

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God

It IS the solution!

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Why can't humankind solve its problems?

Do you know that the first and last things the Bible shows Jesus preached about concerned the gospel of the Kingdom of God?

Do you know that the Kingdom of God was the emphasis of the apostles and those first that followed them?

Is the Kingdom of God the person of Jesus? Is the kingdom of God Jesus living His life in us now? Is the Kingdom of God some type of future actual kingdom? Will you believe what the Bible teaches?

What is a kingdom? Just what is the Kingdom of God? What does the Bible teach? What did the early Christian church teach?

Do you realize that the end cannot come until the Kingdom of God is preached to the world as a witness?

The photograph on front cover shows a lamb lying down with a wolf as composed by Burdine Printing and Graphics. The photograph on back cover is part of the original Church of God building in Jerusalem taken in 2013 by Dr. Bob Thiel.

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1. Does humanity have the solutions?

The world faces many problems.

Many people are hungry. Many people are oppressed. Many people face poverty. Many nations are in serious debt. Children, including unborn ones, face abuse. Drug-resistant diseases concern many doctors. Major industrial cities have air too polluted to be healthy. Various politicians threaten war. Terrorist attacks keep happening.

Can world leaders fix the problems facing humanity?

Many think so.

New Universal Agenda

On September 25, 2015, after a key-note speech by the Vatican's Pope Francis, the 193 nations of the United Nations (UN) voted to implement the "17 Sustainable Development Goals" of what originally was termed the *New Universal Agenda*. Here are the UN's 17 goals:

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries

Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

This agenda is supposed to be fully implemented by 2030 and is also called the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. It aims to solve ailments facing humanity through regulation, education, and international and interfaith cooperation. While many of its objectives are good, some of its methods and goals are evil (cf. Genesis 3:4). This agenda, also, is consistent with Pope Francis's *Laudato Si* encyclical.

The "New Universal Agenda" could be called the "New Catholic Agenda" as the word "catholic" means "universal." Pope Francis called the adoption

of the *New Universal Agenda* “an important sign of hope.”

Pope Francis also praised the international agreement called COP21 (officially titled *21st Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change*) in December 2015, and advised nations “to carefully follow the road ahead, and with an ever-growing sense of solidarity.”

While no one wants to breath polluted air, go hungry, be impoverished, be endangered, etc., will this international solidarity solve the problems facing humanity?

The Track Record of the United Nations

The United Nations was formed and established on 24 October 1945, after World War II, in order to prevent another such conflict and to try to promote peace in the world. At its founding, the UN had 51 member states; there are now 193.

There have been hundreds, if not thousands, of conflicts around the world since the United Nations formed, but we have not yet had what could be described as the third World War.

Some believe that international cooperation like the United Nations claims to promote, combined with the type of interfaith and ecumenical agenda that Pope Francis and many other religious leaders are trying to promote, will bring peace and prosperity.

However, the track record for the United Nations to do this has not been good. In addition to the numerous armed conflicts since the United Nations formed, multiple millions are hungry, refugees, and/or desperately poor.

Over a decade ago, the United Nations set forth to implement its *Millennium Development Goals*. It had eight “development goals,” but this did not succeed, even according to the UN itself. So, in 2015, its so-called “17 Sustainable Development Goals” were adopted. Some are optimistic. Some consider it a utopian fantasy.

As far as utopia goes, on May 6, 2016, Pope Francis said he dreamed of a

humane European utopia that his church could help that continent attain. Yet, the Pope's dream will turn out to be a nightmare (cf. Revelation 18).

There May Be Some Cooperation and Success, But ...

Merriam Webster's Dictionary states that utopia is "an imaginary place in which the government, laws, and social conditions are perfect." The Bible teaches that humanity cannot solve its problems on its own:

²³ O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps. (Jeremiah 10:23, NKJV throughout unless otherwise indicated)

The Bible teaches that international cooperation will fail:

¹⁶ Destruction and misery are in their ways; ¹⁷ And the way of peace they have not known. ¹⁸ There is no fear of God before their eyes. (Romans 3:16-18)

Yet, many humans are working towards their view of a utopian society and even sometimes try to involve religion. But almost none are willing to follow the ways of the one true God. It is not that there will be no progress towards any of the United Nation's or the Vatican's goals. There will be some, as well as some setbacks.

Actually, and probably after massive conflict, a type of international peace deal will be agreed to and confirmed (Daniel 9:27). When it is, many will falsely tend to believe that humanity will be bringing about a more peaceful and utopian society.

Many will be taken in by such international 'utopian progress' (cf. Ezekiel 13:10) as well as by various signs and wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12). But the Bible says such peace will not last (Daniel 9:27; 11:31-44), despite what leaders may claim (1 Thessalonians 5:3; Isaiah 59:8).

If humanity is utterly incapable of truly bringing about utopia, is any type of utopia possible?

Yes.

2. What Gospel did Jesus Preach?

The Bible teaches that a utopian society, called the Kingdom of God, will replace human governments (Daniel 2:44; Revelation 11:15; 19:1-21).

When Jesus began His public ministry, He began by preaching the ***gospel of the Kingdom of God***. Here is what Mark reported:

¹⁴ Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:14-15).

The term gospel, comes from the Greek word transliterated as *euangelion*, and means "good message" or "good news." In the New Testament, the English word "kingdom," related to God's kingdom, is mentioned approximately 149 times in the NKJV and 151 in the *Douay Rheims Bible*. It comes from the Greek word transliterated as *basileia* which signifies the rule or realm of royalty.

Human kingdoms, as well as God's kingdom, have a king (Revelation 17:14), they cover a geographic area (Revelation 11:15), they have rules (Isaiah 2:3-4; 30:9), and they have subjects (Luke 13:29).

Here is the first public teaching from Jesus that Matthew records:

²³ And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 4:23).

Matthew also records:

³⁵ Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 9:35).

The New Testament shows that Jesus will reign forever:

³³ And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end (Luke 1:33).

Luke records that the purpose that Jesus was sent was to preach the Kingdom of God. Notice what Jesus taught:

⁴³ He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent" (Luke 4:43).

Have you ever heard that preached? Did you ever realize that Jesus' purpose for being sent was to preach the Kingdom of God?

Luke also records that Jesus *did* go and preach the Kingdom of God:

¹⁰ And the apostles, when they had returned, told Him all that they had done. Then He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. ¹¹ But when the multitudes knew it, they followed Him; and He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God (Luke 9:10-11).

Jesus taught that the Kingdom of God should be the top priority for those who would follow Him:

³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

³¹ But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. ³² Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom (Luke 12:31-32).

Christians are to SEEK FIRST the Kingdom of God. They do this by making this their top priority by living as Christ would have them live and looking forward to His return and kingdom. Yet, most who profess Christ, not only do not seek first the Kingdom of God, they do not even know what it is. Many also falsely believe that being involved in worldly politics is what God expects from Christians. By not understanding God's kingdom, they do not

live now as they should or understand why humanity is so flawed.

Notice also that the kingdom will be given to a little flock (cf. Romans 11:5). It takes humility to be willing to be part of the true little flock.

The Kingdom of God has not yet been established on the Earth

Jesus taught that His followers should pray for the kingdom to come, hence they do not already possess it:

⁹ Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come. Your will be done (Matthew 6:9-10).

Jesus sent His disciples out to preach the Kingdom of God:

¹ Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. ² He sent them to preach the kingdom of God (Luke 9:1-2).

Jesus taught that His presence alone was not the kingdom, as the kingdom was not established on the Earth then:

²⁸ But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you (Matthew 12:28).

The true kingdom is in the future. It is not here now as these verses from Mark show:

⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast ... (Mark 9:47).

²³ Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" ²⁴ And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in

riches to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:23-25).

²⁵ Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14:25).

⁴³ Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage ... (Mark 15:43).

Jesus taught that the kingdom is not now part of this present world:

³⁶ Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here" (John 18:36).

Jesus taught that the kingdom will come after He returns as its King:

³¹ "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. ³³ And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:31-34).

Since the Kingdom of God is not here, we will not see a real utopia until after it has been established. Because most do not understand God's kingdom, they fail to understand how His loving government works.

What did Jesus say the kingdom was like?

Jesus provided some explanations of what the Kingdom of God is like:

²⁶ And He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, ²⁷ and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. ²⁸ For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. ²⁹ But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come" (Mark 4:26-29).

¹⁸ Then He said, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? ¹⁹ It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches." ²⁰ And again He said, "To what shall I liken the kingdom of God? ²¹ It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened" (Luke 13:18-21).

These parables suggest that, at first, the Kingdom of God is quite small, but will become large.

Luke also recorded:

²⁹ They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God (Luke 13:29).

Thus, the Kingdom of God will have people from all over the world. It will NOT be limited to those who have Israelite ancestry. People will sit down in this kingdom.

Luke 17 and the Kingdom

Luke 17:20-21 perplexes some. But before getting to that, notice that people will actually eat in the Kingdom of God:

¹⁵ "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!" (Luke 14:15).

Since people will (in the future) eat in the Kingdom of God, it is not just something set aside in their hearts now, in spite of mistranslations/misunderstandings of Luke 17:21 which suggest otherwise.

The Moffatt translation of Luke 17:20-21 should help some understand:

²⁰ On being asked by the Pharisees when the Reign of God was coming, he answered them, "The Reign of God is not coming as you hope to catch sight of it; ²¹ no one will say, 'Here it is' or 'There it is,' for the Reign of God is now in your midst." (Luke 17:20-21, Moffatt)

Notice that Jesus was speaking to the unconverted, carnal, and hypocritical Pharisees. Jesus "answered them," — it was the Pharisees who asked Jesus the question. They refused to recognize Him.

Were they in the CHURCH? No!

Jesus was also not talking about a church soon to be organized. Nor was He talking about sentiments in the mind or heart.

Jesus was talking about His REIGN! The Pharisees were not asking Him about a church. They knew nothing of any New Testament church soon to be started. They were not asking about a type of pretty sentiment.

If one thinks the Kingdom of God is the CHURCH — and the Kingdom of God was "within" the Pharisees — was THE CHURCH within the Pharisees? Obviously not!

Such a conclusion is rather ridiculous isn't it? While some Protestant translations translate part of Luke 17:21 as "the Kingdom of God is "within you" (NKJV/KJV), even the Catholic *New Jerusalem Bible* correctly translates that as "the kingdom of God is among you."

Jesus was the one among, in the midst, of the Pharisees. Now, the Pharisees thought they looked forward to the Kingdom of God. But they misunderstood it. Jesus explained that it would not be a local, or limited Kingdom for the Jews only, as they seemed to think (nor a church as some now believe). God's Kingdom would not be merely one of many human and visible kingdoms which people could point out or see, and say, "This is it, here"; or "that's the Kingdom, over there."

Jesus, Himself, was born to be the KING of that Kingdom, as He plainly told Pilate (John 18:36-37). Understand that the Bible uses the terms "king" and "kingdom" interchangeably (e.g. Daniel 7:17-18,23). The KING of the future Kingdom of God was, then and there, standing next to the Pharisees. But they would not recognize Him as their king (John 19:21). When He returns, the world will reject Him (Revelation 19:19).

Jesus went on, in the following verses in Luke 17, to describe His second coming, when the Kingdom of God shall rule ALL THE EARTH (continuing with the Moffatt for consistency for this chapter):

²² To his disciples he said, "There will come days when you will long and long in vain to have even one day of the Son of man. ²³ Men will say, 'See, here he is!' 'See, there he is!' but do not go out or run after them, ²⁴ for like lightning that flashes from one side of the sky to the other, so will the Son of man be on his own day. ²⁵ But he must first endure great suffering and be rejected by the present generation. (Luke 17:22-25, Moffatt)

Jesus referred to lightning flashing, just as in Matthew 24:27-31, describing His second coming to RULE the whole world. Jesus is not saying that His people will not be able to see Him when He returns. People will not recognize Him as their KING and will fight against Him (Revelation 19:19)! Many will think Jesus represents the Antichrist.

Jesus was not saying that the Kingdom of God was within those Pharisees— He told them elsewhere that they were not going to be in the Kingdom because of their hypocrisy (Matthew 23:13-14). Nor was Jesus saying that the Church would be the Kingdom.

The Kingdom of God is something humans shall one day be able to ENTER — like at the resurrection of the just! Yet, even Abraham and the other patriarchs are not there yet (cf. Hebrews 11:13-40).

The disciples knew that the Kingdom of God was not within them personally then, and that it had to appear as the following, which came after Luke 17:21, shows:

¹¹ Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately (Luke 19:11).

The kingdom was clearly in the future

How can you tell if the kingdom is near? As part of addressing that question, Jesus listed prophetic events (Luke 21:8-28) and then taught:

²⁹ Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. ³⁰ When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. ³¹ So you also, **when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near** (Luke 21:29-31).

Jesus wanted His people to follow prophetic events to know when the kingdom would come. Jesus elsewhere told His people to watch and pay attention to prophetic events (Luke 21:36; Mark 13:33-37). Despite Jesus' words, many discount watching prophetically-linked world events.

In Luke 22 & 23, Jesus again showed that the Kingdom of God was something that would be fulfilled in the future when He taught:

¹⁵ "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶ for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; ¹⁸ for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes" (Luke 22:15-18).

³⁹ But one of those evildoers who were crucified with him was blaspheming him and he said, "If you are The Messiah, save yourself and save us also." ⁴⁰ And his companion rebuked him and he said to him, "Are you not even afraid of God? For you also are in condemnation with him. ⁴¹ And we justly so, because we are worthy, for we are repaid according to what we have done, but nothing evil has been done by this one." ⁴² And he said to Yeshua, "My Lord, remember me when you come into your Kingdom." ⁴³ But Yeshua said to him, "Amen, I say to you that today you shall be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:39-43, Aramaic in Plain English)

The Kingdom of God did not come as soon as Jesus was killed either as both Mark and Luke show us:

⁴³ Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage ... (Mark 15:43).

⁵¹ He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God (Luke 23:51).

Notice that it is after the resurrection that one will be born again in the Kingdom of God as John records:

³ Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." ⁴ Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3-5).

Consider that after Jesus was resurrected, He again taught about the Kingdom of God:

³ He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many

infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).

The first and last sermons that Jesus gave were about the Kingdom of God! Jesus came as the messenger to teach about that Kingdom.

Jesus also had the Apostle John write about the millennial Kingdom of God that would be on the earth. Notice what He had John write:

⁴ I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4).

Early Christians taught that the millennial Kingdom of God would be on the earth and replace the governments of the world as the Bible teaches (cf. Revelation 5:10, 11:15).

Why, if the Kingdom of God is so important, haven't most heard very much about it?

Partially because Jesus called it a mystery:

¹¹ And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables (Mark 4:11).

Even today the true Kingdom of God is a mystery to most.

Consider, also, that Jesus said that the end (of the age) will come (soon) AFTER the gospel of the kingdom is preached in all the world as a WITNESS:

¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come (Matthew 24:14).

Proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God is important and is to be accomplished **in these end times**. It is a “good message” as it offers the real hope to humanities ills, despite what political leaders may teach.

If you consider Jesus’ words, it should be clear the true Christian church should be proclaiming that gospel of the kingdom now. This should be its top priority for the Church. And in order to do this properly, multiple languages should be utilized.

This is what the *Continuing* Church of God strives to do. And that is why this booklet has been translated into scores of languages.

Jesus taught most would NOT accept His way:

13 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.

14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)

The gospel of the Kingdom of God leads to life!

It may be of interest to note that although most professing Christians seem oblivious to the notion that Christ's emphasis was on preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God, secular theologians and historians have often understood that this is what the Bible actually teaches.

Yet, Jesus, Himself, expected His disciples to teach the gospel of the Kingdom of God (Luke 9:2,60). Because the future kingdom will be based on God’s laws, it will bring peace and prosperity—and obeying those laws in this age leads to true peace (Psalm 119:165; Ephesians 2:15).

And this good news of the kingdom was known in the Old Testament scriptures.

3. Was the Kingdom known in the Old Testament?

Jesus' first and last recorded sermon involved proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15; Acts 1:3).

God's kingdom is something that the Jews of Jesus' time should have known something about as it was mentioned in their scriptures, which we now call the Old Testament.

Daniel Taught About the Kingdom

The prophet Daniel wrote:

⁴⁰ And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others.

⁴¹ Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay.

⁴² And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. ⁴³ As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. ⁴⁴ And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever (Daniel 2:40-44).

¹⁸ But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.' (Daniel 7:18).

²¹ "I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, ²² until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most

High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.
(Daniel 7:21-22)

From Daniel, we learn that the time will come when the Kingdom of God will destroy the kingdoms of this world and will last forever. We also learn that the saints will have their part in receiving this kingdom.

Many portions of Daniel's prophecies are for our time in the 21st century.

Notice some passages from the New Testament:

¹² "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. ¹³ These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴ These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful." (Revelation 17:12-14)

So, we see in both the Old and New Testaments the concept that there will be an end time earthly kingdom with ten parts and that God will destroy it and establish His kingdom.

Isaiah Taught About the Kingdom

God inspired Isaiah to write about the first part of the Kingdom of God, the thousand year reign known as the millennium, this way:

¹ There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots. ² The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

³ His delight is in the fear of the Lord, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears; ⁴ But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity

for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. ⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, And faithfulness the belt of His waist.

⁶ "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. ⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. ⁹ They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord As the waters cover the sea.

¹⁰ "And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious." (Isaiah 11:1-10)

The reason I referred to this as the first part or first phase of the Kingdom of God, is that this is a time where it will be physical (prior to the time when the holy city, New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, Revelation 21) and will last a thousand years. Isaiah confirmed the physical aspect of this phase when he continued with:

¹¹ It shall come to pass in that day That the Lord shall set His hand again the second time To recover the remnant of His people who are left, From Assyria and Egypt, From Pathros and Cush, From Elam and Shinar, From Hamath and the islands of the sea.

¹² He will set up a banner for the nations, And will assemble the outcasts of Israel, And gather together the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth. ¹³ Also the envy of Ephraim shall depart, And the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, And Judah shall not harass Ephraim. ¹⁴ But they shall fly down upon the shoulder of the Philistines toward the west; Together they shall plunder the people of the East; They shall lay

their hand on Edom and Moab; And the people of Ammon shall obey them. ¹⁵ The Lord will utterly destroy the tongue of the Sea of Egypt; With His mighty wind He will shake His fist over the River, And strike it in the seven streams, And make men cross over dry-shod. ¹⁶ There will be a highway for the remnant of His people Who will be left from Assyria, As it was for Israel In the day that he came up from the land of Egypt. (Isaiah 11:11-16)

Isaiah was also inspired to write:

² Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the Lord's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. ³ Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." **For out of Zion shall go forth the law,** And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. ⁴ He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; **Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore.** ... ¹¹ The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, The haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. (Isaiah 2:2-4,11)

Thus, it will be a utopian time of peace on earth. Ultimately, this will be forever, with Jesus ruling. Based upon various scriptures (Psalm 90:4; 92:1; Isaiah 2:11; Hosea 6:2), the Jewish Talmud teaches this lasts 1,000 years (Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Sanhedrin Folio 97a).

Isaiah was inspired to also write the following:

⁶ 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. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

Notice that Isaiah said that Jesus would come and establish a kingdom with a government. While many who profess Christ quote this passage, especially in December each year, they tend to overlook that it is prophesying more than the fact that Jesus would be born. The Bible shows that the Kingdom of God has a government with laws over subjects, and that Jesus will be over it. Isaiah, Daniel, and others prophesied it.

The laws of God are the way of love (Matthew 22:37-40; John 15:10) and the Kingdom of God will be ruled based upon those laws. Hence the Kingdom of God, despite how many in the world view it, will be based upon love.

Psalms and More

It was not just Daniel and Isaiah that God inspired to write about the coming Kingdom of God.

Ezekiel was inspired to write that those of the *tribes* of Israel (not just the Jews) who were scattered during the time of the Great Tribulation would be gathered together in the millennial kingdom:

¹⁷ Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord God: "I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel."' ¹⁸ And they will go there, and they will take away all its detestable things and all its abominations from there. ¹⁹ Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God. ²¹ But as for those whose hearts follow the desire for their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their deeds on their own heads," says the Lord God. (Ezekiel 11:17-21)

The descendants of the tribes of Israel will no longer be scattered, but will obey God's statutes and stop eating abominable things (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14).

Notice the following in the Psalms about God's kingdom:

²⁷ All the ends of the world Shall remember and turn to the Lord, And all the families of the nations Shall worship before You. ²⁸ For the kingdom is the Lord's, And He rules over the nations. (Psalms 22:27-28)

⁶ Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. (Psalms 45:6)

¹⁰ All Your works shall praise You, O Lord, And Your saints shall bless You. ¹¹ They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom, And talk of Your power, ¹² To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, And the glorious majesty of His kingdom. ¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And Your dominion endures throughout all generations. (Psalm 145:10-13)

Various writers in the Old Testament also wrote about aspects of the kingdom (e.g. Ezekiel 20:33; Obadiah 21; Micah 4:7).

So, when Jesus began teaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God, His immediate audience had some familiarity with the basic concept.

4. Did the Apostles teach the Gospel of the Kingdom?

While many act like the gospel is just the good news about the person of Jesus, the reality is that Jesus' followers taught the gospel of the Kingdom of God. That is the message that Jesus brought.

Paul Taught the Kingdom of God

The Apostle Paul wrote about the Kingdom of God and Jesus:

⁸ And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God (Acts 19:8).

²⁵ And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God (Acts 20:25).

²³ So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening. ... ³¹ preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him (Acts 28:23,31).

Notice that the Kingdom of God is not just about Jesus (though He is a major part of it), as Paul also taught about Jesus separately from what he taught about the Kingdom of God.

Paul also called it the gospel of God, but that was still the gospel of the Kingdom of God:

⁹ ... we preached to you the gospel of God ... ¹² that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. (1 Thessalonians 2:9,12)

Paul also called it the gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16). The “good message” of Jesus, the message that He taught.

Consider that it was not simply a gospel about the person of Jesus Christ or just about personal salvation. Paul said the gospel of Christ included obeying Jesus, His return, and God's judgment:

⁶ ... God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, ⁷ and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, ⁸ in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, ¹⁰ when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10).

The New Testament shows that the kingdom is something that we shall receive, not that we now fully possess it:

²⁸ we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken (Hebrews 12:28).

We can grasp and look forward to being part of the Kingdom of God now, but have not fully entered it.

Paul specifically confirmed that one does not fully enter the Kingdom of God as a mortal human, as it happens *after* the resurrection:

⁵⁰ Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (1 Corinthians 15:50-52).

¹ I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom (2 Timothy 4:1).

Paul not only taught that, but that Jesus would deliver the Kingdom to God the Father:

²⁰ But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³ But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. ²⁴ Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵ For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. (1 Corinthians 15:20-25).

Paul also taught that unrighteous (commandment breakers) will not inherit the Kingdom of God:

⁹ Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹ envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21).

⁵ For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor

covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God (Ephesians 5:5).

God has standards and demands repentance from sin in order to be able to enter His kingdom. The Apostle Paul warned that some would not teach that:

⁶ I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:6-9)

³ But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. ⁴ For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted — you may well put up with it! (2 Corinthians 11:3-4)

What was the “other” and “different,” actually false, gospel?

The false gospel has various parts.

In general, the false gospel is to believe that you do not have to obey God and really strive to live true to His way while claiming to know God (cf. Matthew 7:21-23). It tends to be selfishly-oriented.

The serpent beguiled Eve to fall for a false gospel nearly 6000 years ago (Genesis 3)—and humans have believed that they know better than God and should decide good and evil for themselves. Yes, after Jesus came, His name was often attached to various false gospels—and this has been continuing and will continue into the time of the final Antichrist.

Now back in the Apostle Paul's time, the false gospel was essentially a Gnostic/Mystic mix of truth and error. Gnostics basically believed that special knowledge was what was needed to attain spiritual insight, including salvation. Gnostics tended to believe that what the flesh did was of no particular consequence and they were opposed to obeying God in matters like the seventh-day Sabbath. One such false leader was Simon Magus, who was warned by the Apostle Peter (Acts 8:18-21).

But it is not Easy

The New Testament shows that Philip taught Kingdom of God:

⁵ Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. ... ¹² they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God ... (Acts 8:5,12).

But Jesus, Paul, and the disciples taught that it is not easy to enter the Kingdom of God:

²⁴ And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

²⁶ And those who heard it said, "Who then can be saved?"

²⁷ But He said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." (Luke 18:24-27)

²² "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

³ We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, ⁴ so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and

faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, ⁵ which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; ⁶ since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, ⁷ and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, (2 Thessalonians 1:3-7).

Because of the difficulties, only some are now being called and chosen in this age to be part of it (Matthew 22:1-14; John 6:44; Hebrews 6:4-6). Others will be called later, as the Bible shows that those “who erred in spirit will come to understanding, and those who complained will learn doctrine” (Isaiah 29:24).

Peter Taught the Kingdom

The Apostle Peter taught that the kingdom was everlasting, and that the gospel of God must be diligently obeyed or there would be judgment:

¹⁰ Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; ¹¹ for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:10-11).

¹⁷ For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? (1 Peter 4:17).

The Last Books of the Bible and the Kingdom

The Bible teaches that “God is love” (1 John 4:8,16) and Jesus is God (John 1:1,14)—the Kingdom of God will have a King who is love and whose laws support love, not hate (cf. Revelation 22:14-15).

The last book of the Bible specifically discusses the Kingdom of God.

¹⁵ Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (Revelation 11:15).

Jesus will reign in the kingdom! And the Bible reveals two of His titles:

¹⁶ And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS (Revelation 19:16).

But is Jesus the only one who will reign? Notice this passage:

⁴ And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years . . . ⁶ Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years (Revelation 20:4,6).

True Christians will be resurrected to reign with Christ for a thousand years! Because the kingdom will last forever (Revelation 11:15), but that reign mentioned was only one thousand years. This is why I referred to this earlier as the first phase of the kingdom—the physical, the millennial, phase as opposed to the final, more spiritual, phase.

A few events are listed in the Book of Revelation as occurring between the millennial and final phases of the Kingdom of God:

⁷ Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. ... ¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on

it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵ And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:7-8, 11-15).

The Book of Revelation shows that there will be a later phase that comes after the thousand year reign and after the second death:

¹ Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. ² Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:1-4)

¹ And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. ⁴ They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. ⁵ There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the

Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.
(Revelation 22:1-5)

Notice that this reign, which is *after* the thousand years, includes the servants of God and lasts forever. The Holy City, which was prepared in heaven, will leave heaven and will come down to the earth. This is the beginning of the final phase of the Kingdom of God. A time of NO MORE PAIN OR SUFFERING!

The meek will inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5) and all things (Revelation 21:7). The earth, including the Holy City which will be on it, will be better because God's ways will be implemented. Realize that:

⁷ Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end (Isaiah 9:7).

Clearly there will be growth after the final phase of the Kingdom of God has begun as all will obey God's government.

This will be a most glorious time:

⁹ But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." ¹⁰ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).

It is a time of love, joy, and everlasting comfort. It will be a fantastic time! Don't you want to have your part in it?

5. Sources outside the New Testament taught the Kingdom of God

Did early professors of Christ think that they were supposed to preach the gospel of a literal Kingdom of God?

Yes.

Years ago, in a lecture given by Professor Bart Ehrman of the University of North Carolina, he repeatedly, and correctly, stressed that unlike most professing Christians today, Jesus and His early followers proclaimed the Kingdom of God. Although Dr. Ehrman's overall understanding of Christianity differs greatly from that of the *Continuing* Church of God, we would agree that the gospel of the kingdom is what Jesus Himself proclaimed and His followers believed in. We would also agree that many claimed Christians today do not understand that.

The Oldest Preserved Post-New Testament Writing & Sermon

The Kingdom of God was a significant part of what is claimed to be “the oldest complete Christian sermon that has survived” (Holmes M.W. *Ancient Christian Sermon. The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 2nd ed. Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 2004, p. 102). This *Ancient Christian Sermon* contains these statements about it:

^{5:5} Moreover you know, brothers, that our stay in the world of the flesh is insignificant and transitory, but the promise of Christ is great and marvelous: rest in the coming kingdom and life eternal.

The above statement shows that the kingdom is not now, but will come and be eternal. Furthermore, this ancient sermon states:

^{6:9} Now if even such righteous men as these are not able, by means of their own righteous deeds, to save their children, what assurance do we have of entering the kingdom of God if we fail to keep our baptism pure and undefiled? Or who will be our

advocate, if we have not been found to have holy and righteous works? ^{9:6} Therefore let us love one another, that we all may enter into the kingdom of God. ^{11:7} Therefore, if we know what is right in God's sight, we will enter his kingdom and receive the promises which "ear has not heard nor eye seen nor the heart of man imagined."

^{12:1} Let us wait, therefore hour by hour for the kingdom of God in love and righteousness, since we know not the day of God's appearing. ^{12:6} he says, the kingdom of my Father shall come.

The above statements show that love through proper living is needed, that we still have not entered the Kingdom of God, and that it occurs after the day of God's appearing—that is after Jesus returns again. It is the Father's kingdom and the kingdom is not just Jesus.

It is interesting that the oldest apparently Christian sermon that God has allowed to survive teaches the same Kingdom of God that the New Testament teaches and the *Continuing* Church of God now teaches (it is possible that it could be from an actual Church of God, but my limited knowledge of Greek limits my ability to make a firmer declaration).

Second Century Church Leaders and the Gospel of the Kingdom

It should be noted in the early 2nd century that Papias, a hearer of John and a friend of Polycarp and considered to be a saint by Roman Catholics, taught the millennial kingdom. Eusebius recorded that Papias taught:

... there will be a millennium after the resurrection from the dead, when the personal reign of Christ will be established on this earth. (Fragments of Papias, VI. See also Eusebius, Church History, Book 3, XXXIX, 12)

Papias taught that this would be a time of great abundance:

In like manner, [He said] that a grain of wheat would produce ten

thousand ears, and that every ear would have ten thousand grains, and every grain would yield ten pounds of clear, pure, fine flour; and that apples, and seeds, and grass would produce in similar proportions; and that all animals, feeding then only on the productions of the earth, would become peaceable and harmonious, and be in perfect subjection to man." [Testimony is borne to these things in writing by Papias, an ancient man, who was a hearer of John and a friend of Polycarp, in the fourth of his books; for five books were composed by him...] (Fragments of Papias, IV)

The post-New Testament *Letter to the Corinthians* states:

^{42:1-3} The Apostles received the Gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ was sent forth from God. So then Christ is from God, and the Apostles are from Christ. Both therefore came of the will of God in the appointed order. Having therefore received a charge, and having been fully assured through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and confirmed in the word of God with full assurance of the Holy Ghost, they went forth with the glad tidings that the kingdom of God should come.

Polycarp of Smyrna was an early Christian leader, who was a disciple of John, the last of the original apostles to die. Polycarp c. 120-135 A.D. taught:

Blessed are the poor, and those that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God. (Polycarp. Letter to the Philippians, Chapter II. From *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 1* as edited by Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson. American Edition, 1885)

Knowing, then, that "God is not mocked," we ought to walk worthy of His commandment and glory ...For it is well that they should be cut off from the lusts that are in the world, since "every lust warreth against the spirit; " and "neither fornicators, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, shall inherit

the kingdom of God," nor those who do things inconsistent and unbecoming. (ibid, Chapter V)

Let us then serve Him in fear, and with all reverence, even as He Himself has commanded us, and as the apostles who preached the Gospel unto us, and the prophets who proclaimed beforehand the coming of the Lord. (ibid, Chapter VI)

Like others in the New Testament, Polycarp taught that the righteous, not the commandment breakers, shall inherit the Kingdom of God.

The following was also claimed to have been taught by Polycarp:

And on the following sabbath he said; 'Hear ye my exhortation, beloved children of God. I adjured you when the bishops were present, and now again I exhort you all to walk decorously and worthily in the way of the Lord...*Watch ye, and again Be ye ready, Let not your hearts be weighed down,* the new commandment concerning love one towards another, His advent suddenly manifest as of rapid lightning, the great judgment by fire, the eternal life, His immortal kingdom. And all things whatsoever being taught of God ye know, when ye search the inspired Scriptures, engrave with the pen of the Holy Spirit on your hearts, that the commandments may abide in you indelible.' (Life of Polycarp, Chapter 24. J. B. Lightfoot, The Apostolic Fathers, vol. 3.2, 1889, pp. 488-506)

Melito of Sardis, who was a Church of God leader, c. 170 A.D., taught:

For indeed the law issued in the gospel—the old in the new, both coming forth together from Zion and Jerusalem; and the commandment issued in grace, and the type in the finished product, and the lamb in the Son, and the sheep in a man, and the man in God...

But the gospel became the explanation of the law and its

fulfillment, while the church became the storehouse of truth...

This is the one who delivered us from slavery into freedom, from darkness into light, from death into life, from tyranny into an eternal kingdom. (Melito. Homily On the Passover. Verses 7,40, 68. Translation from Kerux: The Journal of Online Theology. <http://www.kerux.com/documents/KeruxV4N1A1.asp>)

Thus, the Kingdom of God was known to be something eternal, and not simply the current Christian or Catholic Church and included God's law.

Another mid-late second century writing exhorts people to look to the kingdom:

Wherefore, let no one of you longer dissemble nor look backwards, but willingly approach to the Gospel of the kingdom of God. (Roman Clement. Recognitions, Book X, Chapter XLV. Excerpted from Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 8. Edited by Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson. American Edition, 1886)

Furthermore, while it was apparently not written by one in the true church, the mid-second century writing titled *The Shepherd of Hermas* in the translation by Roberts & Donaldson uses the expression "kingdom of God" fourteen times.

True Christians, and even many only professing Christ, knew something about the Kingdom of God in the second century.

Even the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox saint Irenaeus understood that after the resurrection, Christians would enter the Kingdom of God. Notice what he wrote, c. 180 A.D.:

For such is the state of those who have believed, since in them continually abides the Holy Spirit, who was given by Him in baptism, and is retained by the receiver, if he walks in truth and holiness and righteousness and patient endurance. For this soul

has a resurrection in them that believe, the body receiving the soul again, and along with it, by the power of the Holy Spirit, being raised up and entering into the kingdom of God. (Irenaeus, St., Bishop of Lyon. Translated from the Armenian by Armitage Robinson. The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching, Chapter 42. Wells, Somerset, Oct. 1879. As published in SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE. NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN CO, 1920).

Problems in the Second and Third Centuries

Despite its widespread acceptance, in the second century, an anti-law apostate leader named Marcion rose up. Marcion taught against the law of God, the Sabbath, and the literal Kingdom of God. Although he was denounced by Polycarp and others, he had contact with the Church of Rome for quite some time and seemed to have influence there.

In the second and third centuries, allegorists were becoming established in Alexandria (Egypt). Many allegorists opposed the doctrine of the coming kingdom. Notice the report about some of those allegorists:

Dionysius was born of a noble and wealthy pagan family in Alexandria, and was educated in their philosophy. He left the pagan schools to become a pupil of Origen, whom he succeeded in the charge of the catechetical school of Alexandria...

Clement, Origen, and the Gnostic school were corrupting the doctrines of the holy oracles by their fanciful and allegorical interpretations...they obtained for themselves the name of "Allegorists." Nepos publicly combated the Allegorists, and maintained that there will be a reign of Christ on the earth...

Dionysius disputed with the followers of Nepos, and by his account... "such a state of things as now exists in the kingdom of God." This is the first mention of the kingdom of God existing in the present state of the churches...

Nepos rebuked their error, showing that the kingdom of heaven is not allegorical, but is the literal coming kingdom of our Lord in the resurrection unto eternal life...

So the idea of the kingdom come in the present state of things was conceived and brought forth in the Gnostic school of Allegorists in Egypt, A.D. 200 to 250, a full century before the bishops of the empire came to be regarded as occupants of the throne...

Clement conceived the idea of the kingdom of God as a state of true mental knowledge of God. Origen set it forth as a spiritual meaning hid in the plain letter of Scriptures. (Ward, Henry Dana. *The Gospel of the Kingdom: A Kingdom Not of this World; Not in this World; But to Come in the Heavenly Country, of the Resurrection from the Dead and of the Restitution of All Things.* Published by Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, 1870, pp. 124-125)

Thus, while Bishop Nepos taught the gospel of the Kingdom of God, the allegorists tried to come up with a false, less literal, understanding of it. Bishop Apollinaris of Hierapolis also tried to fight the errors of the allegorists about the same time. Those truly in the Church of God stood for the truth of the literal Kingdom of God throughout history.

Herbert W. Armstrong Taught the Gospel of the Kingdom, Plus

In the 20th century, the late Herbert W. Armstrong wrote:

Because they *rejected* Christ's gospel . . . , the world had to supplant something else in its place. They had to invent a *counterfeit!* So we have heard the kingdom of God spoken of as merely a pretty platitude--a nice sentiment in human hearts--reducing it to an ethereal, unreal NOTHING! Others have misrepresented that the "CHURCH" is the kingdom . . . The prophet Daniel, who lived 600 years before Christ, knew that the kingdom of God was a real kingdom--a government ruling over

literal PEOPLE on the earth . . .

Here . . . is God's explanation of what the KINGDOM OF GOD IS: "And in the days of these kings..."--it is here speaking of the ten toes, part of iron and part of brittle clay. This, by connecting the prophecy with Daniel 7, and Revelation 13 and 17, is referring to the new UNITED STATES OF EUROPE that is now forming . . . before your very eyes! Revelation 17:12 makes plain the detail that it shall be a union of TEN KINGS OR KINGDOMS that (Rev. 17:8) shall resurrect the old ROMAN EMPIRE . . .

When Christ comes, he is coming as KING of kings, ruling the whole earth (Rev. 19:11-16); and HIS KINGDOM--*the KINGDOM OF GOD*--said Daniel, is to CONSUME all these worldly kingdoms. Revelation 11:15 states it in these words: "The kingdoms of this world *are become* THE KINGDOMS OF OUR LORD, AND OF HIS CHRIST: and he shall reign for ever and ever"! This is THE KINGDOM OF GOD. It is the END of present governments--yes, and even the United States and the British nations. They then shall become the kingdoms--the GOVERNMENTS--of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, then KING of kings over the entire earth. This makes completely PLAIN the fact that the KINGDOM OF GOD is a literal GOVERNMENT. Even as the Chaldean Empire was a KINGDOM--even as the Roman Empire was a KINGDOM--so the KINGDOM OF GOD is a government. It is to take over the GOVERNMENT of the NATIONS of the world. Jesus Christ was BORN to be a KING--a RULER! . . .

The same Jesus Christ who walked over the hills and valleys of the Holy Land and the streets of Jerusalem more than 1,900 years ago is coming again. He said he would come again. After he was crucified, God raised him from the dead after three days and three nights (Matt. 12:40; Acts 2:32; I Cor. 15:3-4). He ascended to the Throne of God. Headquarters of the Government of the Universe (Acts 1:9-11; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; Rev. 3:21).

He is the "nobleman" of the parable, who went to the Throne of

God--the "far country"--to be coronated as King of kings over all nations, and then to return to earth (Luke 19:12-27).

Again, he is in heaven until the "times of restitution of all things" (Acts 3:19-21). *Restitution* means restoring to a former state or condition. In this case, the restoring of God's government on earth, and thus, the restoring of world peace, and utopian conditions.

Present world turmoil, escalating wars and contentions will climax in world trouble so great that, unless God intervenes, no human flesh would be saved alive (Matt. 24:22). At its very climax when delay would result in blasting all life from off this planet, Jesus Christ will return. This time he is coming as divine God. He is coming in all the power and glory of the universe-ruling Creator. (Matt. 24:30; 25:31.) He is coming as "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19:16), to establish world super-government and rule all nations "with a rod of iron" (Rev. 19:15; 12:5) . . .

Christ Unwelcome?

But will humanity shout with joy, and welcome him in frenzied ecstasy and enthusiasm--will even the churches of traditional Christianity?

They will not! They will believe, because the false ministers of Satan (II Cor. 11:13-15) have deceived them, that he is the Antichrist. The churches and the nations will be angry at his coming (Rev. 11:15 with 11:18), and the military forces will actually attempt to fight him to destroy him (Rev. 17:14)!

The nations will be engaged in the climactic battle of the coming World War III, with the battlefield at Jerusalem (Zech. 14:1-2) and then Christ will return. In supernatural power he will "fight against those nations" that fight against him (verse 3). He will totally defeat them (Rev. 17:14)! "His feet shall stand in that day upon the

mount of Olives," a very short distance to the east of Jerusalem (Zech. 14:4). (Armstrong HW. The Mystery of the Ages, 1984)

The Bible declares that Jesus will return and He will win, yet many will fight against Him (Revelation 19:19). Many will claim (based upon misunderstanding of Bible prophecy, but partially because of false prophets and mystics) that the returning Jesus is the final Antichrist!

The following is also from Herbert Armstrong:

True religion--God's truth empowered with the love of God imparted by the Holy Spirit...JOY UNSPEAKABLE of knowing God and Jesus Christ--of knowing TRUTH--and the warmth of God's divine LOVE!...

The teachings of God's true Church are simply those of "living by every word" of the Holy Bible...

Men shall turn from the way of "get" to the way of "give"--God's way of love.

A NEW CIVILIZATION shall now grip the earth! (ibid)

The NEW CIVILIZATION is the Kingdom of God. Proclaiming that new civilization is to come and be based upon love is a major part of what the true gospel of the kingdom that Jesus and His followers taught is all about. That is something that we in the *Continuing* Church of God preach.

Herbert Armstrong realized that Jesus was teaching that human society, even when it thinks it wants to obey, has rejected the 'give way' of life, the way of love. Almost no one seems to properly grasp the significance of what Jesus was teaching.

Salvation through Jesus is part of the Gospel

Now some who have read this far probably wonder about Jesus' death and role in salvation. Yes, that is part of the gospel that the New Testament and Herbert W. Armstrong both wrote about.

The New Testament shows the gospel includes salvation through Jesus:

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek (Romans 1:16).

⁴ Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. ⁵ Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. ... ¹² But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. ... ²⁵ So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans. ²⁶ Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip ... ⁴⁰ Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea. (Acts 8:4,5,12,25,26,40)

¹⁸ he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection. (Acts 17:18)

³⁰ Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, ³¹ **preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ** with all confidence, no one forbidding him. (Acts 28:30-31)

Notice that the preaching included Jesus AND the kingdom. Sadly, a proper understanding of the gospel of the Kingdom of God tends to be missing from the teachings of the Greco-Roman churches.

Actually, to help us become part of that kingdom, God loved humans so

much that He sent Jesus to die for us (John 3:16-17) and saves us by His grace (Ephesians 2:8). And that is part of the good news (Acts 20:24).

The Gospel of the Kingdom is What the World Needs, But ...

Yet many world leaders, including religious ones, believe that it will be international human cooperation that will bring peace and prosperity, and not the Kingdom of God. And while they will have some temporal successes, they will not only not succeed, their human efforts will ultimately bring planet Earth to the point that it would make life unsustainable if Jesus did not return to establish His Kingdom. This is a false gospel.

Many in the world are trying to put together a semi-religious Babylonian international plan to put in a new world order in the 21st century. This is something that the *Continuing* Church of God has denounced since its inception and plans to continue to denounce. Since the Satan beguiled Eve to fall for a version of his gospel nearly 6000 years ago (Genesis 3), humans have believed that they know better than God what will make them and the world better.

According to the Bible, it will take a combination of a military leader in Europe (called the King of the North, also called the Beast of Revelation 13:1-10) along with a religious leader (called the false prophet, also called THE final Antichrist and the two-horned Beast of Revelation 13:11-17) from the city of seven hills (Revelation 17:9,18) to bring in a 'Babylonian' (Revelation 17 & 18) world order. Although humankind needs the return of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom, many in the world will not pay attention to this message in the 21st century—they will continue to believe various versions of Satan's false gospel. But the world will receive a witness.

Recall that Jesus taught:

¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

(Matthew 24:14)

Notice that the gospel of the kingdom will reach the world as a witness, then the end will come.

There are several reasons for this.

One is that God wants the world to hear the true gospel before the start of the Great Tribulation (which is shown to start in Matthew 24:21). Hence the gospel message is both a witness and a warning (cf. Ezekiel 3; Amos 3:7).

Another is that the gist of the message will be contrary to the views of the rising Beast, King of the North power, along with the False Prophet, the final Antichrist. They will basically promise peace through human effort, but it will lead to the end (Matthew 24:14) and destruction (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:3).

Because of signs and lying wonders associated with them (2 Thessalonians 2:9), most in the world will choose to believe a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12) instead of the gospel message. Because of improper condemnations of the millennial Kingdom of God by the Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Lutherans, and others, many will wrongly claim that the message of the millennial gospel of the Kingdom of God is the false gospel associated with Antichrist.

The faithful Philadelphian Christians (Revelation 3:7-13) will be proclaiming the millennial gospel of the kingdom as well as telling the world what certain worldly leaders (including the Beast and False Prophet) will be up to.

They will support telling the world the message that the Beast, King of the North power, along with the False Prophet, the final Antichrist, will ultimately destroy (along with some of their allies) the USA and the Anglo-nations of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (Daniel 11:39) and that they will shortly thereafter destroy an Arabic/Islamic

confederation (Daniel 11:40-43), function as instruments of the demons (Revelation 16:13-14), and will ultimately fight Jesus Christ upon His return (Revelation 16:14; 19:19-20). The faithful Philadelphians (Revelation 3:7-13) will be announcing that the millennial kingdom will be coming soon. This would likely generate much media coverage and contribute to the fulfillment of Matthew 24:14.

The ‘false gospel’ proclaiming world leaders (likely some ‘new’ type of top leader of Europe along with a compromised pontiff who will *claim* a form of Catholicism) will not like that—they will not want the world to learn what they will really do (and may not even believe it themselves at first, cf. Isaiah 10:5-7). They and/or their supporters will also likely falsely teach that the faithful Philadelphians will be espousing a doctrine (millenarianism) of a coming antichrist. Whatever condemnations that they and/or their followers make towards the Philadelphian faithful and the *Continuing* Church of God will trigger persecution (Daniel 11:29-35; Revelation 12:13-15). This will also lead to the end—the start of the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21; Daniel 11:39; cf. Matthew 24:14-15; Daniel 11:31) as well as a time of protection for the faithful Philadelphia Christians (Revelation 3:10; 12:14-16).

The Beast and False Prophet will try force, economic blackmail, signs, lying wonders, murder, and other pressures (Revelation 13:10-17; 16:14; Daniel 7:25; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10) to have control. Christians will ask:

¹⁰ "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (Revelation 6:10)

Throughout the ages, God’s people have wondered, “How long will it be until Jesus returns?”

While we do not know the day or hour, we expect Jesus to return (and the millennial Kingdom of God established) in the 21st century based upon many scriptures (e.g. Matthew 24:4-34; Psalm 90:4; Hosea 6:2; Luke 21:7-36; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:4,11; 2 Peter 3:3-8; 1 Thessalonians 5:4), some parts of which we now see being fulfilled.

If Jesus does not intervene, the world will have annihilated all life:

²¹ For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. ²² And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. (Matthew 24:21-22)

²⁹ Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Matthew 24:29-31)

The Kingdom of God is what the world needs.

Ambassadors for the Kingdom

What is your role in the Kingdom?

Right now, if you are a real Christian, you are to be an ambassador for it. Notice what the Apostle Paul wrote:

²⁰ Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:20)

¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and

the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; ¹⁸ praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— ¹⁹ and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. (Ephesians 6:14-20)

What is an ambassador? *Merriam-Webster* has the following definition:

1: an official envoy; *especially*: a diplomatic agent of the highest rank accredited to a foreign government or sovereign as the resident representative of his or her own government or sovereign or appointed for a special and often temporary diplomatic assignment

2 *a*: an authorized representative or messenger

If you are a real Christian, you are an official envoy, for Christ! Notice what the Apostle Peter wrote:

⁹ But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

As Christians, we are to be part of a holy nation.

Which nation is now holy?

Well, certainly none of the kingdoms of this world—but they ultimately will be part of Christ's kingdom (Revelation 11:15). It is God's nation, His kingdom that is holy.

As ambassadors, we do not normally engage in the direct politics of the

nations of this world. But we are to live God's way of life now. By doing so, we better learn why God's ways are best, so that in His kingdom we can be kings and priests and reign with Christ on the earth:

⁵ To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶ and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 1:5-6)

¹⁰ And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth. (Revelation 5:10)

One future aspect of that will be teaching those who are mortal then to walk in God's ways:

¹⁹ For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; You shall weep no more. He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; When He hears it, He will answer you. ²⁰ And though the Lord gives you The bread of adversity and the water of affliction, Yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, But your eyes shall see your teachers. ²¹ Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," Whenever you turn to the right hand Or whenever you turn to the left. (Isaiah 30:19-21)

While that is a prophecy for the millennial kingdom, in this age Christians need to be prepared to teach:

¹² ... by this time you ought to be teachers (Hebrews 5:12)

¹⁵ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear (1 Peter 3:15, KJV).

The Bible shows that many of the more faithful Christians will, just before the start of the Great Tribulation, instruct many:

³³ And those of the people who understand shall instruct many (Daniel 11:33)

So, learning, growing in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18), is something we should be doing now. Part of your role in the Kingdom of God is to be able to teach. And for the more faithful, Philadelphian (Revelation 3:7-13), Christians, this will also include supporting the important gospel witness prior to the start of the millennial kingdom (cf. Matthew 24:14).

After the Kingdom of God is established, the people of God will be used to help restore a damaged planet:

¹² Those from among you Shall build the old waste places; You shall raise up the foundations of many generations; And you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In. (Isaiah 58:12)

Thus, the people of God who lived God's way in this age will make it easier for people to dwell in cities (and elsewhere) during this time of restoration. The world will truly be a better place. We should be ambassadors for Christ now, so we can also serve in His Kingdom.

The True Gospel Message is Transformative

Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). Knowing the truth about the gospel of the Kingdom of God frees us from being trapped in the false hopes of this world. We can boldly support a plan that works—God's plan! Satan has deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9) and the Kingdom of God is the true solution. We need to stand for and advocate the truth (cf. John 18:37).

The gospel message is more than about personal salvation. The good news of the Kingdom of God should transform one in this age:

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by

the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:2)

True Christians are transformed to serve God and others:

22 Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. 23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. (Colossians 3:22-24)

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. (Hebrews 12:28)

True Christians live differently from the world. We accept God's standards above the world's for what is right and wrong. The just live by faith (Hebrews 10:38), as it takes faith to live God's way in this age. Christians were considered so different from the world they lived in, that their mode of life was referred to as "the Way" in the New Testament (Acts 9:2; 19:9; 24:14,22). The world lives selfishly, under Satan's sway, in what has been called "the way of Cain" (Jude 11).

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God is a message of righteousness, joy, and peace (Romans 14:17). The prophetic word, properly understood, is comforting (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:18), especially as we watch the world crumble (cf. Luke 21:8-36). The true Christian way of life leads to spiritual abundance and physical blessings (Mark 10:29-30). This is part of why those who live it understand that the world needs the Kingdom of God. Christians are ambassadors of the Kingdom of God.

Christians put our hope in the spiritual, not the physical, though we live in a physical world (Romans 8:5-8). We have the "hope of the gospel" (Colossians 1:23). This is something that early Christians understood that many who profess Jesus today do not truly comprehend.

6. Greco-Roman churches teach the Kingdom is Important, But...

The Greco-Roman churches believe that they teach aspects of the Kingdom of God, but have trouble truly understanding what it really is. For example, *The Catholic Encyclopedia* teaches this about the kingdom:

Christ's ... At every stage in His teaching the advent of this kingdom, its various aspects, its precise meaning, the way in which it is to be attained, form the staple of His discourses, so much so that His discourse is called "the gospel of the kingdom"...they began to speak of the Church as "the kingdom of God"; cf. Col., I, 13; I Thess., ii, 12; Apoc., I, 6, 9; v, 10, etc. ...it means the Church as that Divine institution ... (Pope H. Kingdom of God. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume VIII. 1910).

Although the above pointed to "Col., I, 13; I Thess., ii, 12; Apoc., I, 6, 9; v, 10," if you will look them up, you will find that not one of those verses say anything about **the Church** being the Kingdom of God. They teach believers will be part of the Kingdom of God or that it is Jesus' kingdom. The Bible warns that many would change the gospel or turn to another, an untrue one (Galatians 1:6-9). Sadly, various ones have done that.

Jesus taught, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). Peter taught, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Peter told Jews all must have the faith to repent and accept Jesus to be saved (Acts 2:38).

In contrast to this, Pope Francis has taught that atheists, without Jesus, can be saved by good works! He also teaches that Jews can be saved without accepting Jesus! Additionally, he and some Greco-Romans also seem to consider that a non-biblical version of 'Mary' is a key to the gospel as well as a key to ecumenical and interfaith unity. Sadly, they and others do not understand the importance of Jesus AND the true Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Many are promoting false gospels.

Many wish to walk by sight and have faith in the world. The New Testament teaches that Christians are to look above:

2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.
(Colossians 3:2)

7 For we walk by faith, not by sight. (2 Corinthians 5:7)

Yet, Pope Pius XI basically taught to walk by his sight of his church:

...the Catholic Church...is the kingdom of Christ on earth. (Pius's encyclical *Quas Primas* as cited in Kramer P. *The Devil's Final Battle*. Good Counsel Publications, 2002, p. 73).

The *CatholicBible101* website claims, "the Kingdom of God was established on earth by Jesus Christ in the year 33 AD, in the form of His Church, led by Peter...the Catholic Church." But the millennial Kingdom of God is not yet here nor is it the Church of Rome, but it will be on earth.

The Church of Rome teaches so strongly against a soon-coming earthly millennial Kingdom of God that it is basically the only "doctrine of Antichrist" listed in the official *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

676 The Antichrist's deception already begins to take shape in the world every time the claim is made to realize within history that messianic hope which can only be realized beyond history through the eschatological judgment. The Church has rejected even modified forms of this falsification of the kingdom to come under the name of millenarianism... (Catechism of the Catholic Church. Imprimatur Potest +Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. Doubleday, NY 1995, p. 194)

Sadly, those who agree with that will have major problems with the proclaiming of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God in the end. Some will take terrible steps against those proclaiming it (Daniel 7:25; 11:30-36). But, you might think, will not all who profess Jesus as Lord be in the

kingdom? No, they will not be. Notice what Jesus said:

²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' (Matthew 7:21-23)

The Apostle Paul noted the “mystery of lawlessness” was “already at work” (2 Thessalonians 2:7) in his time. This lawlessness is also related to something that the Bible warns against in the end times that is called “Mystery, Babylon the Great” (Revelation 17:3-5).

The “mystery of lawlessness” is related to professing Christians who believe that they do not need to keep God’s Ten Commandment law, etc. and/or there are so many acceptable exceptions to it and/or there are acceptable forms of penance to break God’s law, so while they think that have a form of God’s law, they are not keeping a form of Christianity that Jesus or His apostles would recognize as legitimate.

The Greco-Romans are like the Pharisees who violated God’s commandments, but claimed their traditions made this acceptable—Jesus denounced that approach (Matthew 15:3-9)! Isaiah also warned that people claiming to be God’s would rebel against His law (Isaiah 30:9). This lawless rebellion is something we, sadly, see this to this day.

Another “mystery” appears to be that the Church of Rome seems to believe that its militaristic ecumenical and interfaith agendas will lead to peace and a non-biblical version of the Kingdom of God on the earth. Scripture warns against a coming ecumenical unity which it teaches will, for a few years, be successful (note: the *New Jerusalem Bible*, a Catholic-approved translation, is shown):

⁴ They prostrated themselves in front of the dragon because he

had given the beast his authority; and they prostrated themselves in front of the beast, saying, 'Who can compare with the beast? Who can fight against it?'⁵ The beast was allowed to mouth its boasts and blasphemies and to be active for forty-two months;⁶ and it mouthed its blasphemies against God, against his name, his heavenly Tent and all those who are sheltered there.⁷ It was allowed to make war against the saints and conquer them, and given power over every race, people, language and nation;⁸ and all people of the world will worship it, that is, everybody whose name has not been written down since the foundation of the world in the sacrificial Lamb's book of life.⁹ Let anyone who can hear, listen:¹⁰ Those for captivity to captivity; those for death by the sword to death by the sword. This is why the saints must have perseverance and faith. (Revelation 13:4-10, NJB)

The Bible warns against an end time Babylon unity:

¹ One of the seven angels that had the seven bowls came to speak to me, and said, 'Come here and I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute who is enthroned beside abundant waters,² with whom all the kings of the earth have prostituted themselves, and who has made all the population of the world drunk with the wine of her adultery.'³ He took me in spirit to a desert, and there I saw a woman riding a scarlet beast which had seven heads and ten horns and had blasphemous titles written all over it.⁴ The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet and glittered with gold and jewels and pearls, and she was holding a gold winecup filled with the disgusting filth of her prostitution;⁵ **on her forehead was written a name, a cryptic name: 'Babylon the Great, the mother of all the prostitutes and all the filthy practices on the earth.'**⁶ I saw that she was drunk, drunk with the blood of the saints, and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus; and when I saw her, I was completely mystified. (Revelation 17:1-6, NJB)

⁹ 'This calls for shrewdness. The **seven heads are the seven hills**, on which the woman is sitting . . .¹⁸ The woman you saw is **the**

great city which has authority over all the rulers on earth.' (Revelation 17:9,18, NJB)

¹ After this, I saw another angel come down from heaven, with great authority given to him; the earth shone with his glory. ² At the top of his voice he shouted, 'Babylon has fallen, **Babylon the Great** has fallen, and has become the haunt of devils and a lodging for every foul spirit and dirty, loathsome bird. ³ All the nations have drunk deep of the wine of her prostitution; every king on the earth has prostituted himself with her, and every merchant grown rich through her debauchery.' ⁴ Another voice spoke from heaven; I heard it say, '**Come out, my people, away from her, so that you do not share in her crimes and have the same plagues to bear.**' ⁵ Her sins have reached up to the sky, and God has her crimes in mind: treat her as she has treated others. ⁶ She must be paid double the amount she exacted. She is to have a doubly strong cup of her own mixture. ⁷ Every one of her pomps and orgies is to be matched by a torture or an agony. I am enthroned as queen, she thinks; I am no widow and will never know bereavement. ⁸ For that, in one day, the plagues will fall on her: disease and mourning and famine. She will be burned to the ground. The Lord God who has condemned her is mighty.' ⁹ 'There will be mourning and weeping for her by the kings of the earth who have prostituted themselves with her and held orgies with her. They see the smoke as she burns, (Revelation 18:1-9, NJB)

In Zechariah, the Bible warns against a coming Babylon and shows that proper unity will not happen until *after* Jesus returns:

¹⁰ Look out! Look out! Flee from the land of the north -- Yahweh declares- for I have scattered you to the four winds of heaven -- Yahweh declares. ¹¹ Look out! Make your escape, **Zion, now living with the daughter of Babylon!**

¹² For Yahweh Sabaoth says this, since the Glory commissioned

me, about the nations who plundered you, 'Whoever touches you touches the apple of my eye. ¹³ Now look, I shall wave my hand over them and they will be plundered by those whom they have enslaved.' Then you will know that Yahweh Sabaoth has sent me! ¹⁴ Sing, rejoice, daughter of Zion, for now I am coming to live among you -Yahweh declares! ¹⁵ And on that day many nations will be converted to Yahweh. Yes, they will become his people, and they will live among you. Then you will know that Yahweh Sabaoth has sent me to you! ¹⁶ Yahweh will take possession of Judah, his portion in the Holy Land, and again make Jerusalem his choice. (Zechariah 2:10-16, NJB; note in the KJV/NKJV versions the verses are listed as Zechariah 2:6-12)

The ecumenical and interfaith movements that the United Nations, Vatican, many Protestants, and Eastern Orthodox leaders are promoting are clearly condemned by the Bible and should not be encouraged. Jesus warned of ones *claiming* to follow Him who would "deceive many" (Matthew 24:4-5). Much ecumenism is related to the "white horseman" of Revelation 6:1-2 (who is NOT Jesus) and the harlot of Revelation 17.

Like Zechariah, the Apostle Paul also taught that true unity of faith would not happen until *after* Jesus returns:

13 until we all reach unity in faith and knowledge of the Son of God and form the perfect Man, fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself. (Ephesians 4:13, NJB)

Those who believe this unity comes prior to Jesus' return are in error. Actually, when Jesus returns, He will have to destroy the unity of nations that will rally against Him:

^{11:15} Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and voices could be heard shouting in heaven, calling, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.' ¹⁶ The twenty-four elders, enthroned in the presence of God, prostrated themselves and touched the ground with their foreheads worshipping God ¹⁷ with these words, 'We

give thanks to you, Almighty Lord God, He who is, He who was, for assuming your great power and beginning your reign. ¹⁸ The nations were in uproar and now the time has come for your retribution, and for the dead to be judged, and for your servants the prophets, for the saints and for those who fear your name, small and great alike, to be rewarded. The time has come to destroy those who are destroying the earth.' (Revelation 11:15-18, NJB)

^{19:6} And I heard what seemed to be the voices of a huge crowd, like the sound of the ocean or the great roar of thunder, answering, 'Alleluia! The reign of the Lord our God Almighty has begun; . . . ¹⁹ Then I saw the beast, with all the kings of the earth and their armies, gathered together to fight the Rider and his army. ²⁰ But the beast was taken prisoner, together with the false prophet who had worked miracles on the beast's behalf and by them had deceived those who had accepted branding with the mark of the beast and those who had worshipped his statue. These two were hurled alive into the fiery lake of burning sulphur. ²¹ All the rest were killed by the sword of the Rider, which came out of his mouth, and all the birds glutted themselves with their flesh . . . ^{20:4} Then I saw thrones, where they took their seats, and on them was conferred the power to give judgement. I saw the souls of all who had been beheaded for having witnessed for Jesus and for having preached God's word, and those who refused to worship the beast or his statue and would not accept the landmark on their foreheads or hands; they came to life, and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (Revelation 19:6,19-21; 20:4, NJB)

Notice that Jesus will have to destroy the world's armies unified against Him. Then He and the saints will reign. That is when there will be proper unity of the faith. Sadly, many will listen to false ministers that appear good, but are not, as the Apostle Paul warned (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). If more would truly understand the Bible and the gospel of the Kingdom of God less would fight against Jesus.

7. Why the Kingdom of God?

Although humans like to think we are so smart, there are limits to our understanding, yet God's "understanding is infinite" (Psalm 147:5).

That is why it will take God's intervention to fix this planet.

While many believe *in* God, the vast majority of humans are unwilling to live as *He* truly directs. Notice the following:

8 He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

To walk humbly *with* God is not something humankind has truly been willing to do. From the time of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:1-6), humans have chosen to rely on themselves and their priorities, above God's, despite His commandments (Exodus 20:3-17).

The Book of Proverbs teaches:

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. ⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil. (Proverbs 3:5-7)

Yet, most people will not truly trust in God with all their hearts or wait for Him to direct their steps. Many say they will do what God wants, but do not do it. Humanity has been deceived by Satan (Revelation 12:9) and has fallen for the lusts of the world and the 'pride of life' (1 John 2:16).

Therefore, many have come up with their own religious traditions and secular governments, because they think they know best. However, they do not (cf. Jeremiah 10:23) nor will most truly repent.

That is why humanity needs the Kingdom of God (cf. Matthew 24:21-22).

God's Ways Are Right

The truth is that God is love (1 John 4:8,16) and God is NOT selfish. God's laws show love towards God and our neighbor (Mark 12:29-31; James 2:8-11). The ways of the world are selfish and end in death (Romans 8:6).

Notice that the Bible shows real Christians observe the commandments:

¹ Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. ² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. ³ For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. (1 John 5:1-3)

All of God's "commandments are righteousness" (Psalm 119:172). His ways are pure (1 Timothy 1:15). Sadly, many have accepted various forms of "lawlessness" and do not realize that Jesus did NOT come to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17), by explaining their real meaning and expanding them beyond what many thought (e.g. Matthew 5:21-27). Jesus taught that "whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19) (the terms 'Kingdom of God' and 'kingdom of heaven' are interchangeable).

The Bible teaches that faith without works is dead (James 2:17). Many claim to follow Jesus, but will not truly believe His teachings (Matthew 7:21-23) and will not imitate Him as they should (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:1). "Sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4, KJV) and all have sinned (Romans 3:23). However, the Bible shows that mercy will triumph over judgment (James 2:13) as God truly has a plan for all (cf. Luke 3:6).

Human solutions, apart from God's ways, will not work. In the millennial kingdom, Jesus will rule with "a rod of iron" (Revelation 19:15), and good will prevail as people will live God's way. **ALL the world's problems exist because societies of this world refuse to obey God and His law.** History show humanity is not capable of solving the problems of society:

⁶ For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷ Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸ So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Romans 8:6-8)

Christians are to focus on the spiritual, and are granted God's Spirit to do so in this age (Romans 8:9), despite our personal weaknesses:

²⁶ For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. ²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence. ³⁰ But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— ³¹ that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)

Christians are to glory in God's plan! We walk by faith now (2 Corinthians 5:7), looking above (Colossians 3:2) in faith (Hebrews 11:6). We will be blessed for keeping God's commandments (Revelation 22:14).

The Bible says that Christians will rule with Jesus, but do you realize that means that real Christians will actually rule over cities? Jesus taught:

¹² "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. ¹³ So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.' ¹⁴ But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.'

¹⁵ "And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how

much every man had gained by trading.¹⁶ Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.'¹⁷ And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.'¹⁸ And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.'¹⁹ Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.' (Luke 19:12-19)

Be faithful over the little you have now. Christians will have the opportunity to rule over real cities, in a real kingdom. Jesus also said, "My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work" (Revelation 22:12). God has a plan (Job 14:15) and a place (John 14:2) for those who will truly respond to Him (John 6:44; Revelation 17:14). The Kingdom of God is for real and you can be a part of it!

At the start of 2016, the journal *Science* had an article titled "The power of crowds" that indicated that artificial intelligence and crowdsourcing could solve the "wicked problems" facing humanity. Yet, the article failed to understand what wickedness was, let alone how to solve it.

Cooperation, apart from following the true ways of God, is as doomed to fail in the 21st century as it was back after the Great Flood when humanity cooperated to build the failed Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9).

Problems in the world, in places like the Middle East (despite expected temporal gains, e.g. Daniel 9:27a; 1 Thessalonians 5:3), will not be solved by humans—we need the peace of the Kingdom of God (Romans 14:17).

The problems of international terrorism, despite expected gains, will not be solved (cf. Ezekiel 21:12) by the deceived in the United Nations (cf. Revelation 12:9)—we need the joy and comfort of the Kingdom of God.

The problems of the environment will NOT be solved by international cooperation, as the world's nations will help destroy the earth (Revelation 11:18), but they will be solved by the Kingdom of God.

The problems of sexual immorality, abortion, and selling human body parts will not be solved by the USA, but by the Kingdom of God.

The massive debt that the USA, UK, and many other nations have will not be solved through international brokering, but ultimately (after destruction per Habakkuk 2:6-8) by the Kingdom of God.

Ignorance and mis-education will not be solved by the United Nations—we need the Kingdom of God. Religious strife will not truly be solved by any ecumenical-interfaith movement agreeing to salvation apart from the true Jesus of the Bible. Sin is THE PROBLEM in the world and for that, we need Jesus' sacrifice and His return in the Kingdom of God.

Hunger issues will not be solved by genetically-modified organisms which are putting parts of the world at risk of famine due to potential crop failures—we need the Kingdom of God.

Modern medical science does not have all the answers for human health—we need the Kingdom of God.

The massive poverty in parts of Africa, Asia, and elsewhere, while benefiting for a time from end time 'Babylon' (cf. Revelation 18:1-19), will not solve the problem of poverty—we need the Kingdom of God.

The millennial phase of the Kingdom of God is a literal kingdom that will be established on the earth. It will be based on the loving laws of God and a loving God as leader. The saints will reign with Christ for a thousand years (Revelation 5:10; 20:4-6). This kingdom will include those truly in the Church of God, but no scripture states that the Kingdom of God is actually the Church (Catholic or otherwise). The Church of Rome has opposed the millennial teaching, and later it will more powerfully oppose the Bible's gospel message as we get closer to the end. This will likely get significant media coverage which may help fulfill Matthew 24:14.

In its final phase, the Kingdom of God will include the "New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God" (Revelation 21:2) and of its increase

there will be no end. There will be no more unrighteousness, no more sorrow, and no more death.

Preaching and understanding the gospel of the Kingdom of God is an important theme of the Bible. Old Testament writers taught about it. Jesus, Paul, and John taught about it.

The oldest 'Christian' sermon to survive outside the New Testament taught about it. Early second century Christian leaders, like Polycarp and Melito, taught about it. We in the *Continuing* Church of God teach it today.

Recall that the Kingdom of God is the first subject that the Bible shows Jesus preached about. It was also what He preached about after the resurrection—and it is something Christians should seek first.

The gospel is not only about the life and death of Jesus. The emphasis of the gospel that Jesus and His followers taught was the coming Kingdom of God. The gospel of the kingdom includes salvation through Christ, but also includes teaching the end of human governments (Revelation 11:5).

Remember, Jesus taught that the end would not come until after the gospel of the kingdom was preached to the world as a witness to all the nations (Matthew 24:14). And that preaching is happening now.

The good news is that **the Kingdom of God is the solution to the problems facing humanity**. Yet, most do NOT want to support it, nor hear it, nor want to believe the truth of it. God's Kingdom is eternal (Matthew 6:13), while "this world is passing away" (1 Corinthians 7:31).

Proclaiming the true gospel of the Kingdom of God is something that we in the *Continuing* Church of God are serious about. We strive to teach all things that the Bible teaches (Matthew 28:19-20), including the Kingdom of God (Matthew 24:14). While we await that kingdom, we need to learn and follow God's ways and comfort others who want to believe the truth. Shouldn't you support the proclaiming of the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God? Will you believe the gospel of the Kingdom of God?

Continuing Church of God

The USA office of the *Continuing Church of God* is located at: 1036 W. Grand Avenue, Grover Beach, California, 93433 USA.

Continuing Church of God (CCOG) Websites

CCOG.ASIA This site has focus on Asia and has various articles in multiple Asian languages, as well as some items in English.

CCOG.IN This is a website targeted towards those of Indian heritage. It has materials in English language and various Indian languages.

CCOG.EU This is a website targeted toward Europe. It has materials in multiple European languages.

CCOG.NZ This is a website targeted towards New Zealand and others with a British-descended background.

CCOG.ORG This is the main website of the *Continuing Church of God*. It serves people on all continents. It contains articles, links, and videos.

CCOGCANADA.CA This is a website targeted towards those in Canada.

CDLIDD.ES La Continuación de la Iglesia de Dios. This is the Spanish language website for the *Continuing Church of God*.

PNIND.PH Patuloy na Iglesia ng Diyos. This is the Philippines website of the *Continuing Church of God*. It has information in English and Tagalog.

News and History Websites

COGWRITER.COM This website is a major proclamation tool and has news, doctrine, historical articles, videos, and prophetic updates.

CHURCHHISTORYBOOK.COM This is an easy to remember website with articles and information on church history.

BIBLENEWSPROPHECY.NET This is an online radio website which covers news and biblical topics.

YouTube Video Channels for Sermons & Sermonettes

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