

# The Remnant

*“Even so then at this  
present time also there  
is a remnant according to  
the election of grace.”  
Romans 11.5*

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## IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

*Irresistible: Impossible to successfully resist.*

*Grace: Favor, goodwill, mercy, and love.*

**T**hus far in this series on the Doctrines of Grace we have seen that the Holy Scriptures of Eternal Truth testify that all of humanity fell into a state of condemnation and total depravity by the original sin of our first father Adam. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned...Therefore as by the offence of one [Adam] judgement came upon all men to condemnation...(Romans 5.12,18).”

Furthermore, it has been shown that from all eternity, from before the foundation of the world, God the Father chose a people for himself in his Son, who assumed the office of Mediator for that people, and became the Surety of salvation for them.

“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love (Ephesians 1.4).”

“For there is one God, and one, mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2.5).” “He was made a priest forever: “...The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec (Hebrews 7.21).” He assumed the responsibility for the salvation of his people. “By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament (Hebrews 7.22).”

It was for the elect that Christ died, and for them only. “Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son...As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him...I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine... (John 17.1, 2, 9).”

Now we come to the doctrine of irresistible grace. Here, if our understanding is illuminated by God the Holy Spirit, we may see how the plan of redemption is revealed to the elect. In the effectual calling of the elect, bankrupt sinners are brought to experience the salvation of the Lord. The eternal purpose of God is made manifest to the spiritually dead sinner. “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation (lived) in times past in the lusts of our flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others (Ephesians 2.1-3).”

Effectual calling is an irresistible act of the Holy Spirit in which he convinces sinners of their corrupt and sinful condition, enlightens their minds, and enables them to embrace Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour by working faith in them. “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out (John 6.37).” “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2.8-9).”

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The proclamation of the gospel is the bringing of the good news to sinners who have been made alive and capable of receiving the message preached. The preaching of the gospel story cannot, and does not generate life in the dead sinner. This regeneration (being born again spiritually from above) of one dead in sins is the sovereign act of Almighty God. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day (John 7.44)."

Only one who views himself as being in need of a Saviour desires to come to God. The dead sinner does not believe there is a God or that he is in need of God. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (Hebrews 11.6)." "...for whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Romans 14.23)."

How then does one come into possession of faith? It is evident from the Scriptures that all men do not have faith. "And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith (2 Thessalonians 3.2)." Faith is not an act of man's will. Man contributes absolutely nothing to the work of his salvation because he cannot. "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy (Romans 9.15-16)."

If the sinner could cooperate in his salvation, it would not be all of grace. The Bible declares that salvation is totally of grace without works of any kind, including faith contributed by man. "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work (Romans 11.6)." It is essential for the sinner to possess faith in order to experience communion with God. "...This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent (John 6.29). " Faith is the work of God the Holy Spirit within the elect. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith (Galatians 5.22)." Paul wrote, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that (faith) not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2.8-9)." Again, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake (Phillippians 1.29)."

Faith is a fruit or product of the Holy Spirit. The sinner is enabled to believe in God as he is revealed in the Scriptures; he views and receives Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, able to deliver him from his lost and sinful condition. "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed (Romans 10.9-11)."

The Scriptures leave little room for argument that God will save all for whom Christ died to redeem. "And when the Gentiles heard this they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed (Acts 13.48)." This salvation of the Lord cannot be resisted. God is omnipotent and immutable. "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed (Malachi 3.6)."

The same God who spoke the universe into existence has engaged his power to secure for himself a people to reside with him in glory. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did fore-

know, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us (Romans 8.28-31)?"

Those whom the Father foreknew or loved from eternity, he chose and predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son. Christ is the firstborn, or elder brother, of a great family of children. Many who deny the efficacy of the power of God to secure the salvation of his elect, would "make God a liar." The Spirit makes the positive statement in Romans 8.30 that God, *has* predestinated, called, justified, and glorified his saints. This action has already been completed by the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing remaining to be done by man.

To assert that God only offers salvation in the gospel to dead sinners, and that he leaves it to the choice of their depraved and corrupt will to accept the work of Christ or not, is the greatest lie that can be told. Jesus told the unbelieving Jews, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life (John 5.39-40)." The simple reading of the Scriptures, or the preaching of the gospel story does not convince dead sinners to come to Christ. It takes something far greater to accomplish this.

"Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father (John 6.65)." The unregenerate or natural man will not accept this truth. Indeed, no one that is not illuminated by the Spirit, can receive any of the truths contained in the Scriptures. "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him (John 6.66)." Many of the followers of Jesus would not accept his teachings. Today the same is true of all not led of the Spirit. "...A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven (John 3.27)."

The effectual working of God the Holy Spirit in his calling dead sinners to life in Christ is not from any merit foreseen in them or from any cooperative

action on the part of man. It is an act of free and sovereign grace toward such as are totally dead in trespasses and sins. The same power that brought again the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, gives spiritual life to the dead sinner and enables him to embrace and obey the truths of the gospel. “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power...(Psalm 110.3).”

Well has it been taught from ancient times that the Spirit works his sovereign will when, where, and how he pleases. “The wind bloweth where it listeth (desires), and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit (John 3.8).” Consequently, the unborn child in the womb, though born in original sin, is saved by the work of Christ, as was John the Baptist: “...and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb (Luke 1.15).” How comforting it is to know that the helpless victims of abortion, who have no voice in this world, have a redeemer that is mighty to save. Likewise, those of the elect with afflictions of mind, whose sanity betrays them, whatever the cause, have an able advocate with the Father. No other doctrine is superior to the revealed truths of the Scriptures that proclaim the sovereignty of Jehovah over all his creation. With the prophet Jonah we may exclaim, “...Salvation is of the Lord (Jonah 2.9).”

If grace is not irresistible, then none can be saved. It is a fact that man by nature is the enemy of God. The natural man hates, disbelieves, and has no regard for God or his truths. “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2.14).”

The Lord does not consult dead sinners in the work of salvation, but bestows his grace freely upon whom he will according to his eternal purpose. “For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will (John 5.21).” Again, “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will (Ephesians 1.11).” Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift, for the things that are impossible with man are possible with God (2 Corinthians 9.15, and Luke 18.27).

“...for the judgement was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification (Romans 5.16).” One offence brought judgement upon all mankind, but regardless of how many sins are committed, the free grace of God has brought righteousness and justification to the elect. “For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance (Romans 11.29).”

The Almighty is not a man that he must change his mind or correct his actions, for he is perfect. What God has given he will not take back.

If the Lord so wills, we shall examine the doctrine of the preservation and final perseverance of the saints through grace at another time.

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## A NOTE ON THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE

**I**t is a pleasure to be able to present the next article, written by Elder David K. Mattingly of Indianapolis, Indiana, to our readers. In this day of apostasy, the enemies of the truth attack, twist, and deny every Bible doctrine. That of the Godhead—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—is certainly no exception.

Nowadays, the enemies of our God call into question the use of the terms “Father” and “He,” substituting such foolish notions as a “Father-Mother God,” or even denying that God is a personal Being. They deny Son’s effectual work. They reduce the Holy Spirit to an “it” or an “influence.”

Elder Mattingly’s article is lengthy, so it must be published in two or more installments. Consider this a blessing, because the author was blessed to thoroughly address most of the major issues involved in the doctrine of our God; and his treatment of the subject being spread over more than one issue of *The Remnant* will give our readers more time to consider this weighty subject, if the Lord is pleased to bless them to that end.

## THE GODHEAD

**A**rticle 1 of the Statement of Principles of *The Remnant* states the following: “The eternal existence, sovereignty, immutability, omnipotence, and perfections of Jehovah God; He has revealed Himself as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these sacred Three are One; Jesus Christ was and is God manifest in the flesh, and in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”

There is only One Jehovah God. He is revealed as Father, Son, and Spirit. The Son, Jesus Christ, is God. These are some of the details that are found in the Statement of Faith that the publisher/editor of this paper acknowledges. There may be some who call themselves Old School Baptists who will not be in full agreement with the above stated Article I. However, it is an expression that is supported by the vast majority of Primitive Baptists, and language similar to this statement will be found in the Articles of Faith of most of our churches.

Some may object to calling this belief the Doctrine of the Trinity. They point out this term is nowhere to be found in the Bible. That is true, but a lot of expressions we feel comfortable in using are not found in the Bible. Try to find these terms in the scriptures: Original Sin, Total Depravity, Particular Redemption, Sovereign Grace, Absolute Predestination. Do I need to continue?

We do not mind using such expressions that we think define the positions that are articulated in the Bible. So it is with the Trinity. Everyone may have a slightly different idea what the Trinity is, but as I understand the term I believe it is taught in the Bible. Yet, I do not mind the objection to the term. I prefer myself simply to speak of the Godhead. On the surface our stated views make little sense. How can anyone come up with the idea there is but One True and Living God; yet we call Him Father, Son, and Spirit? Isn't that three? And how can the Son be the same as the Father? If you see a man and his son walking down the street without even giving any thought to the matter you know there are two, not one, person in your view. You also know the son is less than the father in at least two respects. He is less in rank. It is expected he is to be in subjection to his

father. He is also less in age. A son is never older than his dad. He is not even equal in age to his dad. So, how can the Son of God in fact be God? These have been the questions raised by **Arians**. These are folk named after **Arius**, the man who gave rise to the doctrine the Son is not of the same substance as Jehovah God, but He was created by Jehovah; and is therefore, less than the eternal God. In their view He is literally the Son of God, but not God. Yet, the Bible speaks of Christ as God.

There are also the Unitarians. I am not necessarily speaking about the denomination given that name. Rather, I am speaking about folk who believe the Deity exists only in One Being, without making any substantial difference between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. After all, Jesus said, “I and my Father are one (John 10.30).” Yet, I'm sorry to point this out, but, in Jesus' own words there is a distinction made. He uses the first person, singular pronoun, “I” when He spoke of Himself but He uses the noun, “Father” to describe the One with whom He identified. That makes two. Therefore, it creates a problem to run the Three so completely together into one so that no distinctions are made between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

The subject of the Godhead is an immense subject. Let me give the reader some advice. You will need to see the full picture of the Godhead that is laid out in the revelation of Scripture in order to come close to understanding how He, the One God, is revealed as Father, Son, and Spirit. When you do this you will be able to bring together particular verses to see how they coordinate to describe what revelation tells us about God. If your starting point is a verse here, and a verse there, you will only find verses that seem to contradict the verses you have used as your starting point. I believe our brethren have rightly seen the more complete picture of the Godhead when they spoke of the One God seen as Father, Son, and Spirit. I believe they rightly acknowledge the Son is God. But there is no single chapter or verse in the Bible that brings together everything we hold. It is only as we examine what is said about God from Genesis through Revelation that we can cite the various scriptures to show how they integrate into the doctrine we hold.

I believe the Bible makes three major points concerning the Godhead.

## I. ONE GOD

The first point is there is but One True and Living God. Many gods may be claimed by many different religions, but there is but One. The Hebrew children were made to focus upon this One God. Moses declared: "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD," and He was the only One whom Israel was commanded to love (Deuteronomy 6.4-5). This is the God who had appeared of old unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and He as well is the One God that is known to Christian believers. So, Paul told the believers at Corinth "we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one (1 Corinthians 8.4)."

Simple as it is, this is a fundamental truth. No professor of the religion of Christ should question it. Believers are not called to worship and serve several or many gods. The saints do not credit one god for some things and another god for other things as the ancient Greek and Latin worshippers did. The people of God are not polytheistic. They confess there is but One God.

More space could be given to quote more verses than the two already used, but it really is not required. Since it is so readily accepted that there is only One True and Living God the two verses already quoted should be sufficient.

## II. THE THREE PERSONS

The second point is the One God, Jehovah, is manifested in Three Persons: Father, Son, and Spirit. The Son is in the Person of Jesus Christ, and He is also referred to as the Word. The principle names for the Spirit are the Holy Spirit, or, as referred to frequently in our English Bibles, the Holy Ghost.

Although the delineation of the Persons in the Godhead are more fully disclosed in the New Testament, the Old Testament in a remarkable way foreshadows the plurality in the Godhead. This is shown from the very beginning of the Bible in one of the words that is used to speak of God. Even though the Hebrew people were taught there was but One True and Living God, they used a word for God that is in the plural.

The word, Elohim is correctly translated "Gods." This is the Hebrew name used most of the time in referring to God throughout the book of Genesis. It

is the only word for God found in the first chapter. Literally, Genesis 1.1 should read, "In the beginning Gods." However, the English translators rightly understood that more than One God was not intended so they put the word in the English to indicate a single Being.

Consistent with the Hebrew, verse 26 states, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." The English translators cannot be faulted for using poor grammar. Technically, the use of the singular noun for God would require the singular pronouns so the text would read, "let me make man in my image, after my likeness"; but instead they kept the name of God, Elohim, in the singular in translation but gave the literal translation of the pronouns in the plural persons.

In the next verse, however, they again translated "Elohim" in the singular but also translated the text literally as it is found in the Hebrew. In the Hebrew even the inspired writer had the pronouns in the singular. The text reads: "So God created man in his own image, in the likeness of God created he him; male and female created he them." The fact the children of Israel were commanded to focus upon just One God but widely used a name for God that was in the plural form foreshadows the doctrine of the plurality within the one essence of the Godhead.

The plurality of the numbers is more clearly established in the New Testament. Because there are numerous texts that mention the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and because the Bible student is well aware of this fact, I shall at this point quote only a couple of verses to prove the point.

The first verse I cite is the word of Christ when He commanded His disciples to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28.19)."

The second verse is from John's epistle. He said: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one (1 John 5.7)."

More scriptures will be cited later when an examination is made concerning the distinctiveness of each Person. However, I acknowledge it is not enough to show there are Three Persons called the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It also must be shown that each of these Three Persons make up the Godhead.

## A. THE FATHER

As it is true believers require little to prove there is but One God, it is also true little is required to show that He that is repeatedly referred to in the Bible as the Father is, in fact, God. There is an abundance of scriptural evidence to support this truth. It is a truth so ingrained in the soul of the child of God that it is embraced without the necessity of a lot of proof. Those who demand evidence that the Son is God have absolutely no problem confessing the Father is God. For this reason only a few verses will be cited to show He is God. Phrases connecting God and Father are frequently used in the New Testament. Here are some of the references from the various New Testament writers. Paul greeted the saints at Rome: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 1.7)." James said: "Therewith bless we God, even the Father (James 3.9)." Peter wrote: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (I Peter 1.3)." John also greeted "the elect lady and her children" with the words: "Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father (2 John 1,3)." Jude addressed "them that are sanctified by God the Father (Jude 1.1)." It is not necessary to go further with this. Each of these inspired writers spoke of God as the Father. To state that the Father is God is to set forth apostolic doctrine. Since this is the case it is also unnecessary to examine fully what the Bible states about the character of the Father, such as the fact He is the eternal, omnipotent, immutable, omnipresent, all-wise, and the all-knowing God. If I were writing a book, I should want to show the evidence He has these attributes; but since I am simply writing an article, I will not delve further into these things. Since it has already been proven the Father is God it should be evident He has the full nature attributed to the Godhead.

Before leaving this subject it should be noted that God is Father both in His relationship to His people and in His relationship to His Son, Jesus Christ. When Paul spoke of Him as "God our Father" he was speaking of Him as what He is to us. He is our Father. We are His people. Thus, Jesus taught the disciples to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven (Matthew 6.9)." When Peter spoke of Him as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," he was speaking of Him as what He is to Jesus Christ. If we

are to understand that Christ is manifested as the Son, we must understand also by simple reasoning that He has a Father. He that is Jesus' Father is the same one that is Father to the saints. This two-fold relationship is powerfully shown when Jesus told Mary shortly after His resurrection, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God (John 20.17)."

## B. THE SON

The primary controversies concerning the Godhead have centered upon the Son of God. Arians have long contended the Son is not Jehovah. Since it is not a contested issue whether or not the Father is God, I spent little time and provided only a few Bible verses to prove He is God; but due to the historic battles that have raged in the past over whether or not Jesus Christ, in fact, is Deity, I must take more time, and cite more scriptures to prove He too is God. It has already been shown the various inspired writers frequently used the phrase "God the Father." Believers often speak in like manner concerning "God the Son." However, nowhere does the Bible ever use the expression "God the Son." Although the Bible does not use this exact expression, the Bible does refer to Christ as God. To prove He is God, verses stating this fact will be presented. I will also show He is God by noting what the Bible teaches concerning His nature, work, and office.

John 1.1 declares He is God: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This verse is quite clear. The phrase, "God the Son," is not needed when there is a text that plainly states He is God. There can be no question the Word is the same One who is the Son of God. Notice verse 14: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Who was it that became flesh? It was Jesus Christ. If He was the "only begotten of the Father," then He must be the Son. Language cannot be any clearer than this.

Those who oppose the doctrine the Son is God have a different interpretation of this text. They point out the Greek language has no word for the article "a." Consequently, they argue in translation from the Greek to the English it is appropriate in this case to supply the article. They would have the

passage read, “and the Word was a god.” What’s wrong with this interpretation? The problem is they disregard a basic knowledge of arithmetic. They pay no attention to the fact that one plus one equals two. If this verse is teaching the Son of God is a god but not Jehovah God, then there are two gods. There is really no room to maneuver on this point. If the verse teaches Christ is a god, one that is less than Jehovah, but nonetheless a god; then very plainly there are two gods. Both Moses and Paul and all others who confessed there was but One God, were wrong. This interpretation leads nowhere else but to polytheism. It is no different than the beliefs of the Greek and Roman worshippers. The Greeks had Zeus and the lesser gods, and the Romans had Jupiter and the lesser gods. Both religions were polytheistic. If the Word is a god but not Jehovah God, then Christian worshippers also have a God who is considered supreme while at the same time they have a lesser God who is called Jesus. In this case Christians too would be polytheists. For this reason it is quite clear why our English translators did not insert the article “a” in front of the word “God” when they translated this verse from the Greek into the English language.

A pause is needed to more fully look at this verse. As clear as the text may be that the Word, the blessed Son of God, is God, the verse is also notably written in a very unusual way. To say He is with God and at the same time to say He is God sounds tantamount to saying God is with God. Why would John word the sentence in such a strange way? Please consider this explanation. It may not only help the reader to understand this particular verse but it also may help the reader to understand other scriptures that deal with the Godhead.

There are three rules that govern the meaning of scriptures when the subject of the Godhead is discussed. **The first rule** is that *God has inspired the writers of the Bible to use language that shows there is an order of rank among the Three Divine Personalities*. There is a Head. That Head is the Father. Holy men neither came up on their own with the term, “God the Father,” nor did they invent the term, “the Son of God.” These expressions were given by inspiration. Now, consider that in relationships between fathers and sons here on earth, it is understood fathers have the greater honor. So, it should not be surprising to find that when the relationship

between the Father and the Son is identified in scripture, Christ is under subjection to the Father. A few verses may be cited to show this truth. Jesus said: “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day (John 6.38-39 ).” Jesus told the disciples, “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work (John 4.34 ).” Jesus prayed: “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt (Matthew 26.39 ).” Likewise, in identifying the relationship between the Father and the Spirit, the Spirit is often shown to be someone in the Father’s hands to accomplish His will. So, Peter taught the saints, “Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit (1 Peter 1.2 ).” In this verse it is shown the Father directed the Spirit to sanctify the elect. Headship belongs to the Father. It has already been pointed out there are various verses that use the phrase, “God the Father,” but there are none that use the phrase, “God the Son.” Likewise, there are no verses that use the phrase, “God the Holy Spirit.” Why is this? I submit it is because God directs His saints to think of the One who has Headship. This is the Father.

**The second rule** is, *when Deity is unidentified in scripture as to Person, it is apt to have reference to the Father*. Try this out for yourself and see if it is not true. I will cite just a few verses to establish the point, but by checking out other verses you will find over and over again that what I have just said is true. Here is one example. Jesus said to the Jews: “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent (John 6.29 ).” Of whom was He speaking when Christ spoke of God? Since it has already been shown from John 6.38-39 that the One who sent Jesus was the Father, it should be clear that by the term “God,” Christ was referring to the Father. Here is another example. When Mark spoke of Christ’s ascension, saying, “He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God (Mark 16.20),” God is not specified as to Person; but He is when Paul spoke of the action of “the Father of glory” and said He “set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1.17, 20).”



I will cite one more text to prove the point. At the beginning of Hebrews the Scriptures say: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son (Hebrews 1.1-2)." The subject of these verses is God, but the writer did not in the first verse identify Him as to Person. However, from verse 2 it is evident that he is referring to God the Father. This is clear from the fact God spoke through His Son. If He has a Son, He must be a Father. Through passages such as these it should be clear that when reference is made to the Deity, it is often the Father that is intended. Now, examine 1 Corinthians 11.3. By applying these two rules this verse should be quite plain as to its meaning. After Paul pointed out to the Church that Christ has Headship over every man, and that the man has headship over the woman, he said, "and the head of Christ is God." This text plainly teaches Christ is in subjection to God. This text does not specify God as to Person but it should be clear from the fact seen in other passages that the Son submits to the authority of His Father. As this is the case it should be plain it is the Father of whom Paul is speaking when he said God was Christ's Head. Due to the order of rank, the scriptures assign to the Father more frequent entitlement to the term, "God" than they do to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

**The third rule** is, *when the scriptures show either the Son or the Holy Spirit to be God, they do so by having them viewed in their own stead, apart from the Father.* This way there is no issue of rank.

I hope these three rules are plain enough for the reader to understand. If not, review them again until the meaning is clear. It will go a long way in helping the Bible student to both understand and explain passages of scripture that relate to the Deity; especially those passages that interrelate the Personalities of the Godhead.

Now, return to John 1.1, and let's apply these three rules. By the words, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God," John is applying the first two rules concerning the Godhead. Since the Father is the Head, John is simply identifying Him as God. It is the same as if John had said that in the beginning the Word was with God, the Father. Test this, and see if this is not consistent with the prayer Jesus made shortly before His death.

There, Jesus prayed: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was (John 17.5)." The "beginning" in John 1.1 is the same as "before the world was" in John 17.5, and by comparing these two verses it is clear the One the Word was with was God the Father. By the words, "and the Word was God," John is applying the third rule concerning the Godhead. Here, in the last part of John 1.1, John is viewing Christ in His own stead, apart from the Father, and he states He is God. In other words, the first part of the text connects the Son to His Father, and in this case the Father is God; but the second part of the text views the Son separately, and in this case He is God. By applying these three rules to this verse the strangeness of the language disappears, and the verse fits into the whole scheme of things that is presented throughout the Bible.

The opening verse of the Gospel written by John is not the only verse that proves the Son is God. There are other passages that declare the same truth. In the book of Isaiah there are two clear prophecies concerning the Incarnation of Christ. In 7.14 the Lord declared: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." To show this prophecy was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus, Matthew quoted the text from Isaiah to prove Mary was the virgin, and Jesus was the son, and the gospel writer further provided the meaning of Immanuel (or Emmanuel) by adding, "which being interpreted is, God with us (Matthew 1.23)." The other text that clearly prophesied of Christ's birth is found in 9.6-7: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called... **The mighty God.**" Thus, in both of these passages Christ is spoken of as "God." Another verse is found in Thomas' words after Jesus had given full proof to him that He was alive from the grave. Thomas' exclamation was: "My Lord and my God (John 20.28)." These words might be quickly discounted, and considered exaggerated terms by Thomas were it not for the fact the Lord did not respond with a rebuke but rather replied: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed (John 20.29)." What did Thomas' exclamation show that he believed? He believed his Lord and his God had come forth out of

the grave. I will cite another scripture. Paul told Timothy: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory (1 Timothy 3.16 )."

The subject of this verse is God, but who was it that became flesh, that the Spirit justified, that the Gentiles heard about through preaching, that men believed, and that ascended into heaven? It was Christ Jesus, but He is identified as God.

I will cite one more scripture. Paul wrote to Titus: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (Titus 2.13-14 )." This language is peculiar to what the saints hope for in the Son of God. He is the One who will appear when He returns to receive His own people, and He is the One who redeemed them by giving Himself for them. This person is referred to as both God and Savior. The fact the Scriptures declare the Son to be God proves He is Jehovah.

Repeatedly, throughout the earthly ministry of Christ, He was the object of worship, as in the case of the leper who asked Jesus to heal him, and "kneeling down to him (Mark 1.40)," "worshipped him (Matthew 8.2 )." Although the Law forbade worshipping any except Jehovah God, there was neither this man nor any other who ever bowed before the Lord Jesus was rebuked. Contrast this with Cornelius, who fell down at Peter's feet and worshipped him, only to be lifted up by Peter, and commanded: "Stand up; I myself also am a man (Acts 10.25-26 )." Since, during His temptations in the wilderness Christ told Satan: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve (Matthew 4.10)," can it not be surmised that He is God who is rightfully to be worshipped? Beside all this, Paul said that after Christ's suffering, God "hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2.9-11 )."

The fact the Son is set forth as one who is to be worshipped proves He is God.

The Scriptures also prove the Son is Deity by what they say concerning His nature. No part of creation is equal to God. It either lacks His qualities altogether or else it fails to reach His fullness. The Bible ascribes to the Word the excellent nature of Jehovah. The only conclusion that can be drawn from what is declared of the Son is that He is God. One of the unequal qualities of God is that He is eternal. Genesis 21.33 said: "And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the LORD (Jehovah), the **everlasting** God."

In the absolute sense only God possesses this quality. Everything else had a beginning. When the prophet Micah spoke of the site where the Lord would be born, he also ascribed this characteristic to the Son: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel: whose goings forth have been from of old, from **everlasting** (Micah 5.2 )." The margin of my Bible rightly identifies this expression as "the days of eternity." There can be no doubt this is a prophecy of the Lord. The content of the text itself is clear enough, but one only has to look into the New Testament to see that it was this verse that was cited by the scribes, of whom Herod inquired to find out where the Christ should be born (Matthew 2.1-6).

Before moving on to another part of the Son's nature, another pause is needed to examine an issue that arises from the relationship between Father and Son. It has already been noted that the Scripture's use of the terms, Father and Son, suggests a subjection of the Son to the Father. When the Bible speaks of the Son apart from the Father He has full equality, but when it speaks of His relationship to the Father He is subject to the Father's will. When speaking of the Two together, there is another area in which it can be said the Son does not have equality with the Father. As has already been pointed out, in nature, a son is neither as old as his father, nor is he ever equal in age to his father. True to the relationship between the Father and Son, the Lord is spoken of as having been begotten. Out of the Psalms the Son speaks: "the LORD (Jehovah) hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee (Psalm 2.7 )." Consistent with the terms of the

relationship, the Son is begotten. This makes Jehovah the Father of His Son. Likewise, John had spoken of the Word as “the only begotten of the Father (John 1.14).” Simple logic suggests the Son cannot have existed as long as the Father, Jehovah.

This has been one of the chief arguments made by the Arians against the Doctrine of the Godhead. The fact Jesus Christ, the Word, the blessed Son of God, is the Son suggests He is less than Jehovah, the One of whom He was begotten. How then can He be everlasting as described by Micah? How can He not be younger than Jehovah? The answer to Psalm 2.7 is quite simple. The New Testament provides the answer. When Paul preached the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Christ to the Jews (Acts 13.28-30), he made the following statement to them in verse 33: “God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.” In other words, Psalm 2.7 is not speaking of Jehovah creating the Son. Rather, by being begotten, it is speaking of Him on this certain day being raised from the grave.

So, in Colossians 1.18 He is referred to as “the firstborn from the dead,” and in Revelation 1.4 as “the first begotten of the dead.” I hold there is a different answer to John 1.14. In this text the subject is not the *resurrection* but the *incarnation*: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” Here, He is not the “first begotten,” but the “only begotten.”

With regard to the resurrection, Christ’s uniqueness is the fact that He is the first to come forth from the grave in a glorified body. The elect that God foreknew, called, justified, and glorified were ones “predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren (Romans 8.29-30).” In other words, Christ was first; God’s elect were to follow. However, with regard to the Incarnation, Christ’s uniqueness is the fact He is the Father’s Son in a way belonging to no other. The saints may be His children. Christ’s relationship to the Father is different. No man was ever conceived as He was. The inspired writers used the terms, Father and Son. Therefore, it is to be expected the language would be consistent with the terms and indicate the Son was not around all the

while the Father was, but when the Son is spoken of as apart from the Father He is “from everlasting.”

(To be continued, Lord willing)

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## THIS IS THE WORK OF GOD....

**W**hen our beloved Lord is drawing towards the close of His ministry, He speaks of His own work, appealing to the Father with, “I have finished the work thou hast given me to do.” So this work of the Redeemer was mediatorial work, redemption work, and salvation work, entrusted to Him by the Father: He says, “I have finished the work,” there is its perfection.

Then, as regards the work of the Holy Ghost, the apostle was commissioned to put it down in these words, “We are confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun the good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” And who can begin a good work in the sinner’s heart but God the Holy Ghost? Everything pertaining to the life of God in the soul, He is the author of, and will be the finisher of, consequently we are confident of its perfection in God’s own time. In the language of my text I find God’s work is a perfect one, and cannot but be complete; He never leaves it unfinished, that the Savior’s work is a perfect one, and cannot but be complete, and all His people complete in Him; and that the Holy Spirit’s work is a perfect one, and He never forsakes the work of His own hands, but will complete it, “until the day of Jesus Christ.” Therefore, those who would impugn the character of the Deity, and slander the very name of Jesus, are those who represent His work as if He had done all He could, but not quite enough to save sinners; as if He had done all He could, but had left a great deal to be done for the poor worms of the earth; I say they are the very persons who slander the name of Jehovah, and reproach His very existence as God.

—Excerpt from *The Rock of Ages* by Joseph Irons

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

**M**en often say the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven refer to the exact same thing. Why, then, did Christ and His apostles use two different terms? Is **God** the same as **heaven**?

Before continuing, I would urge readers to take a moment to get their Bibles and to examine exactly what Matthew, Mark, Luke, and the other Bible writers said on this vastly important twofold subject, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven.

We begin with a few statistics. Matthew refers to *the kingdom of heaven* thirty-two times.

Matthew also refers to *the kingdom of God*, but only five times (in 6.33, 12.28, 19.24, 21.31, and 21.43). Mark, Luke, John, and Paul are the only biblical writers beside Matthew who mention "*the kingdom of God*," using those exact words. They do so an additional sixty-four times.

**Matthew is the only writer in the Bible to refer to *the kingdom of heaven*, as such.** How often does it occur to anyone to ask, "**Why is this so?**"?

### CHRIST AND ISRAEL

Matthew wrote primarily to the Hebrew people, or Israelites, more popularly known as *Jews*. The Jews of Jesus' day looked for a kingdom and a king who would deliver them from the Roman Empire. Pious Jews understood that this king, prophesied of from ancient times, was to rule not merely over national Israel, but He would rule as God over all creation. His kingdom they understood to be associated with the term, "the kingdom of heaven."

In the fullness of time, Jesus, who is God the Son and the virgin-born Son of God, came as the *Christ*, or the *Anointed* of God, for that is what the title *Christ* means. *Christ* is His title, not His name. It is the equivalent of the Hebrew word *Messiah*, the promised deliverer for whom they waited. There were three offices to which a person could be anointed: prophet, priest, and king. The Messiah would be all three.

Sometimes a man was anointed to two of these three offices. Melchisedec was a king and a priest but not a prophet. Samuel was a prophet and a priest

but not a king. David was a king and a prophet but not a priest. No one in all the Old Testament economy was all three. The Lord Jesus Christ was unique in all of recorded history in that He came anointed of God, fulfilling all three of these offices to and for His people; He is their Prophet, speaking God's words to them; He is their Priest, representing them before God; and He is their King, ruling over them and in their behalf.

### SPIRITUAL, OR LITERAL?

Down through the history of the New Testament church, there has been an ongoing debate about whether the kingdom of the Christ was *literal* or *spiritual*. **Literal** means "adhering to fact or to the ordinary construction or primary meaning of a term or expression" (Webster). It means exactly what it says it means, a "real" kingdom with a "real" king. **Spiritual** means "of, relating to, or consisting of spirit; incorporeal" (Webster). **Incorporeal** is "having no material body or form. Immaterial," which in turn means "not consisting of matter." It would seem that many—if not most—who expound on the kingdom of Christ assume it cannot be both literal and spiritual. There is no need to so assume, or to assume His kingdom does not have different aspects.

To "spiritualize" a text, or to make a "spiritual application" of it, usually means to deny the text literally means what it says and says what it means. This is also sometimes called a "figurative" or "allegorical" interpretation. Modernists deny the account of the creation, the flood in Noah's day, and the resurrection of Christ were all literal, happening exactly as the Bible says.

In a similar vein, "spiritualizing" is sometimes used to say that a prophecy that is to be literally fulfilled in the future, such as the second coming of Christ, is "spiritually" being fulfilled in the present or has already been fulfilled "spiritually" in the past. Some say that specific prophecies of Christ's literal second coming were fulfilled spiritually, and He is now reigning *spiritually* in the church. The Scriptures say Satan is yet to be bound in the future; those using the *spiritual* approach tell us that Satan is *spiritually* bound now, and, even now, he is deceiving the nations no more.

An extreme view known as **Preterism** says that all prophecy was fulfilled in AD 70—"the end of the

world,” Christ’s second coming, the binding of Satan, the resurrection of the dead—and there remains no more prophecy to be fulfilled.

What makes this “spiritualizing” so tragic is that there *is* often an element of truth to this approach, but, as often as not, it is only a partial and incomplete truth:

1. No one should deny for an instant that Christ *is* reigning now in the church—but He is *not* ruling in the fulfillment of the hundreds of prophecies yet to be realized at His return; nor has He returned in the plain sense of what He, the prophets, and the apostolic writers have said (2 Thessalonians 1.6ff; Philippians 2.10f; Revelation 1.7, for example).

2. Satan certainly *is* restrained now, to a point, and **he always has been**. But to say the evident, worldwide, satanic deception in this present evil age is *all* that “Satan’s being bound so as to deceive the nations no more” means, is to deny God’s veracity and the very meaning of language.

3. The Old Testament age (*aeon*) may indeed have ended with the coming of Christ, His establishing the church, and the Holy Spirit’s coming in a new way on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), but this is hardly “the elements melting with fervent heat,” or “the earth also and the works that are therein [being] burned up (2 Peter 3.10).”

*Spiritualizing* the kingdom of heaven sidesteps the facts that Jesus the Messiah-Christ

(a) came as the literal king of the Jews;

(b) was and is the legal heir to David’s throne; and,

(c) literally fulfilled **all** of the Old Testament prophecies and promises made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah, concerning His first coming.

Spiritualizing also undermines the fact there are more prophecies of His second coming than of His first, and they too must no less be literally fulfilled.

Simply applying the prophecies of His second coming in a *spiritual* sense to His first coming or to the church, as if that is all there is to it, is to miss the point of a major portion of prophetic Scripture.

The first verse of the New Testament announces, “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham (Matthew 1.1).” Here, Jesus is identified as the rightful heir to the throne of David, the heir apparent and rightful ruler over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

We ignore these facts at the expense of understanding Christ Jesus’ relationship to national Israel. His kingship of that nation is such a foundational truth that Matthew spends over half of his first chapter proving Jesus, as the heir to David’s throne, was the promised king of national Israel.

In Genesis 49.10, Jacob prophesied of Christ’s coming: “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.” No earnest Bible-reader can seriously question that this prophecy is of Jesus the Christ. His genealogy in Matthew traces His ancestry back through David, Judah, and Jacob-Israel, to Abraham.

In the opening verse of the New Testament, Matthew documented the fact that Jesus was *the king of the Jews*. The wise men traveled a thousand miles to seek the babe who was born *the king of the Jews*. The Roman soldiers mocked Him as *the king of the Jews*. The Roman governor acknowledged Him as *the king of the Jews* (John 19.19-22). The superscription Pilate placed on the cross of Christ charged Him with being *the king of the Jews*. To try to spiritualize away His being the long-awaited, expected, promised *king of the Jews* undermines the veracity of our God who cannot lie. Indeed, why would anyone with a hope in Christ Jesus *want* to disregard the fact that, among all the other things our Lord is to His people, *Jesus is also the king of the Jews*?

“He came unto his own, and his own received him not (John 1.11).” Who was “His own” to whom He came that did not receive Him? A case can be made for saying

(a) it was *the human race*, for God says, “All souls are mine (Ezekiel 18.4).” He owns all creation and everything in it, including this depraved race of Adam, which certainly did not receive Him. Or,

(b) it could be said that it was *His elect people* from among all nations; because, in their depraved nature and fallen state, even the elect of God did not “receive” Him. But surely it is true that

(c) in the context of the Old Testament and the four gospels, *His own nation (Israel) and tribe (Judah)* did not receive Him as their Messiah and king. Their leaders said He worked miracles by the power of the devil. In the face of this horrible charge Christ introduced a new tactic in His Galilean

ministry: In Matthew 13, He began to speak to the multitudes in parables.

The groundwork for the parables of Matthew 13 is found in Matthew 12. Until that time, He did not use parables. His public ministry began in Matthew 4. Chapters 5 through 7 record His sermon on the mount. There He used a few *similitudes* (“Ye are the light of the world...the lilies of the field... A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit,” etc.) but similes and metaphors are not parables.

Most of chapters 10 and 11 are the words of Christ, but there are no parables there.

In chapter 12, there are no parables. Therein is the record of Christ’s healing multitudes of people and the resulting conflict with the Pharisees, who said, “This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.”

Jesus immediately charged them with blasphemy against the Holy Spirit: “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost 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 Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world [*aion*, age], neither in the world [*aion*, age] to come.”

Importantly, His next public discourse was on the very same day (13.1). “And he spake many things unto them **in parables**, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow...(13.3).”

### WHY PARABLES?

This important juncture (His beginning to teach in parables) did not slip by His disciples unnoticed. They immediately reacted: “And the disciples came, and said unto him, **Why speakest thou unto them in parables** (verse 10)?” They knew this was an abrupt development in His ministry. Sensing that He had a reason for the change, they wanted to know what it was, and they asked Him.

He replied, “Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing

they hear not, neither do they understand (verses 11-13).” He explained that His parabolic teaching was a literal fulfillment of Isaiah 6.9f. Matthew further tells us, “All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and **without a parable spake he not unto them** (verse 34).”

*Remember: This was occasioned earlier that same day by the Pharisees’ crucial blasphemy, their attributing the work of the Three-One God to Satan, the ruler of devils.*

Often, men say Christ used parables as “sermon illustrations” to make His points so simple and easy to grasp that “even a little child can understand.” Nothing is farther from the truth. He used parables to hide His meaning from the reprobates, so the wise men of this world, by searching, cannot find out God. “Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour (Isaiah 45.15).” Then, He reveals to His own people whatever He would have them to know and to understand. “...Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight (Luke 10.21).”

### THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KINGDOMS

In Matthew 13, Christ gives seven parables about the kingdom of **heaven**. As such, these parables do not directly apply to the kingdom of **God**. The difference between these two kingdoms is,

A. There is no one in **the kingdom of God** but those who are born from above. Proof: “*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God... Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God* (John 3.3, 5).” All who are in the kingdom of God are born citizens of that kingdom, born into it by free grace alone.

B. **The kingdom of Heaven** includes the entire creation, from the highest abode of the eternal God and those angelic beings who populate “Heaven” in the grandest sense we are blessed to comprehend, to the lowest subatomic particle in the material universe, and everything and everyone in between these extremes, and no doubt other created things of which we have no knowledge whatsoever: “The LORD hath prepared his throne in the **heavens**; and **his kingdom ruleth over ALL** (Psalm 103.19).” *Nothing* is exempt from Jehovah’s “kingdom of heaven.”

Although the two kingdoms have some common characteristics, the kingdom of God is only *a part* of the kingdom of heaven, and it is contained in it. This is so because the kingdom of **heaven** does include those born from above (the kingdom of **God**), but it also includes those who are **not** born from above: the reprobates represented by the stony ground, the tares, the fowls, the bad fish. The kingdom of heaven also includes the angels, both elect and fallen; the material universe (the sun, moon, stars, planets—"the heavens"); the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms of nature; the laws that govern the natural world (mathematics, chemistry, physics), as well as the laws pertaining to the supernatural world of angels, devils, and demons. The kingdom of heaven ruleth over **all** (Psalm 103.19).

As for the relation between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God, think of the two in this way, for a moment: Everyone in Bazine, Kansas, is also in United States, but not everyone in United States is in Bazine, Kansas. In a like manner, everyone in the kingdom of God is in the kingdom of heaven, but not everyone in the kingdom of heaven is in the kingdom of God.

There is some overlap, to be sure, between the two kingdoms. Some parables of the kingdom of **God** in Mark and Luke are much like the parables of the kingdom of **heaven** in Matthew. But to confuse the two and further muddy the waters by mixing in the church, saying, "The kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are the exact same thing, and they both mean the church," is going far too far and causes much confusion and error.

To be specific, there are three entities: the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, and the church. The freewill (Arminian and Conditionalist) systems, by blurring, ignoring, or denying the distinctions between the three, saying they are all the same, contribute to the confusion and innumerable errors in the worldly religions. This can be documented from the Scriptures and the free-will writers' own literature. It is along these lines we would now look at the seven parables in Matthew 13.

### 1. The Parable of the Sower

This is one of the two parables the Lord privately explained to His disciples in this chapter. We cannot go into this parable at length because of space and

time constraints. Several things can be pointed out in passing:

A. This being a parable of the kingdom of **heaven**, it includes ALL (Psalm 103.19), "both bad and good (Matthew 22.10)." The KINGDOM OF GOD is never said to contain "both bad and good," for all of the Lord's children, born from above, are effectually made good by the blood and the finished work of Christ. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, **through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen** (Hebrews 13.20f)." "**Thy people also shall be all righteous**: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified (Isaiah 60.21)." "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein **he hath made us accepted in the beloved** (Ephesians 1.6)."

B. Christ does not identify the sower in this parable. Instead, He identifies the seed sown as "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom (verse 19)." There are four kinds of ground that represents hearers: the wayside, stony places, thorny ground, and good ground. Only that which falls into good ground survives and is fruitful.

The wayside hearer is the one who "understandeth it [the word of the kingdom] *not*." The fowls that catch it away represent "the wicked one"—Satan and his emissaries. These fowls appear again in the third parable (verse 32).

The stony-ground hearer is one who at first joyfully embraces what he hears, but, "when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended." No one born of God's Spirit, and therefore in the kingdom of God (John 3.3, 5), is offended by the word of Christ. "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me (Matthew 11.6)." This is one of the "all spiritual blessings" with which the Father has blessed His people in Christ (Ephesians 1.3).

The thorny-ground hearer is the one who never comes to fruition because of "the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches" that choke the word.

"He that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which

also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty (verse 23).” How does one come to understand the word of the kingdom? Christ has already explained. “Because it is *given* unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.”

It is my view that the first three types of hearers—the wayside, the stony ground, and the thorny ground—are not children of God and never will be. They are not born of God’s Spirit and are therefore not part of the kingdom of God. They are reprobates in general, and the Pharisees who had blasphemed the triune God in particular. They are in the kingdom of heaven because Jehovah God rules the reprobates no less than He rules the saints.

Problems in interpretation and understanding arise when will-worshippers preach and teach that God’s children may yet have stony-ground hearts, even though they are born from above.

“If the children of God are not careful and diligent,” they say, “Satan may steal the word from their hearts; and they also must work hard at keeping the thorns and weeds out of their spiritual garden-plot, lest they become unfruitful and lose their rewards.” All such preaching is the product of a man-centered religion which says, in effect, God does not cultivate His own garden.

It should go without saying (but we say it nevertheless) that the ground—whether it is good ground, or stony, or plagued by scavenger birds, or overgrown with thorns—was so created by God (Romans 9.21). The act of sowing seed on bad ground never kept the birds away; **neither has sowing seed on poor soil ever made it good.**

Some commentators will nevertheless try to prove the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are the same, because, they allege, *sometimes* what Jesus says of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew is also said of the kingdom of God in other gospels.

This parable of the sower is a case in point. Upon a casual reading of Mark, it might *seem* that what Jesus says in Mark’s gospel of the kingdom of **God** is exactly the same thing He said of the kingdom of **heaven** in Matthew. He does no such thing. There are two things Mark gives us:

1. The **mystery** of the kingdom of **God**: “And he said unto them, **Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God**: but unto them that

are without, all these things are done in parables...(Mark 4.11ff)”; and,

2. The sower parable of the kingdom of **heaven**, practically word for word the same as in Matthew.

“And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables? The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts...(Mark 4.11-15).”

First, He tells His disciples that they are given to know the **mystery** of the kingdom of **God**, period. This is a **mystery**, singular, in addition to the **mysteries** of the kingdom of **heaven** He mentioned in Matthew 13. It is the **mystery** of the elect’s being born from above, with their God-given new nature as a result (2 Peter 1.4). It is such a mystery Nicodemus could only murmur, “How can a man be born when he is old?... How can these things be?”

Matthew and Mark do not contradict each other, nor does Jesus contradict Himself. Rather, He further develops and refines His teaching, explaining it to His inner circle.

Second, the discerning reader will note: Nowhere in Mark’s account does Christ SAY the stony ground, thorns, and birds are in the kingdom of **God**. No one may correctly assume that the stony ground, thorns, and birds are in the kingdom of God, but multitudes wrongly do so. Read Mark’s account again, and again, if necessary. Mark tells us of Christ’s private statement to His disciples about the kingdom of **God**; then He immediately explains the public parable of the kingdom of **heaven**. There is simply no contradiction.

In Mark’s gospel, Jesus still further develops His doctrine of the sower and the seed in His comments on the kingdom of **God** (His elect children born from above, John 3.3, 5). In the kingdom of God, there is no stony ground, thorns, bad birds, tares, or such like. There is only a good crop, something that cannot be fathomed by men—it is a mystery—because **it is God who giveth the increase**: “And He said, *So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after*



*that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come (Mark 4.26-29).*” Where are the weeds, rocks, and crows? Somewhere other than in the kingdom of God! As far as men are concerned, the crop “just happens.”

Comparing what Matthew, Mark, and Luke say is the only way to see Christ’s complete doctrine of the sower and the seed. The seed is sown in the good ground, the kingdom of God; it grows unimpeded, unhindered by stones, birds, or thorns. This is a perfect illustration of what Peter said, that “no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation (2 Peter 1.20).” That is, no one can isolate Matthew’s account, by itself, and build a doctrine on it, making it mean whatever he wants it to mean. Least of all can he rightfully take what Jesus said of the stones, thorns, and fowls in the kingdom of heaven and apply it to the kingdom of God.

Only when the crop is complete and matured, that very day, the harvest (which He describes in Matthew 13.37-43) takes place *immediately*, because God “hath **appointed a day**, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead (Acts 17.31).”

Before we are through, Lord willing, we hope to look in more detail at the objection that “They are both the same; what Christ said in one place of the kingdom heaven, he said elsewhere of the kingdom of God.”

For now, the careful reader of the Scriptures will note: The kingdom of God is never represented as having stony ground, thorny ground, or as Satan having the ability to snatch the word out of the hearts of God’s elect. Every one of God’s children are fruitful, without exception: “...No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD (Isaiah 54.17).” “...that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He might be glorified (Isaiah 61.3).” “**Being filled with the fruits of righteousness**, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God (Philippians 1.11).” “But **the fruit of the Spirit** is

love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts (Galatians 5.22ff).” “Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so **every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit**. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire (Matthew 7.16ff).” “Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit (Matthew 12.33).”

## 2. The Parable of the Wheat and Tares

This is the only other parable Christ interprets in this chapter. Again, in this overview, we cannot here review in detail this parable and its God-given interpretation. As the Lord wills, we may comment further on it if and when we get to verses 37-43. For now, Jesus says the sower who sowed the good seed (“the children of the kingdom,” i.e., God’s children) is the Son of man—clearly, Jesus Himself. The enemy who sowed the tares (“the children of the wicked one”) is the devil. We repeat: God rules over the children of Satan, as is here illustrated, no less than He rules over His own children. The tares, no less than the wheat, are in the kingdom of heaven. Problems in interpretation and understanding arise when will-worshippers preach that, because of the unfaithfulness and unconcern of some of God’s children, they are tares. You will search the Scriptures in vain to find tares in God’s children; *there are no tares in the kingdom of God!* And, tares are never converted into wheat.

## 3. The Mustard Seed

“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof (Matthew 13.31f).”

These birds lodging *in the branches* of the kingdom of heaven are the unclean birds of Satan and

his messengers (Revelation 18.2). From Old Testament times unclean birds typify unclean men and unclean spirits (Leviticus 11.13-20). The Pharisees had wrongfully generalized this to mean *all Gentiles*.

In Peter's vision, he saw "...a vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and **fowls of the air** (Acts 10.11f; see also verse 14)." He perceived these animals and birds were unclean according to the Levitical dietary laws, and he said so. He was later given to see they typified men of other nations, or the Gentiles (verse 28), whom Peter had considered unclean until that time.

The apostle John saw an angel who "...cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of **every unclean and hateful bird** (Revelation 18.2)." Here the birds are identified as devils and foul spirits.

From these and other passages, the Scriptures show these birds represent unclean men and devils. In this parable, they lodge in the branches of the kingdom of **heaven** like unwelcome squatters. They "lodge" there because everything and everyone, any and all (clean and unclean birds and animals, sheep and goats, cattle, dogs, and the sow that returns to her wallowing in the mire), are in the kingdom of heaven, and God rules over them all, without exception; but the "birds" cleansed by God (Acts 10.15, 28), *are not unclean birds in the kingdom of God*.

But more. Whereas Matthew has the fowls **lodging in the branches** of the kingdom of **heaven**, Mark says the fowls are only **in the shadow** of the kingdom of **God**, never finding a lodging therein: "Whereunto shall we liken **the kingdom of God**...? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: but when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may **lodge under the shadow** of it (Mark 4.30ff)."

Problems in interpretation arise when will-worshippers preach and teach that God's children, by "unfaithful" and "disobedient" living, may be counted as the unclean birds of this parable.

We close with a few quotes from a free-will writer to illustrate exactly what problems develop when one equates the kingdom of heaven with its stones, thorns, foul fowls, and tares, with the kingdom of God, the church and body of our Lord, who is all fair within.

In a recent article on Matthew 6.33, a Conditional Elder in Tennessee writes: "A careful study of the gospels shows that two phrases, 'the kingdom of Heaven' and 'the kingdom of God,' are used interchangeably...."

In so saying, he sets it up to prove (perhaps unintentionally?) that being born from above (John 3.3, 5) is achieved by human effort and works. He continues: "Those who have only a casual interest in the kingdom [which he implies is the kingdom of God, the new birth; they are "used interchangeably," he says.—Ed.] and who are not willing to labor and suffer for the kingdom's sake will never experience much of God's reign in their life and will know few of the blessings of the kingdom." He later says,

"Entering the kingdom (that is, experiencing the kingdom in our life) is by obedience," and, "There are severe consequences to those who fail to 'seek first the kingdom of God.' We need to make sure that the kingdom is our first priority."

We could only conclude by this man's words that being born from above, or entering the kingdom of God (the new birth, John 3.3,5), is by our obedience.

Our point in quoting this man's human reasoning is this: **Those born of God's Spirit are in the kingdom of God, exactly as Christ told Nicodemus**. Being born of God, they have a new nature, new desires, a new love for God and His people, and for His kingdom. They do not need a free-will preacher to tell them they must labor, suffer, seek, obey, make sure of their priorities, meet an endless string of conditions, and do whatever else they need to do "to experience God's reign in their life" and "to know more than a few blessings of the kingdom." Such is only some of the confusion that flows from saying the two kingdoms and the church are all the same thing.

If the Lord has so willed, we will take up this subject at another time.

—C. C. Morris

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We believe these principles are, in the main, harmonious with the articles of faith published by predestinarian associations and churches of the old order of Baptists known as Primitive, Particular, or Old School Baptists the world over.

1—The eternal existence, sovereignty, immutability, omnipotence, and perfections of Jehovah God; He has revealed Himself as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these sacred Three are One; Jesus Christ was and is God manifest in the flesh, and in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

2—The Old and New Testaments in their original languages are the verbally inspired word of God, and they are the complete and only valid guide of faith and practice; the King James Version is the preferred English translation;

3—The will of the eternal God is the first cause of all causes;

4—The absolute predestination of all things;

5—The eternal personal election of the redeemed in Christ, before the world began, and their eternal, vital union with Him; their number is fixed, certain, and sure, and can neither be increased nor diminished; their fall in their federal head Adam into

spiritual death, total depravity, and just condemnation; their utter inability to recover themselves from this fallen state;

6—The blood atonement and redemption by Jesus Christ are for the elect only, and are both efficacious and effectual in accomplishing the will and purpose of God to reconcile His people unto Himself;

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12—The principles outlined in the Black Rock Address of 1832;

13—The bodily resurrection, first of Christ, and also that of all the dead;

14—The final and eternal judgment; and,

15—The bliss of the redeemed and the torment of the wicked are both eternal and everlasting.