

Chapter 1

“KINGDOM” — what a magical ring that word plays upon the ear, yet when it comes to the subject of the Kingdom of God there seems to be no end to the carnal-minded reasonings of man as to what it is, where it is, and how it will come to pass.

- [The Kingdom of God](#)
- [What Is the Kingdom of God?](#)
- [The Rule of God](#)
- [Kingdom of God — Kingdom of Heaven](#)
- [The Sovereignty of God and the Kingdom](#)

The Kingdom of God

“KINGDOM” — what a magical ring that word plays upon the ear, yet when it comes to the subject of the Kingdom of God there seems to be no end to the carnal-minded reasonings of man as to what it is, where it is, and how it will come to pass. If you were to ask several average professed Christians what the Kingdom of God is, you would receive a variety of answers. There are a great many ideas, opinions, interpretations, conceptions and mis-conceptions among believers as to what constitutes the Kingdom of God. Vast multitudes of people believe that any minute Jesus will appear in the sky and whisk away (rapture) those who are saved and take them to heaven to enjoy the Kingdom of God. They teach that the Kingdom of God is heaven and that it has no relationship with the earth. For these the “end time” means the cataclysmic end of the universe, the destruction of the earth by fire, the sending of all unbelievers and wicked people to eternal damnation in hell, and the establishing of an eternal order of bliss for the saved in some far-off heaven somewhere.

Others teach that the Kingdom of God is purely earthly, and that it will be a political and social structure enforced on earth for a thousand years at the return of Jesus Christ with His saints to rule and reign. This theory has been popularized by the Schofield Bible. To these the Kingdom of God is the restored kingdom of Israel fulfilling the Davidic covenant. Jesus offered this kingdom to the Jews, but they refused; therefore Christ withdrew His offer and postponed it until a future time when they would accept Him as their King. When that day comes, they say, Jesus will come back and set His feet upon the Mount of Olives. His saints with Him, He will come to the eastern gate of Jerusalem. Having been sealed up for centuries, this gate will be opened for Him to pass through into the city. He will then set up His headquarters in a building, sit on a throne, and be crowned King. His Kingdom will then be established. People from all nations will journey to Jerusalem to see Jesus — in person — and to worship Him in a millennial temple there. From Jerusalem the Kingdom will expand to rule over all nations. The nations will quit fighting — will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks and there will follow a thousand years of unparalleled peace, blessing, prosperity, and righteousness.

A variation of the above plan involves the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic nations of earth as descendants of the “lost” ten tribes of Israel — the northern kingdom of Israel carried away into captivity. There is some evidence that these tribes have become the modern nations of Britain, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, north-western Europe, etc. According to this concept Christ comes back to reign over these great Israel nations rather than the Jews — and the capital city of the restored Israel Kingdom will be London, England, where the throne of David is now located. This Kingdom will be earthly, political, judiciary and military.

Still another teaching is that the Church (organized Christianity) is the Kingdom of God. The covenantal promises God made with Abraham and David have been transferred to and fulfilled spiritually in the Church. The Church is thus the New Israel in the earth. This theory prevailed during the Middle Ages (also called the Dark Ages) when the supreme head of the Church (the

Pope), complete with a crown, a throne, a government and an army, ruled the nations of Europe for a thousand years as the Kingdom of God on earth. Unfortunately, this period, instead of being the most enlightening, progressive, prosperous, righteous and glorious epoch in history was in fact the darkest, most illiterate and ignorant, superstitious and backward, of earth's generations! Some among us even today believe that the Kingdom will come as a result of Christians becoming politically active, taking over the existing political institutions, getting elected to office, and ruling the earth through the power of politics. This is exactly what happened when the Roman Emperor Constantine began mixing Christianity with carnal government which gave rise to the Papacy and the temporal powers of government were seized by the so-called Church. The result was not earth's "golden age," "Utopia," or "Jubilee," but the now infamous "Dark Ages" ruled over by the kingdom of MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT.

What Is the Kingdom of God?

The Bible speaks of a number of kingdoms. The first world empire — the Chaldean Empire often called “Babylon” — was a kingdom. God inspired the prophet Daniel to say to its king, Nebuchadnezzar, “...the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory” (Dan. 2:37). Then there was the kingdom of Israel — the family descended from Israel, which became one of earth’s nations or governments. Nearly all kingdoms involve an ethnic entity (racial group) and their government. The kingdom of Israel under Solomon was a type of the Kingdom of God. Therefore the Kingdom of God is dual: (1) A GOVERNMENT. A government — or kingdom — is composed of four things: (a) a KING, ruling over (b) people, subjects, or citizens within (c) a definite jurisdiction of territory, with (d) laws and a system of administering them. (2) A FAMILY. As with all kingdoms, the kingdom of Israel was a family of the children of Israel. In respect to the Kingdom of God, it comprises the Family of God — a family into which man may be born, which shall be formed into a RULING or GOVERNING family that shall have jurisdiction over all nations, that is, the whole earth, and, later, the entire universe!

As Bill Britton once wrote: “What a marvelous mystery! What a glorious destiny! This new nation of holy people is God’s Kingdom. This Kingdom has a King of kings. And there are kings and priests. There are overcomers who rule and reign with Him. There is a bride and Bridegroom. There is a first-fruits, a harvest, and a great gleanings. There are 30 fold, 60 fold, and 100 fold in that great harvest. There are 144,000 who follow the Lamb wheresoever He goes, and there is an un-numbered multitude standing triumphantly before the throne. There is a Holy City and a Temple. There is a marriage supper attended by Bridegroom, bride, guests, servants, and even intruders. What else could there be in this Kingdom? More by far than our minds could comprehend. Get ready. Be there!”

The dictionary defines “kingdom” as “a government or country headed by a king or queen; a monarchical state; a realm or domain.” The word “kingdom” is made up of the noun “king”, and the suffix “dom”. “Dom” is a noun-forming suffix to express rank, position, or domain. For example, a dukedom is the domain over which a duke has authority or exercises rule, and in the abstract the rank of a duke. In like manner a kingdom is the domain and the people within that domain over which a king exercises authority and rule. It is the “king’s domain”. “Kingdom” is thus a contraction of “king’s domain”. The term, Kingdom of God, can mean no other than the domain over which God exercises rule as King. It is God’s declared purpose therefore that His people, His holy nation, His peculiar treasure, should be the domain over which He would rule as King, and ultimately all the earth and all things and every creature. The Lord’s greatest dominion at this time is in the lives of His elect and chosen ones. We are now becoming ruled and governed by the Lord totally and absolutely. He has extended the dominion of His Kingdom to our hearts and lives, and now the Lord will rule us with complete and undisputed dominion. And He will continue to rule and reign in our lives until every enemy within us is made subject to Him. This is the present truth of the Kingdom of God!

God has a plan, a wonderful Kingdom program for this earth and every person on this earth. You might be surprised to discover how many people go through life — some of them even go to church and speak in tongues — but never truly realize that God has a plan and purpose for them and for the ages. Friends, things are not just “happening” with God. He didn’t fling this earth out in space and then sit back and say, “Whatever will be, will be.” God has a plan and He works all things after the counsel of His own will. God is sovereign and nothing shall thwart His plan. Once you begin to see yourself as a vital part of that plan and purpose, that what He has planned and purposed for your life will not be defeated or stopped, you will then begin to walk forth in victory and in life. But, precious friend of mine, let me assure you that this won’t come just because you give mental assent to it and make a positive confession — this comes only as we bring our lives into conformity with God’s priorities. We need to understand what God’s priorities are and then flow with those priorities. The Lord’s people are dabbling around with so many non-essentials, playing little church games, majoring in minors! The real purpose for which God sent Jesus into the world was to ESTABLISH ON THE EARTH HIS KINGDOM! And His ultimate purpose is that the kingdoms of this world shall experientially become the kingdoms of our God and His Christ. That is the plan of the ages. The prayer that Jesus taught us to pray, and which vast multitudes unheedingly repeat by rote, says, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done...” Where? “On earth as it is in heaven.”

The all-wise and omnipotent Creator planted within man’s very nature a tendency to form into tribes, clans, colonies and nations with some kind of government, having a patriarch, chief, or king. Every kingdom requires a king. You cannot have a kingdom without a king. Neither can you have a king without a kingdom. The king must have a sphere over which he rules with absolute authority. If you don’t believe that ask Constantine II, exiled king of Greece, who for a time lived in Italy and now lives in London. He is no king — he doesn’t have a kingdom. He is out of a job. A true king must have a kingdom.

For people living today, living under democratic governments in the western world and in the twentieth century, the word “kingdom” is not at all a natural term to use. We know a lot about governments and politics, but very little about a kingdom. In Bible days, however, this was not the case. Most nations were then ruled by a king. The king was not elected by the people and he ruled with absolute authority — the king’s word was law. Today, when our elected officials are held more accountable for their actions, I’m not sure we can begin to appreciate the absolute power of an ancient monarch. A thousand years ago, when a king spoke, people trembled. Subjects didn’t say, “I’ll, ah...take that into consideration, your majesty.” What they replied was, “Yes, your majesty!” The closest modern equivalent I can think of would be a decision handed down by the United States Supreme Court. You wouldn’t argue with it, you would just accept it. And yet, that doesn’t even come close. In the New Testament just a word from King Herod was enough to slaughter all the male children in Bethlehem two years old and younger. A king like Herod might be hated, but because of his position and power he was still treated with great respect.

Today there are few kings left in the world, and those that still bear the name actually wield very little power. They are kings by title only. The kingdoms of today are a rather hybrid form, that is, a figurehead as a king, yet the kingdom is ruled by some kind of assembly or parliament. They are constitutional monarchs and present to us a picture far different from the king in ancient times. The idea of doing obeisance before someone and being obedient to his every wish and command is foreign to us if not even repulsive. The very thought of not being in control of their own lives has

not even entered very many men's minds. We in this country are used to "freedom" and any "kings" that come along may have some difficulty asserting their influence over us. Alas! That is the very reason so many Christians today have found no entrance into the Kingdom of God! They want God's grace and His blessings, but are submitted to His authority very little.

We have now come to the most sublime of all truths. Our hearts should bow in holy reverence and rejoice that the heavens are opened and that the mind of Christ is coming to dwell in men. We should be glad with joy unspeakable and full of glory that the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven are being unveiled within our very hearts. The light of the Holy Spirit's wisdom and revelation is shed with its quickening and illuminating rays upon our understanding, dispelling the mists, dividing the light from the darkness, that all the elect sons of God may find an abundant entrance into the Kingdom of God in this great Day.

May the blessed spirit of truth make very real to all who read these lines that the phrase "the Kingdom of God" is only a manner of speaking. That is why Jesus never said, "The Kingdom of God is such and such," but always, "the Kingdom of God is like such and such." He explained the Kingdom in terms of parables and metaphors. There is actually no such entity as the Kingdom. It is not a kind of visible structure or outward establishment that God sets up. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there!" It is rather God Himself exerting His rightful power to actually rule by His Spirit over all people, to bring them consciously under His control, to subdue them to His purposes, and direct them by His will. When Jesus speaks of the Kingdom as "coming," He does not mean some "thing" or some "age" or something else which is to appear or begin. He speaks of God Himself making His rule effective in the hearts and affairs of men. May God help us to see the great and eternal truth that when we speak of the Kingdom of God we are talking about something that has no existence at all apart from GOD HIMSELF. Just as we speak of the grace of God, the mercy of God, the love of God, the wisdom of God, the righteousness of God, or the power of God, we deceive ourselves if we think of them as having some tangible existence apart from God Himself. They are merely verbal ways of describing God Himself as He acts and manifests out of His state of being. So the Kingdom of God is a way of speaking of God Himself as He moves in power and glory and goodness and wisdom and righteousness to influence and rule in the hearts and activities of men!

The Rule of God

It is significant to note that the phrases “Kingdom of God” and “Kingdom of Heaven” are not to be found in the Old Testament. They are strictly New Testament terms beginning with John the Baptist and Jesus. When Jesus came He did not preach a message called grace, or salvation, or justification, or sanctification, or regeneration, or even the Church. Could there be any more glorious message than the one that fell from His lips as He began His sonship ministry declaring, “The KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND!” From that time forward the great teaching of the Lord centered in the truth of THE KINGDOM. His gospel was the gospel (good news) of the Kingdom of God. He only lightly touched on the other subjects which today are considered the great doctrines of the Church and then only as they related to the Kingdom. All of these things are included within the Kingdom, but the Kingdom is none of them. The Kingdom is THE RULE OF GOD. It is the DOMINION OF GOD. That is exactly what it is. And Jesus came with just that message — the revelation of the RULE OF GOD within the hearts of men, and through men, over the earth, yea, over the whole vast universe! First He must reign completely in our lives. The Kingdom of God is God in Christ in the saints governing the creation of God. The rule of God begins in the hearts of His elect.

Jesus, after His resurrection, asked Peter three times if he loved Him. He then said to him: “When you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and Another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go.” Commenting on these words, the Holy Spirit adds: “This Jesus said to show by what death Peter was to glorify God” (Jn. 21:18-19). The expressions when you were young and when you are old speak of two distinct periods in Peter’s life. They indicate His walk before and after entering the Kingdom. The reference to his past (when Peter was young) and to his future (when he would be old) is not a reference to age but to spiritual immaturity and maturity. Emphasis in the first statement is on the pronoun you (“you girded yourself, you walked where you would”). During this period, Peter’s walk with the Lord was a walk which centered on self — on where he wanted to go and what he wanted to do for the Lord. How impetuous was he in his desires! But the day would come when Peter, subject to Jesus as his King, would allow the Lord to do with him as He willed.

The words, another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go, succinctly describe the walk of the Kingdom. The “another” here refers to the Lord. The walk of the Kingdom is far from easy and unlike anything we have experienced in the past. Whereas the Lord tolerated and even overlooked the many inconsistencies in our walk when we were young (immature), He now subjects us to a discipline of fire until His image is formed in us (Mal. 3:2-3). Every part of our being — spirit, soul, and body — must come under His dominion. All our strongholds will be exposed and reduced to ashes, and every thought made captive to the obedience of Christ (II Cor. 10:3-5). In the Kingdom we come to know God as an all-consuming fire — not to destroy but to purge and sanctify us (Heb. 12:29). “Who among us,” asks the prophet Isaiah, “can dwell with the devouring fire?” The answer: “He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, who despises the gains of oppressions, who shakes his hands, lest they hold a bribe, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed, and

shuts his eyes from looking upon evil, he will dwell on the heights...his bread will be given him, his water will be sure. Your eyes will see the King in His beauty; they will behold a land (the Kingdom) that stretches afar" (Isa. 33:14-17).

The epistle to the Hebrews was written to those who were following on to know the Lord. In the twelfth chapter the writer informs his readers that God wanted to wean them from their babyhood walk in God and that which appealed to their physical senses in order to introduce them to that which was real and lasting — the Kingdom. To experience the Kingdom, they would have to forsake the elementary principles which the whole church world glories in today, and go on to perfection. Jesus as King would become the living reality of their lives. But for this to happen, their earth and heavens first had to be shaken. That the earth in us (our humanity) must be shaken before we can enter into the Kingdom is a truth very few would deny. But that our heavens (religious experiences, concepts, understandings, ministries, activities) must also be shaken before we can receive the Kingdom is another matter. To realize all that God has for us as His sons in the walk of the Kingdom, our earth and heavens must give way to a new order — to a new earth and heaven. Not a new earth of mountains and valleys and streams and trees; not a new heavens of galaxies, solar systems, suns, planets and moons; but a **NEW HUMANITY AND NEW SPIRITUAL DIMENSION**. Only then can we know what the Kingdom really is and how to walk in it and minister it to creation. All religious activity apart from the realm of the Kingdom is naught but hay, wood, and stubble. It makes very impressive edifices, but it is not the Kingdom of God, and will disappear forever in the all-consuming fire of God.

Kingdom of God — Kingdom of Heaven

There are many strange ideas around about the difference between the terms “Kingdom of God” and “Kingdom of Heaven”. It has been taught that the Kingdom of God is spiritual and heavenly, whereas the Kingdom of Heaven is temporal and earthly, and that the two cannot be mixed. Actually, if there were any truth in that, it still sounds backwards! Some say that the Kingdom of God is an eternal kingdom of God over all and that the Kingdom of Heaven is an earthly and temporal program, some future divine dynasty to be established on earth, and that it is of special significance only to the Jews, who, still awaiting their Messiah, will see His righteous government in control of the world, and in their hands, during the Millennium. Others assume that the Kingdom of Heaven means a kingdom in heaven, so they are waiting to die so they can go to their kingdom in heaven where they intend to spend eternity strumming harps and dancing up and down the streets of gold.

Ignorant men have long tried to make a distinction between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven, as though they were two separate kingdoms. They often explain that the Kingdom of Heaven embraces the “Church age” and the Kingdom of God will be set up during the “Millennium”. The simple truth is that the two terms are used interchangeably in numerous places in scripture. To cite only a few of several examples, when Matthew recorded the Sermon on the Mount he quoted Jesus as saying, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” But when Luke recorded the same saying of Jesus he said, “Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.” Again, Matthew quoted the Lord, “And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the law and the prophets prophesied until John” (Mat. 11:12-13). Luke says, “The law and the prophets were until John: from that time the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and every man entereth violently into it” (Lk. 16:16). In these two passages the messenger spoken of in both cases is John. His message was said to begin where the law and the prophets left off. His message was announcing a kingdom. In one passage that kingdom is called the Kingdom of God, while in the other it is called the Kingdom of Heaven. The time was the same, the man was the same, the message was the same, and the kingdom was the same in both cases.

Our Lord’s instructions upon sending out the twelve were, according to Matthew, “And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mat. 10:7). According to Luke, “He sent them forth to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick” (Lk. 9:2). Certainly Jesus did not preach two conflicting messages at the same time! Certainly He was not announcing two separate and distinct kingdoms and declaring them both to be at hand! These, and many other passages, show the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven are one and the same. Yet — there is a difference! God does not have TWO KINGDOMS — He has only ONE. There is not one Kingdom of God and another Kingdom of Heaven. There is only one Kingdom. However each of these two terms is not

without its special significance. For, you see, heaven is a REALM and God is a PERSON. The Kingdom has its origin in the REALM OF HEAVEN, and in the PERSON OF GOD. The term “Kingdom of Heaven” denotes, on the one hand, from whence (from what place, location, realm or dimension) the Kingdom proceeds, while the term “Kingdom of God” reveals, on the other hand, from whom (from what person or being) the Kingdom originates. When we consider these two items, place and person, it immediately follows that as to REALM the Kingdom is out of the heavenlies, but as to PERSON the Kingdom comes from God. It is called the Kingdom OF God because it is from and by God. He is the Instigator and Head of the Kingdom. It is called the Kingdom OF Heaven because it has its inception in heaven — the invisible realm of Spirit.

The prophet Daniel brings the two together when by inspiration he says, “And in the days of these kings shall the GOD (person) of HEAVEN (place, realm) set up A KINGDOM, which shall never be destroyed” (Dan. 2:44). Jesus then brings the two together when He says to Pilate, “MY (person) kingdom is not of THIS WORLD (place, realm): for if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now MY (person) kingdom is not from HENCE (place, realm)” (Jn. 18:36). Through their relationship we understand there cannot be a Kingdom of Heaven without the presence of God. On the other hand, where the presence of God is, there is a manifestation of Heaven’s Life.

Ah, then, this Kingdom of God may also be called the Kingdom of Heaven! To call, then, the Kingdom of God the Kingdom of Heaven is to ascribe to the Kingdom of God every heavenly and spiritual perfection. The Kingdom of God is, for example, heavenly in its origin — that origin is the bosom of the eternal Father. The Kingdom of God is heavenly in its purpose — that purpose is to restore creation to its original glory. The Kingdom of God is heavenly in its king — that king is the Son of the Highest, Head and body. The Kingdom of God is heavenly in its subjects — those subjects are the children of God. The Kingdom of God is heavenly in its nature — that nature is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The Kingdom of God is heavenly in its entrance — that gateway is not by birth of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but by birth of God. The Kingdom of God is heavenly in its laws — those laws are not ordinances, rules, or regulations — they are spiritual principles. The Kingdom of God is heavenly in its method — that method is not by might, nor by power, nor by the enticing words of man’s wisdom, but by the Spirit of the living God. The Kingdom of God is heavenly in its prerogatives — those prerogatives are for the sons of God to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, a kingdom of priests after the order of Melchizedek, Saviours on mount Zion. The Kingdom of God is heavenly in its privileges — those privileges are to be heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ to the inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. In brief, the Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of Heaven — it is the Kingdom of Heaven because it is the kingdom or dominion of the GOD OF HEAVEN!

The Sovereignty of God and the Kingdom

What holy assurance stirs within as the Spirit of God floods our souls with the divine understanding of truth so sublime as this: “For BY HIM were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created BY HIM and FOR HIM: and He is before all things, and BY HIM all things consist” (Col. 1:16-17). Your whole outlook on life will change from one of fear and dread to one of blessed assurance and confidence with the entrance of the understanding that ALL THINGS are vassals of His power, His dominion, and His control, and ALL THINGS are in His hands. Nothing exists without His consent. None acts without His orders or prospers without His blessing. In His omnipotent hands the nations of the earth in all their vaunted might and power are but dust upon the scales. You will not spend sleepless nights worrying about the Chinese, or the Russians, or the terrorists when your heart rests assured that God has ordained all these things for His purpose and He is in control of them all as well as your life and mine.

Oh, the unfathomableness of the wisdom and power of our God! How can mortal minds even begin to comprehend it? He is the omnipotent and omniscient Source of everything. He speaks and atoms come into existence. He utters His voice and light shines into the darkness. He commands and billions of galaxies appear. He breathes and life begins to flow. By the manipulation of His fingers He sets the stars in their courses and with the span of His hand He measures the heavens. He sets bars and boundaries for the oceans. He says to them, “Thus far and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stopped.” They may beat upon the shore and run up the beaches, but they have to fall back into the boundaries God set for them. “Praise ye Him, all ye His angels: praise ye Him, all His hosts. Praise ye Him, sun and moon: praise ye Him, all ye stars of light. Praise Him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord: for He commanded and they were created. He hath also established them for ever and ever: He hath made a decree that shall not pass. Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps: fire, and hail; snow, and vapors; stormy wind fulfilling His word: mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars; beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl: kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: let them praise the name of the Lord: for His name alone is excellent; His glory is above earth and heaven” (Ps. 148:2-13).

Oh, my soul, what words are these! All things on earth and throughout the unbounded heavens are under His command. The whole creation, like a great machine, every part working in precise coordination with each other, all fulfilling the purpose they were designed to do. Even fire and hail, the snow and vapors, and the stormy wind fulfilling His word. Everything obeying the will of the Almighty. All accomplishing their designed purpose in the great scheme of creation. Listen in reverence to these divine words, “A man’s heart deviseth his way, but the LORD directeth his

steps" (Prov. 16:9). "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of waters He turneth it whithersoever He wills" (Prov. 21:1). "The steps of a man are ordered of the LORD, and He delighteth in his way" (Ps. 37:23).

The Lord whom we worship controls the hearts of all kings, presidents, prime ministers and rulers whether they realize it or not; God it is who is ordaining their paths and directing their ways. He turns their heart in the direction He wants them to go. He raised up Pharaoh for a purpose, and it was the Lord Himself who kept hardening his heart (Ex. 7:3,13). Now I, like many who read these lines, was raised up with the mentality that somehow the devil got the whole thing and that the earth belongs to "the prince of the power of the air" and "the god of this world." No, it doesn't! The word of the prophet is wonderfully true, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1). God owns it all and He gives it to whom He wills. He has the right to appoint stewards over creation based on His purpose and their faithfulness, regardless of moral, religious, or other considerations.

Let's look at three people in the scripture whom God raised up to rule the earth. Isaiah talks about Cyrus, the Persian king whom God put in charge of the earth (Isa. 44:24 to 45:7). God called Cyrus "My shepherd." That's astounding, to think that God would raise up a heathen king to accomplish His purposes in the earth. But the Lord says, "I will raise up Cyrus, My shepherd, and he is to rule over the whole thing by My divine appointment." In Daniel 4:28-37, we discover that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, ruled by God's divine appointment. If we think of the Kingdom of God as a democracy, we are falling short in our thinking. There's only one vote — and it's God's. He says, "I'm going to appoint you, Nebuchadnezzar, and you're going to be the king and you're going to rule and you're going to fulfill all my will, and I'll establish you in all the earth. And I'll give you wisdom and power and might and majesty." He promised it to him and it happened. Then when Nebuchadnezzar started thinking that he had done it himself, God said, "I'll take it from you."

God took the kingdom from Nebuchadnezzar by causing him to lose his mind for a season. He went insane and lived in the wilderness, ate grass like a cow, had long hair all over his body, and his fingernails grew like bird claws. At the end of this humbling experience, Nebuchadnezzar repented and blessed the God of heaven as the only source of all kingdoms and powers and confessed that God was fully able to "humble those who walk in pride." If we look again in Daniel, we find that Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's son, had the same problem with pride that his father did, and so God also smote him in an instant and took away his kingdom.

Almighty God raises up kings, and casts them down at will. He drowns the mighty Pharaoh in the depths of the sea, and puts His hand on a little shepherd boy tending the sheep and makes him the greatest king the world has ever known. He tells us what is going to happen on the morrow, and casts the shadow of events that will happen in the years and ages to come. He can do all this because He planned it all, created it all, and controls it all; and it will all work out the way He has planned. In spite of men, angels, or demons His purpose is always fulfilled. He is the eternal King and the only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords! What a mighty God we serve! If the God we worship were less than this, we would be in trouble. We serve a God who is guiding us, our loved ones, our president, the governors of our states, the kings and princes and rulers and even our enemies unto the ends of the earth. His mighty hands are in all things and the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ. In due time all will see the fullness of all

this.

I cannot emphasize too strongly that the will of God is sovereign. It is done in the long run everywhere and always. His thoughts are carried out; His laws are enforced; His purposes are accomplished. Man may delay them, defy them, deny them, set himself up with utmost strength against them; but he can no more resist and defeat them than he can push back the ocean tide. The world moves on in the course that He has marked for it. Not in a straight line — the wickedness and perversity of men may push it back a little with His permission; they drag it to the right and left of the true direction; but it returns again and pursues its resistless course until the goal of the Almighty is reached. As Nebuchadnezzar said long ago, “He doeth His will among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, What doest Thou?”

Nations and kings and the great ones of the earth are like clay in the hands of the potter. “He girds them though they have not known Him.” He uses their very folly as an instrument of His wisdom. He makes their wrath to praise Him, and the remainder of that wrath doth He restrain. The greatest crimes that have ever been committed have been wonderfully used by Him to further His truth and justice in the world. The crucifixion of Christ made Christ the world’s Saviour. The slaying of the saints prepared the way for the triumph of the early Church. The burning of the English martyrs made England Protestant. The atrocities of the Spaniards led to the establishment of the Anglo-Saxon race on the American Continent. Out of the hugest evil God’s foreseeing mind works good, and the march towards the perfect day goes on in spite of the craft and strength of devils and men.

If it were not for this we should lose all faith in God, and all hope for the future of His world, if we did not believe that in the end God is always victorious, and that man’s haughty ambitions, evil designs, and fickle passions are over-ridden and thrown aside by His unerring power. The world is not a battlefield in which the results depend upon human combatants alone, or a huge game of chess in which statesmen, rulers, soldiers, thinkers, the press, chance and accident, and the forces of goodness and the forces of hell have the winning and the losing moves. God is over all and in the midst of all. He has the last, decisive word in every dispute, the final and winning move in every game. Through all the ill-doings and stupidities of men His unceasing purpose runs. And there is only one will that always gets done. It is the mighty will of Him who is the sole Master of the world, God in Christ Jesus.

In all our lives that same will is done. It is done in every saint’s life, in every life of faith and obedience, in the joy and strength and peace of those who trust in God. It is done in every foul, unclean, intemperate, and godless life, in the misery and unrest and hell which follow the heels of sin. You cannot escape God’s will or overturn it. It holds you in love or grips you in suffering. He is the Lord of our lives, and if we will not take the way of His dear children, then we have to take the hard way of transgressors, and that also is of His appointment. The will of God, whether infinitely gracious or terribly severe, is done on every one at last. And what we are to pray for is not God’s sovereignty — that is beyond our praying — but something much more beautiful, that HIS KINGDOM MAY COME. “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven.” That is the Kingdom of Heaven on earth! What I want to point out to you is the difference between the sovereignty of God and the kingdom of God. The Kingdom is something beyond God’s sovereignty, higher than God’s sovereignty, more glorious than God’s sovereignty. We must never confuse the two.

The scriptures speak of the Kingdom of God as “everlasting” on one hand, and as having a definite historical beginning, progress, and termination on the other hand. When we allow the Holy Spirit of Truth to teach us, we see that the Kingdom over which God rules has two distinct aspects: the everlasting and the limited, the universal and the local, the general and the specific. There are passages of scripture that clearly declare that God has always possessed absolute sovereignty over all creation and that He rules as King over all. God is ruler over heaven and earth. He is the supreme Governor of the universe. If Creator, then surely He is the Owner and Possessor of all realms. By inherent, incontestable right, He is sovereign Lord. There is but one will in the universe and that will is the will of God. “The Lord reigneth” is declared again and again. He is King over all principalities and powers. “For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods” (Ps. 95:3). “The Lord is King for ever and ever...” (Ps. 10:16). “The Lord sitteth King for ever” (Ps. 29:10). “Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the Kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all; and in Thine hand is power and might; and in Thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all” (I Chron. 29:11-12). “This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and sitteth up over it the basest of men” (Dan. 4:17).

God’s sovereignty is exercised over both heaven and earth. There have been many occasions when His sovereignty has been manifested through His direct intervention in the affairs of kings, rulers, and nations. He has often demonstrated His sovereignty through mighty miracles and judgments, proving that He is Lord. One such instance is seen in His dealing with Pharaoh, as we have mentioned. The seat of God’s government is His throne. The throne of the Most High is the highest thing in all of God’s universe. There is nothing higher. It is a throne of consummate power and majesty and glory. From that throne God rules over all creatures and things. And yet, strange as it may seem, shocking as it may sound, THIS IS NOT THE KINGDOM OF GOD!

The Kingdom of God is not the sovereignty of God as such; God is always and everywhere the sovereign God. If His sovereignty were His Kingdom there would be no need to pray, “Thy Kingdom come.” Jesus would never have said that it is necessary to be “born again” in order to “enter” into the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom is beyond sovereignty and only the Kingdom ultimately satisfies the heart of the Father. The Kingdom is what He is after through His sovereignty. The Kingdom is the sovereignty of God in action to overcome all resistance and bring willing submission of every creature. Sovereignty is God ruling over men. The Kingdom is man submitting to God. In sovereignty God enforces His will upon men even when they are not aware of it. In the Kingdom God is calling and wooing man until God and man become one. Sovereignty is God above man ruling and overruling. The Kingdom is God and man in union. In sovereignty there is only one will — God’s. In the Kingdom God’s will and man’s will are united.

The Kingdom is not the reign of God as such, for God is ultimately reigning as the King eternal and the King of the universe at all times. The Kingdom is, rather, the gracious action of the sovereign God of heaven by which His reign is recognized and revered and entered into by those men whom God had previously permitted to walk in their own sense of “self-hood.” The Kingdom is the gathering together of all things into one in Christ. The Kingdom is reconciliation. The Kingdom is the restitution of all things. The Kingdom is salvation. The Kingdom is regeneration and

transformation. The Kingdom is every man presented perfect in Christ Jesus. The Kingdom is God All-in-all.

In the nineteenth century, Karl Marx went off to university, where he renounced his faith in God in favor of atheism. He defied God and seduced arrogant minds and ignorant masses. Marx gathered his armies and weapons like a dark cloud over man's highest hopes. Marx and his hearers shook their fists at history, revelation, and divine will. But we have seen, are seeing, and shall yet see that Jesus Christ is Lord of the opposition — "Bye-Bye Marx!" Jesus Christ is Lord of all! But some are persuaded that the collapse of communism in Russia and Eastern Europe heralds the dawn of the new age of the Kingdom of God. After decades of Godless tyranny both the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Wall fell and the captive nations were set free. The world looks with wonder on these astonishing events as a historic turning point in the world political structure — Someone in supreme authority raised His hand and actually rolled back the vast and icy seas of communism. Great news! A real cause to celebrate! New-found freedom is always a cause to celebrate, and any undermining of godless systems is surely a reason to be glad.

Now the light of the gospel of Christ can more easily penetrate the darkness of those great lands. The Lord revealed to me in a dream in 1983 that He would soon liberate Russia from the yoke of communism and that this liberty would be followed by a massive "religious revival" which in turn would ultimately be followed by a mighty move of the Spirit of God. I have witnessed these events take place with the exception of the final one. How we praise God for what He is doing! What a day to behold the wonders of our Lord! But — is this a manifestation of the KINGDOM OF GOD? I think not! It is rather an action of God's sovereignty. Just as "law" is a facet of the government of the United States, yet the government is something vastly more than "law," so is the Kingdom of God an aspect of God's sovereignty, yet God's sovereign acts are not the Kingdom of God. God sovereignly moved to bring down atheistic communism, but this did not bring the Kingdom of God to Russia nor to the world. Everything that happens is controlled by His sovereignty. But the Kingdom of God is something infinitely greater, grander, and more glorious than the sovereign act of God to destroy a corrupt system of government. Many such governments and tyrannies have fallen throughout history. God Himself brought them down. But casting a devil out of a man does not make him a saint. After the devil is cast out he must then be quickened by the Spirit of God and made alive unto God. In like manner, eradicating communism out of Russia brings no one into the Kingdom of God. Except the Russian people be born again, born of God, born of the Spirit, they can neither "see" nor "enter" into the Kingdom of God. That is the realm beyond sovereignty.

The Kingdom of God is more narrow in scope than the region over which God rules as Sovereign. At all times and in all circumstances God has dominion. He is Lord of ALL. Even evil men and vile deeds in their worst expressions are under His sway and scepter. Satan is the servant of God as an adversary to challenge us so that we may grow stronger in the Lord. Yet wicked men have not entered into the Kingdom of God. Neither has Satan, though he does God's bidding, been translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son. All men are subject to God's sovereignty, but when we come to the Kingdom the scriptures speak of a "calling" to the Kingdom of God, of "entering" into it, of its being "shut" or of people being "cast out" from it, of its being "sought," "given," "possessed," "received," and "inherited."

The Kingdom of God is limited to that domain where God's saving power has defeated all opposition, broken down every wall, transformed all that is contrary of God's nature, mind, and will, and has brought men into willing submission to His authority. Where the nature of God and the mind of Christ have mightily conquered, the state of things is called the Kingdom of God. Where hearts are changed, where sin and error and darkness have been defeated, where truth and righteousness advance, where the will and ways of God are raised up as reality and life in a people, where the mind of Christ rules out of union with God — there the Kingdom of God has come and is advancing. In the Kingdom it is no longer God ruling over you by sovereignty, but the life, mind, heart, nature, power, wisdom, knowledge, and will of God entering into you, becoming your very own reality.

The Kingdom of God is the power to transform. Its citizens are a holy people. Its kings and priests are all righteous, wise, mighty through God. Its territory is one of light and beauty and glory. In the days of Christ's earthly sojourn, as He was choosing the first men for His Kingdom, He selected men of passions and faults like yours and mine; but He manifested the power to change them! He found Matthew the tax collector — mercenary, commercial, selling his birthright for cash and commission, metallic, his god more a Roman coin than the God of Israel. Yet Christ changed him, and forsaking all, Matthew marched to the drum beat of the Kingdom of God. Then James, selfish, introverted, hedonistic, wanting the right hand at the throne of Christ, finally finds that the glory of life lies in works of faith, mercy, goodness, righteousness and the power of God. Christ finds John, a man irascible and of bad disposition, "Boanerges — a son of thunder," but when Jesus is done with him he becomes the great apostle of love and reconciliation. He finds Thomas, ever stumbling over his mind, intellectually slow to believe; but he finally cries, "My Lord and my God" and marches to a great kingliness of spirit. He calls Simon Peter, impulsive, bragging, making great boasts but bogging down in the face of the taunting of the crowd; but finally Peter is willing to be crucified head downward for his Lord. Before their change they were subject to God's sovereignty, but after their change they were one with God in nature, power and purpose. That is the reality of the Kingdom of God! It is the experiencing of God Himself BEYOND SOVEREIGNTY! This is the kingly life. When you and I step into Christ we become a part of a great imperial, majestic program to make Christ King of kings and Lord of lords. Alexander the great, Caesar, Hannibal, Napoleon and Hitler never dreamed of the breath-taking consummation of power that Christ prophesied for Himself and those who are one in Him when He uttered the sublime words: "MY KINGDOM".

According to the good pleasure of His will, and to the praise of His glory, the purpose of God from eternity focused on the Kingdom. A Kingdom not of this world, a Kingdom not of men blindly ruled and over-ruled by the unobserved sovereignty of an unknown God, but a reign in the hearts of willing and loyal subjects. The story is told of a king who was famous for his abhorrence of waste — so it was quite surprising when he came into the room where his aides were assembled carrying a breathtakingly beautiful pearl in his hands. Showing it to the first of his aides, he asked, "What do you think this pearl is worth?" "Oh, many trunks full of gold, your majesty," he replied. The king said, "Smash it." "It would be an insult to the king to destroy such a beautiful pearl," replied the aide. The king turned to a second man and showed him the pearl. "How much do you think this pearl is worth?" he asked. "One cannot put a price tag on such a beautiful pearl as this," replied the second man. "Smash it," said the king. "Such senseless destruction is unthinkable," replied the second aide. The king turned to a third man. He was a humble laborer who, in return for a kindness he had shown the king, had been invited to live in the palace. "What do you think this pearl is

worth?" he asked the man. "More than all the gold I have ever seen in my entire life," he replied. "Smash it," said the king. Without a moment's hesitation, this man took the pearl to where there were two large rocks and in an instant, reduced the pearl to a thimbleful of useless dust. "The man is mad," cried the others in the room. Holding up his hand to quiet the murmurs, the laborer said: "Which is of greater value; a beautiful pearl or obedience to the king's command?"

The Kingdom of God that I am proclaiming today is composed of that company of elect sons of God who have aligned themselves with God; who listen to His voice, who put on His mind, who obey His commands, who walk in His nature, who do His will and carry out His divine purpose in the heavens and on the earth. They are the loyal subjects of His Kingdom and ever do His bidding. Their King is the Lord God Almighty and He is their Father. They obey without question; for it is their nature to do only and always those things that please the Father. They are the true citizens of the Kingdom of God. They are first under His rule and authority, but they are ambassadors of that divine Kingdom. They are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. They are destined to share His glory and sit with Him upon His throne. They are the members of the government of God and the Kingdom of Heaven is expressed through them and the power and the glory of the Kingdom is being committed into their hands for the age and the ages to come.

This is the Kingdom Jesus came and announced, taught, personified, demonstrated and brought into reality among men. Are all Christians in the Kingdom of God? Perhaps you have heard someone say, "All Christians have Jesus as Saviour, but not all have Him as Lord." A young boy might put it this way: "I am the son of my father, but I don't want him to tell me what to do." The Kingdom of God in its simplest definition means that JESUS CHRIST IS LORD! He must be Lord in us, and He must be Lord through us. This is the mark of sonship. This is the power of the Kingdom.

Such is what God planned in a new creation species of men redeemed and transformed into the image and likeness of God. Such is what God has purposed to bring all men into in His due time. Such a glorious climax to the Father's plans, which has now been made known unto God's elect by the Spirit, has not always been revealed to the sons of men. Righteous men and prophets received glimmering hints, but it was not given to them to know. Mighty angels were curious, but they too had to wait until the fullness of time (I Pet. 1:10-12). Little by little, however, God had dropped hints of a wondrous Kingdom to come. Dim at first, then becoming brighter and clearer, was the lamp of prophecy. As a candle in a dark place is helpful, so was the prophet's testimony about Jesus and the Kingdom, which inspired hope until the Day dawned and the Day Star arose within our hearts.

One glorious day the firstborn Son of the living God walked among men and announced, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand" (Mk. 1:15). The new reign of God had come to the birth. The call went forth throughout all the earth in the power of the Spirit for men to become willing subjects to the Kingdom of God. First twelve, then seventy, then vast multitudes responded to the call. On the day of Pentecost alone about three thousand precious souls, quickened by the Holy Spirit with eyes to see and ears to hear answered the call and were gathered into the reign of God. No longer did devout men wait for the Kingdom, but they were in it, and they ate and drank in the Kingdom of Heaven. Let God be praised! for His rule in ransomed hearts had begun. Everywhere men and women were translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of Heaven. Even in lonely exile on the isle of Patmos, John the disciple could exult that he was a brother and companion to the saints "in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ."