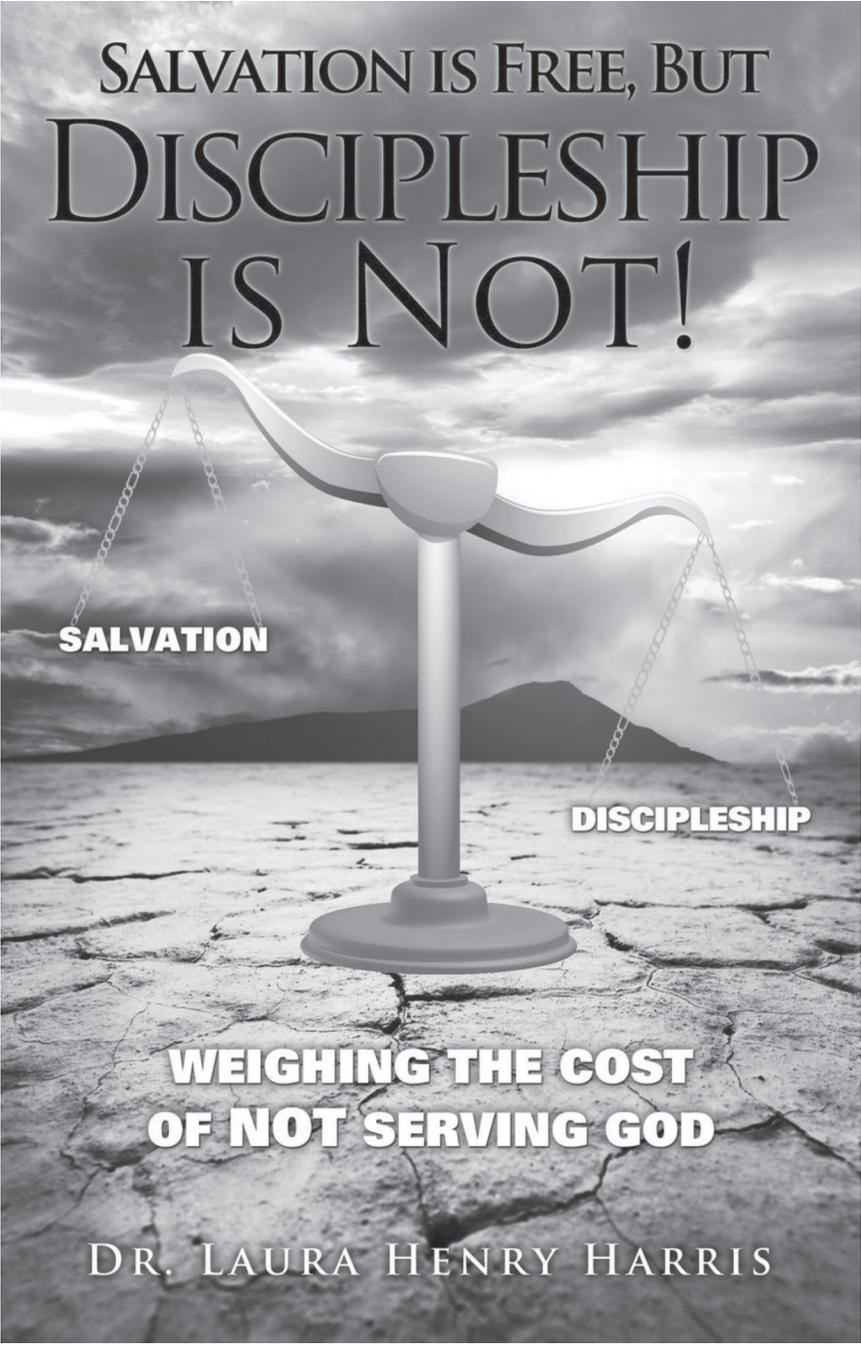


Salvation is Free, Discipleship is Not! Weighing the Cost of NOT Serving God! is a cry to the Church of Jesus Christ to experience a wake up call. Time is short! The Church is called to wake up and be in a state of preparation and readiness for the return of the Lord. Jesus Christ is returning for a Bride who has made herself ready to meet her Groom. The body of Christ is drowsy or may have already fallen asleep. Sadly, some who think they are ready to meet Jesus will be mistaken. There will be many who hear those terrifying words, “Truly I tell you, I don’t know you” (Matt. 25:12). The Lord is not willing that any should perish. Scripture is very plain, however, that there are those who have confessed Christ with their mouths, but who have not known him in their hearts. They will be sent away into eternal damnation.

If you are uncomfortable by these words, this may be just the book for you. Please take the warning of the Lord to heart. There are many who have heard the Word of the Lord, but it has not been transformative in their lives.

In *Salvation is Free, Discipleship is Not!*, the Lord speaks through a prophetic voice to call the Church to repent, to be wholeheartedly devoted, to avoid deception, to be radically obedient, to live in purity of life, to consume the Word of God, and to harvest souls of the lost. This book is a call for a transformation of the body of Christ. Salvation truly is free, but careful reading of scripture confirms is that discipleship should cost the believer a precious price.

SALVATION IS FREE, BUT DISCIPLESHIP IS NOT!



SALVATION

DISCIPLESHIP

**WEIGHING THE COST
OF NOT SERVING GOD**

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