

**THE GOSPEL OF THE**



**KINGDOM OF GOD**

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God wants His church to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God  
in all the world as a witness. But what is the Kingdom of God?  
Why is it so important that we understand the truth in this matter?

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## What Is the Gospel?

When you hear the word Gospel, what comes to mind? Do you think of the gospel of grace? Do you think about the four gospel writers—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John? Do you think of the gospel about the person of Jesus Christ?

There seems to be quite a bit of confusion and some misconceptions when it comes to the gospel. What then, is *the Gospel*? And where can we find irrefutable answers to this most VITAL subject? We'll go to an irrefutable source—God's Word—the Bible.

### **ONLY ONE TRUE GOSPEL**

The word “gospel” simply means “good news.” Jesus Christ was a messenger sent by God the Father to proclaim the Gospel or the good news. But people did not want to hear it and eventually killed Christ. His true disciples were also persecuted when they continued to proclaim the very same message that Christ brought. What was it about this message that created so much hostility among the listeners? And why does there continue to be such a variety of ideas about what the Gospel is?

There is only *one* true gospel, but many counterfeits. Already at the

time of the Apostle Paul, another gospel, a counterfeit, was being preached. Paul warned everyone *not* to accept or believe this counterfeit—in fact, not to accept *any* message which is not the true and only good news that Christ brought.

He states in Galatians 1:6-9: “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a **different gospel**, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the **gospel of Christ** [the good news that Christ brought]. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that we have preached to you, let him be accursed. And 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.”

And why could Paul be so sure that the gospel that *he* had preached to them was the only *true* one?

Do you understand  
what the Kingdom of  
God is, and what  
relevance it has in  
your life?

Because he had received this message directly from Christ, as he states in verses 11-12: “But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Christ, the messenger of the good news, revealed it to Paul. Just what *was* this message?

## **GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

Let’s turn to the book of Mark. This account is sometimes called the “gospel of Mark,” but that is really an inaccurate designation. The New King James Bible introduces it as “the gospel according to Mark.” Let’s read in Mark 1:1 to see who brought this gospel. We read: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

Jesus Christ brought good news from God the Father. He said many times that whatever He taught was not of Him, but of God the Father. It is true that the gospel includes news and information about Christ Himself and the reason He became human, but the gospel of Christ includes *more* than just news about Christ.

Notice Mark 1:14-15: “Now after John [the Baptist] was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the *gospel of the Kingdom of God*, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe the gospel...’”

The Bible repeats time and again that Jesus Christ preached the gospel of the Kingdom of God. In fact, Christ’s whole message had to do with the Kingdom of God—*WHAT* it is,

*WHY* we need to understand it, and *HOW* we can have a part in it.

The Jews at the time of Christ were so upset about the message of the Kingdom of God that they killed Christ. Their understanding of what the Kingdom of God is, and who would be in it, was quite different from what Jesus taught. That is why they were so intent on killing Him.

Mark 4:11-12: “And He said to them [His disciples]: ‘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, so that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest they should turn, and their sins be forgiven them.’”

Here we see that Christ’s disciples *would* understand what the Kingdom of God is all about—but that people who were not called would *not* understand—to them it would be a great mystery, beyond comprehension. We also see that the Kingdom of God has to do with “turning” and “forgiveness of sin.” We read that people who are outside would not “turn.” Earlier, we read that Christ said, people who hear the gospel must repent.

It’s really the same thing—when we repent, we *turn* around, go the other way, leaving the wrong way and going the right way. And we ask for forgiveness of our past wrong conduct, of our sins, of what we were, realizing that our past ways were sinful.

So the disciples of Christ would do that—they would turn or repent and ask for and receive forgiveness of their evil past, so that they could go on without a guilty conscience on their way toward the Kingdom of God.

Those outside, though—those who are not called in this life—would not believe the gospel of the Kingdom of God and, as a consequence, they would not understand that repentance and forgiveness are prerequisites to entering the Kingdom of God.

Turn to Luke 8:1, “Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God.” The margin of the New King James Bible has here, “proclaiming the good news” of the Kingdom of God. Jesus came to preach the gospel or good news of the Kingdom of God. It is GOOD news—the BEST news one can imagine, once we understand what the Kingdom of God IS—and that WE can become part of it.

Jesus would continue preaching the good news, as we read in Luke 9:11: “He received them and spoke to them about the Kingdom of God.”

God has not changed, and neither has His message. He sent His disciples out at that time to preach the gospel

of the Kingdom of God (cp. Luke 9:2), and He does not expect anything less of His true servants today. But in order to preach the gospel, we must know, of course, *what* the Gospel of the Kingdom of God is. This means, we must belong to those whom God has specifically revealed this knowledge. Remember, only the true servants of Christ would understand the mystery of the Kingdom of God. Luke 8: 9-10: “Then His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘What does this parable mean?’ And He said, ‘To you it has been *given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God*, but to the rest it is given in parables, that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may *not understand*.’”

The Bible makes it very clear that we are not yet in the Kingdom of God, even if we are Christ’s disciples, and it also makes it clear that the Kingdom of God is not something within us. Rather, we must indeed *enter* into it—in the future—if we remain faithful.

## Kingdom of God Has Not Yet Come

Jesus Christ gave a parable that shows the Kingdom of God is not yet here. Mark 10:17-22: “Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’ So Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: Do not commit adultery. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not bear

false witness. Do not defraud. Honor your father and your mother.’ And he answered and said to Him, ‘Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.’ Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, ‘One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.’ But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he

had great possessions.”

Realize now, this was a *command* that Christ gave to this rich man because He saw that his riches stood between him and the *way* to eternal life. Remember, the man had asked Christ what to do that he could INHERIT eternal life. He knew he did not have it yet. And Christ told him that if he wanted to have eternal life, he needed to keep the commandments (cp. Matthew 19:17). And one of the commandments is, You shall not have any other gods before Me. The young man had placed the god of riches before the true God. And he did not want to give it up.

Continuing now in Mark 10:23: “Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, ‘How hard it is for those who have riches to **enter the Kingdom of God.**’” Here we see that *entering* the Kingdom of God is the same or synonymous with *inheriting* eternal life.

Verses 24-26: “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. 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.’ And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, ‘**Who then can be saved?**’” The disciples understood that **inheriting eternal life, entering the Kingdom of God, and salvation** are all one and the same.

Christ did not disagree with that perception. Quite to the contrary, He confirmed it, by saying in verse 27: “But Jesus looked at them and said,

‘With man it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.’” Even the salvation of a rich person, upon repentance and belief.

Continuing in verses 28 - 30: “Then Peter began to say to Him, ‘See, we have left all and followed You.’” So Jesus answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and **the gospel’s**, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, **eternal life.**” God promises eternal life to those who place more importance on attaining the Kingdom of God than on material possessions, even if it means suffering.

## **THE GOSPEL MUST BE PREACHED IN ALL THE WORLD**

Turn now to Mark 13:10 where we find a remarkable prophecy of Christ for our time today, again relating to the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Christ was answering the questions of His disciples as to when He would return. We read: “And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations.”

There is only one gospel, as we have seen—the gospel of the Kingdom of God. In the parallel account of Matthew, we find the gospel clearly identified. We read in Matthew 24: 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.”

Look around you. The end is not

here yet. Christ has not returned to this earth yet, as He promised He would. His prophecy about the gospel being preached in all the world is still to be fulfilled. The only sign for His **imminent** return that Christ specifically referred to in Matthew 24:14, is when the gospel of the Kingdom is being preached in all the world as a witness. *Then the end will come.*

Mark repeats the fact that Christ's gospel would be preached in all the world [to all nations] in Mark 14:9. By way of background, a woman had come to anoint Jesus' feet with precious fragrant oil. The disciples rebuked her for that, but Christ came to her defense, realizing that the woman had done it in anticipation of His death. And so Christ said: "Assuredly, I say to you, wherever *this gospel* is preached *in the whole world*, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her."

We also read in Mark 16:15-16 the commission Christ gave His disciples: "Go into all the world and **preach the gospel** to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." This is a continuing obligation of Christ's disciples—to preach **the gospel of the Kingdom of God**. Notice, it did not say to preach a gospel, but rather, to preach **the** gospel. Again, there is only ONE gospel.

## **WE ARE NOT YET SAVED**

When people hear this gospel and believe the message, they are to respond by repenting and being baptized as an outward sign of inward repentance. They will then receive the gift of the Holy Spirit that will

enable them to do what Christ told them to do—to *keep the commandments*. In doing so, they will move toward the Kingdom of God so that they can finally enter it, at the time of their resurrection. So their process of salvation began with their conversion, but it will not be completed until they have been resurrected or changed to immortality.

*That* will be the time when they WILL ULTIMATELY BE saved—*not* before. Remember what Christ said, "He who believes and is baptized WILL BE [future] saved." Remember, final salvation is the same as inheriting eternal life and entering the Kingdom of God. We are not yet saved!

Notice, too, Christ's words in Matthew 24:13: "But he who endures *to the end* shall be saved." To enter the Kingdom of God requires overcoming, endurance, perseverance, long-suffering and patience in the face of pressure, adversity and even persecution. Revelation 14:12 tells us what kind of patience God requires: "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus [the faith that Jesus had when He was human and with which He was able to resist and overcome Satan the devil—the faith that God will help us to keep His commandments]."

Many have correctly understood this in the past, but have yielded to the pressures of this world and have given up. Christ warned us through several parables that many would fall by the wayside. But we don't have to give up. We *can* endure until the end—until we die or until Christ returns, whichever is earlier.

# The Kingdom of God Will Be Here On the Earth

Luke has much to say about the gospel of the Kingdom of God and the rulership of Jesus Christ. Let's read a familiar passage in Luke 1:30-33 where an angel was sent to Mary to announce to her that she would become pregnant, but not from a man: "Then the angel [Gabriel] said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His Kingdom there will be no end.'"

## **JESUS CHRIST WAS BORN TO BE THE KING**

There is a lot being said here by the angel Gabriel. Let's take a closer look. Jesus Christ was born to become a KING. Remember that He told this to Pilate, and the Jews used this as a reason to have Him killed. The angel proclaimed that Jesus would become a King to RULE over the House of Jacob FOREVER. If He rules forever, then this would imply eternal life. This account also says that Jesus Christ would rule from the throne of His father, or forefather, David. So we read that the throne of David has a connection with this eternal rulership. And finally, there will be no end to His Kingdom—once established, it

would rule and exist forever—eternally.

The angel Gabriel quoted here in part from Isaiah 9:6-7: "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. 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."

Isaiah had been inspired to write about the birth of Christ, and also about His second coming, as well as the establishment of the Kingdom of God here on earth. After all, the throne of David is here on earth, not somewhere in heaven. And Isaiah foretold that this Child had been God prior to His human birth, and that He became man, but would become God again when He was resurrected, to rule as God in the Kingdom of God, which is also called a kingdom of peace.

Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, would rule over this earth with justice and in a peaceful way. Once the peoples [nations] of this world really understand God's way of life, they will not want to learn war any more, as we read in Isaiah 2:4, but will, in fact, beat their swords into plowshares. War and strife will be replaced with peace and harmony. That is what the Kingdom of God on this earth, under the rulership of Jesus Christ the King,



will accomplish.

Christ knew why He had come to this earth. He knew what His mission was, and what He had to proclaim. Let's notice it in Luke 4:43: "I must preach *the Kingdom of God* to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent."

But that was not what many expected. They thought Christ would establish the Kingdom of God on earth right then and there—they did not expect Him to just preach *about* it, and the message they heard was not what they expected to hear. Even John the Baptist, when he was in prison, began to wonder whether Jesus was really the Christ, and so he asked Jesus through his disciples, "Are you the Coming One, or do we look for another?"

Notice what proofs Jesus gave to John's disciples that He was the Christ, the King of the coming [future] Kingdom. As recorded in Luke 7:22: "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor **have the gospel preached to them.**" Christ preached the gospel of the

Kingdom of God—one of the proofs that He was the Messiah.

Let's continue reading in Luke, where we find another statement made by Jesus Christ pertaining to the Kingdom of God. A statement which must have shocked His listeners—especially those who believed that the Kingdom of God was something physical, composed of physical human beings. The truth is that the Kingdom of God will rule over humans, but it will not be composed of humans. Notice in Luke 7:28: "For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the **Kingdom of God is greater than he.**"

John the Baptist was born of a woman, but he had the Holy Spirit while he was still in his mother's womb (Luke 1:15). And having God's Spirit so abundantly and from his mother's womb, is what made him such a great prophet. Now, John the Baptist was not in the Kingdom of God yet, and this account we just read in Luke, compares John's human status as being less than anybody in the Kingdom of God. Let's understand *why*.

# Human Beings Cannot Enter the Kingdom of God

Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 15:50: “Now this I say, brethren, that **flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.**” Are you still human? If so, you cannot inherit the Kingdom of God as you are. So then, *how can* we enter the Kingdom?

## **WE MUST BE CHANGED**

Paul explains in verses 51 and 52: “Behold, I tell you a mystery...we shall all be changed—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.” *That is, how we can enter the Kingdom of God.* Our human bodies need to be changed. But changed to what?

Verses 42-49: “So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, **it is raised a spiritual body...** (verse 47) The first man [Adam] was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man [Jesus Christ] is the Lord from heaven... (verse 49) And as we have borne the image of the man of dust [human], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man [spirit].”

Did you catch that? Is it true that we will bear the image of the heavenly Man, Jesus Christ? Is Paul really saying that we, in the resurrection, when entering the Kingdom of God,

will look like Jesus Christ? Yes, that is **EXACTLY** what Paul is saying.

And the same message was written by the Apostle John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. In I John 3:1-2, we read: “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God.... Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be [we are still flesh and blood—we have not been changed yet to spirit beings], but we know that when He is revealed [when Christ comes back in power and glory, to establish the Kingdom of God on this earth], we shall be **like Him**, for we shall see Him as He is.”

No human being can look at God in His glorified state, as He is, and live. But when we are changed, we *can* look at God and His Son Jesus Christ in their glorified state and live. Why? Because we will be *like* them, Jesus Christ being the image of God the Father. And what does it mean to be like Christ? To bear His image? It means that we will look like He looks. And how does He look in His glorified state? Let’s read Revelation 1:14-16, which gives us a glimpse of what Christ looks like today: “His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire. His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters...and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.”

That's *exactly* how we will look too, when we are changed and are in the Kingdom of God.

There is another description of God the Father and Jesus Christ in the Old Testament, in the writings of the prophet Daniel. We read in Daniel 7:9-14: "I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days [a reference to God the Father] was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire... And behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven [describing the ascension of the resurrected Christ to heaven]! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him [the Son of Man] was given dominion and glory and a **Kingdom**, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and **His Kingdom** the one which shall not be destroyed."

## **WE WILL RULE WITH CHRIST IN THE KINGDOM**

Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, who is also God, receives rulership over the peoples of the world from God the Father, the Ancient of Days. Christ will establish this Kingdom, the Kingdom of God, on this earth. It's a Kingdom ruled by God. It's a Kingdom composed of God—the Father and Jesus Christ.

But remember, we learned earlier that *we* also will be in that Kingdom. Notice Daniel 7:27: "Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms *under* the whole heaven

[that is, on this earth] shall be given to the people, the *saints* of the Most High. His Kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. And all dominions shall serve and obey Him."

So **WE**, the resurrected saints, those who have been faithful, will be given dominion over all nations, once we are in the Kingdom of God. Christ tells us in Revelation 2:26-27: "And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—he shall rule them with a rod of iron [that is, he will not allow rebellion and crime and evil as we see in this world]; they [those who want to continue to live with violence and hatred and who will try to bring about destruction and misery] shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels, *as I also have received from My Father.*"

Let's also note this remarkable statement in Revelation 20:4 and 6: "And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them.... And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years... Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection... they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."

And where will they reign? In heaven? Let's read Revelation 5:10: "[You] have made *them* [as it should be—the angels are singing this song about the saints—us] kings and priests to our God; and we [again, it should say: they] shall reign **on the earth.**"

Do you understand what all these scriptures are telling us? We will be like Christ, we will bear His image, we will look like He does, we will be in God's Kingdom, we will reign with Christ.

What does this all mean? Does this mean that we will be like the angels of God—higher in essence than man, but lower in essence than God?

No, because Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 6: 3 that we will *rule over*, and judge, angels. So we will be higher than the angels. Further, angels won't be in the Kingdom of God, because they are not God. Rather, Hebrews 1:14 tells us that they are “ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.” (Authorized Version) They are beings created by God, but without the potential of becoming God. Lucifer, the cherub, wanted to become like the most High God, as we read in Isaiah 14:14, and actually tried to throw God

from His throne, but he was defeated, of course, and became Satan the devil.

No, the Bible is very clear that whoever is in the Kingdom of God must actually **be** God. We must become God beings, sharing in Christ's glory, the firstborn of many brethren. That is indeed a mystery that only very few understand today—that **God is a Family**, consisting presently of God the Father and the Son Jesus Christ, but that **God is enlarging His Family**. We are already called His children, but we have not been glorified yet. And when we are glorified at the time of our resurrection to eternal life, we will be entering the Kingdom of God, as literal God beings, as glorified sons and daughters of God, made immortal.

## Why Were Humans Created?

Have you ever wondered why God even created man? God the Father tells Jesus Christ in Genesis 1:26, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.”

God is a Family, and when He created man, He began His awesome work of adding to His Family. He wanted to bring children into His Family. Note how the NIV translates Hebrews 2:11: “Both the one who makes man holy [God] and those who are made holy [that's us] **are of the same family**”—that is, the Family of God.

Let's also read Ephesians 3:14-15: “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the **whole family in heaven** [a reference to God the Father and Jesus Christ] **and earth** [that refers to us] is

**named.**” (Authorized Version) The Family of God *IS* the Kingdom of God. We will be permitted to *enter* that Family, that Kingdom, if we endure and live worthy of our calling.

### THE AWESOME HUMAN POTENTIAL

That we are to become members of the God Family, or God beings, is clearly taught in scripture. Let's look at a few more proofs.

In Psalm 17:15, we read about man's potential: “As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied **when I awake in Your likeness.**” David understood that we will look like God when we are resurrected.

Also Phil. 3:20-21: “For our citizenship is in heaven... [Our names are

written in heaven, where God is. We belong to Him, we are His children. We belong to a different country, a heavenly government, which will come down to this earth when Christ returns.]...from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body **that it may be conformed to His glorious body.**" We already read that we shall bear the image of Christ, we will look like He does, in His glorified state.

But more than that—we will actually **BE GOD BEINGS.** We are told that it is our potential to be filled with the fullness of God. That is what it says in Eph. 3:19. Paul wants us "to be filled"—ultimately—"with all the fullness of God."

What does this mean? It means that we will be God beings, since we read in Col. 1:19 that "it pleased the Father that in Him [in Jesus Christ] all the fullness should dwell." That was after Christ was resurrected—He became God again, as before His human birth. And as in Christ all the fullness of God dwells, so in us also all the fullness of God will dwell—when we are resurrected.

We understand that Christ was God before His human existence, because John 1:1 says that in the beginning was the Word—the Logos, as it is called in Greek, meaning, the Spokesman. This Logos was none other than Jesus Christ, and this Word or Logos, according to John 1:1, was with God [God the Father], and **He was God.** But He gave up His divine nature and became a man—flesh and blood. Phil. 2:6-7 tells us that Jesus, "being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of

no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men." John 1:14 tells us that the Word, Jesus Christ, **became** flesh. He *had* to become human in order to overcome sin *in the flesh*, and in order to *die*. But after His resurrection, Christ **became** God again. He is called God in Titus 2:13, where we read that we are "looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our **great God and Savior Jesus Christ.**"

And as the Man Jesus Christ became God in the resurrection, so will we. Christ himself confirmed this human potential in John 10:31-36: "Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, 'Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?' The Jews answered Him, saying, 'For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because **You, being a Man, make Yourself God.**' Jesus answered them, '**Is it not written in your law, "I said, You are gods?" If He called them gods, to whom the Word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, You are blaspheming, because I said, I am the Son of God?"**'

What is Jesus Christ telling us here? That He, the Son of God who had become man, would be God again. But also, that it is **man's potential to become God beings** as well. Although stated in a present tense, Christ was mainly referring to the future, speaking about future things as if they already existed (cp. Romans 4:17). God created man so that man could become God—a member of the God Family.

## **GOD IS REPRODUCING HIMSELF**

Those of you who are familiar with us know that we have been preaching this truth for a long time. Herbert W. Armstrong, the late human leader of the Church of God in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, wrote a book entitled, “Mystery of the Ages.” On page 170, he wrote: “Consider why God created mankind in the first place. God is reproducing Himself through man. He is creating in Man God’s own perfect holy and righteous spiritual character. And that, in turn, is purposed to restore the government of God over all the earth. And further, to create BILLIONS OF GOD BEINGS ...”

This knowledge that it is man’s potential to become God has also been understood by several Christian authors over the centuries. In her book, “A History of God,” former Catholic nun Karen Armstrong [not related to Herbert Armstrong], quotes several early professing Christian writers who believed and taught this truth. She writes on page 98: “Clement [of Alexandria, ca. 150-215 A.D.] also believed that Jesus was God... If Christians imitated Christ, they too would become deified: divine, incorruptible and impassable. Indeed, Christ had been the divine logos, who had become man, ‘so that you might learn from a man how to become God.’”

She also quotes, on page 129, Maximus the Confessor, who lived from ca. 580-662, as saying, “The word was made flesh in order that ‘the whole human being would become God, deified by the grace of God become man.’”

Theophilus (A.D. 115-181) wrote: “A man, by keeping the directions of

God, may receive from Him immortality...and become God.”

The Trinitarian author Spiros Zodhiates writes regarding John 1:18 [“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son (God) who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”]: “The word (for only-begotten) *monogenees* actually is a compound of the word *monos* = ‘alone,’ and the word *genos* = ‘race, stock, family.’ Here we are told that He who came to reveal God—Jesus Christ—is of the same family, of the same stock, of the same race, as God. There is ample evidence in the scriptures that the Godhead *is* a Family.” (“Was Jesus God?”, page 21)

Further, the most recent Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church, which was published in 1994 under the auspices of Pope John Paul II, states that the official Catholic position is, that man is to become God. Now this might not be very well known even among Catholics, but here are some quotes from the Catechism:

“The Word became flesh to make us ‘partakers of the divine nature’: For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the word and thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God.’ ‘For the Son of God became man so that we might become God.’ ‘The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods.’” (pp. 128-129, Section 460. The last quote is attributed to Thomas of Aquinas.)

# An Important Job for All Eternity

When we become members of God's Family, we will be ruling this earth, as we have seen, for a thousand years, together with Christ who received His authority and power from God the Father.

But what after that? What is going to happen once the thousand years have expired? Our reign will never stop. Notice Revelation 22:4-5, which speaks about a time long after the 1000 years: "They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads [the name of God will be their name as well]...the Lord God gives them light. **And they shall reign forever and ever.**"

What will we do for all eternity? Over what will we reign, forever and ever? We have not been told everything yet, but one thing we do know: We will beautify our entire universe. Notice Romans 8:18-23: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility... in hope; because the creation itself [the entire universe] also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption

[better translated 'sonship'], the redemption of our body."

This passage indicates that once we are God beings and full members of the God Family, we will participate in the process of beautifying and finishing the creation of the presently unfinished universe. The universe is in decay—the planets are, from all that we can tell, waste and empty. But it is our human potential to become God and to free the universe from decay and corruption under the leadership of Jesus Christ.

God says that ultimately, He will make **all things new** (Rev. 21:5). And He tells us this, in Rev. 21:7: "He who overcomes **shall inherit all things**, and I will be his God and he shall be My Son."

You see, as Christ is the Son of God, so will we be sons and daughters of God. Of course, God the Father will always be greatest of all, and Christ will always be greater than we. But still—we will be God beings in the Family of God, literal children of our loving Father, and brothers and sisters of our elder brother Jesus Christ. What an awesome potential—what a destiny!

Now it's clear WHY Christ said that although John the Baptist was the greatest of all the prophets born of a woman, everyone in the Kingdom of God will be much greater than he was at the time he was human.

We must be humble  
and willing to take  
correction from God.

## HOW DO WE GET THERE?

What are some of the *requirements* to gain entrance into the Kingdom of God—to become a member of the God Family? We read Jesus' words in Luke 6:20: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God."

We must live within the law of God, doing what God tells us to do. When comparing this with the parallel passage in Matthew 5:3, we understand that it refers to those who are "poor in spirit," not necessarily those who are physically poor. Jesus did not mean those who have only a little bit of God's Spirit,

either. Rather, it means that we must be humble, willing to take correction and admonishment from God. If we have a humble attitude, as a little child, then we will be able to enter God's Kingdom.

If you *can see and understand* the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, then this is a fairly good indication that God has opened your mind. If so, then God expects you to respond, because God does not give understanding to someone for no reason. The response God expects from you is to live within the law of God, *doing* what God tells you to do. Remember, we are told in the Bible time and again, if we want to enter into life, we must *keep* Gods' commandments.

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## A VISION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Many have stumbled and come to wrong conclusions from some scriptures that seem to indicate that the Kingdom of God was already established on the earth during the lifetime of the early apostles. Let's read Christ's own words and understand what He meant in Luke 9:27: "But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death, until they see the Kingdom of God."

In the parallel account in Mark 9:1 it says that some of them would not die until they see "the Kingdom of God PRESENT WITH POWER." We know they all did die. So, people argue, the Kingdom of God must have already been established on this earth. But *is that* what Christ meant with His statement?

Let's read on in Luke 9:28: "Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. [Notice, He took some of the disciples to whom He had said that they would not die before they saw the Kingdom.] As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening [Christ appeared to these three disciples in a glorified state]. And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who ap-



peared in glory [they also appeared in a glorified state, just as Christ did] and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him.”

The disciples saw the Kingdom of God, just as Christ had said. They saw the three men glorified, as God beings, so they saw the POWER of that Kingdom. But how did they see it? And if the Kingdom was established at that time, did it continue? No, the two men disappeared, and Christ’s glory disappeared as well. So what had happened?

Let’s look at Matthew 17:2: When Christ was on the mountain with those three disciples, He “was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.” But Matthew adds an important piece of information in Verse 9: “Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, ‘Tell the **vision** to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.’”

The whole experience was a VISION! The disciples saw, in a VISION, the time when Christ and Moses and Elijah would be powerful God beings in the Kingdom of God. We know that in order to be in the Kingdom of God, one must be a glorified member of the God Family. And we also know that we will become glorified at the time of our resurrection, which will happen when Christ returns—not before. So the apostles were allowed to see, through a vision, the time when the Kingdom of God would be established on this earth, with power.

The Greek word translated here as “vision” is “horama.” The same word is used, for example, in Acts 9:12. There, the temporarily blinded Paul saw “in a vision” “a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.” So Paul saw something in a vision which would later actually occur. But it did not *actually occur* when he saw it.

Also, in Acts 10, we read that Peter “fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet” with all kinds of animals in it descending to him. Now that was a “vision,” too, as we read in verses 17 and 19, and the same Greek word is used. After those events, Peter had a real encounter with an angel, but at that time, he thought it was just a vision. We read in Acts 12:9 that Peter followed the angel out of prison, and he “did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.” This passage explains to us the difference between real events and events portrayed in a vision. And so, when Peter, James and John saw Jesus, Moses and Elijah in the Kingdom of God, they saw it in a vision. This was not really happening, but it portrayed what would happen in the future. Just as Christ had said, they saw the Kingdom of God BEFORE they died.

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# When Will the Kingdom Come?

Reading from the New King James Bible, Luke 17:20-21 states: “Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, ‘The Kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, See here! or, See there! For indeed, the Kingdom of God is within you.’”

## **IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD WITHIN US?**

Just what did Christ mean with the statement, “The Kingdom of God is within you?” Remember, He was speaking to the unbelieving, hypocritical, envious and self-righteous Pharisees. The answer to the question is that the phrase “the Kingdom of God is within you,” is wrongly translated. It should read, as the margin of the New King James Bible points out: The Kingdom of God is “in your midst.”

The Revised English Bible, the New American Bible, and the New Jerusalem Bible all render this phrase with, “among you.” The Moffat Bible puts it this way, “The Reign of God is now in your midst.”

The Ryrie Study Bible has the following annotation to this verse: “It cannot mean, ‘within you,’ for the Kingdom certainly was unconnected with the Pharisees to whom Jesus was speaking.”

John the Baptist had already identified Jesus as the King of the Kingdom of God, who was among them, when he stated, in John 1:26: “I baptize with water, but there stands One AMONG YOU whom you do

not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.”

Jesus, the future King of the Kingdom of God, was standing among them in person. But He was not glorified yet. The Kingdom was not established yet on the earth. Christ Himself had asked His disciples to pray, in Luke 11:2, “Your Kingdom COME.” We still pray that prayer today. The Kingdom has not come YET—we are still waiting for it!

But what did Christ mean with the phrase in Luke 17:20, “The Kingdom of God does not come with observation”? Does this mean that we cannot SEE the Kingdom of God? Remember, the Kingdom of God is the Family of God ruling over creation.

If we can't see the Kingdom of God, or the two present members of that Family, how do we explain passages like Rev. 1:7? Here we read about the return of Jesus Christ, bringing to the earth the government or rulership of the Kingdom of God. It says: “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and *every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him.*”

Jesus Christ Himself describes His return in Matthew 24:30: “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes [nations] of the earth will mourn, and *they will SEE the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*”

Also, notice Luke 17: 24: “For as the lightning that flashes out of one

part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day.”

So here people will SEE the returning Jesus Christ, the ruling King of the Kingdom of God. But Christ said, the Kingdom does not come with observation, so that people could not say, Here it is, or there it is. What did He mean by that?

Also, consider John 3:3 where Christ told Nicodemus: “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, *he cannot see* the Kingdom of God.”

### **ARE WE BORN AGAIN NOW?**

Are we born again now? Some believe they are, but let’s read in John 3:6: “That which is born of the flesh *IS* flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit *IS* spirit.” We are still flesh and blood, not spirit, so we cannot see the Kingdom of God yet.

Christ goes on to explain what it will be like once we are born of the Spirit. John 3: 8: “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes [you cannot *see* the wind, although you can feel its impact or power]. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” So Christ is saying here that unless you are Spirit, you cannot *see* the Kingdom of God.

But then we read in Luke 13:28: “There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you *see* Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets *in* the Kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.”

Also, we read that the rich man in Luke 16:19, who is waking up in the

grave to be thrown into the lake of fire, *sees* Lazarus and Abraham “afar off.” (Verse 23). We understand that by that time Lazarus and Abraham will be in the Kingdom of God, but that the rich man is not, and will never be. Rather, he has committed the unpardonable sin and will be destroyed in Gehenna fire. So there are people, then, still flesh and blood, who will see the Kingdom of God.

So what does this all mean? How do we harmonize all these seemingly different and contradictory statements? Let’s go through them again, but now much more carefully:

Let’s start again with John 3:3: Unless we are born again, we **CAN’T** SEE the Kingdom of God. If we are born again, we are born of the Spirit—we will **BE** spirit. As a matter of fact, we will be God beings. And when we are spirit beings and full fledged members of the God Family, we can SEE the Kingdom of God in its power—we **CAN** see the other members of the God Family—we **CAN** see God the Father, Jesus Christ, and other Christians made immortal.

The word for “see” here is the Greek word, “eidon.” It is the same word as used in Luke 9:27, where Christ said that some of the disciples would SEE the Kingdom of God in power and glory, before they died. And they **DID** see it—but in a vision, as you recall. They were still flesh and blood, but they **SAW** the glorified Christ. They could only do that **IN A VISION**.

We **DO** read that Moses **SAW** the form of the Lord in His glorified state—but he was only allowed to see

God's back. Read it in Numbers 12:8: "I speak with him face to face [but not in His glorified state], even plainly and not in dark sayings, and he SEES the form of the Lord." Now read Ex. 33: 18-23: "And he said, 'Please, show me Your glory....' (20) But He said, You cannot see My face [in its glorified state]; for no MAN shall see Me and live.... (22) So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen!"

The Greek word "eidon" used in John 3:3 and Luke 9:27, is usually and accurately translated as "see." It is used in many passages throughout the Bible and has this meaning. For instance, we read in Matthew 4: 18 that Jesus SAW two brothers, Simon and Andrew, casting a net in the sea. Afterwards, He SAW two other brothers, James and John (v. 21).

On the other hand, we have read that those outside the Kingdom of God will SEE those inside the Kingdom of God. But how can that be, if flesh and blood cannot see the Kingdom of God?

For instance, we read in Rev. 1:7, that those who mourn over Christ's return will SEE Him. Now, those people who are mourning that Christ comes back won't be in the Kingdom—at least not at that time. But it says that they SEE Him. We also read, in Matthew 24:30, that all the tribes of the earth will mourn, when they SEE Christ return. Again, the tribes won't be in the Kingdom of God, but they still see Him, the King of the

Kingdom. And remember, Christ comes back in glory.

Also, we read in Luke 13:28 that those who weep because they have not been allowed to enter the Kingdom, SEE Abraham and others in the Kingdom. And finally, we read in Luke 16:23 that the rich man who is in torment because of his impending death, SEES Abraham afar off.

It is interesting that in **all those passages**, except in the ones in John 3:3 and Luke 9:27, the Greek word, translated "see," is NOT "eidon," but "horao." This word "horao" CAN have, and many times does have, the meaning of seeing in a literal sense. For instance, we read in Matthew 5:8 that the pure in spirit will SEE God. The Greek word is "horao" and has the literal meaning.

Also, we read in 1 John 3:2 that we, when we are glorified, will SEE the returning Christ AS HE IS. The Greek word here is "horao" as well. This passage is interesting, as it implies that others who are not glorified, who are not in the Kingdom, will see Christ, too, but NOT AS HE IS.

That explains HOW the world will SEE the returning Christ. They will see Him, even in glory, but not to the degree of glory that would kill them immediately. We [those who are resurrected at His return] will SEE Him *as He is*, but the world will not see Him in His fullest glory.

In addition—this Greek word "horao" can ALSO have a figurative meaning. That is, it can also mean, "acknowledge, understand, comprehend, experience, discern, take heed behold, perceive."

Consider the following examples.

John 8:38: “I speak what I have SEEN with My Father, and you do what you have SEEN with your father.” In both cases, the word is “horao.” The first time, the term describes, or at least includes, the literal act of seeing, but the second time, it can only describe a figurative way of seeing, as the father referred to here is Satan the devil—no human has actually seen the devil, a spirit being. And Satan *cannot* manifest himself, although he can possess men or even animals.

1 Thess. 5:15: “SEE that no one renders evil for evil to anyone.”

3 John 11: “He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not SEEN God.”

So the people of this world and the rich man who SEE Abraham in the Kingdom, see him in the sense that they recognize and discern and understand the fact that he is in the Kingdom, while they are not.

## **KINGDOM OF GOD DOES NOT COME WITH OBSERVATION**

Now, let’s go back to Christ’s statement in Luke 17:20 that “the Kingdom of God does not come with observation.” What did He mean by that?

The Greek word, translated here as “observation,” is “parateresis” and shows up only this one time in the entire New Testament. The “para” in “parateresis” means, “intensive” or “intense.” “Teresis” is a noun. But the verb “tereo,” which is derived from the noun “teresis,” appears 75 times in the New Testament.

In most cases, it has the meaning of “to keep,” such as, to keep the

commandments (Matthew 19:17), or to keep or observe God’s word (John 15:20), or to keep good wine, in the sense of holding it back (John 2:10). It can have the meaning of “preserve,” as in John 17:11, or of “protect,” as in John 17:15. It is rendered “reserved” in I Peter 1:4, and it can have the meaning of keeping a prisoner under guard, as, for instance, in Matthew 27:36 and in numerous other places.

When this word “tereo” is combined with the word “para,” the meaning of which was “intensive” or “intensely,” the verb “para - tereso” would mean then, that something is kept intensely, in the sense that it is either observed intensely, or guarded or protected or held back in an intense fashion, depending upon the context.

The verb “paratereso,” which is derived from the noun “parateresis,” which is used in Luke 17:20 and rendered there as “observation,” appears six times in the New Testament:

Mark 3:2: “So they watched Him closely...so that they might accuse Him.”

Luke 6:7: They “...watched Him closely..., that they might find an accusation against Him...”

Luke 14:1: “He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, ... they watched Him closely.”

Luke 20:20: “So they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, that they might seize on His words, in order to deliver Him to the power and the authority of the governor.”

Acts 9:24: “And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him.”

Gal. 4:10: “You observe [keep or watch closely or intensely, but in a negative way] days and months and seasons and years”—a reference to pagan holidays, NOT God’s Holy Days.

So we see that the Greek word “paratereo” is exclusively used in the New Testament in a negative way. It is used to convey an intense close watch on someone in order to trick him, accuse him or kill him. In Gal. 4:10, it is even associated with the superstitious keeping of pagan holidays.

Going back to Luke 17:20, which was translated in the Authorized Version as, “The Kingdom of God does not come with observations,” Christ is telling us that the *Kingdom of God does not come in a negative way*. Remember, it is the *good news* of the Kingdom of God that we are proclaim. One cannot watch or observe it closely in a negative, superstitious way and one cannot gain it by deceit or craftiness. One cannot get it either in such a way

that one wants to keep it under a guard, such as a prisoner. Remember, the Pharisees had attempted to “shut up the Kingdom of God against men.” They did not want to go in, but they would not allow others to go in either. (Matthew 23:13). It is for that reason that the Kingdom of God “would be taken away from” them and given to “a nation bearing the fruits of it”—the church of God (Matthew 21:43).

Christ was telling the Jews at His time that the Kingdom of God was already among them—but not in the way that it had been already established. They could not point at it and say, “Here it is.” Rather, Jesus Christ was standing among them in person. He was the representative of the Kingdom. He was the future King of the Kingdom, and the Savior through whom we can have access to the Kingdom. But it would not come for those who were looking for it in a negative way. Those who like to find fault with it, or try to gain it by trickery or fraud, or to keep it under guard, preventing others from entering it, would *not* gain access to it.

## The Kingdom of God Has Come Upon You

In Luke 10:8-11, we read that the disciples were to preach that the “Kingdom of God has come near to” those who would be receptive to the message of the Kingdom of God. It was not established yet, but it was near to them who were willing to listen.

But, what about Luke 11:20, where Christ says that “the Kingdom of God has come upon” you? He was

casting out demons by the power of God when He made that statement. The thought expressed here is the same expressed in Luke 17:20—the passage we just covered, where Christ said that the Kingdom was among the people. Christ, the future King, had been given the power from God to cast out demons. Many times, the Bible uses the word *king* and *kingdom* interchangeably.

In the book of Daniel, for example, we read about an image, symbolizing four world-ruling kingdoms. But the first kingdom, that of Babylon, is simply equated with the king over that kingdom, Nebuchadnezzar. We read in Dan. 2:37-38: "You, O king, are a king of kings. You are this head of gold." But it goes on to say, in verse 39: "But after you shall arise another kingdom..."

The same principle applies in what we just read in Luke 11. Jesus Christ, the King of the Kingdom, had come to them, He was standing among them, and He healed people and cast out demons with the power of God. He gave them a glimpse of the power and the rulership and government of the Kingdom of God, once it was fully established in power here on earth.

## Count the Cost

Let's turn now to a passage in Luke 9, which tells us about the Kingdom of God and our relationship to it. Beginning in Verse 57: "Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, 'Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.' And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.'"

Christ is telling this man to count the cost. He is talking about inheriting the Kingdom of God as we will see in a moment, but He is saying in effect, 'Count the cost, because once you start, there is no turning back, even in spite of difficulties encountered.'

Continuing in verse 59: "Then he said to another, 'Follow Me.' But he said, 'Lord, let me first go and bury my father.' Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and *preach the Kingdom of God*.'" He was actually called into the ministry, and Christ was telling him that once he is in the ministry of Christ, nothing else is more important than

preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Continuing in verse 61: "And another also said, 'Lord I WILL FOLLOW YOU, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.' But Jesus said to him, 'No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.'"

We are not to look back, as Lot's wife did, once we have begun to look for, and work for, and live for, the inheritance of the Kingdom. That means, we are not to desire the things we left behind because of the Kingdom, like Israel desired the "good times" in Egypt, when they were facing trials in the wilderness. Christ admonishes us not to give up, but to continue in our mission to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world until He returns to establish the rulership of the Kingdom of God on this earth.

Again, He tells us in Luke 12:31: "But seek the Kingdom of God, and all these [material] things shall be

added to you.” The parallel passage in Matthew 6:33 is perhaps better known, where we read that we are to “seek FIRST the Kingdom of God AND His [God’s] righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

We read in Matthew 6:24: “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

We are admonished to set our priorities straight. We cannot serve God and think, that at the same time, we can serve something or someone else. If we serve mammon, then we become distraught and discouraged and start to worry when mammon does not come. But when we serve God, we are told that we need to cast

all our burdens on Him, and He will carry them for us. When we do that, we do not have to worry about tomorrow. And so we read in Matthew 6:25, “Therefore, I say to you, do not worry about your life...” When we really serve God, and nothing else besides God, then God will take care of us. He will open up possibilities to get a job, earn money and provide food and housing.

Back to Luke 12:29: “And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink [Don’t make the pursuit of material possessions your goal and fulfillment in life], nor have an anxious mind.” Verse 32: “Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you *the Kingdom*.” God WANTS us in His Family—His Kingdom.

## The Kingdom of God is a Growing Family

In Luke 13:18- 21, we are taught that the Kingdom of God begins small, but grows. Right now, the Kingdom of God, which is the Family of God, consists of God the Father and Jesus Christ. But the God Family is a growing Family. **God is adding to His Family. God is reproducing Himself.**

We who are called today, are already sons and daughters of the Family, but we are not glorified God beings yet. That will happen when Christ returns. Even so, God has only called very few today. And many of those who are called do not respond to the call. That is why we are called FIRSTfruits, and Jesus Christ is called the FIRST of the Firstfruits. The

designation of Firstfruits then, implies that there will be others who will be called later. This will happen in the millennium and during the Great White Throne Judgment period.

And so the God Family will grow, and the government of the Kingdom of God will grow too, that is, it will reach into the uttermost parts of the earth, and after that, into the entire universe. The rulership of Christ will start from the throne of David, which is here on earth—in Great Britain—and which will be located in Jerusalem when Christ has returned—and His rule will spread from there until it has covered the whole earth, as leaven starts small, until it has



leavened the entire loaf.

What God does, begins small. Many think Christ's mission was to save everyone at the time of His first coming, and that it is also the mission of the church today to convert as many as possible. This idea is totally false. Christ spoke to the multitudes in parables so that they could NOT understand. He would only tell the few—those He had called—what His parables meant. Likewise, God calls only very few today. Nobody can come to Christ unless the Father draws him or her.

### **ONLY ONE WAY TO ENTER GOD'S KINGDOM**

Let's note Luke 13:23-24: Christ is telling us that if WE are called to salvation, we must be serious about it. We must strive, put effort into it, to enter through the narrow gate into the Kingdom of God. When we read verses 28 -29, we see that the context is entering the Kingdom of God. So Christ is telling us that MANY will seek to enter it, but they will not be able to. This is a very serious warning. Christ is apparently talking about people who DID understand the truth about the Kingdom of God, and because they understood, they were anxious to inherit it and to enter it. But they would not be successful. Why?

The reason seems to be that they GAVE UP. They ceased obeying God and still thought they would be able to enter the Kingdom of God. They thought they could enter the Kingdom of God in another way, perhaps, NOT through the narrow gate. Read Luke 13:24 again! Christ said that it is IMPOSSIBLE to enter the Kingdom of God except through the NARROW gate. There is only ONE way to enter it.

Reading on in Luke 14: 16-24, we are warned again by Jesus Christ to not to have ANY priorities before that of seeking the Kingdom of God. Notice too, that what is being described here is occurring on earth, not in heaven.

Verses 21 and 23 describe people whose priorities are NOT the things of the world. They don't own land or oxen, and may not even be able to marry—not that it is wrong to have land or oxen or to want to get married. But it is wrong if that is becoming the most important priority in life—if it is more important than serving God and entering the Kingdom of God. This means we should not get married to someone whose foremost interest is not the Kingdom of God, as this will invariably create marriage problems and could even lead to a lack of zeal and dedication in the one who began well.

# “The Law and the Prophets were until John...”

Consider now this passage in Luke 16:16: “The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the Kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.” Until the prophet John came, only the Old Testament scriptures—the law and the prophets—were known. In Luke 24:44, the entire Old Testament is summarized as the “Law of Moses, and the Prophets, and the Psalms.” The Kingdom of God had already been preached in the Old Testament, but not with such magnitude and clarity as Christ came to preach. NOW was the real *possibility* to enter it—since Christ had already qualified as King of that Kingdom, so that He could, *with authority*, proclaim the Kingdom of God as a future certainty for mankind. NOW it had become NEAR.

And because of Christ’s preaching, many responded by trying to get into the Kingdom. But unless they were called, they would still not know HOW. Remember, Christ told us in Luke 13:24 that many would TRY to enter it, but would not be able to. Christ warned those of His time, as well as us today, that not everyone who would just say “Lord, Lord” to Christ, would enter the Kingdom of God, but only the person “who does the will of My Father in heaven.” (Matt. 7:21)

This same thought is expressed in Luke 16:16: Everyone wants to desperately enter the Kingdom of God. But what does Christ tell us in verse 17: “And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail.” In other words, if you want to enter into eternal life, *keep the commandments*. Only those who do the will of the Father, which is, to keep the commandments of God, will enter the Kingdom of God. And now Christ continues to give us an example of such a commandment to be kept, in verse 18: “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.”

“You shall not commit adultery” is one of the commandments that we are to keep. And divorcing someone for any other than Biblical reasons and then marrying again, is a violation of the law against adultery.

In order to enter the Kingdom of God, in order to be part of the Kingdom of God, we must *keep* God’s Law. It is the SAME Law, as we are told in Luke 16:16, that had already been preached up until the time of John the Baptist. It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for the Law to fail.

# We Must Be About Our Father's Business

As we saw earlier, when Jesus Christ came preaching the Kingdom of God, people thought that He would establish it right then. Note in Luke 19:11: "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.*"

Although He, the future King of the Kingdom, was among them, the establishment of the Kingdom of God here on this earth would come much later—at the time of His second coming. He gave a parable in Luke 19 to explain this. Remember, He spoke in parables so that the world would not understand, but so that His disciples would understand.

## **WE MUST BE FAITHFUL IN OUR DUTIES**

Luke 19:12: "Therefore He said: A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return." Christ is talking about Himself. He is the nobleman who went into a far country—the third heaven—to receive from God the Father the kingdom or government or rulership over this earth. We read about this already in the account of Daniel 7:13-14, where the Son of Man would appear in the clouds before the Ancient of Days to receive everlasting dominion and a kingdom that shall not be destroyed, so that all peoples and nations should serve Him.

And the angels confirmed this in Acts 1:11, when they told the disciples at the time when Christ

ascended to heaven: "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

Before Christ, the nobleman, departed for the far country, he instructed his servants to keep busy during his absence. We read in Luke 19:13: "So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas [a mina was worth about three month's salary], and said to them, 'Do business till I come.'"

What the master gave his servants was valuable. And they were to DO something with what they had received. They were not to sit back and do nothing. Over and over we read in the Bible that Christ expects action from His disciples. He tells us in Matthew 28:19-20 that we are to make disciples of all nations, "teaching them to observe ALL THINGS that I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." We already read in Mark 16 that we are to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

Also, He admonishes us in Matthew 24 to watch and to be ready when He, the Master, returns. Beginning in Verse 45: "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to *give them food in due season?* Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, **will find so doing.** Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him

ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, My master is delaying his coming, and begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and to drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant...will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites.”

Again, we see that Christ expects His servants to BE DOING something—but it has to be the RIGHT kind of work. In this parable, the head servant is charged with feeding his fellow servants healthy physical food while his master is gone. The analogy here is that of the ministry feeding the sheep healthy spiritual food until Christ returns. As Christ told Peter three times, “feed my sheep.”

In Acts 20:28, Paul admonishes the ministry: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost [Spirit] hath made you overseers, to FEED the church of God which he has purchased with his own blood.” (Authorized Version)

The apostle Peter stated the same in 1 Peter 5:1-2, Authorized Version: “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed THE FLOCK OF God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.”

Let’s go back to the parable again, to Luke 19:14: “But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.”

We see that the citizens, the Jews

at Christ’s time, did not want Christ to rule or govern over them. In fact, they said, “We have no king but Caesar.” Also, we read in John 1:11: “He came to His own [His own people], and His own did not receive Him.” This can also be applied to the Church today. How many do really want Christ to rule over their lives?

We see, too, that the citizens understood that the nobleman was to RULE as a king over them—but they did not like that. Again and again, we are told that **the Kingdom of God is God RULING over others**. Some will accept God’s rulership over their lives, and others will not. But in rejecting God’s rulership, they are in fact rejecting Christ’s sacrifice and are still living in sin.

Continue with verse 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.”

## **WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE WAY WE LIVE**

At that time, Christ will be sitting on the throne of David here on earth, to judge the nations. But before He does that, He will ask His servants, His disciples, you and me, to come forward to give an account. A very similar parable is given in Matthew 25. The only difference is that each servant received from the outset a different amount of money. The first one would get five talents, the second one two talents, and the third one one talent, “according to his own ability.” A talent was worth 6,000

denarii. One denarius was the day's wage for a worker. When the master of the servants comes back, this is what he does, according to Matthew 25:19: "After a long time the lord of those servants came and **settled accounts** with them."

What we read here is about giving an account to Christ for what we did, or what we did not do, with what He gave us. Notice the following passages in this regard:

Romans 14:10-12: "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ...So then each of us shall give account of himself to God."

2 Cor. 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

Heb. 4:13: "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."

Matthew 12:36-37: "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

All of these passages speak about an accounting in the future, when we appear before the judgment seat of Christ AFTER His return. It is true, of course, as 1 Peter 4:17 points out, that the time has already come for judgment to BEGIN at the house of God. We are being judged today on how we live. Nevertheless, we still have to give account at the time of

Christ's return. And there is a reason for that, as we will see in a moment.

Continuing then with the parable in Luke 19, verse 16: "Then came the first [servant], saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.'" This servant had done something with what he received from his master. This servant participated in preaching the precious truth of the Kingdom of God that he had received. He did it either directly, or indirectly through prayer, encouragement, financial support, or simply by living the way Christ told him to live, setting a right example to others, as a light shining in a dark room. He brought forth fruit with the seed he had received.

And let's notice Christ's answer, in Verse 17: "And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.'"

Christ is using here symbolic language. He points out that the servant did bring fruit, that he grew, spiritually speaking. He was able to overcome his weaknesses, at least to a large degree. He served Christ well. He was faithful even in little things. He was willing to let Christ work through him, as a potter would shape clay into something useful.

Remember what Christ told us in Rev. 2: 26: "And he who overcomes and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—He shall rule them with a rod of iron."

Since the servant *overcame*, he was *rewarded* with a certain *rulership position in the Kingdom of God*.

There is a great deal of confusion in the Christian world today about

God's gifts and His rewards. There is clearly a distinction, and it is important that this distinction is understood. God gives us eternal life in His Family as a *gift*. We cannot do anything to earn it. Notice it in Luke 22:29: "And I bestow upon you a Kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me."

## **GIFTS AND REWARDS**

The Kingdom of God is the Family of God ruling over all creation. So we will become part of that Family of God by a **GIFT**. God **GIVES** to us the enormous privilege to become a God being within His Family. God *gives* us everything we need to make it into the Kingdom (1 Corinthians 1:4-8).

But God will **NOT** give the gift of membership in His Family to anyone who **disqualifies** him- or herself from that gift, by showing God through the way he or she lives that he or she does not really want what God is offering. Our lifestyle must reflect the fact that we really **WANT** to inherit eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

And if we received more from God than others, then more is required of us. That is why we read in 2 Thess. 1: 4-7: "we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, 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, since it is a righteous thing with God to... **GIVE YOU** who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels."

Also, we are told in Luke 20:35-36, we will be, in the resurrection,

**SONS OF GOD**, if we "have been **counted WORTHY** to attain that age, **AND** the resurrection from the dead."

So, our lifestyle will determine whether God is going to **GIVE US** the gift of eternal life and membership in His Family—in the Kingdom of God. We can't earn it—but we **CAN** live unworthily and thereby become disqualified. (Cp. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:5).

When it comes to what exactly we will be doing in the Kingdom of God, **HOW** and **TO WHAT EXTENT** we will rule, that is very much dependent on how we live today. Our **reward**—that is, *the extent of our rulership positions in the Kingdom of God*—is *dependent on how much fruit we produce today*.

Notice in Rev. 22: 12: "And behold, I am coming quickly and My **REWARD** is with Me, to give to every one **ACCORDING TO HIS WORK**."

1 Cor. 3: 8: "Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own **REWARD** according to **HIS OWN LABOR**."

Luke 14:13-14: "But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be **REPAID AT THE RESURRECTION OF THE JUST**."

Luke 6: 22-23, 35: "Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed **YOUR REWARD IS GREAT IN HEAVEN**, for in like manner their fathers did to

the prophets...But, love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return [this does not mean, you lend without hoping to get the money back; it means, when you lend, you don't do it with the motivation that now you deserve to really get something great back in return]; and your REWARD WILL BE GREAT, AND you will be sons of the Most High."

2 John 8: "Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive A FULL REWARD."

Our reward has to do with rulership. To the extent that we learn in this life to be ruled by God, we will be allowed to rule over others. We need to stay humble (Matthew 5:3). If we allow God to rule over us, we will develop the love of God in our lives, and only with that love in us can we be permitted to rule over others so that we won't abuse the authority He gives us.

The servant who beats his fellow servants will not be given authority in the Kingdom of God. He has never learned how to use authority the right way. So God won't give him authority in the World Tomorrow, so he cannot abuse his subjects on a greater scale. Those who are called into the ministry today and are given authority over God's sheep have a great responsibility. They are being judged by God as to how they are doing. And if they are abusive, and if they refuse to feed the sheep proper and healthy food, and if they refuse to use the responsibilities given to preach the gospel in all the word as a witness, then, as we have read, Christ will come back at a time that servant will not expect, and cut him to pieces. It

is THAT serious.

In the parable in Matthew 25, the servant who received five talents was able to double what he had received. And this is what the master tells his servant (Matthew 25: 21): "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord." This is virtually the same response as the one given to the second servant in Luke's parable who had gained ten minas.

Let's return to Luke 19:18: "And the second [servant] came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.'" So this servant was successful, too. He did not sit idle all day. He let God change his life, too. But he was not as diligent and as persistent as the first servant, who had gained ten minas. But still—he DID overcome to an extent. So let's see Christ's response, in Verse 19: "Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.'"

Not quite the same enthusiastic response as the first servant received. We don't read here that Christ said, "Well done, good servant." BUT, He grants him authority over five cities. NOT over ten. Not AS MUCH authority as to the first servant. But he had overcome enough to be granted authority over five.

Compare this with Matthew 13:8, where seed falls on good ground. But even then, the seed does not yield the same crop in each case. It says that some yielded hundredfold, some yielded sixty, and some only thirty. Christ admonishes us in the next verse to think about that. To hear, if we have ears to hear. Our reward

then, is the extent of our rulership positions in the Kingdom of God over this earth, which is dependent on how much we overcome, and how much fruit we produce, in this life.

What is being described in the parable of Luke 19 is our appearance as spirit beings before the throne of Christ here on earth, after His return. When we appear before Him, we will be God beings, since the resurrection or our change took place. NOW it will be announced what REWARD of rulership positions we will receive. The first two servants in both parables, who will appear before Christ as glorified God beings and full members within the Family of God, will receive a reward.

Going back to the similar parable in Matthew 25, we see somewhat of a

distinction there. The second servant in Matthew 25:22-23 traded in or gained only two additional talents. But remember, HE had only gotten two talents to begin with. So he traded in or overcame as much as the first servant, who had added five talents, but he had received five talents at the start. Therefore, Christ's reward for the second servant in that parable is the same as the reward for the first servant. Both had overcome the same—*according to their abilities*. And so Christ's words to the second servant are exactly the same as His words to the first servant. Christ could have given the second servant more talents, but He did not. Christ knows what we can handle individually. We really have no excuse for not *using* what God is giving us.

## No Eternal Life for the Wicked

But let's go now to the third servant in BOTH parables. This servant won't get ANY reward. Let's see why, in Luke 19: 20-21: "Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. For I feared you, because you are an austere [a severe] man. You collect what you do not deposit, and reap what you do not sow.'"

This servant had not done any business with what he had received from his Master. He was not trying to overcome sin nor his bad habits. He showed through his conduct that he was not willing to have God change

him. He did not want to be clay that could be formed in the hand of the potter. And since he showed that he was not willing to let God rule over him, Christ was not willing to give him responsibility to rule over others.

### **WRONG CONCEPT OF GOD**

This servant had a wrong concept of God. He FEARED Him, because he thought that God was a severe man. God does not want us to sin, and if we do, He will punish us, but He does so in love, for our good. We need to fear God in the sense that we must respect Him, but not fearing Him in the sense that the servant did.



This servant did not have the *love of God* in him; otherwise, he would not have feared God in the way that he did. Remember what we read in 1 John 4:18: “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear.” But this servant apparently feared that whatever he would do, he could not satisfy his master anyhow. So he decided to do nothing.

This servant also had a wrong concept of what was required of him. Christ HAD told all of them to do business with what He had given them, but the servant refused to do so. He thought perhaps, in spite of what the Master told him, as long as he didn’t lose the mina, his Master would still be pleased, and that he could still be in His Kingdom and rule over others. He was afraid to use his mina, perhaps thinking that he may lose it if he were to use it in business. So rather than being obedient to God’s command, he thought that he could go about it in a different way.

In the similar parable in Matthew 25, we read that the servant said that he was AFRAID, and so he hid the talent in the ground (Matthew 25: 25).

We are clearly told that if we are afraid, timid, fearful, or without courage, we will NOT inherit the Kingdom of God. We will NOT receive any rulership positions, either. The following scriptures confirm this:

Rev. 21:8: “But the cowardly, unbelieving...and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

Luke 9:26: “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when

He comes in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels.” And WHY would anybody be ashamed of Christ and His words?

The previous verses tell us, beginning in verse 23: “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily [by enduring trials and persecution and ridicule], and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life, will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed and lost?”

And then Christ goes on to talk about those who are ashamed of Him. But the context is, trying to gain acceptance from people, trying to fit in, trying to be politically correct, even if that means, NOT saying certain things that Christ says must be said. The reason? FEAR! Fear that we might offend. Fear that we might be persecuted. FEAR that people might not like us anymore. BUT—Christ says that if we are fearful and ashamed of Him, He will be ashamed of us and reject us. And that’s what He did with the third servant in Luke 19.

Let’s read Luke 19, beginning in verse 22: “And he said to him, ‘Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant [we read earlier that we will be judged and condemned out of our own mouth]. You knew [that is what this man thought about God] that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?’”

This does not mean that Christ

really is that way. But Christ is saying: If YOU THOUGHT about me that way, then why did you not ACT accordingly—if not out of love for me, then at least because you should have been afraid of Me. But you, Christ said, did not do ANYTHING. That's not even logical. The point being that the servant makes excuses here for not having overcome. In the parable in Matthew 25, Christ calls him not only “a wicked servant,” but, “a wicked AND LAZY servant.” (verse 26). But now we see how Christ reacts when we are UNWILLING to overcome and to DO what God wants us to do, and then make excuses for our failure:

Luke 19, Verses 24-26: “And he said to those who stood by [perhaps the angels, perhaps some of us having been made immortal], ‘Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.’ (But they said to him, ‘Master, he has ten minas.’) For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has [or what he thinks he has] will be taken away from him.”

Christ gave the servant with the ten minas [the one who had overcome the most] another mina, that is, a rulership position over an additional city. He knew what that servant would be able to handle. He had proven this to God in this life.

The worthless servant did not receive ANY rulership position. In fact, he did not even receive eternal

life. He did not enter the Kingdom of God. He did NOT appear in front of God as a glorified being, but as a human being who had not died, but who was still alive at the time of Christ's return.

The parable in Matthew 25 ends this way, in verse 30: “And cast the unprofitable servant [the one who had received one talent and hid it in the ground] into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

He won't rule in the Kingdom of God. He won't even be there! If he thought that the one mina or the one talent gave him a guarantee to be in the Kingdom of God, without having to do anything with it, then he was now terribly disappointed. Whatever God gives us must be put to proper use.

Let's see now, how the parable in Luke ends. Luke 19: 27: “But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me.” Neither the unprofitable servant, nor the enemies of Christ will be in the Kingdom of God. Neither one was willing to accept God's rule over their lives—to do what God told them to do.

We must be different! These are stern warnings for us. We must be about our Father's business, so that we will hear the words of our Master, Jesus Christ, at the time of His return: “Well done, good and faithful servant, you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord.”

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