

A Subject Problem (II)

The Church, the New Testament
Acts, the Epistles

The four gospels relate *the OFFER of “the kingdom of the heavens” to the NATION of ISRAEL*, beginning with John the Baptist, then continuing with Jesus, the Twelve, and the Seventy.

THIS was the HEAVENLY aspect of the kingdom that had been promised to Abraham and his seed 2,000 years earlier, *NOT the EARTHLY*, though also promised at the same time.

Note this promise of BOTH the HEAVENLY and EARTHLY aspects of the kingdom in Gen. 22:17, 18 (cf. Gen. 26:3-5; 28:10-15):

“That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”

The HEAVENLY aspect of the kingdom is seen in Abraham’s “seed” being multiplied “as the stars of the heaven.”

And the EARTHLY aspect is seen in Abraham’s “seed” being multiplied “as the sand which is upon the seashore.”

THEN, clearly showing that the whole of the kingdom was an OUTWORKING of God’s five-part command to Adam in Gen. 1:28 (with BOTH HEAVENLY and EARTHLY shown in the animal kingdom, over which man was to rule), Abraham’s “seed,” BOTH HEAVENLY and EARTHLY, would one day “possess the gate of his enemies.”

“The gate” was the place in that day where governmental affairs of the city were conducted.

“The gate,” in the REGAL respect seen in Gen. 22:17, 18, referred to the SEAT of GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS.

THUS, possessing “the gate” in this REGAL respect had to do with CONTROLLING the GOVERNMENT.

And “the enemies” in these two verses referred to the GENTILE NATIONS on the EARTH (or, in a larger respect, to SATAN and his ANGELS [having been put down] as well).

The EARTHLY Aspect of the Kingdom

The EARTHLY aspect of the kingdom, the kingdom later covenanted to David (II Sam. 7:1-17), had been established at Sinai under Moses about 1,500 years preceding Christ’s first coming. When the Glory — God’s presence among His people — had filled the completed Tabernacle at Sinai (one year following the Exodus), a theocracy, centered in the camp of Israel, came into existence (Ex. 40:1-38).

The Israelites, during the two hundred ten years that the nation spent in Egypt, had fulfilled the first three parts of the command given to Adam in Gen. 1:28. *They had been FRUITFUL, they had MULTIPLIED, and they had FILLED the land of Egypt*, a type of “the world” (Ex. 1:1-7).

Note particularly Ex. 1:7 in the light of the first three parts of the command in Gen. 1:28:

“And God blessed them, and God said unto them, BE FRUITFUL, and MULTIPLY, and REPLENISH [‘FILL’ (Heb. *mala*)] the earth...” (Gen. 1:28a).

“And the children of Israel WERE FRUITFUL, and increased abundantly, and MULTIPLIED, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land WAS FILLED [Heb. *mala*] with them” (Ex. 1:7).

THEN, as previously stated, within God’s EXACT timing, Moses led the nation out of Egypt; and a theocracy was established at Sinai.

And once the nation, within the theocracy, had entered the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the

Jewish people were to fulfill the fourth and fifth parts of the command given to Adam at the time of his creation.

“...and *SUBDUE* it: and have *DOMINION* [*RULE*] over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen. 1:28b).

The Jewish people, once in the land, over time, were to SUBDUE ALL of the Gentile nations (Deut. 7:1-26).

THEN, the Jewish people, possessing “the gate” of these SUBDUED nations, were to RULE these nations within the theocracy which had previously been established at SINAI. And the nations were, in turn, to be blessed through Israel (Gen. 12:1-3; 22:17, 18).

(A sharp *DISTINCTION* was made between Israel and the nations through Abraham’s grandson, *JACOB*).

Prior to Jacob’s day, the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob did NOT exist in a completely separate respect in relation to governmental control of the HEAVENS and the EARTH — i.e., the descendants of Abraham being able to “possess the gate of his enemies” in both HEAVENLY and EARTHLY realms.

Prior to Jacob’s day, Satan and his angels ruled from the HEAVENS through ALL of the nations on EARTH [Dan. 10:12-20].

BUT, following Jacob’s day, things changed completely. Jacob’s twelve sons and their descendants [eventually, the nation of Israel during Moses’ day and beyond] existed in a manner completely separate from this rule [Dan. 10:21]. Israel was NOT to be “reckoned among the nations” [Num. 23:9].

WHAT made the difference, pre- and post-Jacob’s day?

Note Isa. 43:1:

“But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.”

Because of a special creation in Jacob, God looks upon Israel as a nation completely separate from the Gentile nations [Deut.

7:6]. And the heavenly prince over Israel, an angelic prince ruling through Israel, is "Michael," along with his angels [NOT "Satan," along with his angels, as exists among ALL of the other nations, the Gentile nations (Dan. 10:10-21)].

Thus, because of this special creation in Jacob, God could remove the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob from Egypt during Moses' day and establish this nation in a theocracy in the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — a theocracy completely separate from Satan's rule, a theocracy comprised of individuals who *COULD* and *WOULD* one day "subdue" and *THEN* "possess the gate" of their "enemies."

Apart from this special creation in Jacob, God could NOT have done ANY of the preceding, seen in its preliminary, beginning stages in Ex. 12:40, with completion awaiting a future date.)

This theocracy established at Sinai under Moses WAS to be, and WILL YET PROVE to be, the beginning fulfillment of God's command to Adam.

The *EARTHLY* aspect of the kingdom, referenced by "the sand which is upon the seashore," HAD BEEN established.

The *HEAVENLY* aspect of the kingdom, referenced by "the stars of the heaven," AWAITED establishment.

This visible manifestation of the *EARTHLY* aspect of the kingdom could be seen for about the next 800 years. BUT, because of an ever-increasing, continuous covenantal disobedience among the Jewish people, including harlotry, God eventually withdrew His Glory, bringing an end to the O.T. theocracy as it existed in that day (Lev. 26:14ff; Deut. 28:15ff; Ezek. 8-11).

THIS END of the theocracy though, because of God's promises, COULD ONLY anticipate a new day when the theocracy would be RESTORED to Israel, under a New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-37; Ezek. 43).

The HEAVENLY Aspect of the Kingdom

THEN, about 600 years beyond the end of the O.T.

theocracy, John the Baptist appeared on the scene, with a call for national repentance, announcing that “the kingdom of the heavens” was “at hand [had drawn near].”

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

And saying, Repent ye [a pl. pronoun, referencing *ALL Israel*]: for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand” (Matt. 3:1, 2).

(The expression, “the kingdom of heaven” [lit. “the kingdom of the heavens” (“heavens” is always plural and articular in the Greek text)] appears thirty-two times in Matthew’s gospel and is peculiar to this gospel, with the possible exception of John 3:5. Some good Greek manuscripts have “the kingdom of the heavens” instead of “the kingdom of God” in this verse.

However, in one respect, it is immaterial whether “the kingdom of God” or “the kingdom of the heavens” appears in John 3:5, *for both reference the SAME kingdom.*

BUT, because of the introductory nature of John’s gospel to the Synoptics, Acts, and Epistles, it is quite likely that the original reading in the Greek text has “the kingdom of God” in John 3:3 and “the kingdom of the heavens” in verse five, showing their COMMON REFERENCE at the outset of the N.T. [cf. Matt. 19:23, 24].

The expression, “the kingdom of God,” could be understood to reference a larger aspect of God’s kingdom than just the earth with its associated heavens [i.e., referencing God’s universal kingdom (Ps. 103:19)]; *BUT, textually and contextually, it is NOT used that way in the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles [it doesn’t appear in Revelation].*

The expression, “the kingdom of God,” is *ALWAYS* used in the N.T. in a synonymous sense to “the kingdom of the heavens.” The two expressions in the N.T. reference *the SAME facet of the kingdom, the HEAVENLY.*

In this respect, “the kingdom of God” is ALWAYS used in the N.T. to reference the kingdom offered to Israel in the

Gospels, re-offered to Israel in Acts, and offered to the Church in Acts and the Epistles [e.g., cf. Matt. 21:43; Acts 1:3, 6; 20:25; 28:23, 31; I Cor. 6:9, 10; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5].)

John the Baptist, making the announcement in Matt. 3:1, 2 as the forerunner of the Messiah (v. 3), preparing the way before Israel's Messianic King at His first coming, partially fulfilled Isa. 40:3.

Note Both Isa. 40:3 and Matt. 3:3 together:

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a high-way for our God."

"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."

(This verse from Isa. 40:3, with parts quoted or referenced and applied to John the Baptist in Matt. 3:3, as previously stated, was only partly fulfilled by John. Elijah, Christ's forerunner when He returns, will complete the fulfillment [Mal. 4:5, 6; cf. Matt. 17:10-13].

Note that this announcement to Israel by Christ's forerunner in Isa. 40:3 is followed by the Messianic Era [vv. 4, 5], *BUT NOT so in Matt. 3:3*:

"Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

And the Glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it."

John was the Elijah of his day as Elijah will be the John of his day. One went out ahead of and prepared the way for Christ at His first coming, and the other will go out ahead of and prepare the way for Christ at His second coming [Matt. 11:10-15].

Had the Jews received the Message and Messenger at Christ's first coming, Elijah would have appeared instead of John. And Isa. 40:3-5 would have been completely fulfilled, with Mal. 4:5, 6 correspondingly being fulfilled.

BUT, God, in His omniscience, knew what the Jewish people would do and sent John instead.

Elijah's day, fulfilling *this SAME* role, is yet future.)

In John's day, the King of the kingdom Himself was present. And Israel — beginning with John's preaching, followed by Jesus' preaching, then the preaching of the Twelve and the Seventy — was being offered *THIS heavenly sphere of the kingdom, based on national "repentance."*

"Repentance" could ONLY have had to do with covenantal disobedience, going back to times of the past earthly sphere of the kingdom, which would be restored with Israel's acceptance of the proffered heavenly sphere of the kingdom.

(Note that NATIONAL sins are involved, and the passage of generations is MEANINGLESS!

"...the iniquity of the fathers" will be visited "upon the children unto the third and fourth generation [contextually referencing *unlimited generations*] of them that hate me" [Deut. 5:9b].

In Matt. 23:34-37, Christ ascribed to the Jewish people "*ALL the righteous BLOOD SHED upon the earth,*" going all the way back to Abel, 2,500 years before Israel was even a nation.

And in Zech. 12:10, the Jewish people at the time of Christ's return will be seen just as guilty of Christ's *SHED BLOOD* as the Jewish people who were present and committed this act when Christ came the first time, 2,000 years earlier.)

To properly understand the GOSPELS, Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets MUST be properly understood.

To properly understand ACTS, the Gospels MUST be properly understood.

To properly understand the EPISTLES, the Gospels and Acts MUST be properly understood.

And to properly understand REVELATION, the whole of preceding Scripture MUST be properly understood.

THIS is the Divine unity inherent in the way that the Spirit moved some forty different men over a period covering about 1,500 years to pen God's complete Revelation to man, *with THIS Revelation commenting on and explaining ITSELF.*

The N.T., continuing from the O.T., is about the *SAME* thing previously introduced and dealt with in the O.T.

The N.T. is about God's five-part command to "the first man," "the first Adam" in Gen. 1:28 being fulfilled by "the second Man," "the last Adam" in Rev. 11:15.

The N.T. is about "the kingdom of this world" (the kingdom under Satan and his angels), becoming "the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ" (the kingdom under Christ and His co-heirs).

Note Gen. 1:28 and Rev. 11:15 placed together in this respect:

"And God blessed them, and God said unto them, BE FRUITFUL, and MULTIPLY, and REPLENISH ['FILL'] the earth, and SUBDUE it: and HAVE DOMINION ['RULE'] over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms ['kingdom'] of this world are ['is'] become the kingdoms ['kingdom'] of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

Six thousand years and God's redemptive/restorative work during three dispensations separate these two verses.

EVERYTHING lying between, throughout time covering these three dispensations, after some fashion, emanates out of Gen. 1:28 and finds its fulfillment in Rev. 11:15.

NOW, a multifaceted question:

IF the preceding is TRUE, and it IS...

IF the CENTRAL message seen throughout Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets has to do with a KINGDOM, and it DOES...

IF THIS KINGDOM has two spheres — HEAVENLY and EARTHLY — and it DOES...

IF ISRAEL and the EARTHLY sphere of the KINGDOM — the KINGDOM covenanted to DAVID — occupy the center of attention throughout Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets, and they DO...

IF ISRAEL and the HEAVENLY sphere of the KINGDOM — “the KINGDOM of the HEAVENS” — occupy the center of attention throughout the Gospels and Acts, and they DO...

IF THIS HEAVENLY sphere of the KINGDOM was offered to, rejected by, and taken from Israel, and it WAS...

IF THIS HEAVENLY sphere of the KINGDOM is presently being offered to Christians, and it IS...

IF THIS, accordingly, is the central subject of the epistles, and it IS...

IF THIS KINGDOM, with its EARTHLY facet restored as well, is realized in the Book of Revelation, and it IS...

THEN, WHY are Christians talking about everything BUT THIS overriding, central subject of ALL Scripture?

WHY DON'T Christians talk about and deal with WHAT Scripture talks about and deals with?

WHY! WHY! WHY...!

The answer is easy to address and answer. It is addressed and answered in the first four parables in Matt. 13, or the seven epistles to the seven Churches in Rev. 2, 3.

BUT, Christians ignore and/or misinterpret those two sections of Scripture as well, for reasons given in each section.

(Viewing the complete history of the KINGDOM — from Genesis to Revelation — note that the EARTHLY sphere of the kingdom was to be realized FIRST during Adam's day [at the time of Adam's creation, a theocracy centered in Eden, on the earth], AS the EARTHLY sphere of the kingdom was to be realized FIRST during Moses' day [at the time a Jewish nation was brought into existence, a theocracy centered in the earthly land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob].

Had Adam's fall NOT occurred, the HEAVENLY sphere of the kingdom could ONLY have been in the offing for Adam and his descendants at a subsequent time, AS the HEAVENLY sphere of the kingdom was in the offing at that subsequent time when "the second Man," "the last Adam," was on earth and offered Israel "the kingdom of the heavens."

And BOTH the HEAVENLY and EARTHLY spheres of the kingdom will be realized at a future time WHEN "the second Man," "the last Adam," with His co-heirs ["Abraham's seed, and heirs..."], take the kingdom, realizing the HEAVENLY sphere.

At the same time, "the second Man," "the last Adam," will also dwell in the midst of a restored Jewish nation on EARTH, in a restored theocracy, the EARTHLY sphere restored [cf. Isa. 66:1a].)

Message to Israel in the Gospels and Acts

NOW, in order to properly understand the offer of the HEAVENLY sphere of the kingdom to Christians in the epistles, let's take the matter from its beginning in the N.T., starting with the offer of the kingdom to Israel in the gospels, then with the re-offer to Israel in Acts, along with a beginning offer to Christians in Acts as well, then with a continuing offer to Christians today.

(The whole of the matter of that stated in the preceding, introductory paragraph, in the light of currently existing conditions in Christendom, *is amazing in ONE respect, BUT not so in ANOTHER.*

It is amazing in one respect because of that which currently exists. We have a Book — Moses, the Psalms, the Prophets, the Gospels, Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation — which *is about ONE central subject*, with practically the whole of Christendom dealing with the Book *as if it were about ANOTHER central subject.*

BUT, this is NOT amazing in ANOTHER respect, for Scripture plainly declared that *the present dispensation would end EX-ACTLY like the past dispensation ended/will end* [Matt. 13:1-33; Luke 18:8; Rev. 2, 3].

The past dispensation *ended/will end with the Jewish nation in a completely leavened state* [including *HOW* the seven years to complete the dispensation will end yet future (Dan. 9:24-27; Matt. 23, 24)]. And, as previously stated, the present dispensation *WILL end THIS SAME WAY as well.*

1) *The Offer of the Kingdom in the Gospels*

NOTHING could be more plainly revealed and stated than simply reading what the Scriptures clearly have to say about Christ, at His first coming, appearing to the Jewish people as their KING and offering to them the HEAVENLY sphere of the Messianic Kingdom (Matt. 2:1-6; 3:1ff; 4:17ff).

BUT, though clearly and plainly revealed and stated, *THIS*, as previously seen, is far from what is believed and taught almost universally throughout Christendom today. In fact, what is believed and taught, for the most part, *has little correspondence with what the Scriptures plainly reveal and state.*

And the REASON...

Invariably, after some fashion, it is ALWAYS the SAME!

The FOUNDATIONAL BUILDING BLOCKS in Genesis have been IMPROPERLY dealt with or IGNORED!

The FOUNDATIONAL BUILDING BLOCKS in GENESIS, introducing the O.T., begin with the message of salvation by grace, for light and life, out of darkness and death, MUST be dealt with, brought into existence, FIRST.

And EXACTLY the SAME thing is seen at the beginning in JOHN, CONTINUING from the O.T. and INTRODUCING the N.T.

Note again two verses beginning *GENESIS* and two verses beginning *JOHN*:

“And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

And God said, Let there be light: and there was light” (Gen. 1:2, 3).

“In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not” (John 1:4, 5).

These two verses at the beginning of *GENESIS* and two verses at the beginning of *JOHN* set forth the message of salvation by grace, within context, at the beginning of each Testament.

NONE of the other four books of Moses, all five books together forming the Pentateuch, begin in such a manner.

NOR does any one of the three Synoptics, or Acts (actually, a fifth gospel, forming a Pentateuch at the outset of the New, as the books of Moses formed a Pentateuch at the outset of the Old) begin in such a manner.

The two Testaments MUST begin with THESE two books — the O.T. with GENESIS, the N.T. with JOHN.

Apart from the two Testaments beginning in THIS manner, they would begin at a place other than the stated “beginning” (Gen. 1:1-3; John 1:1-5) relative to the subject matter at hand (Gen. 1:4ff; John 1:6ff).

They would begin at a place AFTER “light” had ALREADY shined in the darkness, AFTER “life” from the dead had already been brought to pass.

And THAT’S what the WHOLE of the message following these two introductory places in each Testament is about.

In GENESIS, it is about a continuing restoration of the creation AFTER light/life had been brought into existence, foreshadowing that later seen in John.

THEN, in JOHN, it is about a continuing restoration of the creature, of man, AFTER light/life had been brought into existence.

And, whether in the initial part of the restoration (light shining in the darkness/life from the dead) or in the continuing part of the restoration, EVERYTHING is with a view to a completed restoration in a KINGDOM with two spheres, HEAVENLY and EARTHLY.

It is evident from the question which the disciples asked Christ in Acts 1:6, following His forty-day, post-resurrection ministry — “...Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” — that *the EARTHLY sphere of the kingdom* was still ingrained within their minds, *even at a time following the proclamation of the HEAVENLY sphere of the kingdom to the nation of Israel for some three years.*

Evidently they knew, possibly Christ had dealt with the subject during the preceding forty days, that with Israel’s acceptance of the HEAVENLY sphere of the kingdom, the EARTHLY sphere of the kingdom would be restored to the nation as well (Acts 1:1-6).

Though Israel had rejected the HEAVENLY sphere of the kingdom throughout the gospel accounts, an all-out effort was made in Acts to reverse the course which the nation had previously taken, resulting in Israel subsequently realizing BOTH spheres of the kingdom, with Israel possessing “the gate” of their enemies in BOTH realms, BOTH HEAVENLY and EARTHLY.

2) *The Re-Offer of the Kingdom in Acts*

During time covered by the gospels, "the kingdom of the heavens" had been offered to, rejected by, and taken from Israel (Matt. 3:1ff; 4:17ff; 10:1ff; 21:17-43).

Beginning in Acts chapter two, on the day of Pentecost, 33 A.D., fifty days following Christ's resurrection, ten days following His ascension, the Church was brought into existence as the new repository of *the HEAVENLY sphere of the kingdom* (Acts 2:1, 2).

And that which immediately transpired *was the beginning of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel* (Acts 2:3ff).

This re-offer began with the one hundred twenty, initially forming the Church, proclaiming the message in the native tongues of the Jews gathered from "every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:3-13).

Then, this opening message was proclaimed and concluded by Peter addressing the complete assembly (vv. 14-40), resulting in about 3,000 Jews believing the message (v. 41).

NOTHING could be more plainly revealed and stated than Christ, ten days following His ascension, bringing into existence the Church and making this new entity the repository for the HEAVENLY sphere of the Messianic Kingdom, which had previously been taken from Israel (cf. Matt. 21:43; I Peter 2:9-11).

And this will also show the fallacy of attempting to teach that the Church began at a time later than the beginning of Acts chapter two (mid-Acts, or at the end of Acts), immediately prior to the beginning of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel on the day of Pentecost in 33 A.D.

God HAD to possess an entity in possession of the kingdom taken FROM Israel in order to begin OFFERING this kingdom TO ISRAEL once again, the RE-OFFER of the KINGDOM.

THUS, since the RE-OFFER of the kingdom began in Acts 2:3ff, the Church HAD to be brought into existence PRIOR to this time, in Acts 2:1, 2.

(One thing which shows the whole of the preceding — the formation of the Church on the one hand and the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel on the other — are the two different Greek words translated “fill.” One [*pleroo*] has to do with the formation of the Church; and the other [*pimplemi*] has to do with Joel’s prophecy and the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel.

There is a sharp distinction between *the WAY* that these two words are used during the thirty-year Acts period, both textually and contextually. And understanding this distinction and *HOW* this distinction has to do with that which occurred throughout that stated in Acts 2:1-4 *will greatly facilitate a proper understanding of NOT ONLY this second chapter BUT of different things which occurred throughout other chapters of Acts during this period, things peculiar to this period.*

Refer to the author’s article, “Acts Chapter Two,” for additional information on the preceding.)

The Thirty-year Acts period, covering all twenty-eight chapters of the book, *is NOT difficult to understand IF the information in the second chapter is properly understood.*

Scripture explains Scripture. That’s the way God has designed His Word. *And introductory Scripture — e.g., the first thirty-four verses of Genesis and the first sixty-two verses of John — are important beyond degree.*

And so it is in Acts, revealing the formation of the Church (the entity *NOW* in possession of the kingdom) and information concerning the beginning of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel by this new entity.

Get matters right HERE, in Acts chapter two, and you WON’T go wrong in Acts chapters three through twenty-eight.

THEN, correctly understanding Acts will have a direct bearing on correctly understanding the epistles (some written during the Acts period, some after this time).

During the Acts period, this message concerning the kingdom was “to the Jew first [the re-offer of the kingdom],

and also to the Greek [the new entity *NOW* in possession of the kingdom]" (Rom. 1:1-18; cf. Rom. 2:5-16 [Romans was written during the Acts period]).

The number ONE problem, the MAJOR problem, which Christians have with understanding Acts is attempting to understand the book in a non-contextual manner.

Individuals attempt to read salvation by grace into the book, relative to both Jew and Gentile, rather than the Word of the Kingdom, relative to both Jew and Gentile.

To follow this erroneous line of interpretation in Acts — reading salvation by grace into passages which, instead, have to do with the Word of the Kingdom — *can ONLY lead to ONE end. It can ONLY lead to interpretation which will take an individual into NOT ONLY more erroneous interpretation in Acts BUT into erroneous interpretation in the epistles as well.*

As the Synoptics flow out of John, Acts flows out of all four Gospels. And the epistles, in turn, flow out of Acts.

A progression of this nature exists in Biblical interpretation, necessitating a proper, correct beginning.

Again, get it RIGHT at the beginning! THEN, you will have a PROPER FOUNDATION on which to build as you move on into the book.

BUT, get it WRONG at the beginning, and...

(Ref. the author's book, *The Acts Period*.)

This book begins with Moses and works through the Gospels prior to dealing with Acts.)

Message to the Church in Acts and the Epistles

As in the preceding section about Israel in the Gospels and Acts, we'll take the matter in this section from the beginning, starting with the offer of the kingdom to the Church in Acts, then in the epistles (Pauline, Hebrews, General, and the seven epistles in Rev. 2, 3).

1) *Offer of the Kingdom, in Acts*

An inseparably related problem to that of seeing Acts dealing with the message of salvation by grace is, correspondingly, seeing Jews who had believed the proclaimed message in Acts becoming members of the Church brought into existence in Acts 2:1, 2 (e.g., 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1, 7).

In fact, an overall interpretation of this nature is almost universally held in Christendom today.

(A proper understanding of Acts chapter two, introduced by chapter one [in turn, introduced by the Gospels, which were introduced by the O.T.], *can ONLY be seen as FOUNDATIONAL* to a proper understanding of Acts chapters three through twenty-eight which follow.

And contrariwise, an improper understanding of *the FOUNDATIONAL nature of Acts chapter two*, seen on almost every hand today through attempts by numerous Christian leaders to teach that the chapter deals with salvation by grace, will do away with a proper understanding of subsequent chapters in Acts, continued in the Epistles.

WHY are Bible teachers dealing with this chapter in the light of the message of salvation by grace, usually attempting to explain vv. 38, 39 in this same respect?

The whole of Peter's message [Acts 2:14-40] to Jews in Jerusalem on this day *had NOTHING to do with salvation by grace*.

Rather, the message CLEARLY had to do with the beginning of the re-offer of the KINGDOM to Israel, to a people who had ALREADY been saved, who were ALREADY beyond that stated and dealt with in Gen. 1:2, 3 and John 1:4-5.

Let it be forever stated:

John the Baptist, Jesus, the Twelve, and the Seventy *NEVER, at ANY time, proclaimed the message of salvation by grace to the Jewish people [NOR to the Samaritans in John 4].*

The proclaimed message, throughout the Gospels, ALWAYS had to do with the proffered KINGDOM.

And EXACTLY the same thing can ONLY be seen relative to the re-offer of the KINGDOM to Israel in Acts.

The message ALWAYS had to do with the SAME people and the SAME proffered KINGDOM — a re-offer of THIS KINGDOM — from the Gospels, NEVER with the message of salvation by grace.

The 3,000 saved on the day of Pentecost were saved from an unbelieving nation, an “untoward generation” [v. 40] and were added to those who had believed during the previous offer of the kingdom in the gospels [vv. 41, 47], NOT added to the newly formed Church in Acts 2:1, 2.

The statement concerning believing Jews on the day of Pentecost and beyond being “added to the Church” [v. 47, KJV] is misleading in this respect. The word “Church” is NOT found in the majority of the better Greek manuscripts. And the verse, from the Greek text, should read in a similar manner to the same thing previously seen in v. 41 [“added to them”].

THEN, something similar is seen through the use of the word “Church” [Gk., *Ekklesia*] in the first nine chapters of Acts, prior to any saved Gentiles believing the message [Acts 10ff], adding to the previous one hundred twenty originally forming the Church in Acts 2.

[The Greek word *ekklesia* means “called out” (a compound word [*ek*, meaning “out,” and *klesis*, meaning “called.”]). And the word could be used of “Israel,” as in Acts 7:38, or of “Christians.” The word simply refers to one group called out of another group (both Israel and Christians called out of the nations, the world).

However, the word *ekklesia* is not used in Acts relative to Christians until after chapter ten, until after Gentiles began to be added to the body of Christ (used prior to chapter ten in Acts 5:11; 7:38; 8:1, 3; 9:31).

And the use of the word in these first nine chapters of Acts could ONLY refer to saved Jews called out of the unbelieving nation, being added to the previous number of believing Jews, NOT added to the newly-formed *Ekklesia*.

The word *ekklesia* (always translated “Church” in Acts, except “assembly” in 19:32, 39, 41), appears eighteen times in the book beyond 9:31.

And, particularly during the Acts period, *this word MUST ALWAYS be understood contextually*].

Believing Jews, whether on the day of Pentecost or beyond, throughout the thirty-year Acts period, were added to the Jews having previously believed the message.

And the Jews having previously believed the message would take the matter all the way back to John the Baptist’s ministry at the beginning of the offer of “the kingdom of the heavens” to Israel [Matt. 3:1ff].)

The IMPOSSIBILITY, from a Scriptural standpoint, that believing Jews during the Acts period were added to the Church, with its beginning seen in Acts 2:1, 2, can be seen on almost every hand.

FIRST, the proclaimed message ALWAYS had to do with the proffered KINGDOM, NEVER with salvation by grace.

The message to Israel in the Gospels was simply continued in Acts. “The kingdom of the heavens” was offered to Israel in the Gospels, and the SAME kingdom was re-offered to Israel in Acts.

The WHOLE of the matter pertaining to BOTH the Jewish people and the message is that simple!

SECOND, an all-out effort can be seen throughout Acts to see Israel saved [saved relative to the message being proclaimed].

Paul, during this time, evidently realizing that which could be brought to pass through the entire nation believing the message, *stated that he would be willing to give up his place in the kingdom IF Israel’s salvation could somehow be effected through such an act* (Rom. 9:1-3).

BUT, note WHAT could ONLY have occurred IF the entire nation HAD believed, becoming part of the existing Church, as commonly believed and taught.

The nation of ISRAEL would have eventually CEASED to EXIST!

Individuals having comprised the nation, rather than remaining part of the creation “in Jacob” (Isa. 43:1) would have become new creations “in Christ” (II Cor. 5:17).

And, an end of this nature for believing Israel would NULLIFY the REASON for Paul’s desire to see Israel saved in Rom. 9:1-3. In effect, it would make NULL and VOID God’s ENTIRE PURPOSE for having called the nation into existence.

Thus, remain with that which Scripture clearly states about ISRAEL and the CHURCH — two completely separate entities which will ALWAYS remain separate, called into existence for completely separate purposes.

2) Offer of the Kingdom, in the Pauline Epistles

The Church was called into existence to be the recipient of that which Israel had rejected, “the kingdom of the heavens,” *the proffered HEAVENLY sphere of the KINGDOM* (cf. Matt. 12:31-45; 13:1-23; 21:18-43; Gal. 3:26-29; I Peter 2:9, 10).

Israel was the past repository of the complete kingdom, BOTH HEAVENLY and EARTHLY spheres (Gen. 22:17, 18).

Israel realized the EARTHLY sphere in the O.T. and was offered a realization of the HEAVENLY sphere in the Gospels and Acts, with a corresponding restoration of the EARTHLY dependent on Israel’s acceptance of the HEAVENLY.

With Israel’s rejection of the HEAVENLY sphere in the Gospels, *THIS facet of the kingdom* was taken from Israel.

And THIS HEAVENLY facet of the kingdom was taken from Israel with a view to the Church being called into existence to be the recipient of that which had been taken from Israel.

NOTHING short of this and what it portends will explain, textually and contextually, the EXISTENCE of the CHURCH!

(NOW, time has been spent on the preceding, even repeating parts, because of the gravity of the error presently taught throughout Christendom on this WHOLE overall subject.

To begin, the common teaching in Christian circles, because of their failure to see *TWO entirely separate spheres of the kingdom, deals with Matt. 21:43 in relation to the kingdom covenanted to David, the EARTHLY sphere of the kingdom.*

And knowing that *this kingdom can NEVER be taken from Israel*, they deal with this verse in relation to *generations of the nation, NOT the nation at large.*

That is, the kingdom would be taken from the present unrepentant generation but returned, given to, a future repentant generation [a somewhat forced interpretation, resulting from an incorrect understanding of the subject].

BUT, note that an interpretation of this nature introduces something completely foreign into the text — *the kingdom covenanted to David in place of the proffered kingdom of the heavens.*

And, through so doing, the central reason for the existence of the Church [*the entity NOW in possession of and allowed to bring forth fruit for the kingdom*] is done away with.

THEN, note the outcome of all *THIS* as seen in the Pauline epistles, later in Hebrews, the general epistles, and Rev. 2, 3.

WHEN the N.T. epistles are seen in an incorrect setting — i.e., NOT coming out of a correct understanding of the Gospels and Acts — these epistles could ONLY be improperly understood, for they would be understood non-contextually.

And the place to go in order to understand the preceding is “Paul’s gospel,” *the message which the Lord had taught him face-to-face, the message which the Lord had called him to proclaim throughout the Gentile world* [cf. Acts 9:15; Rom. 11:13; Gal. 1:1, 15, 16].

THEN, it should go without saying that *ALL* of the epistles [Pauline, Hebrews, General, and Rev. 2, 3] are comprised of information pertaining to different facets of Paul’s gospel.)

Shortly after Paul’s conversion (Acts 9:3ff; 26:13-18; cf. Acts 2:40), the Lord took him aside, into a place in the Arabian desert, then evidently into heaven. And, over a period of some three years, the Lord taught him the gospel which he was to

carry throughout the Gentile world, *which had to do with an inheritance in the heavenly sphere of the kingdom taken from Israel in Matt. 21:43. (cf. II Cor. 12:1-7; Gal. 1:11-20; Eph. 3:1-6).*

And, if an individual wants to know what the Pauline epistles are about, *he MUST read them in the light of Paul's gospel, NOT in the light of salvation by grace.*

("Paul's gospel" is invariably misunderstood as the simple *gospel of grace*, which results from misunderstanding matters pertaining to the kingdom from Acts, which, in turn, results from misunderstanding matters pertaining to the kingdom from the Gospels, which, in turn, results from misunderstanding matters pertaining to the kingdom from the O.T., going all the way back to the opening verses of Genesis.

The ROOT of ANY error can ALWAYS be traced back to Genesis.)

Note Gal. 1:6-12 for a classic example of *BOTH* the importance of and the misuse of Paul's gospel:

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another *GOSPEL*:

Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the *GOSPEL* of Christ.

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other *GOSPEL* unto you than that which we have preached unto you, *let him be accursed.*

As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other *GOSPEL* unto you than that ye have received, *let him be accursed.*

For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

But I certify you, brethren, that the *GOSPEL* which was preached of me is not after man.

For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

The use of the word “gospel” [Gk., *euaggelion*], meaning “good news,” *MUST ALWAYS* be understood contextually, for there is *NOTHING* in the meaning of the word itself which relates the nature of the good news.

Despite the preceding, the word “gospel” is used in Christian circles today, far more often than not, as *somewhat of a synonym for the message pertaining to salvation by grace. And the whole of the N.T. is THEN interpreted accordingly.*

As an example of the preceding, note *HOW* “the gospel of Christ” in the seven verses beginning this opening chapter of Galatians is invariably understood by Christians today.

The word “gospel” is used five times in these verses, with NOT ONLY the whole of that stated having to do with THIS gospel BUT the nature of the “good news” in view is plainly stated (vv. 11, 12).

In spite of the preceding though, in spite of Paul’s statement concerning which facet of the good news was in view — *which was OTHER than the gospel of grace — Christians invariably miss it, seeing only ONE thing.* They see these verses referring *SOLELY* to the good news pertaining to salvation by grace.

HOW has the Church come into such a state — all segments, liberal and so-called fundamental alike — where a simple reading of a text within its context can’t be properly handled? *The text has been made to reference something that it plainly DOESN’T reference.*

For those wanting to know, the answer to that question can be found in the first four parables of Matt. 13 and/or the letters to the seven Churches in Rev. 2, 3.

BUT, the preceding raises another issue, presenting another problem. *IF* Christians can’t read and understand a simple, straightforward text like Gal. 1:6-12 (*cf.* Gal. 2:2-14; 3:6-9), *HOW* are they going to understand something more complex like the parables in Matt. 13 or the letters to the seven Churches in Rev. 2, 3?

Something not understood at all and something which would surprise, probably shock, numerous Christians would be to find out EXACTLY HOW Paul used the word “gospel” throughout his epistles, WITHOUT exception.

Paul, throughout his epistles, ALWAYS used THIS word in a completely opposite respect to the way that it is invariably used in Christian circles today.

Paul ALWAYS used THIS word in his epistles in a completely UNIFORM manner, ONLY ONE WAY — as a reference to the good news which had been delivered to him by “the revelation of Jesus Christ,” following his conversion (e.g., II Cor. 4:3-6; Gal. 1:7-12; Eph. 3:1-6).

And THIS good news had NOTHING to do with salvation by grace.

THIS good news was for those who had ALREADY been saved by previously hearing and responding to the good news concerning salvation by grace.

And Paul used the verb form of this word [Gk., *euaggelizo*, often translated “preach,” or “preach the gospel”] EXACTLY the SAME way.

(Paul used the noun form of this word [*euaggelion*] sixty times and the verb form [*euaggelizo*] twenty-two times in his epistles, more times than used in all the remainder of the N.T. books combined.

And the use of these two words in the Gospels, Acts, general Epistles, and Revelation is completely consistent with HOW Paul used the words in his epistles, needing NO explanation at any point concerning which aspect of the “gospel” was being referenced, for, from the contextual usage throughout, NONE would be necessary.

The complete N.T. — the gospels, Acts, Epistles, Revelation — uses these two words in the SAME consistent manner:

In the GOSPELS, the words are used referencing the kingdom offered to Israel.

In ACTS, the words are used referencing the kingdom being re-offered to Israel, and, at the same time, being offered to individuals comprising the one new man "in Christ."

In the PAULINE EPISTLES, HEBREWS, and GENERAL EPISTLES, the words are used referencing the kingdom [taken from Israel] being offered to individuals comprising the Church.

Then in REVELATION [10:7; 14:6; the only two places where the words appear], they are used in a different manner yet, though completely consistent with their previous usage.)

Thus, as previously seen, Paul used both of these words *ONLY ONE WAY* throughout his epistles. He used these words to reference the main crux of his ministry — the good news pertaining to that encompassed within the mystery, which had been delivered to him, which he, in turn, had been called to proclaim to Christians throughout the Gentile world (Eph. 3:1-11; Col. 1:25-29).

And the Christians to whom Paul ministered would have easily understood his use of these two words from the context of that which he had either previously proclaimed or written.

And, since this was the message of the hour, something which Paul had proclaimed to Christians throughout the Gentile world, something which Christians understood and would expect Paul to reference, they would easily know what he meant by his extensive use of the word "gospel."

a) Central Thrust of Paul's Ministry

This *central thrust* of Paul's ministry (to the Gentile world) becomes *self-evident* as one reads through the Book of Acts and the Pauline epistles. Paul proclaimed both *the gospel of the grace of God* and *the gospel of the glory of Christ*, and he proclaimed the good news pertaining *to the grace of God* with a view to then being able to proclaim the good news pertaining *to the glory of Christ*. Paul explained to individuals *HOW they could be saved*, with a view to subsequently being able to explain to them *WHY they had been saved*.

For example, note how plainly the matter is outlined in Paul's final message to the Christians in Ephesus, through their elders (Acts 20:24-32).

Or, for that matter, *note also how plainly the matter is outlined in Paul's epistle to the Christians in Ephesus (2:1-22). And similar verses can be seen in other epistles, NOT ONLY in the Pauline epistles BUT in Hebrews and the general epistles as well.*

(BUT, note that the Spirit's work among the unsaved, a passing from death unto life [Eph. 2:5], is SPARINGLY dealt with in Paul's epistles. And, evidently to avoid possible confusion, in his epistles, Paul NEVER dealt with salvation by grace in connection with the noun or verb forms of the word for "gospel."

The epistles are simply NOT about the gospel of grace.

The epistles have been written to saved individuals, to those who have already passed from death unto life, relating and dealing with a continuing aspect of the salvation message, with a view to one day occupying positions with Christ in the HEAVENLY sphere of the Messianic Kingdom.

[This, for example, is completely in line with HOW Scripture deals with Abraham's salvation and calling.

Scripture has to do with things pertaining to Abraham's calling, NOT with things pertaining to his prior salvation.

In fact, Scripture DOESN'T even deal with Abraham's prior salvation. Rather, Scripture, following a reference to Abraham marrying Sarah, begins with Abraham's calling (*which could ONLY have been AFTER he was saved*), at the age of seventy, continuing from that point. And verses such as Gen. 15:6, often used as references to Abraham's salvation, years following his calling (usually using Rom. 4:3), should be understood accordingly (cf. Gen. 11:27-12:3; Ex. 12:40, 41; Gal 3:8, 17, 18)].

b) Gospel of Grace Referenced, Dealt with, BUT...

Though the gospel of grace is, at times, referenced and dealt with in Paul's ministry, the word "gospel," *through-*

out Paul's entire recorded ministry, is ONLY used ONE time to reference the gospel of grace (Acts 20:24). And, as recorded by Luke, Paul is careful in this section of the Book of Acts to clearly distinguish between the gospel of grace and the gospel which he had been taught by the Lord and called to proclaim throughout the Gentile world (cf. vv. 25, 26).

Some type distinction or explanation of this nature would, of course, have been completely unnecessary throughout the Pauline epistles. As previously stated, the Christians, with whom Paul dealt, were quite familiar with the main focus of his ministry and would need no clarifying explanation.

In fact, a clarifying explanation of this nature would have been completely out of place.

As previously seen, the word "gospel" (in its noun or verb form) is NEVER used in the Pauline epistles to reference the gospel of grace. Paul used these two words ONLY ONE WAY throughout his epistles, which is a way that would have been understood by the recipients of his epistles in the first century.

Paul used these words to reference the message which the Lord had taught him, which he had been called to proclaim throughout the Gentile world (cf. Col. 1: 5, 6, 23), *NOT to reference the gospel of grace.*

And Paul's gospel, as plainly stated in Eph. 3:1-6, has to do with Jews and Gentiles, in one body, being "fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph. 3:6; cf. Gal. 3:29). And being "fellowheirs" *can ONLY* be referring to the inheritance (*HEAVENLY*) taken from Israel and being offered to the new creation "in Christ" (*to BOTH Jews and Gentiles in one body*).

Note Eph. 3:1-6, clearly stating the matter:

"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

Which in other ages [Gk., *geneais*, 'generations'] was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:"

Thus, when you see the word "gospel" in the Pauline epistles, as relative to *HIS GOSPEL* in Eph. 3:6, *KNOW that Paul is NOT referencing the gospel of grace. Rather, Paul is referencing the on-going aspect of the "good news."* *KNOWING and ADHERING to the way Paul uses the word "gospel" will prevent ALL types of interpretative errors and problems in this realm.*

3) Hebrews, the General Epistles, Revelation, 2, 3

The word "gospel," in both its noun and verb forms, is used sparingly in Hebrews, the general Epistles, and Revelation. The word is only found two times in Hebrews (4:2, 6), four times in I Peter (1:12, 25; 4:6, 17), and three times in Revelation (10:7; 14:6 [twice]). The word is not found in James, II Peter, I, II, III John, or Jude.

The word throughout Hebrews and I Peter is used in the same manner as seen in Paul's epistles, though used in a different manner in Revelation.

In Revelation the word is used relative to "the mystery of God" being completed (10:7), *i.e.*, relative to "the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:1) being fully opened up at the end of the Tribulation.

And the word is used twice in this closing book of Scripture relative to the message proclaimed by the 144,000 throughout the Gentile world during the last half of the Tribulation (14:6; *cf.* Matt. 24:14).

a) Hebrews

Hebrews is built around five major warnings.

The first warning has to do with Christians neglecting “so great salvation” (2:1-5).

The second warning has to do with Christians under Christ and their “*HEAVENLY calling*” (3:1), seen in the antitype of the Israelites under Moses and their “*EARTHLY calling*” (chs. 3, 4).

(Note that the account of the Israelites under Moses has a dual fulfillment yet future in the antitype.

One part of the fulfillment has to do with Israel in relation to an *EARTHLY calling* [the kingdom covenanted to David restored to Israel, in the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob].

And the other part of the fulfillment has to do with Christians in relation to a *HEAVENLY calling* [Christ and His co-heirs taking the kingdom, replacing Satan and his angels in the heavens].

The account in Hebrews chapters three and four clearly has to do with *Christians and the HEAVENLY sphere of the kingdom* [Heb. 2:1-5; 3:1ff]. *Israel and the EARTHLY sphere of the kingdom* are dealt with elsewhere.)

The third and fourth major warnings in the book (6:1-6; 10:26-39) draw from the first and second major warnings and are about the same thing, dealt with after a different fashion.

And the fifth major warning (12:14-17), drawing from the first and second warnings as well, has to do with the forfeiture of one’s birthright, a way of dealing with the matter after a different fashion yet.

And it should go without saying that the word “gospel,” appearing twice in chapter four, is used in a contextual manner, having to do with the antitype of the Israelites under Moses, with Christians under Christ.

b) *The General Epistles, Revelation 2, 3*

The general epistles and the seven epistles in Rev. 2, 3 are about *EXACTLY the SAME subject* seen in Hebrews and the Pauline epistles, though from different perspectives yet.

And the four usages of the noun and verb forms of the word for “gospel” in I Peter (1:12, 25; 4:6, 17) are in complete keeping with the subject matter in the book, which, as previously stated, is in complete keeping with the subject matter in the Pauline epistles (*cf.* II Peter 3:15-17), Hebrews, the six general epistles, and the seven epistles in Rev. 2, 3.

Message of Scripture

The message of Scripture — having to do with angels, man, and the government of the present heavens and earth, from the time of the creation to the time of the destruction of the present heavens and earth — is told on the pages of Scripture, beginning with Moses in Genesis and concluding with John in Revelation.

Scripture is REGAL in nature.

Scripture begins in a REGAL manner in Genesis, remains this way throughout, and concludes this way in Revelation.

And Scripture should be studied accordingly!

Scripture should be studied in the light of FOUNDATIONS, set forth at the beginning, and in the light of ITSELF, seen throughout!

Everything rests on a BASE, a FOUNDATION, EVEN the earth suspended in space (Job 26:7; 38:4-7), and Scripture interprets, explains ITSELF (I Cor. 2:9-13)!

ALWAYS build on the BASE, and ALWAYS interpret Scripture in the LIGHT of ITSELF!

Do it GOD’S WAY IF you want to know WHAT HE has to say in HIS Book!

Do it MAN’S WAY, which is ANY OTHER WAY, and...!