

Result of the Problems (II)

The Church at Christ's Second Coming Completely Saturated with Leaven

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

And saying, Repent ye [a plural pronoun, the entire nation]: for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand.

For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Matt. 3:1-3; *cf.* Isa. 40:3).

"Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered.

And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever ['for an age']. And presently the fig tree withered away...

Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:18, 19, 43).

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (I Peter 2:9-11).

(Different things dealt with in this article [Part II] will be based on material in Part I; and little background, explanatory material will accompany these things.)

ONE CENTRAL MESSAGE is seen throughout the four gospels, *WHETHER* introduced by events surrounding John's and Jesus' births (Matt. 1, 2; Luke 1, 2), *OR* later openly proclaimed by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1ff), then by Jesus (Matt. 4:17ff), the Twelve (Matt. 10:1ff), and the Seventy (Luke 10:1ff).

And *THIS* message had to do with a KINGDOM, having both HEAVENLY and EARTHLY spheres, dating back to "the beginning," to the time of the creation of the heavens and the earth and God placing angelic rulers over this province in His universal kingdom.

The EARTHLY sphere of the kingdom had been ESTABLISHED 1,500 years earlier under Moses (Ex. 40).

NOW, the HEAVENLY sphere of the kingdom, to COMPLETE the WHOLE of the promised kingdom (Gen. 22:17, 18), was in the OFFING under the One greater than Moses, Jesus the Christ.

Accordingly, the four gospels have to do with the professed "kingdom of the heavens," the HEAVENLY sphere of the kingdom, NOT with the EARTHLY sphere, the kingdom covenanted to David.

In this respect, two major things about the gospels can ONLY be seen as quite evident:

- a. The gospels continue the O.T.
- b. The gospels introduce the N.T.

The central subject DOESN'T change from one Testament to the other; NOR does the central subject change from one part of either Testament to another part.

The WHOLE of Scripture is found in one INDIVISIBLE Testament, NOT two Testaments.

And, to properly continue the O.T. by moving from the Prophets into the Gospels, the Gospels *MUST* be dealt with in an evident order, as the order previously seen in the arrangement of books at the beginning of the O.T., in Moses.

John MUST be dealt with FIRST, THEN the Synoptics, NOT the way matters have been turned around in man's arrangement of the four Gospels, with John placed AFTER the Synoptics.

(John is the only gospel that begins and continues like Genesis.

John's opening words are, *EXACTLY* as seen in Genesis, "In the beginning..." [Heb., *Bereshith*; Gk., *En arche*].

Then, John continues with a septenary arrangement of events, *EXACTLY* as seen in Genesis [John 1:1-2:11; cf. Gen. 1:1-2:3].

And, at the beginning of this septenary arrangement of events, the message of salvation by grace appears [1:4, 5], *EXACTLY* as seen in Genesis [1:2b, 3].

This septenary arrangement of events, whether in Genesis introducing the O.T. or in John introducing the N.T., relates the whole of the matter, covering Man's 6,000-year Day and the Lord's 1,000-year Day.

Then, John introduces *SIGNS* [*TYPES* had been introduced and dealt with by Moses in Genesis], *providing a PURPOSE STATEMENT for the use of SIGNS* [20:30, 31].

ALL three Synoptics, opening at a point BEYOND salvation by grace, are COMPLETELY DIFFERENT than John in the preceding respect.

ALL three are dependent on John PRECEDING them, in a similar respect to Christ being dependent on John the Baptist PRECEDING Him [cf. Matt. 3:1ff, 4:17ff].)

John introduces the Synoptics and Acts (actually, a fifth Gospel).

Then the four Gospels and Acts introduce the Epistles.

The central subject in the Epistles is *the SAME* as the central subject in Acts.

The central subject in Acts is *the SAME* as the central subject in the Gospels.

The central subject in the Gospels is *the SAME* as the central subject in the O.T., beginning with Moses.

And THIS central subject has to do with a KINGDOM, with two spheres, HEAVENLY and EARTHLY.

To recap, or add to the preceding material:

BOTH spheres of the kingdom are referenced and in full view on a somewhat equal setting throughout about the first twenty-eight chapters of Genesis (*FROM* the command given to Adam and Eve at the time of their creation [Gen. 1:26-28] *TO* the account of Jacob over 2,200 years later being shown a ladder set upon the earth, extending into the heavens, with angels ascending and descending the ladder [Gen. 28:10-15]).

The O.T. though, beginning with Exodus and the departure of the Israelites from Egypt under Moses (Ex. 12ff), is centrally about *the EARTHLY part, the ESTABLISHMENT of the EARTHLY sphere of the KINGDOM.*

Then, the N.T., picking up where the O.T. left off, is about *the HEAVENLY part, the ESTABLISHMENT of the HEAVENLY sphere of the KINGDOM.*

The O.T. had dealt extensively *with ONE part (the EARTHLY)*, though presenting matters time and again *about the OTHER part (the HEAVENLY).*

And the N.T., continuing from the Old, deals extensively *with the LATTER (the HEAVENLY).*

Accordingly, the subject of Scripture, FROM Genesis TO Revelation is about a KINGDOM, having HEAVENLY and EARTHLY spheres. And THIS MUST be recognized IF the Scriptures are to be understood and interpreted correctly.

John, Introducing the Synoptics and Acts

As previously stated, there is *ONLY ONE* place in the four gospels where the message of salvation by grace is found, and that is in the opening verses of John (1:4, 5 [as also seen in the opening verses of Genesis, in 1:2b, 3]).

And this should be perfectly understandable. *There HAS to be a BEGINNING point.*

BUT, material beyond *the BEGINNING point* is another matter (in this case, *the REMAINDER of John and EVERYTHING in the three Synoptics*).

1) The Message in the Gospels, Beginning with John

The message in *ALL four gospels*, beyond the two verses at the beginning of John ("and the light shineth in darkness" [John 1:4, 5; cf. Gen. 1:2b, 3]) has to do with things beyond salvation by grace (things beyond Ex. 12a in the type).

This message is directed to ISRAEL, it has to do with the HEAVENLY sphere of the KINGDOM, and it has to do with FULFILLING the promise given to Abraham 2,000 years earlier (Gen. 22:17, 18), and the command given to Adam 4,000 years earlier (Gen. 1:28; cf. Gen. 9:1, 2).

Solely from a Biblical standpoint, *it would be IMPOSSIBLE* to see the message proclaimed to Israel throughout *ALL four gospels* as having anything to do with salvation by grace. A message of this nature would imply that at least part of the nation was unsaved when John began his preaching, something completely alien to that seen about Israel over their past 1,500-year history.

With the gospel accounts providing a continuation of that previously seen in the O.T., *a message pertaining to salvation by grace relative to Israel could ONLY be COMPLETELY out of place.*

Again, in the gospel accounts, *the COMPLETE NATION* is dealt with *BEYOND* the events of Ex. 12 in the type.

(With the death of the firstborn in Ex. 12 and the establishment of the seed of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob as a nation, *a SAVED NATION* subsequently departed Egypt through the waters of the Red Sea [with a view to fulfilling *the EARTHLY* part of the command given to Adam in Gen. 1:28].

Note the word “*ALL*” in I Cor. 10:1-4 with respect to Israel’s saved status at the time they left Egypt:

“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that *ALL* our fathers were under the cloud, and *ALL* passed through the sea;

And were *ALL* baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

And did *ALL* eat the same spiritual meat;

And did *ALL* drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.”

And, because of a continued yearly observance of that seen in Ex. 12, the nation, throughout their generations, would occupy *THIS SAME SAVED condition* for the next 1,500 years, continuing into the generation seen in the Gospels and Acts [which was still sacrificing paschal lambs and would slay the Paschal Lamb].

Paschal lambs, having died in their stead, reflected back upon and received their efficacy from the Paschal Lamb “slain from the foundation of the world” [Rev. 13:8].

That is to say, they were saved through *the ONLY means that man HAS EVER BEEN or EVER CAN BE saved* — through Christ’s finished work at Calvary.

Had this *NOT* been the case during Moses’ day, there could have been *NO* departure from Egypt, with the theocracy in view.

Had this not been the case throughout the next 1,500 years, God *could NOT* have continued His dealings with this nation after the manner seen throughout the O.T. — *in connection with a sacrificial system providing atonement for the sins of a saved people.*

[Note the counterpart in Christendom today — Christ, in the heavenly Sanctuary, providing a cleansing for the sins of Christians on the basis of His Own shed blood on the Mercy Seat (Heb. 9:11ff; I John 1:5-2:2).

Christ's ministry in the Sanctuary is for Christians ALONE, NOT the unsaved world.

And the O.T. sacrificial system was for Israel ALONE, NOT the unsaved world.

THIS type sacrificial system was THEN and is TODAY for the saved ALONE, NOT the unsaved].

Had this *NOT* been the case during John the Baptist's day, he *could NOT* have begun his message beyond the death of the paschal lambs but preceding the Red Sea crossing [repentance, followed by Baptism, with the proffered kingdom in view (cf. John 3:5)].

And *the SAME thing* is seen regarding Christ and His ministry to Israel shortly afterwards [John 3:22-24; cf. Matt. 4:17], or the subsequent ministry of the Twelve and the Seventy [Matt. 10:1ff; Luke 10:1ff].

Also note that *the SAME thing* is seen at the beginning of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel in Acts 2:38, 39, with "*SIGNS*" both preceding and following [vv. 4, 43; cf. "*SIGNS*" associated with Christ's past ministry (Matt. 4:17ff)].

THIS is WHY there is NOTHING in the offer of the kingdom to Israel in the four gospels [and in Acts during the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel as well] about salvation by grace.

As can be seen, a message of this nature would have been *COMPLETELY out of place, fostering CONFUSION in Biblical interpretation.*

John the Baptist, Jesus, the Twelve, and the Seventy dealt with Israel ONLY ONE WAY!

They dealt with Israel as a nation beyond the death of the paschal lambs in Egypt, standing on the western banks of the Red Sea [note “water and Spirit,” in that order in John 3:5, with a continuation of the overall type in vv. 14ff].

And EXACTLY the same thing is seen in Acts during the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, begun by the one hundred twenty on the Day of Pentecost in 33 A.D. [Acts 1:15; 2:3ff; understand vv. 38, 39 accordingly].

And any attempt to deal with salvation by grace *throughout parts of the four gospels [or relative to the Jewish people when the re-offer of the kingdom is in view in Acts] has ONLY ONE end result — a DOING AWAY with that being taught, while, at the same time, making the Scriptures, instead, deal with that NOT being taught [ref. how John 1, 3 and Acts 2 are invariably mishandled in this manner, doing away with that being taught and, instead, dealing with that NOT being taught].*

Again, there HAS to be a BEGINNING POINT.

THIS is seen at “the beginning” in Genesis [1:2b, 3], introducing the O.T.

THIS is seen in Exodus [12:1ff] at the time of the birth (“the beginning”) of the nation of Israel.

And THIS is seen at “the beginning” in John [1:4, 5], introducing the N.T.

BUT, beyond these beginning points, whether in Genesis, Exodus, or John...)

2) John Introducing SIGNS

There are *eight SIGNS* in John’s gospel, with five of *these SIGNS* peculiar to this gospel.

The first seven *SIGNS* occur in the first eleven chapters.

And the *eighth SIGN* — the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ — occurs in chapters eighteen through twenty (cf. John 2:18-22).

And each of *these SIGNS* had to do with *some facet of the person and work of Christ in relation to Israel and the proffered kingdom.*

As well, different places in John's gospel, reference is made to the numerous *other SIGNS* which Jesus was performing (2:11, 18, 23; 3:2; 6:2, 14, 26; 7:3, 31; 9:16; 11:47; 12:18, 37; 20:30), which had to do with *EXACTLY the SAME thing as the eight recorded in this gospel.*

Then, near the conclusion of the gospel, *following the eighth SIGN*, there is a two-verse statement regarding the *PURPOSE for these SIGNS, which could ONLY be the SAME as the purpose for any of the other referenced SIGNS, many seen in the Synoptics and Acts.*

Note this purpose statement in John 20:30, 31:

"And many *other SIGNS* truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

But these are written, that ye [the Jewish people] might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye [again, the Jewish people] might have life [life in the proffered kingdom] through his name."

a) "Jesus is the Christ"

The word "Christ" in verse thirty-one is the transliteration of *Christos* in the Greek text, which is derived from or closely related to the word *chreo*, which means "to anoint." And *Christos*, or "Christ," means the same, "the anointed One."

The corresponding word in the Hebrew text would be *Masheah* ("Messiah," a transliteration of *Masheah*), meaning, "anointed." And the word is consistently translated "anointed" in the English text (some thirty or so times; e.g., Lev. 4:3, 5, 16; 6:22; I Sam.2:10, 35; 12:3, 5; 26:9-11, 16, 23; II Sam. 1:14, 16, 21).

"Prophets," "Priests," and "Kings" were anointed in the O.T., and Christ is seen fulfilling all three of these offices.

Christ fulfilled the office of "*PROPHET*" during His earthly ministry.

He is presently fulfilling the office of "*PRIEST*" through His work in the heavenly sanctuary.

And He will, following His return, fulfill the office of "*KING*."

Christ was "born King of the Jews" (Matt. 2:1, 2), ready to fulfill this office at the time of His first coming.

But, with Israel's rejection, matters took a completely different turn (though *NOT* a surprising turn, for the O.T. had already provided different facets of information regarding the matter [e.g., Gen. 2, 4, 24]).

b) "*The Son of God*"

NOW, note Christ's Sonship in John 20:31.

ONLY "Sons" rule in God's kingdom.

Satan, a son of God (Job 1:6-2:6; 38:4-7), presently rules; Jesus, "the Son of God," will one day rule in his stead.

With a view to the message being proclaimed to Israel (the proffered kingdom) and the manifestation of *SIGNS* inseparably associated with this message (because of that seen in Ex. 4:1-31), note Peter's *IDENTIFYING statement in Matt. 16:16 set alongside the PURPOSE statement in John 20:31*:

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16).

"Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:31).

c) *The Whole of That Stated in Verse Thirty-One*

Supernatural "*SIGNS*" were being manifested to effect *BELIEF* that "Jesus was the anointed One," born "King of the Jews," the "Son" Who would replace the incumbent son, with the Jewish people being offered the opportunity to ascend the throne with Him.

The whole of the matter can be seen:

In the preaching of John, Jesus, the Twelve, and the Seventy in the offer of the kingdom to Israel in the gospels.

And in the preaching of the One Hundred Twenty on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, and later others as well (individuals hearing, believing, and then proclaiming the message [cf. Acts 2:44-46; 6:7ff; 8:4ff]), in the re-offer of the kingdom in Acts.

And the supernatural "SIGNS" being manifested (e.g., Acts 2:4, 43; 4:16; 5:12; 6:8; 8:6, 7) were inseparably connected and in complete keeping with the message being proclaimed.

These SIGNS were NOT in evidence BEFORE the beginning of the offer of "the kingdom of the heavens" to Israel in the gospels, and they CEASED to be in evidence AFTER this offer to Israel had been completely closed (following the re-offer in Acts).

(There is no record in the gospel accounts of John the Baptist manifesting "SIGNS" in his ministry.

A manifestation of these *supernatural SIGNS* began with Christ and His ministry *PRIOR to the time John was imprisoned* [cf. Matt. 4:17ff; John 2:1-11; 3:1, 2, 22-24].)

These supernatural SIGNS, previously seen in connection with the theocracy in Israel's history, were inseparably associated with the offer of "the kingdom of the heavens" to the nation of Israel in the gospels and the re-offer to the nation in Acts.

And THESE SIGNS are what John introduced in his gospel.

And, in connection with introducing *these SIGNS*, to avoid *ANY mistake* being made concerning the nature of *these SIGNS* and their inseparable connection to the message being proclaimed, John, as previously seen, provided a *PURPOSE statement* for the *SIGNS* near the close of his gospel (20:30, 31).

BUT, because of Satanic activity covering two millenniums of time, the whole of the matter has been turned on its head.

John has been removed from its designed place introducing the Synoptics and Acts, *with the SIGNS in the gospel seen as having to do with something OTHER than the stated PURPOSE for these SIGNS.*

And, as a consequence, ANY proper understanding of the Synoptics, Acts, and the Epistles has been negatively affected.

And this type erroneous thinking *about the PURPOSE for the SIGNS in John's gospel* has been carried to such extremes by some that the gospel of John is seen as a book written to the unsaved, telling them how to be saved, with *the SIGNS* in John having to do with this message, having to do with salvation by grace.

Instead of dealing with the numerous, negative ramifications of the preceding, suffice it to say:

Erroneous teaching pertaining to the foundational nature and subject matter of John's gospel can ONLY result in the superstructure (the Synoptics, Acts, and the Epistles) suffering a similar fate.

Destroy the foundations, and...

(For foundational information regarding "*SIGNS*" in the O.T., *of the SAME nature as seen in the gospels and Acts*, refer to the author's article, "Supernatural Signs.")

The Gospels Introducing Acts

As previously seen, the gospels deal with the offer of "the kingdom of the heavens," *the HEAVENLY sphere of the kingdom*, to the nation of Israel, along with that which occurred as a result of this offer — *REJECTION of the offer and the CRUCIFIXION of the One extending the offer.*

And Acts (a fifth gospel) deals with the re-offer of "the kingdom of the heavens" to Israel, clearly evident because of the message proclaimed and the continuance of associated, *supernatural SIGNS*, beginning with chapter two.

But Israel's attitude and actions in the re-offer of the kingdom were little different than previously seen in the offer of the kingdom. *There was a continued REJECTION and, at times, a continued SLAYING of those proclaiming this message* (Acts 4:1ff; 5:17ff; 6:9ff; 7:54ff; 8:1ff; 9:1ff; 12:1ff).

(The expression, "the kingdom of the heavens," is used thirty-two times in Matthew's gospel, "heavens" is always plural and articular, and the expression would be peculiar to this gospel apart from the possible exception of John 3:5. Some good Greek manuscripts have "the kingdom of the heavens" in this verse instead of "the kingdom of God.")

IF the expression, "the kingdom of the heavens," does appear in John 3:5, John, rather than Matthew, would introduce the proffered kingdom referred to in this manner.

The expression, "the kingdom of God" is used elsewhere in all four Gospels, Acts, and the Pauline Epistles [not used in Hebrews, the general Epistles, or Revelation, though referred to].

And throughout, regardless of the wording [whether "the kingdom of the heavens" or "the kingdom of God"], *the HEAVENLY sphere of the kingdom is being referenced, for THAT is the SUBJECT of the N.T., "beginning" with John.*

But the preceding about John 3:5 would, in a respect, be immaterial, for "the kingdom of the heavens" and "the kingdom of God" are used synonymously in the N.T. [*e.g.*, Matt. 19:23, 24; *cf.* Matt. 3:1, 2; 4:17; 21:43].)

Though John introduces the Synoptics, John does not present an overall chronology of events throughout Christ's ministry, as seen in the Synoptics. Thus, to see and understand the complete scope of events, one has to move beyond John and turn to the Synoptics.

And this complete scope of events deals with:

The OFFER of the KINGDOM TO Israel.

The REJECTION of the KINGDOM BY Israel

The TAKING of the KINGDOM FROM Israel, with a view to a COMPLETELY NEW ENTITY being called into existence to be the recipient of that which Israel had rejected.

And this is followed by Israel's CRUCIFIXION of the ONE having made the rejected offer.

And to show and deal with this complete scope of events, we'll begin with parts of the opening two chapters of both Matthew and Luke. Then, beyond that, we'll use mainly the chronology of events as revealed in Matthew's gospel.

1) Matthew 1, 2; Luke 1, 2

The O.T. Scriptures were brought to a close about 1,050 years after the ESTABLISHMENT of the EARTHLY realm of the theocracy (about 400 B.C.).

And, though BOTH realms of the kingdom — BOTH HEAVENLY and EARTHLY — had been introduced different times in the first twenty-eight chapters of Genesis, the O.T. was brought to a close WITHOUT the ESTABLISHMENT of the HEAVENLY realm, leaving the kingdom INCOMPLETE.

Some 3,600 years of Man's 6,000-year Day, the complete time that God had decreed He would use to rectify matters relative to the kingdom — REMOVING the incumbent son (Satan) FROM the throne and PLACING "His only begotten Son" (Jesus) ON the throne — had come to pass.

And, again, the kingdom which would exist in that day, apart from the HEAVENLY realm, would be INCOMPLETE.

BUT, a rectifying of the matter was in the OFFING!

AFTER some four hundred silent years — FROM the end of Malachi TO that recorded in Matt. 1, 2 and Luke 1, 2, God ONCE AGAIN began to speak TO and THROUGH His people!

The four hundred years of silence was broken in Luke 1:11-20 by God, through the angel Gabriel, appearing and revealing certain things to Zacharias (a Levitical priest) as he ministered in the Holy Place of the Temple.

Gabriel's appearance and message to Zacharias had to do with the birth and heralding ministry of John the Baptist.

Zacharias and his wife, Elisabeth, though evidently beyond the age of childbearing (v. 7; cf. Gen. 17:16-19; 18:10-14; 21:1-3), were to have a son. And his name was to be called, "John."

Then, about six months later the angel Gabriel was sent to Mary (Elisabeth's cousin), relating different things to her about the birth of Israel's Messiah and His coming reign, apprising her also of John's impending birth (Luke 1:26-37).

And, as in John's case, *specific reference was made concerning His name. He was to be called, "Jesus" (v. 31), in complete keeping with the name already given in the O.T., "Yeshua."*

("Jesus" is the English translation of *Iesous* in the Greek text. And *Yeshua* is the Hebrew form of *Iesous*.

Yeshua/Iesous means "Salvation.")

Then, Matthew's account begins with the same subject at a time beyond the events seen in Luke 1 (at a time beyond the angel appearing to Mary, possibly about the time of John's birth).

An angel appears to Joseph in a dream, providing information about Mary's pregnancy, along with the name, "Jesus," that was to be given to the Child (Matt. 1:18-25).

Then Luke 2:8-20 records the account of an angel appearing to shepherds in the field following Jesus' birth, later accompanied by a great host of other angels praising God, *relating things which could ONLY be true of a coming KING, in His KINGDOM.*

Then in Matt. 2:1ff we have an account of “wise men from the east” following “His star” to Jerusalem (*cf.* Num. 24:17), *in search of Israel’s “KING,”* asking and stating:

“Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East and are come to worship him” (v. 2).

(These “wise men” [Gk., *magoi*, referring to “a sacred caste of individuals”] could *ONLY* be Jews in the dispersion [*cf.* Ps. 147:19, 20], descendants of Jews dating back to the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities [about 722 and 605 B.C.], residing in Gentile lands east of Jerusalem.)

ALL of the things seen in Matt. 1, 2 and Luke 1, 2, viewed together, *NOT ONLY* break a four-hundred-year silence *BUT ALSO* set the stage, at the outset, for that beginning some thirty years later with John the Baptist’s ministry in Matt. 3.

(Angels appearing after the manner seen in the referenced sections of Scripture *can ONLY* be understood as synonymous with the Lord Himself appearing.

Angels appearing in this manner *act under Divinely established laws, with their actions being seen as the Lord’s actions* [*e.g., cf.* Gen. 18:20-19:29; Ex. 3:2; Ps. 103:20; Acts 7:30].)

2) Matthew 3-9

The four-hundred-year silence broken by angelic activity in the opening two chapters of Matthew and Luke, points to *ONLY ONE* thing — the *ESTABLISHMENT* of that sphere of the *KINGDOM* still missing, the *ESTABLISHMENT* of the *HEAVENLY* sphere of the *KINGDOM*.

And, when the one being dealt with at the time that the silence was broken (“John,” in Luke 1:11ff) appeared on the scene some thirty years later (Matt. 3:1ff), fulfilling that stated in Luke 1:15-17, *the ESTABLISHMENT* of the long-awaited *HEAVENLY* sphere of the *KINGDOM* was in the *OFFING*.

The ministry of John the Baptist signaled the BEGINNING of SOMETHING UNPARALLELED in ALL of Jewish history.

John's ministry began an all-out, some three to three and one-half-year effort, to bring about Israel's repentance, with, again, the proffered HEAVENLY sphere of the KINGDOM in the OFFING.

And, when Christ took up and continued this same ministry, there was a manifestation of associated supernatural SIGNS unlike anything heretofore seen in the nation.

And these SIGNS, as clearly stated in John 20:31, had to do with bringing about Israel's belief that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (ref. previous comments in this article about this statement).

With the message being proclaimed to Israel — attended by supernatural SIGNS, with Twelve disciples and then Seventy others sent out — there was an all-out effort to bring about Israel's positive reaction to the message, resulting in the ESTABLISHMENT of the HEAVENLY sphere of the KINGDOM.

(Accordingly, note the NEARNESS of the HOUR.

The prophesied kingdom — with BOTH HEAVENLY and EARTHLY spheres — HAD to be brought into existence WITHIN the next few years.

There was NO alternate TIME! The Prophets had SPOKEN!

TIME in Daniel's Seventy-Week prophecy [Dan. 9:24-27], a prophecy covering 490 years, was about to run its course. ONLY about ten or eleven years remained in the prophecy when John the Baptist appeared on the scene in Matt. 3:1ff. And, ONCE this COMPLETE time [the full 490 years] had run its course, the kingdom, according to v. 24 in the prophecy, would be established.

Thus, because of the lack of TIME left in Daniel's prophecy, that which began to transpire with John's preaching in Matt. 3:1ff — Israel's REPENTANCE and ACCEPTANCE of their MESSIAH and His MESSAGE — was of the ESSENCE .)

The religious leaders in Israel SHOULD have known all of the preceding. And they, accordingly, SHOULD have led the masses under their teaching to respond positively to the message.

BUT, that's NOT what happened!

Though these teachers (mainly the fundamental Pharisees, the largest of the religious sects in Israel) *KNEW* certain things about these signs and the message being proclaimed (John 3:1, 2) they *DIDN'T* understand other related things (John 3:10).

And from the beginning, a REJECTION of Christ's message and an increasing HOSTILITY toward His ministry was seen.

Not too long after Christ began His ministry (which began with that revealed in John 1-3, followed by that revealed in Matt. 4:17-25 [cf. v. 12]), He gave the Sermon on the Mount (a connected discourse dealing with entrance into or exclusion from the proffered "kingdom of the heavens" [Matt. 5-7]).

And though rejection of the Messenger and His message can be seen prior to this time in John's gospel (2:18-25), the Sermon on the Mount is where rejection is seen beginning in Matthew's gospel (5:10, 11, 20, 22, 44; 7:13-27). And a constant rejection of the message and an increasing hostility toward the One proclaiming this message *can be seen BEGINNING at this early time and CONTINUING throughout Matthew's gospel, THEN, into and through the thirty-year Acts period.*

Note Christ's words about unbelieving Jews cast into "outer darkness" in Matt. 8:11, 12, which can only be synonymous with Jews cast into "Gehenna" in the previous Sermon on the Mount, in Matt. 5:22 (the word "hell," *Geenna* in the Greek text, should be translated [transliterated], "Gehenna").

Then in Matt. 9:32-34, setting the stage for Matt. 12:22-32 (where the same thing is more fully developed and dealt with), Israel's religious leaders, the Pharisees, both places, are seen *ascribing the miraculous SIGNS performed by Christ to Satan.*

(Both "Gehenna" and "outer darkness" [Matt. 5:22; 8:11, 12] are used in metaphorical respects relative to the Jewish people and unbelief/rejection of the message being proclaimed.

"Gehenna" was the place of refuse outside Jerusalem's walls, *on the SOUTH side* [which would be seen as a place removed from God, Who resides in the NORTH (Lev. 1:11)], describing the place awaiting unbelieving Israelites.

And "outer darkness" simply described a place *OUTSIDE the LIGHT* associated with the proffered KINGDOM, again, a place awaiting unbelieving Israelites.)

3) Matthew 12, 13, 16

In Matt. 12, presenting a continuation of the same thing previously seen in chapter nine — *ascribing to Satan the power behind the miraculous SIGNS being manifested* — the stage is set for the negative nature of that seen in the remainder of the gospel accounts, extending into and through Acts.

In chapter twelve, Jesus is first seen healing a man's "withered [extremely dry] hand" at the Synagogue, then healing others in the multitudes following Him (vv. 13-15).

Then, Jesus healed a man "possessed with a demon, blind, and dumb" (v. 22). And the Pharisees, already seeking to do away with Jesus because He had healed the man with the withered hand (v. 14), could only have been further infuriated.

The people seeing this were "amazed." *BUT, with Pharisaical leadership, they didn't know WHAT to believe* (v. 23).

(The structure of the Greek text shows that these people were in a quandary when they asked, "Is not this the son of David?"

The WAY that their question is worded shows that *they thought this MIGHT be the Son of David, BUT they really didn't think so.*)

The preceding illustrates *WHAT* Pharisaical leadership and teaching over the years had done and was continuing to do among the Jewish people.

The account in Matthew chapter twelve of Jesus healing a man “possessed with a demon, blind, and dumb” (v. 22), followed by the people’s reaction (v. 23) and then the Pharisees’ reaction to the whole of the matter (vv. 22-24), is *the MAJOR turning point in Matthew’s gospel*.

The Pharisees attributed Jesus’ actions (a “SIGN”) to Satanic power. And such a reaction on the part of the Pharisees *brought matters regarding Israel’s rejection of the proffered kingdom to a place heretofore unseen*.

Note Jesus’ statement in verses thirty-one and thirty-two:

“Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men.

And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world [Gk., *aión*, ‘age’], neither in the world [‘age’] to come.”

(“This age” would refer to Man’s 6,000-year Day, and “the age to come” would refer to the Lord’s 1,000-year Day, the Messianic Era.

And non-forgiveness would have to do with Israel in relation to *THAT* seen in the text, *THAT* being proclaimed to the nation, the HEAVENLY sphere of the kingdom, NOT the earthly sphere, the kingdom covenanted to David.)

For all practical purposes, the proffered kingdom, “the kingdom of the heavens,” *the HEAVENLY sphere of the kingdom*, was taken from Israel at this point in Christ’s ministry, though the announcement was not made until later, as stated in Matt. 21:43.

Then, following the Scribes and Pharisees having the effrontery to ask Christ for a “SIGN” (v. 38), “the SIGN of Jonah” was referenced (vv. 39, 40), *for matters were NOW moving in a more direct manner toward the Cross rather than the Crown*.

And, following this, *because of WHAT had occurred*, Christ gave a short discourse on Israel's desolate future, similar to that given at the end of Matt. 23, *AFTER* the announcement concerning the kingdom being taken from Israel (ch. 21).

And to further present the complete picture, *resulting from the climactic actions of the Pharisees in chapter twelve*, Christ, "*the SAME day went...out of the house [the house of Israel] and sat by the seaside [alluding to the Gentiles]*" (Matt. 13:1).

This was followed by four parables given outside the house (having to do with the Gentiles) and three additional parables given back inside the house (having to do once again with Israel).

The four parables given outside the house provide the course set for the Church during an impending 2,000-year dispensation (the third dispensation during Man's Day).

And the remaining three parables given back inside the house have to do with that seen at the end of chapter twelve, that which would happen to Israel following the impending 2,000-year dispensation.

(In the preceding respect, note once again Daniel's Seventy-Week prophecy.

By this time in Christ's ministry, little more than seven years, possibly eight, would have remained in Daniel's prophecy [by the time of Christ's subsequent crucifixion, all but seven years would elapse in this prophecy (vv. 25, 26)].

And, to allow time for events surrounding the Church [*necessary to procure a bride for God's Son and ESTABLISH the HEAVENLY sphere of the KINGDOM*], God simply STOPPED the chronometer marking off time in Daniel's prophecy, set Israel aside for a time, and began a new 2,000-year dispensation.

Then, when God has completed His plans and purposes for the existence of the Church, followed by His removing and judging the Church, the chronometer marking off time in Daniel's prophecy *will be REACTIVATED* [vv. 26, 27].

Seven years later, this prophecy will have been completed, with all things fulfilled in the last three parables in Matt. 13.

[Note an error often made regarding Daniel's Seventy-Week prophecy.

Numerous Christians, attempting to explain the present dispensation, talk about an unseen break in the prophecy. *BUT, there is NO unseen break in the prophecy. God simply STOPS and RESTARTS the chronometer marking off time in the prophecy*].

Ref. pp. 30, 31 of this article for comments on events and conditions *ONCE the FULL 490 years of Daniel's prophecy have run their course.*)

THEN, continuing the thought of Christ departing the house and going down by the seaside in Matt. 13:1, note Christ's question to His disciples following this time and Peter's response to this question in Matt. 16:15, 16:

"He [Christ] saith unto them [His disciples], But whom say ye that I am?

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

THEN, immediately following Peter's confession is Christ's statement regarding this confession and the building of His "Church" (vv. 17-19):

"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of the heavens: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

The complete passage (vv. 15-19) has to do with the Church in relation to "the kingdom of the heavens."

This is seen in verses fifteen and sixteen preceding Christ's reference to building His Church, and it is seen in verse nineteen following Christ's reference to building His Church.

The Church, about to be brought into existence, would be built on EXACTLY the SAME Rock which had been (remained through Acts) in place for Israel (cf. Acts 1:3-8; Rom. 1:16; 2:9, 10).

And that Rock had to do with Jesus in relation to the proffered kingdom, recognizing Him as "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt 16:16, 17; cf. John 20:31).

The SAME "life" in John 20:31, associated with the HEAVENLY sphere of the KINGDOM, was to be offered to those comprising the Church, the one new man "in Christ," about to be brought into existence.

And Matt. 16:15-19 clearly shows that realizing the "life" in John 20:31 is the SAME for Christians as it was for Israel.

(In Matt. 16:18, two different Greek words are used for "Rock":

"...thou art *Petros*, and upon this *Petra* I will build my Church."

Petros refers to "a small, detached stone"; and *Petra* refers to the opposite, such as "an unmovable, massive stone cliff."

The reference to Peter [*Petros*] continues the thought from the previous two verses [Peter's confession about Christ's identity and Christ's comment concerning this confession (vv. 16, 17)].

Then Christ — referencing Peter's confession through referencing Peter [*Petros* (vv. 16-18a)] — stated, "...upon *THIS* Rock [*THIS Petra*] I will build my Church" [v. 18b].

Note Lenski's statement in his Greek word studies:

"She [the Church] rests on the reality which Peter confessed, namely on Jesus, 'the Christ, the Son of the Living God'."

Then the continuing text [v. 19] connects the whole of the matter [vv. 15-18] to possessing *the keys of "the kingdom of the heavens"* and *binding and loosing relative to this kingdom*.

For information on v. 19, refer to the author's article, "Binding and Loosing.")

4) Matthew 21-25

The things occurring in Matt. 21-25 occurred within a three-day period, with the Olivet Discourse (chs. 24, 25) given two days preceding the crucifixion (cf. Matt. 21:1-9; 26:1, 2; John 12:1, 12, 13).

It was at the very end of the offer of "the kingdom of the heavens" to Israel that *THIS kingdom* was taken from an unbelieving, antagonistic, fruitless nation (Matt. 21:18-43, which had been brought into this condition by the nation's religious leaders.

And this is *WHY* Christ echoed the condemnatory words toward the fundamental Scribes and Pharisees seen in Matthew chapter twenty-three (cf. Matt. 12:24-45).

Israel's main body of religious leaders had, in the words of verse thirteen, "shut up the kingdom of the heavens against men [in the presence of men, the Jewish people]."

In the continuing words of the verse, *the Scribes and Pharisees would NEITHER "go in" themselves NOR allow the people under their teaching and control to "go in."*

The Pharisees, with the Pharisaical Scribes, had done more to "fill" Israel's cup of iniquity (cf. Gen. 15:13-16) than any other religious group in Israel.

Rather than filling the waterpots with water (John 2:1-11), they had filled them with something else.

And the ONLY end result which COULD follow, DID follow!

THEY had SHUT the door to the nation EVER realizing the HEAVENLY promises and blessings associated with the KINGDOM.

And, as a result, ALL of this was taken from Israel (cf. Matt. 12:24-32; 21:43; 23:33-39)!

5) Matthew 26-28

Then, the end of that which Israel's religious leaders wrought is seen in the concluding three chapters of Matthew.

They brought about the crucifixion of Israel's King, with the state into which the nation at large had been brought by this time seen in John 19:14, 15:

"And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he [Pilate] saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!

But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar."

The WHOLE of the matter, leading to the place seen in John 19:14, 15, is INCONCEIVABLE!

BUT it DID happen!

And what could ONLY be considered a REPETITION occurred during the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel in Acts.

And what can ONLY be considered a REPETITION occurred/is occurring during the offer of the kingdom to Christians today, though in a far more subtle way.

ALL of this is clearly revealed in the Scriptures for ALL to see and understand.

(The preceding relative to Christians and the proffered kingdom is clearly revealed in the first four parables in Matt. 13 and the epistles to the seven Churches in Rev. 2, 3.

For material on these sections of Scripture, refer to the author's books, *Till the Whole Was Leavened* and *I Know Thy Works*.)

Acts, Introducing the Epistles

The Book of Acts has to do with *a thirty-year transitional period following the gospels*.

Preceding Acts, during the time covered by the gospels, “the kingdom of the heavens” *was offered ONLY to Israel*.

During Acts, “the kingdom of the heavens” *was RE-OFFERED* to Israel; and also, *at the SAME time*, this facet of the kingdom *was OFFERED* to those comprising *the one new man “in Christ,” the Church, brought into existence in Acts 2:1, 2 and NOW the repository for the kingdom (cf. Matt. 21:43; I Peter 2:9-11)*.

But, though *OFFERED* to both during this time (“*RE-OFFERED*” to Israel, “*OFFERED*” to *the one new man*), an “order” was given for the proclamation of this message. Throughout these thirty years, *the message was to be proclaimed “to the Jew FIRST, and ALSO to the Greek [Gentile]” (Rom. 1:16; 2:9, 10)*.

Then, following Acts, “the kingdom of the heavens” *was offered ONLY to Christians, with NO distinction made between Jews and Gentiles, as they, TOGETHER, formed the one new man*.

And *THAT*, succinctly, shows the transitional nature of and place which the thirty-year Acts period occupies in Scripture.

(For more specific information on the preceding, refer to the author’s book, *The Acts Period*.)

1) Acts

Acts is a continuation of the gospels (a fifth gospel), and the gospels are a continuation of the O.T.

Taking matters back to “the beginning,” *showing the BASE upon which ALL that follows MUST rest*, the O.T. opens with the creation, ruin, and restoration of a kingdom (the heavens and the earth, forming a provincial kingdom within God’s universal kingdom).

And man was created to take and rule this restored kingdom in the place of the incumbent ruler, Satan (Gen. 1:1-28).

And, moving six more verses, to Gen. 2:3, the picture presented in the opening twenty-eight verses in chapter one is completed.

These opening verses, in skeletal form, provide the complete picture of *WHAT* God has done and is about to do relative to the heavens, the earth, man, and Satan.

Thus, these opening thirty-four verses of Genesis set the stage for *WHAT the WHOLE of succeeding Scripture is about.*

And the WHOLE of succeeding Scripture, in turn, provides ALL the sinews, flesh, and skin to properly clothe the skeletal framework set forth at "the beginning" (cf. Ezek. 37:1ff).

Thus, the SUBJECT of Scripture has been UNCHANGEABLY SET at "the beginning."

In that respect:

WHAT are the Gospels, beginning with John, about?

WHAT is Acts about?

WHAT are the Epistles about?

It was ALL UNCHANGEABLY SET at "the beginning" of the O.T., in Genesis!

And EXACTLY the SAME thing is seen once again at "the beginning" of the N.T., in John (1:1-2:11)!

The Gospels are about the subject matter introduced in Genesis at "the beginning" of the O.T., seen once again in John at "the beginning" of the N.T.

Acts, continuing from the Gospels, is about the subject matter in the Gospels.

And the Epistles, introduced by and continuing from Acts, are about the subject matter in Acts.

Study the Gospels, Acts, and the Epistles with the correct central subject matter in view, and you won't go wrong.

BUT, study them after any other fashion, and...

Acts begins by referencing events during the forty days between Christ's resurrection and ascension, during which time Christ instructed His disciples in things pertaining to "the kingdom of God" (1:1-9).

And Acts chapter two, a natural outflow of these verses, *MUST be understood accordingly* (ref. to the author's article, "Acts Chapter Two").

And with these two opening s introducing the subject of the book, carried over from the gospels, *the remainder of the book MUST, as well, be understood accordingly.*

Acts chapter two has to do with two main things:

- a) The Church being brought into existence (vv. 1, 2).
- b) And the beginning of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel by those comprising the newly formed Church (vv. 3-40).

And, throughout the remainder of the book, *the RE-OFFER* ("to the Jew first") and *the OFFER* ("and also to the Greek") *of the KINGDOM are in view, NOT salvation by grace.*

This is seen relative *to the Jews ALONE* in the first seven chapters, then *the Samaritans ALSO* in chapter eight (vv. 5-8).

Then, this is seen relative *to the Gentiles ALSO* in Peter's dealings with Cornelius and others with him in Acts 10:1-48.

This is seen in what is often called "The Jerusalem Council" in Acts 15:1ff (cf. Gal. 1-4).

This is seen in Paul and Silas' continuing message to the Philippian jailer (later, his house as well) in Acts 16:32-34.

NONE of this, or succeeding sections of Acts, has ANYTHING to do with the message of salvation by grace.

ALL is in complete alignment with Christ's last recorded words to His disciples immediately preceding His ascension, in Acts 1:7, 8 (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:14-18):

"And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

2) The Epistles

And the epistles simply present the same message, both during the Acts period and continuing following this time.

(Note that the epistles began to be written during the Acts period [33 A.D. to about 62 A.D.]. Some were written during this period, others following.)

The epistles were written to those *NOW in POSSESSION of the KINGDOM taken from Israel.*

The epistles were written to those *NOW in a POSITION to bring forth FRUIT for the KINGDOM* (note the first four parables in Matt. 13).

The epistles have to do with *a HEAVENLY inheritance awaiting faithful believers* (Eph. 1:3-11; cf. Heb. 3:1; I Peter 1:3-9).

And, with this inheritance in view, the epistles have to do with *instructions on OVERCOMING, rather than BEING OVERCOME, in the present warfare against those NOW occupying the heavenly places which Christians are destined to one day occupy* (cf. Eph. 6:10-18; II Peter 1:2-11; Rev. 2, 3).

The epistles present God's message to the "nation" *NOW in possession of that rejected and forfeited by Israel, occupying REGAL positions with Christ in the HEAVENLY sphere of the KINGDOM.*

And the epistles MUST be read and studied accordingly!

EITHER the existence of the Church results in the HEAVENLY sphere of the KINGDOM being established, with Christ and His co-heirs reigning FROM the HEAVENS in the stead of Satan and his angels, OR there can be NO establishment of the HEAVENLY sphere of the KINGDOM.

And the reasoning for that is quite SIMPLE and PLAIN!

The Church is NOW the repository for the HEAVENLY sphere of the KINGDOM, the “nation” spoken of in Matt. 21:43 and I Peter 2:9, 10, through which God has decreed that He will bring about the ESTABLISHMENT of this HEAVENLY sphere.

And Christians are presently being offered positions as co-heirs with Christ in this HEAVENLY sphere when THIS facet of the KINGDOM is ESTABLISHED, resulting in the EARTHLY sphere of the KINGDOM being restored to Israel (cf. Acts 1:6-8).

THIS is what the Epistles are about!

Climaxed in Revelation

After a few statements concerning the subject of the book (1:1-9), the Book of Revelation continues with the removal and judgment of the Church at the end of the dispensation (1:10-3:22), along with the result (4:1-11).

Then, once the Church has been dealt with in this manner, bringing to pass God's purpose for having called the Church into existence — procuring a bride for God's Son and making it possible *to NOW establish the HEAVENLY sphere of the KINGDOM* — God can turn back to Israel and complete his dispensational dealings with this nation.

A seven-sealed scroll is introduced in chapter five, outlining God's redemptive terms for the earth (sin had been reintroduced in Gen. 3, resulting in a ruined earth once again).

And Christ — *the ONLY One Who CAN redeem*, the One Who redeemed the earth in Gen. 1:2b ff — begins to break the seals of this scroll, redeeming the earth once again, in chapter six.

The breaking of the first seal on this scroll (6:1) is synonymous with God once again activating the chronometer marking off time in Daniel's Seventy-Week prophecy.

And the Jews in that day will find themselves *in the EX-ACT position* occupied by the Jews when the chronometer was stopped 2,000 years ago — having *JUST* crucified their Messiah (cf. Zech. 12:10).

Then, as the seals continue to be broken (chs. 6-8), the chronometer will continue to run. And the ultimate result will be *the FULL END of the TIME, with that stated at the beginning of Daniel's prophecy (v. 24) brought to pass* (Rev. 10:1-11:15):

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting [Heb., *olam*, ‘age-lasting’] righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.”

The completion of “time” in Daniel's prophecy will mark the FULL END of God's allotted 6,000 years for Man's Day.

It will mark the TIME when Christ and His co-heirs will take the kingdom from Satan and his angels.

It will mark a TIME at the end foreshadowed by a TIME seen at the beginning.

(For additional and more detailed information on the preceding section of this article, refer to the author's four-volume set on the Book of Revelation, titled, *The Time of the End.*)

Concluding Thoughts

Near the end of the Jewish dispensation, at Christ's first coming 2,000 years ago, a completely leavened Jewish nation existed (Matt. 21:18-42; 23:1ff).

Near the end of the Christian dispensation, immediately preceding Christ's second coming, which can only be the

present day and time, a completely leavened Christendom exists (Matt. 13:33; Rev. 3:14-21).

In Israel 2,000 years ago, the leavened state had to do with fruit-bearing in relation to the proffered "kingdom of the heavens."

In Christendom today, the leavened state *can ONLY have to do with the SAME thing as it did in Israel 2,000 years ago, with fruit-bearing in relation to the proffered "kingdom of the heavens."*

It HAS to be the SAME, for Israel was the repository for the HEAVENLY sphere of the KINGDOM then, and the Church is the repository for this sphere of the KINGDOM today. And Satan would fight THIS message in the Church unlike ANY OTHER message, EXACTLY like he fought THIS message 2,000 years ago in Israel.

But Satan has changed tactics in his dealings with the Church. He has all but silenced this message by placing the emphasis elsewhere, *invariably on "salvation by grace."*

And he has done this gradually, over time, misleading the masses.

The emphasis during this time has gradually shifted *FROM the message of the hour (the Word of the Kingdom) TO that which is NOT the message of the hour (salvation by grace).*

Numerous passages having to do with the proffered kingdom have been taken and taught as passages having to do, instead, with salvation by grace.

And doing something of this nature, of course, *NOT ONLY* does away with what the passages actually deal with *BUT* makes them deal with something foreign to the passages.

And, associated with the preceding, the complete Gospel of John has been taken by many to be a book written to the unsaved, telling them how to be saved.

Aside from doing away with the message that John deals with and substituting a message that he doesn't deal with, the introductory relationship that John provides for the Synoptics, Acts, and the Epistles is done away with as well.

And the mistranslation of *aion* and *aionios*, seen in almost any English translation printed during the last four hundred years, dating back to the 1611 KJV, certainly hasn't helped matters.

THIS is the STATE of the existing Church in the world today!
The REASON for the very existence of the Church has been IGNORED! Actually, this REASON is all but UNKNOWN!

And if anyone attempts to relate *the REASON for the Church's existence*, he will be met with askance looks, rejection, etc.

And the preceding will explain *WHY* the Church near and at the end of the present dispensation is depicted in Scripture as "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17b).

And, as well, it will explain *WHY* those comprising the Church at this time see themselves in a completely opposite respect, as "rich, increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (Rev. 3:17a).

And for thoughts on *WHAT part the LEADERSHIP in the Church has played and continues to play in ALL of this*, as seen in Israel's spiritual leadership 2,000 years ago, refer back to the data on pp. 19-25 of this article.

Though presently done in a far more subtle manner, there is really little to no difference in Israel's leadership *THEN* and Christendom's leadership *TODAY* when it comes to the message concerning the proffered kingdom.

They did everything within their power to do away with the message *THEN*, and they are doing and will do everything within their power to do away with the message *TODAY*!

They “shut up the kingdom of the heavens” in the presence of the Jewish people *THEN*, and they are doing *EXACTLY the SAME thing* in the presence of Christians today!

ONLY the tactics have changed!

Today, they take numerous Scriptures (even a whole book [John’s gospel]) which deal with the proffered “kingdom of the heavens” and relate them to the message of salvation by grace, using them to deal with the unsaved.

And doing this, *again, they do away with THAT being dealt with and substitute THAT NOT being dealt with.*

In the words of Matt. 23:13 once again, they “shut up the kingdom of the heavens” in the presence of those to whom they minister, in the presence of Christians.

And, as in Israel, so in Christendom. The masses have been and are being misled by this type leadership.

BUT, in Scripture, NOTHING has CHANGED!

The central message of Scripture remains the SAME, regardless!

The central message of Scripture is about fruit-bearing in relation to the proffered “kingdom of the heavens!”

The central message of Scripture is about God bringing to pass THAT which He set in motion 6,000 years ago at the time of man’s creation (Gen. 1:2b-28)!

And God is seen working 6,000 years to bring the WHOLE of the matter to the place which He has decreed, as seen in Gen. 2:1-3 and John 2:1-11!

In the first dispensation during Man’s Day, God worked 2,000 years through a twenty-generation lineage extending from Adam through Shem to Abraham.

In the second dispensation during Man’s Day, God worked another 2,000 years through a forty-two generation lineage extending from Abraham through David to Christ (actually,

seven years yet remain to be fulfilled in this dispensation).

And in the third dispensation during Man's Day, God is working another 2,000 years, extending from Christ's first coming to His second coming.

And the WHOLE of the matter is about bringing to pass that set in motion 6,000 years ago in Gen. 1:2b-28!

God, through Israel, ESTABLISHED the EARTHLY realm of the KINGDOM during the past dispensation, and He offered the HEAVENLY realm to Israel near the end of the dispensation.

BUT Israel spurned the offer, the HEAVENLY realm of the KINGDOM was taken from Israel, and the Church was called into existence to be the recipient of that which Israel had rejected.

And God, through the Church, WILL ESTABLISH this HEAVENLY realm of the KINGDOM after the present dispensation has run its course.

And THIS will complete the KINGDOM, allowing NOT ONLY Christ and His co-heirs to move in and take the HEAVENLY sphere of the KINGDOM from Satan and his angels BUT allow the EARTHLY sphere of the KINGDOM, the KINGDOM covenanted to David, to be restored to Israel.

*THAT'S WHAT the central message of Scripture is about!
And THAT'S WHAT should be proclaimed!*

Can John Be Used to Proclaim the Gospel of Grace?

Can material in John's gospel, beyond John 1:4, 5 — "the light shineth in darkness" — be used in a secondary, interpretative respect to deal with the unsaved?

Understanding a few basic things about this gospel allows the question to become self-answering.

"Belief" in John's gospel, at the time that it was written (during the Acts period), had to do with the Jewish people, signs, Jesus recognized as "the Christ, the Son of God," and "life" in the proffered "kingdom of the heavens."

"Belief" in John's gospel during the Acts period ALSO had to do with Christians; then beyond the Acts period it had to do with with Christians ALONE. And, throughout this time, it had/has to do with recognizing Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of God," and "life" in the proffered "kingdom of the heavens."

"Belief" in John's gospel has to do with the SAVED ALONE, ISRAEL during past time and CHRISTIANS during present time.

CHRISTIANS are the present repository for the KINGDOM, the ones NOW in a position to hear and respond to the same message which Israel rejected, the ones NOW in a position to bring forth fruit for the KINGDOM (note "the fruits thereof" in Matt. 21:43; cf. Matt. 13:1-33).

Christ began building His Church in Acts 2:1, 2 on that stated in Matt. 16:16.

The Church is built upon Jesus, recognized as "the Christ [the One anointed King over the earth], the Son of the living God [the Son destined to replace the incumbent son, Satan]."

THIS statement, seen in Matt. 16:16 and John 20:31 (cf. John 11:27), was inseparably connected with SIGNS, directing attention to that which the Jewish people were called upon to believe during BOTH the offer and re-offer of the KINGDOM.

THIS is what the Church, NOW the repository for the KINGDOM, is built upon; and THIS is what those forming the Church, apart from SIGNS, are called upon to believe.

WHETHER dealing with Israel during the offer and re-offer of "the kingdom of the heavens" OR Christians, forming the Church, during the present offer of "the kingdom of the heavens," it is ALL about JESUS "the CHRIST, the SON of the Living God."