



# The Kingdom of God in the New Testament: A Panoramic View

by Ron Kangas

**B**ecause the kingdom of God is the kingdom of *God*, we may say without exaggeration that, in a very real sense, the kingdom matches and is coextensive with God Himself. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the New Testament is a book concerned with the kingdom of God; the entire New Testament is on the kingdom (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; John 3:3, 5; Rev. 11:15; 12:10). Sadly, concerning the kingdom of God, there is widespread disagreement among Christian believers, and the disputes over various theological assertions regarding this subject are endless and often acrimonious. Some argue that the kingdom has been suspended during the present age of the church; others aver that to be in the church is to be in the kingdom. Many are waiting for the Lord Jesus to return and to set up His glorious kingdom on earth to inaugurate His millennial reign; others insist that there will not be a kingdom age in the future but that the present age will be followed by eternity. In writing this essay, it certainly is not my intention to enter into or contribute to this ongoing doctrinal argument. Rather, realizing that few readers will affirm the accuracy of everything that I will present, I hope, primarily as a testimony, to set forth what I have seen in the Word and thus what I believe to be true. My goal is modest. I seek not to convince or persuade but simply to inform for the purpose of clarity and understanding. Thus, I will be exercised to write with a pleasant and irenic spirit, hoping that the panoramic view of the kingdom of God delineated here will provide an opportunity for some to consider, or even reconsider, their ideas, concepts, and understanding of the kingdom of God. We will begin, as the Bible itself does, with God and conclude with the New Jerusalem, attempting to sketch at least a general outline of revelation concerning the kingdom of God in the New Testament.

## A Realm Where God Rules and Where His Will Is Carried Out for His Glory

It may be helpful to begin with a generic definition of

*kingdom*. A kingdom is a sphere, or a realm, where a person accomplishes something. For one to have a kingdom means that there is a realm, a sphere, where this one can work to reach a particular goal or carry out a certain plan. Thus, a kingdom is a realm where a person does whatever he or she wants to do. The principle is the same with God and His kingdom. The kingdom of God is a sphere, a realm, for God to work out His eternal purpose and to accomplish His goal. With this basic thought in mind, we may now consider this subject more specifically and in greater detail.

**T**he kingdom of God is God's reign by power and authority over the entire universe. In this sense, the kingdom of God is a vast realm—the whole universe—where God employs His power and authority to do whatever He desires. More specifically, the kingdom of God as the ruling, the government of God (Acts 26:18), is a realm where the will of God is carried out for the glory of God. The kingdom of God is a realm where God works out His plan, a realm where God exercises His authority to accomplish His intention (Matt. 6:10). Here in this realm God can exercise His authority for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose. If there were no kingdom, God would not have a realm in which to exercise His authority, and thus He would not have a sphere in which He could accomplish His purpose.

In order to carry out His eternal purpose by operating without hindrance to fulfill the desire of His heart, God must have a kingdom over which He can rule with power and authority. Hence, the kingdom of God is the reign of God, the rule of God, the sphere wherein God exercises His governmental authority. The fact that the kingdom of God is the reign of God is unveiled clearly in Revelation 11:15: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever." For God to have a kingdom is for Him

to have dominion: “Your kingdom is an eternal kingdom, / And Your dominion is throughout all generations” (Psa. 145:13). As indicated by this verse, *Your kingdom* is the equivalent of *Your dominion*. After a time of discipline under the sovereign hand of God, Nebuchadnezzar could eventually testify of the reigning God:

His dominion is an eternal dominion, / And His kingdom is from generation to generation; / And all the inhabitants of earth are considered as nothing, / But He does according to His will in the army of heaven / And among the inhabitants of the earth; / And there is no one who can resist His hand / Or say to Him, What are You doing? (Dan. 4:34-35)

As God’s reign in a general way by power and authority, the kingdom of God is God’s reign over the universe and over everything and everyone in it. This means that God rules the heavens, the earth, all created things, all human beings, and all the nations and peoples of humankind. As thus defined, the kingdom of God, as the universal reign of God, is coextensive with God’s existence. God’s exist-

intent, cannot be done. Presently, there is widespread rebellion against God’s will, as opposing wills—that of Satan and fallen humankind—are set defiantly against the divine will. In His kingdom, by contrast, the inhabitants not only submit to and obey God’s will but even become one with His will, longing for it to be carried out on earth. All things were created for God’s will (Rev. 4:11), the great will revealed in Ephesians, but unless God has a realm in which He can rule and act freely, it will not be possible for His will to be worked out on earth as it is in heaven.

God’s glory goes with His kingdom and is expressed in the realm of His kingdom (1 Thes. 2:12; Psa. 145:11-13). Glory is the expression of God, God expressed in splendor. Where the kingdom of God is, there the glory of God is also, for the kingdom is the realm in which God exercises His power so that He may express His glory and be expressed, manifested, as the God of glory (Rev. 5:10, 13). First Thessalonians 2:12 indicates that we enter into the kingdom of God and the glory of God simultaneously. Viewed from the perspective of God’s glory, the kingdom of God is God’s manifestation in His glory with His authority for His divine, governmental administration. Hence, entering into the kingdom of God and entering into the expressed glory of God take place at the same time as one thing (Heb. 2:10; Matt. 5:20; Rev. 21:9-11; 22:1-5).

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tence is from eternity to eternity, without beginning or ending, and God’s kingdom is likewise from eternity to eternity, without beginning or ending (Heb. 1:8; Dan. 4:3).

The Bible emphasizes the fact that, although God rules over the universe as His kingdom, He has a particular interest in the earth and desires to bring His kingdom from heaven to the earth. God’s intention is to have the earth controlled by heaven, and for this reason He needs to bring His kingdom to the earth. The whole earth must, and eventually will, be brought under God’s rule and government. As we will see, the Lord Jesus came to cause the earth to be subdued under God’s rule in His kingdom, and it was with this in mind that He charged His disciples to seek the kingdom of God and to pray for the coming of the kingdom (Matt. 6:33, 10).

The kingdom of God involves both the will of God and the glory of God. “Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth” (v. 10). Apart from the kingdom, God’s will, His desire and determined

### The Kingdom of God as a Realm of the Divine Life

The kingdom of God is not only God’s reign in a general way over the universe by His power and authority but also God’s reign in a particular, organic way in the sense of life in the kingdom as a realm of the divine life (Psa. 103:19; 1 Chron. 29:11; John 3:3, 5). As God’s reign in the sense of life, the kingdom of God is God’s reign by Himself as life over those, in those, among those, and through those who have been born of God in spirit to receive the divine, eternal life (vv. 6, 15-16) and thereby to enter and live in the kingdom of God as the realm of the divine life. This way of God’s reigning—His rule in and by the divine life—is not outward but inward, not objective but subjective, and not by the exercise of power but by the consciousness of His life within His children, who truly possess His life and nature.

Actually, every kingdom involves a certain kind of life. Plants in the plant kingdom have the plant life, animals in the animal kingdom have the animal life, and human beings in the human kingdom have the human life. The

plant, animal, and human kingdoms are, respectively, the totality of the life of that kingdom with all its activities. In the same principle, those who have been born of God to be in the kingdom of God have the life of God and thereby live in the kingdom of God as the totality of the divine life with all its activities. It should be obvious, therefore, that if we would enter into the kingdom of God as the realm of the divine life, we must have the divine life—the eternal, uncreated, indestructible life of God. To be under the reign of God in the divine life requires that we be reborn, regenerated, born of God, to have the uncreated divine life. Then we can be ruled not only by God’s power and authority outwardly but also by God’s life inwardly, for we are now in the kingdom of God as the realm of the divine life.

**T**he kingdom of God in the sense of life and as a realm of the divine life is actually God Himself. God is a God of life, and with Him is the fountain of life (Psa. 36:9); He is the fountain of living waters (Jer. 2:13). Because God is the fountain of life, life is the content of God. The Father has life in Himself (John 5:26); this reveals that life is the content of God the Father. The Father, whose content is life, “gave to the Son to also have life in Himself” (v. 26), and now the Son, who is the embodiment of the Father, has life as His content. Moreover, the Spirit is called the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2), indicating that the content of the Spirit is life. From this we see that the Triune God is a God of life and that the content of the Triune God is life. It is God’s intention, based upon the redemption accomplished by Christ the Son, that life as the content of His being would become the content of our being and that, in Christ, we would become beings of life filled with eternal life (1 John 5:11-12; Rom. 8:6, 10-11). The more we are filled with the life of God and live by this life, the more the kingdom of God will become a realm of life in which we are ruled in life by the God of life.

In the sense of life and as the realm of the divine life, the kingdom of God is actually God Himself. A kingdom is a matter of life. The plant kingdom is the totality of the plant life, the animal kingdom is the totality of the animal life, the human kingdom is the totality of the human life, and the divine kingdom—the kingdom of God—is the totality of the divine life. Only God Himself has the life of God, and thus (initially, that is, prior to our regeneration) only God is in the kingdom of God in the sense of life and as a realm of life. This means that before God in Christ made eternal life available to those who believe

into the Son (John 3:15-16), the divine life was in God, not in anyone else. For this reason, the kingdom of God as a realm of the life of God was limited to God alone. If we have this view, we will realize that in the sense of life and as a realm of life, the kingdom of God is actually the Triune God.

**B**ecause the kingdom of God is God Himself, God’s kingdom has God as its content; God in Christ as the Spirit is everything as the content of His kingdom (1 Cor. 4:20; 15:28). As we have seen, the content of God is life, and God Himself is life, having the nature and ability of the divine life, which functions according to the law of the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2). Once this life enters into us in Christ, it forms the organic realm of God’s ruling among His children, who have His life by virtue of their divine birth (John 1:12-13). As a result, in the sense of life, God’s ruling over His children, the believers in Christ, is not an outward matter of power but an inward matter of the innate ability of the divine life. Our Father reigns over us in life and by life in His kingdom as a realm of life. Those believers in Christ who

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live in the kingdom of God as a realm of life have God in Christ as their life (Col. 3:4); God in Christ lives in them, through them, and out of them, and thus they express God (Phil. 1:21).

### **The Kingdom of God Being Christ, the Son of God, in His Person and Ministry**

As revealed in the New Testament, the kingdom of God is inextricably related to the person and ministry of Christ, the Son of God. Concerning this, the Gospel of Luke is especially rich in revelation, showing that Christ is both the King and the kingdom. At the time of His conception, the angel Gabriel said to His mother Mary, “The Lord God will give to Him the throne of David His father, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end” (1:32-33). Here we see that the Lord Jesus will have the house of Jacob—the nation of Israel—as the center of His reign, through which He will rule over the entire world, initially in the millennium and ultimately in the new heaven and new earth for eternity. Furthermore, Christ, who is intimately

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related to David, being called the son of David (Matt. 1:1), in fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 16:5 and 24:23, will reign as King in the coming age during the restoration of Israel (Acts 15:16).

In His ministry on earth, the Lord Jesus announced the gospel of the kingdom, taught regarding the kingdom, and sent forth His disciples to proclaim the kingdom. “I must announce the gospel of the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this I was sent” (Luke 4:43). He “journeyed from city to city and village to village, preaching and announcing the gospel of the kingdom of God” (8:1). When crowds found out about Him and followed Him, “He welcomed them and spoke to them concerning the kingdom of God” (9:11). In His teaching about the kingdom, He said, “Blessed are the poor, for yours is the kingdom of God” (6:20). He encouraged His disciples by telling them, “To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God” (8:10). He then “sent them to proclaim the kingdom of God,” charging them to “announce the kingdom of God everywhere” (9:2, 60). For the Lord Jesus, the kingdom of God demands absoluteness: “No one who puts his hand on the plow and looks behind is fit for the kingdom of God” (v. 62).

The teaching of the Lord Jesus as presented in the Gospel of Luke indicates that the kingdom of God is not only a present reality but also a future enjoyment. Regarding the enjoyment of the kingdom in the future, He said,

There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth there when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you being cast outside. And they will come from the east and the west, and from the north and the south, and will recline at table in the kingdom of God. (13:28-29)

This wondrous enjoyment will occur in the coming age, the age of the kingdom, after the Lord comes back to the earth with the kingdom (19:11-27).

**T**he kingdom of God, whether present or future, is related not only to the Lord’s ministry—what He does—but even more to the Lord’s person—who and what He is—for He is both the King in the kingdom of God and the kingdom of God itself. This is a crucial revelation, disclosing that the kingdom of God is not simply a realm but a person.

When He was questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, Behold, here it is! or, There! For behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you. (17:20-21)

This reveals that the kingdom of God is not material but spiritual, because it is the Savior Himself both in His first coming and in His second coming (vv. 23-30). The kingdom is primarily a person, not a future event. Wherever the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, is, there the kingdom of God is. The kingdom of God is with Him, and He brought the kingdom to His disciples. In His incarnation the Lord as the kingdom of God was in the midst of people in an outward way; now in His resurrection He, the pneumatic Christ, as the kingdom of God, is within the believers in a subjective way (John 14:17, 20; Rom. 8:10).

**T**he One who proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom, who taught the truth of the kingdom, and who actually is the kingdom established the kingdom of God by sowing Himself as the seed of the kingdom into God’s chosen people (Luke 8:4-15). The sowing is the Lord’s ministry, and the seed (the word) is the Lord’s person; thus, the sowing of the seed of the kingdom combines the person and work of Christ.

The New Testament reveals that the Triune God in Christ has been incarnated in order to be sown into His chosen people and then develop within them into a kingdom. The kingdom of God in the sense of life is Christ Himself as the seed of life sown into us, growing in us, spreading in us, and maturing in us until there is a harvest—the manifestation of the kingdom (Matt. 13:3-11, 18-23, 43). This is clearly revealed in the parable of the seed in Mark 4:26-29. The man in verse 26 is the Son of God as the Sower who came to sow Himself into our heart in order to grow in us, live in us, and be expressed through us. The seed is the seed (the word) of life, and the casting of the seed on the earth indicates that the kingdom of God is a matter of the divine life growing and developing within us until it reaches maturity. From this we see that the kingdom of God in the sense of life is the Lord Jesus Himself sown as a seed into us and developing within us into a realm over which God can rule in life as His kingdom.

### **The Kingdom of the Son of the Father’s Love**

As the kingdom of God develops within us, we make a marvelous spiritual discovery—that the kingdom of God, which has entered into us as a seed and into which we have entered as a realm of life, is the kingdom of the Son of the Father’s love. This is the marvelous expression used by the apostle Paul: “Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you for a share of the allotted portion of the saints in the light; who delivered us out of the authority of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Col. 1:12-13).

The authority of darkness is the authority of Satan (Acts

26:18). Because darkness is Satan as death, to be delivered out of the authority of darkness is to be delivered from the devil, who has the might of death (Heb. 2:14). God the Father delivered us from the devil with his death, darkness, and authority by the redeeming death of Christ and by the life of Christ in resurrection (Col. 1:14; John 5:24).

To be sure, the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love refers to the authority of the Son (Matt. 28:18; Rev. 11:15; 12:10); however, this authority and the experience of living under it are radically different from what is commonly understood in religious and political circles. Since the Son is the embodiment of the expression of God as the divine life, the kingdom of the Son (like the kingdom of God in the sense of life) is a realm of life (1 John 5:11-12; John 1:4). In Him we have eternal life, and in His kingdom we are ruled by life and in life, not by an outward, threatening exercise of authority. This kingdom into which we have been transferred by God the Father, who delights in His beloved Son, is the kingdom of the Son of God's love; hence, this kingdom is a realm of life and love, not of fear. In addition, the kingdom in which we live today is a realm not only of life and love but also of light, for here we enjoy the allotted portion of the saints in the light (Col. 1:12), which is God Himself (1 John 1:5).

To further appreciate this delightful realm, we need to consider, from the perspective of the kingdom of God, the relationship between the Father and the Son in whom He delights (Matt. 3:17; 17:5). The Son of the Father is the expression of the Father, who is the unique source of life, the fountain of life (John 1:4, 18; 1 John 1:2; Jer. 2:13; Psa. 36:9). In Colossians 1:13 the Son is called the Son of the Father's love. As such and as seen in Matthew 3:17 and 17:5, the Son is the object of the Father's love, and as this love-object, He is to us, His believers, the embodiment of the divine life. This embodied divine life is in the divine love and has the authority of resurrection. Thus, we need to be impressed with the fact that the Son, the embodiment of the divine life, is the object of the Father's love and that this divine life in the Son is imparted to us in the divine love with the authority given to Christ the Son in His resurrection. Because the Father delights in His Son, the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love is a most pleasant realm, a sphere of divine delight. To know the kingdom in this way and to appreciate its vital elements of life, love, and light are to know the kingdom as the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love.

When we were transferred into the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love, we were transferred out of Adam into Christ the Son, in whom is life (1 John 5:12) and who is now our life (Col. 3:4). This matter is experiential to the uttermost. The Son, in whom we are, is the resurrected Son (John 14:17, 20), and economically (that is, in God's economy) this resurrected One is the life-giving Spirit who is mingled with our regenerated spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 6:17). Because He is the King, He rules us, yet He rules in His resurrection life with the divine love. The more we live in and by the Son as our life in resurrection, the more we live in the reality of the kingdom of God as the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love. In this delightful realm we enjoy the all-inclusive Christ as our God-allotted portion (Col. 1:12), and here we have the genuine church life (v. 18; 4:15-16).

As we trace this revelation of the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love throughout the New Testament, we see that this kingdom involves and includes three ages—the present age (the church), the coming age (the kingdom), and the eternal age (the new heaven and new earth with

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the New Jerusalem). Nevertheless, Paul's emphasis in Colossians 1:13 (which should be our emphasis today) is on the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love in this age, the age of the church. The Father delights in the Son, and thus the kingdom of His Son is likewise delightful to Him. As we will see, in the present age the practicality and actuality of the kingdom of God are in the church life, making the church life the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love and causing the church life to be as delightful to the Father as the beloved Son is. If we are enlightened by the Spirit through the Word regarding this, we will see that the Father loves the Son and the kingdom of the Son and delights in this realm even as He delights in the Son. May the eyes of our heart be anointed and enlightened to see the kingdom of God in this way.

### The Kingdom of God as Power to Subdue Rebellion

The unique controversy between Satan and God concerns the matter of authority, and there are two great principles in the universe—God's authority and Satan's

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rebellion. Thus, there is a universal dispute that relates to who has authority. God's acts are based upon His throne, and His throne is built on authority, which represents God Himself. Although God created the universe by His authority and rules the universe with His authority, Satan challenges God's authority, refuses to submit to God's authority, denies God's authority, and seeks to assert his own authority and thereby establish his own kingdom in rivalry with the kingdom of God.

The fundamental problem in the universe is the refusal to honor and submit to the authority of God's throne in His kingdom. Satan wants to overthrow God's throne. Satan acts to violate God's sovereignty, usurp God's authority, and overthrow God's throne; he desires to establish his own kingdom. Satan's kingdom is his overthrowing of God's throne for the setting up of his own authority. When man sinned, he did not merely violate a rule; even more, he revolted against God, rebelled against God, and put God's authority aside, denying God's authority and rejecting God's rule. Like Satan, fallen human beings rebel against the authority of God's throne. Just as Satan rebelled against God, man also rebelled against God. Man and Satan acted as a team to rebel against God.

When the Lord Jesus came, He came as a God-man under the authority of God, and He came with the kingdom of God to reach the goal of establishing the kingdom of God on earth through the preaching of the gospel and the building up of the church. Apart from Christ, we cannot find the kingdom of God, touch the authority of God, and submit to the throne of God. We need Jesus, who, as our Savior, sets up His throne in us and thereby ushers us into the kingdom of God, the realm where God rules in life, power, and authority and where rebellion is impossible. This is the kingdom of God as the power to subdue rebellion.

**I**n the Gospel of Mark we see the Lord Jesus with the kingdom of God and Satan with his kingdom (1:1, 15; 3:22-27). As the Slave of God serving Him in and for the kingdom of God, the Lord Jesus was under the authority of God, did the will of God, and was obedient to God; thus, He was approved by God the Father (1:11; 9:7; 14:36). In His ministry Jesus brought in the kingdom of God and subdued rebellion. This is vividly portrayed in the Gospel of Mark, where we see the principle of rebellion and the manifestations of rebellion.

The Gospel of Mark, by emphasizing the actions of Jesus as the Slave of God, shows that the kingdom of God is the power to subdue rebellion (4:35-41). If we would rightly understand this, we need to realize that there are two great principles in the universe—God's authority and Satan's rebellion; the unique controversy between God

and Satan concerns authority and rebellion (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13). Rebellion is the denial of God's authority and the rejection of God's rule. Satan was originally an archangel created by God, but due to his pride, he uplifted himself, violated God's sovereignty, rebelled against God, became God's adversary, and established his own kingdom (Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:2-19; Matt. 12:26). When man sinned, he rebelled against God, denied God's authority, and rejected God's rule; at Babel fallen humankind rebelled collectively against God to abolish God's authority on the earth (Gen. 3:1-6; 11:1-9). Although Satan rebelled against God's authority and although fallen human beings violate His authority by rebelling against Him, God will not let this rebellion continue; He will establish His kingdom on the earth (Rev. 11:15).

**T**he Lord Jesus came to establish the kingdom of God for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose (Mark 1:14-15). We have emphasized the fact that the kingdom of God is a divine realm where God can exercise His authority to work out His plan (Matt. 6:10, 33; Luke 12:32; Col. 1:13). As God incarnate, the Lord Jesus came to establish the kingdom of God—to establish a realm in which God can carry out His purpose through the exercise of His authority (John 1:1, 14; 3:3, 5; 18:36). In order to establish the kingdom of God, He stood as a victorious man, defeating Satan and withstanding all hardship, opposition, and attack (Mark 1:13; Matt. 4:1-11). He preached the gospel of the kingdom so that rebellious sinners might repent, be saved, qualified, and equipped to enter into the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15; Matt. 4:17). He bound Satan, the strong one, and entered his house to plunder his goods so that sinners might be brought into the house of God through regeneration for the kingdom of God (Mark 3:27; Eph. 2:19). As the Lord cast out demons by the Spirit of God, He was destroying Satan's kingdom and bringing in the kingdom of God (Matt. 12:28).

An excellent illustration of the action of the Lord Jesus is found in Mark 4:35-41. The record here is a picture of rebellion and of the kingdom of God as the power to subdue rebellion. Satan has a kingdom, the authority of darkness, which is against the kingdom of God (Matt. 12:26; Acts 26:18). Demons belong to Satan's kingdom and possess people for his kingdom (Mark 1:23-27; 5:2-20; 7:25-30; 9:17-27; 16:9). Satan is the ruler of the world and of the authority of the air; he has his angels, who are his subordinates as principalities, powers, and rulers of the darkness of this world (John 12:31; Eph. 2:2; 6:12). Between the word concerning the kingdom of God in Mark 4:26-29 and the record of the demonstration of the kingdom of God in 5:1-43, there is the incident on the stormy sea in 4:35-41. The fallen angels in the air and the demons in the water collaborated to frustrate the

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Lord Jesus from going to the other side of the sea because they knew that He would cast out the demons there (5:1-20). The Lord rebuked the wind and commanded the sea to be silent because of the rebellious angels and demons that were behind the scene. After He rebuked the wind and spoke to the sea, the wind ceased, and there was a great calm, for the rebellion of the evil angels and the demons had been subdued by the power of the kingdom (4:39).

On the one hand, the kingdom of God is the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love where, in a most pleasant and delightful way, we are ruled by the resurrected Christ in life, love, and light. On the other hand, the kingdom of God is the power to subdue rebellion. When we touch this kingdom with its power and authority, we touch the throne of God, allow the pneumatic Christ as the King to reign in us, and begin to live in the unique sphere where rebellion is impossible and obedience is a spontaneous issue of the kingdom life in our regenerated spirit (John 3:3, 5-6, 15-16).

### The Gospel of the Kingdom of God

It is through the preaching of the gospel and our response to it under God's sovereign mercy that we see and enter into the kingdom and begin to enjoy its blessings. After John had been delivered up, "Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has drawn near. Repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:14-15). The gospel of God and the kingdom of God are inseparable, for the gospel of God is the gospel of the kingdom of God (Luke 4:43; Acts 8:12). The gospel of the kingdom of God brings the repentant and believing ones into the realm of the divine ruling in order that they may participate in the blessings of the divine life in the divine kingdom (Matt. 24:14; 1 Thes. 2:12).

**I**n Mark 1:15 the Lord Jesus said that the kingdom of God had drawn near. Because the kingdom of God is God Himself, to proclaim that the kingdom of God has drawn near is to declare that God Himself has drawn near and that we should prepare ourselves to meet God and to receive God into us. The way to prepare is, through repentance, to put away the old, natural concepts and to hold on to the New Testament revelation, knowing that to enter into God's kingdom is to receive God Himself (Luke 3:3-5; John 1:12-13; 3:3, 5). Repentance for the kingdom is to have a change in concept and

a radical turn to God for the kingdom of God (Matt. 4:17).

It is important for us to see that the gospel, the kingdom, and God are one. The gospel is the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of God is God Himself. According to the New Testament, the gospel of the kingdom of God actually refers to the true and living God Himself. The kingdom is God, not something apart from God. In like manner, the gospel is the kingdom of God, not something separate from the kingdom of God. We need to have God as the kingdom and the kingdom as the gospel, knowing that God, the kingdom, and the gospel are one marvelous divine reality. Today we should follow the Lord Jesus and the apostles to preach God as the kingdom and the kingdom as the gospel.

We have pointed out that as God incarnate the Lord Jesus came to establish the kingdom of God as a realm in which God can carry out His purpose through the exercise of His authority. This was the reason that in His preaching of the gospel, He told people to repent for the kingdom

To proclaim that the kingdom of God has drawn near is to declare that God Himself has drawn near and that we should prepare ourselves to meet God and to receive God into us. The way to prepare is, through repentance, to put away the old, natural concepts and to hold on to the New Testament revelation, knowing that to enter into God's kingdom is to receive God Himself.

of God. Because the kingdom of God, even God Himself, had drawn near, the people had to repent in order to enter into the kingdom. From this we see that the kingdom is the goal of the gospel. The purpose of the gospel is to have the kingdom. The kingdom is the gospel, and the gospel is the kingdom. The intrinsic essence of the gospel is the kingdom—the ruling of God with blessing and enjoyment. To enter into this kingdom, people need to repent of their sins and believe in the gospel so that their sins may be forgiven and so that they may be regenerated by God to have the divine life, which matches the divine nature of this kingdom.

**T**he unique way to enter into the kingdom of God is to receive God as life and gain God Himself; this is regeneration (John 3:3, 5, 15; 1 John 5:11-12). The kingdom of God is a divine realm to be entered into, a realm which requires the divine life; hence, for us to see or enter into the kingdom of God requires regeneration. Repentance and regeneration through believing in the Lord are not first for salvation but for entering into the kingdom of God (Matt. 4:17). Because through regeneration we receive

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the divine life, the life of God, regeneration is the unique entrance into the kingdom. We have been born into the kingdom of God, and now the divine life in our spirit knows the kingdom of God (John 3:6).

The gospel is the gospel of the kingdom through which God brings us under the ruling of the heavenly authority so that we may become people in His kingdom, those who are ruled by His authority. The proper response to the gospel of the kingdom of God is to repent and to believe in the gospel with all its contents. In particular, we believe into the Son, who is the embodiment of eternal life and the One who gives life (vv. 15-16; 10:10; 11:25) and thereby are born of the Spirit in our spirit to become children of God with the divine life (1:12-13) and thus become qualified to enter into the kingdom of God as the realm of the divine life.

### The Kingdom and the Church

The word of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 16:18-19 reveals that the kingdom and the church are inseparable and that, in the present age, the kingdom and the church are synonymous.

The Bible first presents the kingdom and thereafter presents the church, indicating that the presence of the kingdom produces the church (4:23; 16:18-19). The life of God is the kingdom of God in the sense of life, and this life produces the church through the gospel. The gospel brings in the divine life, and this life has its realm, which is the kingdom; thus, the divine life with the kingdom as its realm produces the church (2 Tim. 1:10). The reason that the gospel of the kingdom brings forth the church is that the kingdom is the life itself, and the church is the issue of life (Matt. 4:23; Acts 8:12).

The kingdom is the reality of the church; therefore, apart from the kingdom life, we cannot live the church life (Matt. 5:3, 8; Rev. 1:4-6, 9). According to Matthew 5—7, the reality of the kingdom of the heavens is the content of the church, and without this reality the church is empty. Because the kingdom life issues in the church life, as we live this kingdom life in a corporate way, we spontaneously live the church life (Rom. 14:17). If we see this, we will realize that believers who do not live in the reality of the kingdom by the divine life cannot be built into the structure of the church (Eph. 2:22). Sadly, in today's situation countless believers meet together for worship or fellowship without being built up together as the temple of God.

The Lord Jesus prophesied that He would build His church and that the gates of Hades would not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18). The building up of the church in Matthew 16 requires the reality of the kingdom in

Matthew 5—7. This means that without the kingdom as the reality of the church, the church cannot be built up. The church is brought into being through the authority of the kingdom with the life of the kingdom, and the keys of the kingdom are given to make the building of the church possible (16:19; 18:18). When the kingdom is able to assert its authority over a company of believers, those believers are built up into the church (Col. 1:12-13; 2:19; Eph. 4:15-16).

The genuine church life is in the kingdom of God in this age, and such a life is the practicality of the kingdom on earth today (Matt. 16:18-19; 18:17-18; 13:44-46; Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 4:20; Eph. 2:19; Col. 4:11; Rev. 1:4-6). Whenever the Lord Jesus spoke of the church, He mentioned it in relation to the kingdom; this indicates that the kingdom and the church are intimately related. Romans 14:17, which concerns the church life, proves that the church in this age is the kingdom of God. Moreover, *the kingdom of God* in 1 Corinthians 4:20 refers to the church life (v. 17), implying that in the sense of authority, the church in the present age is the kingdom of God. This thought is further developed in Ephesians and Colossians. The term *fellow citizens* in Ephesians 2:19 points to the kingdom of God, the sphere where God exercises His authority. From Colossians 4:11 we see that what Paul and his fellow workers were doing in their gospel work to establish churches was for the kingdom of God. The word *kingdom* in Revelation 1:6 and 9 reveals that where the church is, there the kingdom of God is, for the church represents the kingdom. However, although the church today is God's kingdom, we are in the kingdom in reality only when we live, walk, and have our being in the spirit, not in our natural life (Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 25).

The church is brought forth by the kingdom, the church is the kingdom, and the church brings in the kingdom. The work of the church is to bring in the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:10; 12:22-29; Rev. 11:15; 12:10). The church has come into being for the purpose of bringing in the kingdom (Matt. 16:18-19; 18:17-18; Rev. 1:6, 9; 11:15). Thus, the responsibility of the church is to perpetuate Christ's victory and to bring the kingdom of God to earth for the reign of Christ over the nations (12:10). We need to be deeply and lastingly impressed with the fact that the work of the church is to bring in the kingdom of God and that all the work of the church is governed by the principle of the kingdom of God. As the practicality of the kingdom of God on earth today, the church as the kingdom of God is responsible for bringing the will of God down to earth and for doing the will of God on earth (Matt. 6:10; 7:21; 12:50).

This involves spiritual warfare on a grand scale. The church, which comes into being under the rule of God to



be the kingdom of God, by reason of her submission to the rule of God, deals with the enemy of God (16:19; Eph. 6:10-18). Warfare is necessary because it is only through spiritual fighting that the kingdom of God can be established on earth (Matt. 12:22-29). The responsibility of the church, therefore, is to continue the warfare that Christ fought when He was on earth in the flesh. This means that the church as the kingdom of God must continue the victorious work that Christ carried out against Satan (Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8; Col. 2:15; Psa. 149:5-9).

In order to fulfill her responsibility to bring in the kingdom of God, the church should pray in a particular way for the coming of the kingdom (Matt. 6:10). If there is not this kind of prayer, the kingdom cannot and will not come. The coming of the kingdom is not automatic, and regarding this, we cannot afford to be passive. The prayer of the church is the most effective means of curbing Satan, and it is also the outlet of heaven, allowing the authority of God to be expressed on earth (16:18-19; 18:18). Genuine prayer for the kingdom is actually a joint labor with God to bring His kingdom to earth and to carry out His will on earth; hence, prayer for the kingdom is a spiritual battle (2 Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:12).

### Living in the Kingdom of God

After we have been born of God to enter into the kingdom of God, we need to live in the kingdom of God in a practical way day by day. This is a vast subject, and the limitation of space requires that I comment only on certain selected aspects of this kind of living.

Since the kingdom of God, which we have entered through regeneration, is the kingdom in the sense of life, a realm of life, our living in the kingdom must be in keeping with the principle of the tree of life and according to the inner consciousness of the divine life. God in Christ is the tree of life as the center of God's kingdom. The principle of the tree of life is dependence on God for everything, whether spiritual or human, in contrast to independence from God, which is the principle of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In the kingdom of God as a realm of life, we all need the Triune God as our life and our life supply; this is richly revealed in Romans 8, a chapter that speaks of the Divine Trinity dispensing Himself as life into our tripartite being (vv. 2, 6, 10-11). This life, like every other kind of life, has its consciousness. Because the divine life, the eternal life of God, is the highest life, this life has the highest conscious-

ness, and as fellow citizens in the kingdom of God, we should not live by our concepts of right and wrong but by the inner consciousness of the kingdom life, which life is God Himself.

The kingdom of God as a realm of life is a realm of love in which we love the Lord and all those who have believed into Him (1 John 5:1). To love the Lord is to appreciate Him (Matt. 26:6-13), to direct our being toward Him (2 Cor. 3:16; Mark 12:30), to open to Him (Rev. 3:20), to enjoy Him (1 Pet. 1:8), to give Him the preeminence in all things (Col. 1:18), to be one with Him (1 Cor. 6:17), to live Him (Phil. 1:20-21), and even to become Him, that is, to become the same as He is in life and nature but not in the Godhead. The more we love the Lord in this way, the more we will appreciate the blessing of living in the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love. Here we love one another with God Himself as love and build up one another in this love (1 John 4:7-8, 10-12, 16; Eph. 4:16).

We have noted that the kingdom of the Son of the

The church, which comes into being under the rule of God to be the kingdom of God, by reason of her submission to the rule of God, deals with the enemy of God. Warfare is necessary because it is only through spiritual fighting that the kingdom of God can be established on earth.

Father's love is a realm of life, love, and light. In this realm we walk in the light as God Himself is in the light (1 John 1:5, 7). The divine light is the nature of God's expression (John 1:4); this light is God's shining, God's expression. Whenever God is expressed, the nature of that expression is light. To walk in this light—to walk in God as light—is to live, move, act, and have our being in the divine light, which is God Himself. This light is intrinsically related to the divine life. A great principle in the Bible is that light and life go together (Psa. 36:9); where light is, there is life, and where life is, there is light (John 1:4). Furthermore, the divine light is the source of the divine truth (1 John 1:5-6; John 8:12, 32). As the divine light shines upon us in the kingdom of God, it becomes the truth, which is the divine reality. The more this light shines, the more the divine things become real to us. Because light is the source of truth and truth is the issue of light, when we walk in the light, we practice the truth (1 John 1:5-6).

As we honor the sense of life, love the Lord Jesus with the first love, giving Him the first place in all things, and

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walk in the divine light to practice the divine truth, we experience and enjoy Christ as the all-inclusive One unveiled in Colossians (3:4, 10-11), and we explore the unsearchable riches of Christ mentioned in Ephesians 3:8. Simply put, the kingdom of God in the sense of life is a realm in which we enjoy Christ to the uttermost, exulting in Him and, at times, being beside ourselves with joy in Him. As one who had learned to live constantly in this blessed realm, Peter could say, “Whom having not seen, you love; into whom though not seeing Him at present, yet believing, you exult with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet. 1:8).

To live in the kingdom corporately, as it is expressed in the genuine church, is to live a life of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17). The kingdom of God is righteousness. As righteousness denotes that which is right and proper, those who live in the kingdom of God should be right and proper toward others, toward things, and toward God (Matt. 5:6; 6:33). This is not self-improvement—this is the issue of a living that is in union with Christ. The most righteous persons are those who live Christ, for the Christ who lives within them makes them right in every way (Phil. 1:21; 3:9; Gal. 2:20).

According to the New Testament, righteousness has four main aspects. Righteousness is being right with persons, things, and matters according to God’s righteous and strict requirements (Matt. 5:20). Righteousness is also the outward expression of the Christ who lives in us as the life-giving Spirit (2 Cor. 3:9, 18; 1 Cor. 15:45). The Spirit is the essence of God living, moving, and acting within us, and righteousness is the essence of God manifested outwardly as God’s image to express Him (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). The divine essence that has been inscribed into us will have a particular expression, and this expression is righteousness (2 Cor. 3:3, 9; Matt. 5:20). In addition, righteousness is a matter of God’s kingdom (6:33).

God’s throne is established with righteousness as the foundation (Psa. 89:14; 97:2). Righteousness issues from God for His administration and thus is related to God’s rule and government (Isa. 32:1). Righteousness first issues in the image of God and then establishes the kingdom of God (Rom. 8:4, 29; 14:17). Furthermore, righteousness is a matter of being right with God in our being (1 Cor. 15:34; 2 Cor. 5:21). To be right with God in our being is to have an inner being that is transparent and crystal clear—an inner being in the mind and will of God (Rev. 21:11, 18, 21; 22:1). To be righteous in this way is to become the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21).

The kingdom of God is peace (Rom. 14:17). Our Father is the God of peace, having a peaceful life with a peaceful

nature (15:33; 16:20; Matt. 5:9; Heb. 12:14; James 3:18; 2 Thes. 3:16). The peace that is in Christ, the peace that is Christ, the peace that was made by Christ, and the peace announced by Christ as the gospel are the peace of the Body and in the Body (Eph. 2:14-15, 17; 6:23; Gal. 6:16; Col. 1:20; 3:15). To live in the Body, the church as the kingdom of God, and to keep the oneness of the Body are to live in the peace of the Body. We must keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace in and for the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:3). As far as it depends on us, we should live in peace with everyone (Rom. 12:18; Heb. 12:14).

For the kingdom life in the church, the Body of Christ, we need to let the peace of Christ arbitrate all things in our hearts (Col. 3:15). The arbitrating peace of Christ is Christ working within us to exercise His rule over us and to make the final decision (Isa. 9:6-7). For the peace of Christ to arbitrate in our hearts, it must be enthroned as a ruler and decider in everything (cf. Heb. 7:2). In the Body life the peace of God guards our hearts and our thoughts in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7, 9). In the Body life our heart should be in a peaceful condition toward the members, for we were called to the peace of Christ in one Body (Col. 3:15).

The kingdom of God is joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17). Living the kingdom life in the church requires that we live joyfully to God in the Holy Spirit (1 Pet. 1:8; Matt. 5:11-12; Acts 5:41; 13:52; Phil. 2:17-18). Not being joyful indicates that we are defeated, that something is wrong with us, and that we have cast off the divine restraint; as a result, our spirit is weighed down, and we cannot rejoice (4:4; 1 Thes. 5:16). If we live a life of righteousness and peace, we will live joyfully to God in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17). The Triune God is a God of joy, and the apostles are fellow workers with the saints for their joy (15:13; John 15:11; 17:13; Acts 13:52; Gal. 5:22; 2 Cor. 1:24; Phil. 1:25; 2:17-18).

A sweet thought revealed in the Word of God is that in Christ God has given Himself to us as grace to be our enjoyment in the kingdom of God (John 1:14, 16-17; 2 Cor. 13:14). In the first reference in the Bible to God’s relationship with man, God presents Himself to man as food; this shows that God wants us to enjoy Him (Gen. 2:7, 9; Psa. 16:11; Jer. 15:16). We need to see that God’s desire is to give Himself to us to be our enjoyment (Neh. 8:10). The secret to the Christian life in the kingdom of God as the realm of the divine life is not how much we work for Him but how much we absorb Him and enjoy Him (John 15:4-5; Col. 2:6-7). If we look away unto Jesus and see that there is a joy set before us, we will be able to run with endurance the race which is set before us (Heb. 12:1-2), living the kingdom life in spirit and in the church.

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## The Kingdom of God as a Blessing for the Overcomers to Inherit in the Coming Age

We have emphasized the point that the kingdom of God in the sense of life is a realm in which the believers of Christ should live today. Now we need to see that the kingdom of God in the sense of life is also a blessing for the believers to inherit in the coming age, the millennium (Matt. 19:29; 1 Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5). To inherit the kingdom of God is not simply to enter into the kingdom; it is to receive the kingdom as a future reward for our enjoyment during the kingdom age (Matt. 25:14, 21). To inherit the kingdom of God is actually to inherit the eternal life for our enjoyment. To inherit the kingdom of God is to obtain the enjoyment of God's eternal life in the millennial kingdom by presently entering into the kingdom of God through our experiences of His eternal life (1 John 1:2; 2:25; 5:11-12; Matt. 19:29).

Inheriting the kingdom of God is different from entering into the kingdom of God through regeneration (1 Cor. 6:10; John 3:5). When we believed in the Lord Jesus, we were regenerated, received eternal life, and entered into the kingdom of God (1:12-13; 3:5, 15). As we live by the eternal life that we have received, this life becomes our inheritance for our enjoyment (Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5). Thus, we need to live in the kingdom of God today by the eternal life, experiencing and enjoying the eternal life in this age so that we may inherit the kingdom of God in the coming age, that is, inherit the full enjoyment of God's eternal life as our reward during the millennium (Rom. 8:2, 6, 10-11; 14:17; 1 Cor. 6:10).

**T**he eternal life as a blessing from God to us is in three stages, and these three stages are in three ages. In the present age, the church age, we receive eternal life as a free gift for us to enjoy and live by (John 3:15-16; Rom. 6:23; 1 John 5:13). In the coming age, the kingdom age, the overcomers (those who are faithful and victorious in the sight of God) inherit the eternal life as a reward; in the coming kingdom the eternal life becomes an inheritance for them to enjoy in a particular way (Matt. 19:29). In the present age the eternal life is for us to receive and live by, but in the coming age of the kingdom, the eternal life is for the overcomers to inherit (Rev. 2:7). This inheritance is not for salvation but for a reward in the coming age in the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens with an enjoyment of eternal life that is fuller than the enjoyment in this age (Luke 18:29-30). In the eternal age

in the new heaven and new earth with the New Jerusalem as the center, we all will enjoy the ultimate consummation of the eternal life in its fullest blessing (Rev. 22:1-2, 14).

If we would inherit the kingdom of God as a blessing in the coming age, we should follow Peter's exhortation to be diligent to pursue the growth and development of the divine life within us until we are richly and bountifully supplied an entrance into "the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:5-11). This means that we need to experience the development of the divine life and the divine nature contained in the divine seed that has been sown into us so that we may have a rich entrance in the eternal kingdom (vv. 1, 4-11).

We have been allotted the wonderful equally precious faith, and this faith is an all-inclusive seed. All the divine riches are in this seed, but we must be diligent to develop them; to grow to maturity is to develop what we already have (vv. 1-8; 3:18). By developing these virtues, we grow in life, and eventually we will reach maturity, be

As we live by the eternal life, this life becomes our inheritance for our enjoyment. Thus, we need to live in the kingdom of God today by the eternal life, experiencing and enjoying the eternal life in this age so that we may inherit the kingdom of God in the coming age, that is, inherit the full enjoyment of God's eternal life as our reward during the millennium.

full of Christ, and be qualified and equipped to be kings in the coming kingdom (Eph. 4:14-15; Col. 2:19).

**W**e need to have the full development and maturity from the seed of faith, through the roots of virtue and knowledge, the trunk of self-control, and the branches of endurance and godliness, to the blossom and fruit of brotherly love and love (vv. 5-7). To supply virtue in faith is to develop virtue—the energy of the divine life issuing in vigorous action—in the exercise of the equally precious faith; this faith needs to be exercised so that the virtue of the divine life may be developed in the succeeding steps and reach maturity. Virtue needs the bountiful supply of the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; the knowledge that we should develop in our virtue includes the knowledge of God and of our Savior, the knowledge of God's economy, the knowledge of what faith is, and the knowledge of the divine power, glory, virtue, nature, and life. Self-control is the exercise of control and restraint over the self in its passions, desires, and habits. Such self-control needs to be exercised in knowledge for the proper growth in life. To exercise endurance is to bear with

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others and with circumstances. Godliness is a living that is like God and that expresses God. Brotherly love (*philadelphia*) is brotherly affection, a love characterized by delight and pleasure; in godliness, which is the expression of God, this love needs to be supplied for the brotherhood, for our testimony to the world, and for the bearing of fruit (v. 7; 1 Pet. 2:17; 3:8; Gal. 6:10; John 13:34-35; 15:16-17).

**T**he ultimate development of the divine nature within us is love—*agape*, the word used in the New Testament for the divine love, which God is in His nature (1 John 4:8, 16). Our brotherly love needs to be developed further into a nobler and higher love. In our enjoyment of the divine nature, we need to let the divine seed of the allotted faith develop to its consummation in the divine and nobler love. When we partake of the divine nature to the uttermost, we are filled with God as love, and we become persons of love, even love itself (Eph. 3:19). To develop the spiritual virtues in the divine life and thus to advance in the growth of the divine life makes God's calling and selection of us firm (2 Pet. 1:10).

We should be diligent to pursue the growth and development of the divine life and divine nature for a rich entrance into the eternal kingdom (v. 11). The bountiful supply that we enjoy in the development of the divine life and divine nature (vv. 3-7) will bountifully supply us a rich entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord. This supply will enable and qualify us to enter into the coming kingdom by all the riches of the divine life and divine nature as our excellent virtues (energy) unto the splendid glory of God (v. 3; 1 Pet. 5:10). Apparently, it is we who enter into the eternal kingdom; actually, the entrance into the eternal kingdom is supplied to us richly through our growth in life and through the development of the divine life within us.

### **The Kingdom of God in the New Heaven and New Earth with the New Jerusalem**

Ultimately and consummately, the eternal kingdom of God will be the new heaven and new earth with the New Jerusalem as its center (Rev. 21:1-2). This new heaven and new earth will be the new universe as the realm of God's reigning in eternity. This new universe will be the sphere in which God in Christ will administrate His government in eternity and for eternity.

The New Jerusalem is not a physical city—it is a corporate person, a corporate God-man constituted of the processed and consummated Triune God mingled with His glorified sons (v. 7). In the center of the New Jerusalem is the throne of God and of the Lamb (22:1), the throne of the redeeming God, whence flows the river

of water of life. On the one hand, the sons of God as the constituents of the holy city will be under God's rule, for the Lord God will shine upon them with His ruling element. On the other hand, "they will reign forever and ever" (v. 5). Over whom will they reign? They will reign over the restored nations, the people who, although not regenerated, will be restored to the original state of humankind as created by God. They will dwell on the new earth around the holy city. "The nations will walk by its light [the light of the New Jerusalem—21:11]; and the kings of the earth bring their glory into it...And they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it" (vv. 24, 26). This is a picture of the eternal kingdom of God in the new heaven and new earth, wherein we, the glorified sons of God, will reign with the Triune God over the nations forever and ever.

### **Called into God's Kingdom and Glory**

I conclude with comments based upon Paul's word in 1 Thessalonians 2:12. In this verse the apostle expresses his desire that the believers would "walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory." We have been called into God's kingdom to be under His rule with power and authority. We have been called into God's kingdom as the realm of the divine life to live according to the consciousness of the divine life in our regenerated spirit. We have been called into God's kingdom by receiving the Son of God as a seed of life. We have been called into God's kingdom as the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love to enjoy the divine life under the shining of the divine light with the sweetness of the divine love. We have been called into God's kingdom as the power to subdue rebellion to live in subjection to God's authority and in obedience to His will. We have been called into God's kingdom through the gospel of the kingdom to enter into and live in the realm of God's rule in life and in authority. We have been called into God's kingdom as the genuine church in this age to be built up together as God's house and, by prayer and spiritual warfare, to bring in the kingdom with Christ's millennial rule. We have been called also to live in the kingdom of God a life of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit and to experience and enjoy the eternal life as a gift of God's grace. We have been called into God's kingdom with the hope of inheriting the kingdom of God as a reward in the coming age, and for this we need the growth and development of the divine life unto maturity. Ultimately, we have been called into God's kingdom as the new heaven and new earth with the New Jerusalem as its center for God's eternal governmental administration. Praise the Lord for such a marvelous calling into the kingdom of God! May we, by the grace of God, experience, enjoy, and live the kingdom life in the present age, in the kingdom age, and for eternity in the New Jerusalem. **AF**