

The Meaning of Kingdom Theology

**Where Do We Find the Meaning of Kingdom Theology,
in Etiology or Eschatology?**

**That is, do we find the Theology of the Kingdom
where it Begins or Where it Ends?**

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Thesis of the Study

Kingdom Theology Introduced

The purpose of this study is to set the kingdom of God *centrally within God's eternal purpose to redeem his fallen creation through the faithfulness of Jesus*. The kingdom speaks of the *sovereignty of God* which was rejected by the disobedience of mankind, and eventually restored through the faithful obedience of Jesus, the Messiah and the mission of God's people beginning with God's call of Abraham, Gen 12.

A central thought of the theology of the kingdom was expressed by Jesus in his opening thoughts praying for *the holiness and sovereignty of God being praised on earth as it is in heaven*, Matt 6:9, 10: “⁹ Pray then like this:

*Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.”*

An underlying theme of this prayer is that *God's holiness* is expressed in “*the kingdom coming on earth as it is in heaven!*”

God's covenant promise to Abraham beginning at Gen 12 was to bless *all mankind*. Through the patriarchs of Israel; Isaac, Joseph, Jacob, followed by Mose, Joshua, and Samuel; God worked toward establishing his kingdom on earth. This *was fulfilled in Jesus*, Matt 12:28f, when with the power of the holy Spirit Jesus proclaimed “*But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.*”

Shortly before his ascension to heaven his disciples asked Jesus whether he was going to *restore his kingdom to Israel*, Acts 1:6! Jesus had already commissioned his apostles with what we know as the great commission, Matt 28:18f, “*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.*” Luke records that Jesus' answer to the Apostles in a remarkable practical theological charge, Acts 1:6-8, “*It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.*”

This remarkable series of events and kingdom instruction clearly *defines the theology of the kingdom, the kingdom is missional*, not benevolent! It is going out to the nations, teaching them about Jesus and his kingdom, baptizing them into Christ.

Luke explains in his book of the *Acts of the Apostles* how the apostles and the apostolic church interpreted and carried this out! They went out, preached the Gospel, baptized people, planted churches, taught the message of the kingdom of God which included all nations.

In summary, *the theological kingdom of Christ is missional¹, not benevolent²!* Being benevolent should be the natural response to helping others.

¹ In theological missiological language missional implies preaching the Gospel converting new people, baptizing them, and planting new congregations where these new converts can be matured in Christ!

² Benevolence means *carrying out good deeds* to assist those in need of physical and spiritual need. Benevolence implies a disposition to do good, an act of kindness, a wish to help, *Miriam-Webster Dictionary*. Benevolence became a fundamental ministry of local churches as they practiced their Christian faith in serving others in need.

All those who like Abraham, the Prophets, Jesus and his apostles who are faithful to God and his purpose *share in God's covenant blessing and commission*. They likewise share in *his covenant missional promise to Abraham that his blessings were to be shared with the nations*.

The *kingdom promise of God* was not confined to the nation who would inhabit the Promised Land, Israel, it was the mission of God's kingdom to include those of the *nations* who would like Israel come to God in an obedient faith.

Thus the Abrahamic promise to bless all nations was *theological and missional*. It was *inaugurated* by Jesus and the apostolic church and carried out into all the world, Mk 16:15, 16.

Kingdom theology is missional, fulfilling God's covenant to Abraham through Jesus to reach ***all nations with the gospel message***.³

Kingdom *theology* and *mission* are summed up in two major Scriptures, **Matt 28:18-20**, “*And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age,”* and **Acts 1:6-8**, “*So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷ He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.”*”

Kingdom - βασιλεία Theology and Function; Church-Ε κ κ λ η σ ι α ***Theology and Function***

A *practical ecclesiological* reason for this study is a *misunderstanding* among many contemporary Church leaders of *the different theological emphases and different foci* of the *kingdom as missional*, and the *church as benevolent*. The local congregation, *ekklesia*, carries within it both a *missional kingdom* commission and a *benevolent purpose*.

The tragedy occurs when the *benevolent ministry* of a church has overpowered and *displaced* the *kingdom missional* purpose.

The fallacy results when a church *equates* the *commissions and ministry of the kingdom* and the *benevolent ministry of the church*. In one sense, the church and the kingdom are comprised of the same people, disciples of Christ, but each term or concept, *kingdom* and *church*, carries within it different *missional* and *benevolent ministry* emphases.

For an example, the worship service community is made up of the Christian people, disciples of Christ! However, their *ministry* as a church is specific, worship God and Christ and edify one another through singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, and be *missional* in spreading the Gospel. These same people are described in Scripture as a kingdom with a different commission, *go make disciples!* Same people, *church* people at worship, *kingdom* people to *go and make disciples!*

The *ministry of the kingdom* is *missional evangelistic*, “*go, make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to be disciples*, Matt 28:16-20.”

The *ministry of the local church* involved in *kingdom ministry* is defined by the response of the apostolic disciples, *they went, established churches, baptized disciples, and taught them how to be disciples of Christ*.

³ Fair, Ian, *Kingdom Theology*, HCUMedia, 2012.

The *theology of the kingdom* was to **go, make disciples** by **teaching** them to be disciples of Christ. The theology of the local church was to *build up the body of Christ in unity to love one another and bring glory to Christ*, Ephesians and Acts. The only ministry of the church Jesus built, the *ekklesia* of Matt 16:18-20, is seen in the description of this *ekklesia* in the Apostolic Epistles and the Book of Acts!

The history of Churches of Christ, as seen in the Campbell/Scott “restoration movement history” of the 19th century, reveals a movement “back and forth” along a continuum of “millennial” kingdom views beginning with Thomas Campbell, 1809, and his pivotal *Declaration and Address*, followed by the Stone/Campbell, Cane Ridge “great awakening” settled under Alexander Campbell’s Postmillennialism views, 1809-1866, for a few decades in a Moderate Premillennialism. Then came the American Civil War, or War of Rebellion, which disrupted any views of a “one thousand Postmillennial era of peace” Bitter post-civil war “divisions” among churches of Christ (Disciples of Christ, Christian Church, and Church of Christ) under the leadership of the Nashville, Gospel Advocate opposition of any Premillennial inclination of R. H. Boll 1915, and the *Christian Leader* Boll Premillennialism debates with Foy Wallace Jr. opened the way for a burgeoning Amillennial theological view supported by the Firm Foundation. Under these circumstances a new civil-war broke out, both north and south, east, and west!

The tragedy of the millennial debates was that the focus was on the kingdom age era, not the kingdom theology of function.

By the mid-20th century *the millennial discussion of the kingdom* was laid to rest for 50 years!

Beginning with the **post-world war II** era soldiers returning home from overseas reconstruction Europe initiated and developed several *church planting world mission movements*, Italy, Denmark, Germany, France, rose to the attention of American churches. Restoring the New Testament became the focus of church zeal both locally and internationally. Brazil, South Africa, East Africa, Australia, and New Zealand became the focus of missionary evangelism with New Testament churches being planted the focus of missiology.

Concern for the fractured families and poor citizens in “tribal regions” saw the growth of orphan homes surfacing leading into an anti-cooperation and anti-orphan home debate of the 1960’s.

The scene was set for a benevolent mindset in local American churches. Benevolent concerns for the needy churches and people “overseas” resulted in the ascendancy of *benevolent concerns* over *evangelistic missional interests*.

The benevolent ministry of the church, caring for the poor and disenfranchised, supporting churches in need, all good church ministries, displaced the missional evangelistic theology of the kingdom of *going and evangelizing the lost*.

A Modern Day Example of the Lost Missional Theology of Church Ministry

The Scriptural Foundation for Kingdom Theology

Matt 28:18-20, “And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ **Go** therefore and **make disciples** of **all nations**, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ **teaching** them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”

Mark had already recorded his version of Jesus’ great commission at **Mk 16:15, 16**, “And he said to them, “**Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation.** ¹⁶ He who believes and is **baptized** will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”

Note Jesus’ words at **Matt 28:18-20** - “**go, make disciple of all nations, baptizing them ... teaching them,**” and Luke’s explanation of this at **Acts 1:6-8**, “you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the **end of the earth.**”

Exegesis of Matt 28:18-20

The imperative verb of **Matt 28:18-20**, *μαθητεύσατε*, in context means “**you must make disciples of all nations.**” This is the only imperative in this great command. The imperative *μαθητεύσατε* is an aorist active imperative, **you must make disciples among the nations.** This imperative verb is modified, or explained, by three modal adjectival participles, explaining **how you must make disciples of the nations**, you **go**, you **baptize** and you **teach** them! Cf. Mark 16:15, Matt 28:18-20, Luke 24:44-49, Acts 1:6-8.

The important element in all of Jesus’ mission commissions was **you go, you must make disciples of all nations, the whole creation, to the ends of the earth!**

You cannot do this by staying at home in Jerusalem, or wherever your home congregation might be, you need to go out of, and away from Jerusalem, and make disciples of all nations!

A misinformed application

I have recently heard of how an outreach commission is explained in a particular church! They already have an excellent church facility; a worship hall to seat about 1000 worshippers in two services, many adult classrooms for adult bible classes, a young people’s facility with several classrooms, a Children’s ministry facility with classrooms, church offices, fellowship spaces, and 10 ministers to serve their congregation!

All commendable!

However, because they have many young families coming to join them, they have run out of space!

Commendable!

They decided to build more classrooms and space in their home facility to accommodate these people **who are coming to them!** This would cost over \$8,000,000! In order to justify this, they have promoted a new **outreach ministry!** The outreach ministry is you invite people **who come** to your church to be cared for, **primarily in the beautiful building facilities! A reasonable plan!**

Short Term Benevolent mission trips

To cover their interpretation of **going** and **making disciples**, they conduct several **short term mission trips** each year, returning home after two weeks! **Commendable!**

However, I am not sure this is what Jesus had in mind for the Apostles and Jerusalem church in Acts 1:1-8!

Claiming to be a church shaped by Scripture and the New Testament this is not the interpretation of **going** one finds in Jesus' great commissions and Luke's book of the *Acts of the Apostles*! The short term mission trips are usually primarily *medically and benevolently related*. **Commendable!** They do a lot of *good benevolent work*, they *teach, baptize, and build up the local congregations*, but I wonder whether the word *missions* is a *placebo* in such cases!

Do not make the mistake of assuming that I am opposed to short term *benevolent* trips to help Christians and congregations in the "*diaspora*." ***I am absolutely not!*** However, biblically and missiologically *they are not great commission missional practices*. They are essential excellent benevolent ministries and growth opportunities for encouraging people, notably young people, to become interested in outreach ministries!

Missiologically, and biblically, there is a definitive difference between making short benevolent trips and great commission missions of going, baptizing, and planting new churches!

As we read Luke's explanation of Paul's, Barnabas,' Silas,' and Timothy's mission journeys, they were not benevolently short term motivated.

Interestingly, the disciple who accompanied the apostle Paul and others through Asia, Macedonia, and into Europe, *going to all nations, making disciples, baptizing, and teaching*, wrote the most informative work on missionary practice, the *Acts (praxeis, practice) of the Apostles*! This was Luke who according to biblical tradition was a *medical doctor*! His understanding of going to all nations was to *go, move on, keep going, make disciples, plant new churches!*

For \$8,000,000 a church can plant several new churches in regions where the people who are coming to you live!

But the stumbling block of mission according to Jesus was *you have to go!* Other churches have effectively *gone, planted new churches* where the people live! Simply drive into the new growing communities where the "new comers" and other affluent people are relocating, and notice how many new churches are being planted as satellite churches in the area! Someone understands Jesus' great commission! New churches in new areas should indicate that one can effectively meet more people where they live by "going to them than by them coming to us!"

A reverse great commission!

But that is beside the point! Jesus' great kingdom commission said **go**, not **come** or **invite to come!** *Local evangelism*, an uncomfortable word today, should certainly be a local church outreach! *Should we invite people to come experience worship with us, absolutely! That is evangelism!*

Jesus' great kingdom mission outreach commission was to **go where the people live, not invite them to come live where you live.** *True, we should welcome those who come, but that was not what Jesus intended when he charged his disciples to go!*

In the same context of building more buildings and outreach discussions we are hearing incentives to enable people to come to us! Outreach evangelism has become welcome evangelism which is much more comfortable than outreach going. It costs money, but then we have lots of money enabling us to do difficult work much easier at home!

So, what does an outreach ministry mean, or look like? Apparently for some, outreach ministry means build more buildings for people who come to you! You don't go to make disciples where they are, but welcome them when they to come to where you are!

But, Jesus' great commission was "**go, make disciples**, witnessing in Jerusalem and then Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the world! At least that is how the original disciples of Jesus understood **go!** **They went!** They did not build a bigger church building in Jerusalem! They sent their members *out from Jerusalem and Antioch, into the world!*

How real missionaries react to home churches building cathedrals!

Our missiological libraries are well supplied with excellent works on *missiology* and *missionalia* written by experienced and well trained missionaries. Interestingly, one of the lessons we learned from membership in the Southern African Missiological Society members, most of whom were Lutheran, Baptist, Episcopalian, Methodist, Full Gospel missionaries, was that Jesus' Great Commission was intended to promote full time mission work, not part time mission trips which would be encouraged by home mission churches or societies, but not by missionaries in action in world mission locations. Long term missionaries literally "shudder" in disbelief as they struggle for operational finances as home churches build Cathedrals!

The Biblical model of "going mission" work

Early church records and literature indicate that disciples **went north** into Syria, Asia, Europe, Italy planting churches. Some **went west** into Africa and Egypt and planted great churches in Africa. Others **went east** into Babylon, India, and the Orient, planting churches. They did not invite people to come to the, **they went!**

That is what **go**, πορευθέντες, means in Jesus' great commission instruction! In fact the tense of the participle implies *modal* or *adjectival* activity; *this is how you make disciples, you go*, you do not wait for them **to come!**

What does "outreach" mean in your vocabulary?

Outreach biblically, according to Scripture, and most understandings of outreach, means **go**, not **come!** Perhaps we have a *new missional theological dictionary* that renders **go** as **come!**

A recent church bulleting speaks of outreach to "Indians," this means we must build more buildings so the "Indians" *will come to us* and be welcomed, fellowshipped, and comfortably disciplined!

According to what dictionary, or lexicon, or Greek/English grammar, does the model participle **go**, πορευθέντες, mean *come to us*, *be welcomed*, or **build more buildings so they will come?**

The Biblical Theology of Jesus' Kingdom

A central issue in the discussion hinged around *how the church and the kingdom were related*. The presence of the church was not under question, but the debate of nature of the kingdom, *past, present, or future* millennial nature of the kingdom was bitter and divisive. The result was that the theology of church/kingdom relationships.

Eventually ca 1964/65 Churches of Christ settled on a moderate Amillennialism in which a common view equated church/kingdom. The view was "if you are a member of the church you are automatically a member of the kingdom." Most contemporary Churches of Christ support this symbiotic view.

However, in this reciprocal relationship the different emphases of *church mission/function* and *kingdom mission/function* were lost. The difference between a *benevolent* and a *missional* movement was merged to where the *missional commission* aspect of the Great Commission was enveloped by a *supra-benevolent church/kingdom* mindset and commission.

My point of view in this paper is to demonstrate that the commission given by Jesus to his disciples was two-fold, a *kingdom mission*, Mark 16:16, and Matt 28:18, "*go into the world and make disciples of all nations*", and a *local community commission* in Jesus' instruction that disciples should love one another, and all people, providing benevolent gifts, a *local church benevolent mission*, and that the apostolic church understood the difference.

Luke's *Acts of the Apostles* is a dynamic example of *the disciples* honoring these two missions! The disciples *going out everywhere to the nations* witnessing/preaching Jesus to all nations (Acts 1:1-8, Acts 8:1 and Paul's three great missionary journeys), planting and establishing local churches, and *the local churches* providing benevolent support to their members (Acts 2:43ff, Acts 4:32-5:11, Acts 6:1-7).

My concern is that contemporary Churches of Christ have merged the two commissions with the *missional commission* being almost completely overpowered by the *benevolent dynamic* of the local church. The *benevolent ministry* of the local church is being explained as *mission work* in the absence of *going out in a missional effort* to establishing new congregations.

A *local church* providing *financial and benevolent support* for another local church is admirable, but is not *missional by nature or commission*.

A *local church* or *parachurch* organization providing Christians with health and other benevolent opportunities is admirable benevolent work, but is *not missional!*

This might sound like I am opposed to *Christians providing benevolent support for Christians in other local churches or parachurch organizations*, but that is not my intention.

“The Beginning in the End, or the End in the Beginning”

The theme of this study is the *Meaning of the Kingdom Theology*. We enquire “*at what point do we come to the full understanding of Kingdom Theology?*” ***In its beginning or its end?***

It could be in a study of the ***History of the Beginning of the Kingdom of God***, or the ***History of the End of the Messianic Kingdom***. Either of these titles would be a good beginning which would set one in a certain direction!

The Question in our study is where do we begin?

Etiology of Eschatology?

Do we begin with the *Beginning of the Kingdom* in God’s eternal plan, or do we begin with the End of the kingdom with the final terminal end of God’s eternal plan?

One beginning point of our exercise could simply be the ***identification of the kingdom***. *What kingdom are we seeking?*

Perhaps we could ask “*to what does the concept of kingdom theology refer? Hence, what is kingdom theology? Or simply why study the etiology⁴ or eschatology of kingdom theology? Is this kingdom that important to theological studies. Apparently, for the Liberal theology of the 19th century, it was not!*

However, in contrast to the views of Liberal theology a different approach to theology was introduced in Ireland ca 1827 when John Nelson Darby, a lawyer, introduced a Dispensational interpretation of Old Testament fulfillment with an emphasis on a different view of Old Testament prophetic scriptures. Darby popularized a view of a future Christian dispensation when the prophetic voice of the Old Testament would be fulfilled, a symbolic apocalyptic approach to prophecy which projected the fulfillment into a future, not yet historically fulfilled era related to a “second coming” of Jesus who would establish a future eschatological kingdom. Darby’s views spread rapidly in a British and American theological world tired of a moribund 19th century Liberal theological world.

The options of a tired Liberal theological kingdom which reduced the kingdom to a declining human element, and a speculative Darby Dispensational view which projected kingdom theology into a not yet realized future hope, were challenging to Biblical kingdom theology.

A new line of thought to kingdom theology - an apocalyptic eschatological approach

So, we might begin by asking “*what makes the kingdom of Christ different from other kingdom views?*

The “archaeological” discoveries of several ancient libraries of ancient biblical resources presented new refreshing views of Old Testament documents, The *Dead Sea Scrolls*, ca 1947-1953 in Jordan, and the *Nag Hammadi Library*, 1947-1953, in Northern Egypt, provided access to ancient Second Temple Jewish and early second century Christian views of Scripture.

A better understanding of *how* Scripture was *read* by ancient Jewish and Christian groups provided Old and New Testament biblical theologians with a fuller appreciation of ancient Scriptures. An appreciation of *apocalyptic eschatology* grew among biblical theologians in the mid-1960 and 1970s with works like H. H. Rowley’s work, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic*, and studies by James. H. Charlesworth, (1983). *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* Vol.1 - *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, 1983, and J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination, An Introduction to Jewish*

⁴ Etiology in theology refers to the study of the causes or origins of theological conclusions and disorders and behaviors.

Apocalyptic Literature, 2026, rendering models of kingdom theology that was apocalyptically eschatological.

The beginning point, or goal of apocalyptic eschatological kingdom history

Several generations ago an astute American poet and literary critic, living in England, T. S. Eliot, 1942, wrote a four part, enigmatic piece, *Little Gidding*, suggested that *the beginning of a thought lies in the end!*

We might rephrase Eliot's point by suggesting that ***the meaning of the beginning is seen in the end, not in the beginning!***

T. S. Eliot, *Little Gidding*

***“What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from. And every phrase
And sentence then is right (where every word is at home,
Taking its place to support the others,
The word is neither diffident nor ostentatious,
An easy commerce of the old and the new,
The common word exact without vulgarity,
The formal word precise but not pedantic,
The complete consort dancing together)
Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,
Every poem an epitaph. And any action
Is a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea's throat
Or to an illegible stone: and that is where we start.
We die with the dying:
See, they depart, and we go with them.
We are born with the dead:
See, they return, and bring us with them.
The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree
Are of equal duration. A people without history
Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern
Of timeless moments. So, while the light fails
On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel
History in England is now.”***⁵

The “Beginning” of the History of Kingdom Theology

So, when we return to the topic, *The History of Kingdom Theology*, we find that *the meaning of the beginning* lies in its ending, hence, *the meaning of the kingdom is found in its eschatology*, and not in its origins, or *etiology*.

It has become common in theological circles to refer to *the kingdom of God*, or *of Jesus*, as an *eschatological kingdom* in which the *meaning of the kingdom in question* is found in its end, expressed in Greek as “in the ἔσχατος, *éschatos*, of time, *the last or latest thought*”⁶

⁵ I have edited *Little Gidding* in a place or two to maintain Eliot's point. The title *Little Gidding* refers to a small Anglican community in Little Gidding in Huntingdonshire, established by Nicholas Ferrar in the 17th century and scattered during the English Civil War. The troubling wartime setting in England during WW II, and Eliot's failing health, were an ideal context for Eliot's four part piece and new approach to poetry and poetical!

⁶ Zodhiates, ἔσχατος, *éschatos*, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*.

So in *theological talk*, the kingdom of God is known as *the eschatological kingdom* described in *apocalyptic mysticism*.

Thus, with *Eliot talk*, consider *the eschatological end time kingdom* in which *the meaning of the end time kingdom is found in its beginning*, or *the meaning of the beginning is found in its end!*

The Apocalyptic Eschatological Kingdom of God

The Kingdom from 19th Century Liberal Theology to 20th Century Realized and Inaugurated Eschatology

Over a period of 100 years kingdom thinking moved from a 19th century Liberal human theological perception to a 20th century developing spiritual “realized” perspective.

The Liberal Theology of W. F. G. Hegel, William Schleiermacher, Wilhelm Wrede and others was caught up in the Romantic Mood that elevated *man’s knowledge and experience* over any *divine supra-knowledge* of a spiritual source, like Scripture. Liberal theology reduced faith and theology to the realm of *the process of the natural power of history*.

Karl Barth, in his comprehensive critique of Nineteenth Century Liberal Protestant Theology,⁷ questioned the role of history in producing faith, placing faith in an “experiential” response to the message of Jesus and his cross which for Barth was the real Word of God in Scripture. Although Barth’s view was a positive reaction to Liberal Theology, Barth and his Neo-orthodox colleagues, Rudolf Bultmann, Emil Brunner, Reinhold Niebuhr, *et al*, were nevertheless reluctant to permit history to have a role in the development of faith. This certainly was an improvement on Hegel and Schleiermacher, but still left the nexus of faith in an “existential” response to Scripture!

From Hegel to Barth the “elephant in the room” was history! History resonated with human elements and in the dialectical, neo orthodox thinking of 20th century theology needed to be circumvented in the process of faith.

A former student of Barth, Wolfhard Pannenberg, and a circle of Barth’s and Bultmann’s students, identified as the Pannenberg Circle, ca the 1950’s, took Barth’s views a little further locating faith in a revised *historical philosophy* of Scripture, concluding that faith, notably resurrection faith, had sound roots in the comprehensive, reliable, consistent historical testimony of Jesus’ resurrection.

However, the discovery of new ancient Biblical libraries in the 1940 -1956 era opened the door to fresh resources for historical theology.

Heilsgeschichte/Salvation History

Over the same period as the Barth-Pannenberg debate a view of biblical history was developing that circumnavigated the emphasis of the human element in the history of religion. The common term describing this approach was *Heilsgeschichte*, a term already popularized by a German theologian J. C. von Hofmann, and the Erlangen School of theology.

Hofmann’s thoughts of history included *divine acts in history* were developed elsewhere in the 1950’s by G. E. Wright, *God Who Acts*, 1952, O. Cullmann, *Salvation in History*, 1967, and G. Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 1974. They stressed that *God’s saving acts* in history by which human redemption was achieved should be included in a category of *salvation history* which would include both *divine and human activity*.

Certain major *acts of God’s redemptive plan* such as Israel’s *exodus* and Jesus’ *resurrection* presented to the theologians a new category under which to examine God’s eternal plan of redemption which elevated much of the biblical narrative into a new understanding of history.

G. Ernest Wright proposed a view of *salvation history* which included *God’s divine intervention in history* as *God working man’s salvation through divine saving acts in history*. By introducing the divine

⁷ Karl Barth, with Colin E. Gunton, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, W. B. Eerdmans, 2002.

activity into human history a new definition of history was being defined which soon assumed an older German title and category of *Heilsgeschichte*, *salvation history*.

Heilsgeschichte and Apocalyptic Eschatology

Any discussion of the *theology of the kingdom of God* requires a keen awareness of the *Biblical apocalyptic eschatology categories, the mystical language of the Sacred*,⁸ and **of a final end time-event reckoning of all creation and life!**

We will attempt to provide that keen awareness of the Biblical or theological ages, ***an eschatological age of reckoning or final event.***

The *important studies on eschatology which began to surface in the early 20th century*, in reaction to Liberal Theology, highlighted by C. H. Dodd's *Realized Eschatology*, stimulated a significant interest in the role of "end time" references in prophetic predictions. The eschatological studies of C. H. Dodd, John A. T. Robinson, Joachim Jeremias, and Ethelbert Stauffer, had introduced the concept of a *realized eschatology*. This *final aspect of the end* was realized in the *ministry, teaching, and life* of Jesus, not simply in the role of history as *fulfilling, realizing the final end and judgment*. *Liberal Theology ignored this critical aspect of the equation of God's redemptive work in Jesus.*

The *realized eschatology* of Dodd, *et al*, was a definite improvement on Liberal theologies *denial or neglect of an eschatological judgment*. However, Dodd suggested that *a final eschatological age of theology, God's final redemption of his creation and final judgment of all had been ignore in the natural flow of Liberal history.*

It was apparent that Dodd's view of Old Testament *eschatology which Dodd saw being realized in Jesus' ministry* was a good starting point verses Liberal theologies anti-historical views. However, it ignored much of what Jesus had stressed in his own ministry where he repeatedly pointed to *a future element of God's redemptive activity in history*, a "second coming" still to be realized!

Hence, Oscar Cullman and others corrected Dodd by calling for an *inaugurated eschatology in which the eschatological kingdom would initially be fulfilled in Jesus own life, ministry*, Matt 12:28, and then in his death and resurrection. There would still be another aspect of the fulfilled kingdom at a *future "second" coming*⁹ *at the close of the age in final judgment* intricately connected to his *first coming* as a *final fulfillment of his first coming*, **1 Thess 4:13-18, 1 Cor 15:51-58**. *The meaning of the beginning is found in the end of the beginning!*

The meaning of the ***beginning of the eschatological kingdom*** would ***initially be revealed*** when the ***final eschatological kingdom*** was ***introduced or inaugurated***, by Jesus *in his ministry* (he claimed at Matt 12:28 that the kingdom was fulfilled), but by being taught by Jesus there was still a ***future kingdom act of judgment, salvation and condemnation to come at his final coming*** that would ***finalize the beginning and inauguration of the eschatological kingdom.***

The *arrival of the eschatological kingdom* would not be a *single act of divine judgment and power*, but would involve a *series of powerful acts of divine activity* beginning with Jesus' *birth*, his *ministry* of proclamation, his *death*, and *resurrection*, the *pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost*, and the final judgment end call to be with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in their eternal kingdom at **1 Thess 4:13-17**.

“¹³ *But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.* ¹⁴ *For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even*

⁸ The word *sacred* refers to the realm related to a divine ethereal spiritual existence different from the worldly profane life associated with the physical world of matter. It is used to define matters related the concept of a divine being, or semi-divine beings activities with the human or profane life.

⁹ Interestingly, the coming of the Lord is not referred to in Scripture as a *second coming*, only as *an arrival or coming* εἰς τὴν παρουσίαν τοῦ κυρίου *at the end of the age with the archangels call and the sound of the trumpet!*

so, through Jesus, **God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.** ¹⁵ *For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep.* ¹⁶ *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first;* ¹⁷ *then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord."*

William Manson had said, "When we turn to the New Testament, we pass from the climate of prediction to that of fulfillment. The things which God had foreshadowed by the lips of His holy prophets *He has now, in part at least, brought to accomplishment . . . The supreme sign of the Eschaton is the Resurrection of Jesus and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Church.* The Resurrection of Jesus is not simply a sign which God has granted in favour of His son, but is the *inauguration, the entrance into history, of the times of the End. Christians, therefore, have entered through the Christ into the new age . . .* What had been predicted in Holy Scripture as to happen to Israel or to man in the "Eschaton" has happened to and in Jesus. *The foundation-stone of the New Creation has come into position.*" "Eschatology in the New Testament," (Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers No. 2; Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1953).

The Importance of Eschatology to Kingdom Theology

Although in a previous generation of eschatology 1 and 2 Peter and Revelation were considered the major apocalyptic writing among the New Testament corpus, in recent years the scholarship of G. B. Caird, James H. Charlesworth, J. J. Collins, Adella Yarbro Collins, Richard Bauckham, Robert H. Mounce, G. K. Beale, David E. Aune, David C Sim, have drawn attention to the profound role apocalyptic eschatology has played in almost every New Testament book, including the Pauline and Johannine corpus.

Ernst Käsemann, esteemed German New Testament scholar, was renowned for his observation that *eschatology is the mother of New Testament theology* implying that ***without a knowledge of eschatology one cannot understand New Testament theology.***¹⁰ Prominent New Testament scholar, F. F. Bruce, agreed, observing that "unless one is able to stand in the shoes of an apocalypticist one will not understand the New Testament." Ernst Käsemann is renowned for his observation ***that eschatology is the mother of New Testament theology implying that without a knowledge of eschatology one cannot understand New Testament theology.***¹¹

Prominent Scottish/English New Testament scholar, F. F. Bruce, agreed with Käsemann, observing that "unless one is able to stand in the shoes of an apocalypticist one will not understand the New Testament." Bruce wrote extensively on *The Gospel of Mark* and *Mark 13*, Jesus' apocalyptic discourse.

One scholar who caught the attention of a new generation of New Testament scholars, was H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic*, 1950, stressing the importance of apocalyptic to both Old and New Testament theology.

So magnificent was the concept of the arrival of the eschatological kingdom that it could not be described in normal human symbols. The *Kingdom of God* views referring to *the divine purpose and activity of the full Godhead, Trinity, and their divine heavenly servants* needed a more majestic

¹⁰ "Matthew and apocalypticism as the "mother of Christian theology": Ernst Käsemann revisited," Andries van Aarde Department of New Testament Studies University of Pretoria. Paper presented at the Gospel of Matthew Seminar, Studiorum Novum Testamenti Societas, 56th General Meeting, Faculté de théologie de l' Université de Montréal, Canada, 31 July-4 August 2001.

¹¹ "Matthew and apocalypticism as the "mother of Christian theology": Ernst Käsemann revisited," Andries van Aarde Department of New Testament Studies University of Pretoria. Paper presented at the Gospel of Matthew Seminar, Studiorum Novum Testamenti Societas, 56th General Meeting, Faculté de théologie de l' Université de Montréal, Canada, 31 July-4 August 2001.

description than a normal historical genre! The *mysterious living creatures, cherubim, archangels and angels* were all involved in redeeming God's fallen creation. To lift such activity theologians resorted to the Babylonian-Greek-Jewish mystical genre of apocalypticism to elevate the drama of divine initiation in human history.

*The magnitude of this divine program called for extra-ordinary spiritual powers descending to earth, cosmic symbols to describe the other worldly scenes in mystical Jewish and Christian elements, which call **apocalyptic eschatology**.*

The introduction of this *cosmic or ethereal symbolism* in the biblical narrative removed the narrative from *human history* into a *divine heilsgeschichte*¹², God was reclaiming the power and authority of his redemptive plan, and activity and doing it in a cosmic display of mysticism..

Without an awareness of the *theological and literary aspects of apocalyptic eschatology* the theology of the kingdom would either become the arena of human effort, or would be reduced to a misguided "*anthology*" defined by human space-time concepts. In his ministry Jesus warned against human attempts to define the purpose of God by attempting to restrict the divine activity of the kingdom in terms *demonic powers* or concepts. Jesus at **Matt 12:22ff**, discussed the blasphemous claim that he worked under the powers of Beelzebul, He criticized *being led astray by interesting narratives*, **Matt 24:3-51**, "*the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray."*

By the creation *God was preparing a new spiritual life or existence* in which *he could live with his creation in peace* like any father would who loved his family!

Kingdom theology is the story of the *spiritual world of God* seeking fellowship with *fallen humanity*. This fellowship or kingdom relationship cannot be adequately described in human terms or concepts. How do you describe sin, spiritual death, or the depth of judgment incurred in sin, in human or physical terms? How do you describe God in human physical concept? With great difficulty, for when you have done so you have reduced the holiness of an almighty being to humanity!

Hence our past Jewish sages who struggled with this challenge introduced in the concept of Holy Scripture a *mysterious symbolism* drawn from the mysticism of Babylon, Greece, and Egypt, the result of which we identify as *apocalyptic eschatology*. Scripture resorts to the symbolism of the *mystical language of apocalyptic eschatology* to define what cannot be defined in human terms.

The library of Jewish mysticism is vast as the sages through the centuries had visions of celestial and cosmic scenes which painted dramatic messages of judgment and hope. Literally dozens of Jewish mystical writings found their way into the almost sacred apocryphal corpus of Judaism and early Christianity.

The three pseudepigraphical books of Enoch became a major corpus in this "library." The storyline of the leading Book of Enoch, 1 Enoch, with 108 chapters in the Ethiopian Enoch, recounts how the axis of the *ethereal spiritual world of God entered the plane of human existence, bringing meaning to the horizontal world of human history*.

Genesis 5:18-24 describes how Enoch, a *godly man* was taken by God to be with God. "*When Enoch had lived sixty-five years, he became the father of Methuselah. ²² Enoch walked with God after the birth of Methuselah three hundred years, and had other sons and daughters. ²³ Thus all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. ²⁴ Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.*"

¹² *Heilsgeschichte, salvation history, a special divine empowered history, empowered by the Spirit of God, described in rich Jewish and Christian symbolism, apocalyptic eschatology.*

Genesis says little further about Enoch “*being not*” other than *God took him*. A comment in Hebrews 11:5, adds little help, “*By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was attested as having pleased God.*”

Jude 14 speaks of Enoch *speaking*, but it is obvious that Jude has in mind the Book of Enoch not the human character of Genesis 5!

The mystical Enoch, of the Book of Enoch, who was taken by God is endowed with special *godly vision and character*. He eventually returns to earth to serve the earth as *God’s spiritual watchman*. Fallen disobedient angels had descended to earth, coupling sexually with the women of men, producing mixed forms of corrupt giants identified as *Nephilim, corrupting the men and women of God*, reshaping them to be giants like the *Nephilim*.

The *Apocryphal Book of Enoch*, or 1 Enoch, is a long major work whose writing took place over at least four centuries by Jewish mystics. The following comments from Wikipedia describe some interesting features of 1 Enoch:

“The Book of Enoch contains unique material on the origins of demons and Nephilim, why some angels fell from heaven, an explanation of why the Genesis flood was morally necessary.

Three books are traditionally attributed to Enoch, 1 Enoch, 2 Enoch, and 3 Enoch.

1 Enoch is not considered canonical scripture by most movements of Judaism or branches of Christianity, although it is part of the biblical canon used by the Ethiopian Jewish community as well as the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Eritrean Orthodox Church.

The older sections of 1 Enoch are estimated to date to c. 300–200 BCE, and the latest part (Book of Parables) is probably from c. 100 BCE. Scholars believe Enoch was originally written in either Aramaic or Hebrew, the languages first used for Jewish texts. Copies of the earlier sections of 1 Enoch were preserved in Aramaic among the Dead Sea Scrolls in the Qumran Caves.

Authors of the New Testament were familiar with some content of the book. A short section of 1 Enoch is cited in the Epistle of Jude, being attributed to “Enoch, the Seventh from Adam” (1 Enoch 60:8).

The full Book of Enoch survives in its entirety only in the Ethiopic Ge’ez translation.”¹³

The symbolism of 1 Enoch reflect the nature and character of the *eschatological apocalyptic kingdom* demonstrating to men what the kingdom of God looks like, how to understand the symbolism of apocalyptic eschatology.

Jesus’ Great Kingdom Commission to the Apostles

Matt 28:16. “*Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and **make disciples** of all nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ **teaching** them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”*

Speaking for the full godhead, Jesus made his great kingdom mission simple. There is only ***one imperative verb in Jesus’ commission, you must make disciples!***

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Enoch.

Let me outline verse 19 with some exegetical comments!

“**Go** is an *aorist passive modal participle* explaining *how you must make disciples*, you go to make disciples. You don’t stay at home base!

Therefore is an inferential conjunction indicating why you should go, you go to make disciples!

You make disciples of all nations, not just of the Jews; a natural tendency for life-long Jews!

You must make disciples, μαθητεύσατε, *disciple all nations, make disciples*, an aorist passive **imperative verb**, *you must disciple*, i.e. *make disciples*!

Baptizing, βαπτίζοντες, and **teaching**, διδάσκοντες, are both present active participles explaining the *purpose* you go to **make disciples**, *you go to baptize* and *to teach* the disciples. You make disciples by *baptizing* and *teaching* them!

That is the missional imperative theology of the great eschatological kingdom! **You must make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching them.**

This was not a commission to do benevolent work among the nations. The commission of the kingdom is to make disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching them how to be disciples.

What was the intended theology and nature of the kingdom? It was missional, not benevolent.

Going into the world to make disciples was not the apostles, or the Jerusalem church’s decision, nor is it the present day church’s decision. **It was a divine imperative!**

Think Matt 28:18. Jesus (the Son of God) said, “**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.** ¹⁹ **Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,** ²⁰ **teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”**

First, I think we get the idea from this text that **the commission carried the full authority of the full godhead!**

Second, the **only imperative** in this text is **make disciples!** In this commission Jesus wanted the apostles, or Christians, to do? **Make disciples!**

Third, he did not say **feed the poor!** Naturally that is what good Christians, churches, should do! Read the Sermon on the mount in Matthew and Luke.

The **kingdom** commission was **make disciples by going, teaching, baptizing!**

Let’s make a fine point, or two, or three!

Kingdom mission is *missional*, **make disciples** by teaching and baptizing people. After Jesus gave this kingdom mission to the apostles he repeated it in Acts 1:1-8. In the remainder of the Book of Acts, whose title in my Bible reads, *The Acts of the Apostles*, we see the apostles doing precisely what Jesus commanded them to do! They go out making disciples by preaching, teaching, baptizing, and planting churches!

Church mission is benevolent, *feed the poor, care for you members, worship God and Jesus, be led by the Spirit!* This is what we learn from the Jerusalem church in the book of Acts and by watching the apostolic church in action.

A Conundrum! Benevolence may lead to, or open the door to **missional kingdom ministry**, but the *focus* of a *benevolent* church is *not missional!* The focus of a benevolent church is taking care of the needy – a good Scriptural ministry. A **missional church** should be benevolent and take care of the poor, but its focus is going into the world, **evangelizing, making new disciples, baptizing** them, **teaching** them. A **benevolent church** may not be **going** into the world preaching Jesus, **making new disciples, teaching** them, planting churches. Being a missional church may open the door to benevolent opportunities, but a weak missional church may not be benevolent!

God's Eternal Purpose for the Kingdom

Paul discusses God's eternal purpose and mission in Eph 1:3-23. Although this is a long text I am including it here in hope that you will read it carefully! It describes God's eternal purpose in Christ and his intention for the kingdom.

³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. ⁵ He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸ which he lavished upon us. ⁹ For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.*

¹¹ *In him, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

¹⁵ *For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come; ²² and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all."*

An Apocalyptic Eschatological Kingdom

The eternal plan of God is described in Scripture in magnificent *apocalyptic eschatological* terms as a *spiritual kingdom*, a *last days kingdom*, with eternal final implications and possibilities by the Holy Spirit, beyond human reality, as in Luke's Acts 2 Day of Pentecost happening which Peter described in Joel's apocalyptic terms as a striking day with eternal implications:

*"And it shall come to pass afterward,
that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.*

²⁹ *Even upon the menservants and maidservants
in those days, I will pour out my spirit."* Joel 2:28,

Peters response at Acts 2:17-20 fixes the events of Pentecost as Holy Spirit end tome eschatological events:

"And in the last days it shall be, God declares,

*that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;
¹⁸ yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days
I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.
¹⁹ And I will show wonders in the heaven above
and signs on the earth beneath,
blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;
²⁰ the sun shall be turned into darkness
and the moon into blood,
before the day of the Lord comes,
the great and manifest day.”*

In order to communicate this narrative *God chose a unique genre* for his message that would *elevate the narrative above and beyond* the earthly human space-time existence – *a mystical apocalyptic eschatology that lifts the kingdom into a new existence*. The Old Testament and New Testament kingdom events are all described in the Jewish mythical other worldly language, of apocalyptic eschatology for striking impact.

The kingdom is not an ordinary event! It is a mystical, cosmic, ethereal, beyond time event.

Everything about God’s kingdom system is described in striking *apocalyptic eschatological* concepts which have ***eternal final end of the world implications*** beyond the physical realm.

Spiritual otherworldly concepts such as *the arrival of God’s kingdom* or *the final judgment of man* are communicated best in *mystical apocalyptic conflagrations* demonstrating *the awful dramatic finality of such judgments*, either atoning salvation events, or final resurrection judgment events!

An apocalyptic eschatological narrative provides an explanation of some power that lies beyond the weakness of human foibles and calls us to trust the theory of that power.

Kingdom theology expressed in *apocalyptic eschatology* concepts or contexts signifies divine power behind the kingdom, it was not in conception, in activation, and in ending it was not a natural human event, it had full divine approval and authority.

The kingdom was specifically commissioned by Jesus in three of our Gospels, Mark 16:15, 16; Matt 28:16-19, Luke 24:42; and by Jesus in Acts 1:1-8., Acts 10, 11. Notice the presence of the Holy Spirit in each case emphasizing the dramatic power and approval of God in each instance.

The Apocalyptic Eschatological Kingdom Theology Summarized

For several years I have been increasingly impressed by the impact of the *eschatological* and *apocalyptic* genres on all New Testament studies. I had heard the terminology, but the implications of these disciplines remained remote to me!

Perhaps this interest had its roots in my early study of *kingdom theology in Matthew*, and in Jesus’ preaching ministry in the Gospels, Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God which theology seemed to escape not only the Jews to whom he came, but also to the disciples he called and chose.

Jesus’ condemnation of the Jerusalem Temple system, and the destruction of the Temple itself which was much deeper than the destruction of a building, was lost in the mind of his disciples he had been teaching for almost three years when he announced the fall of the Temple in Matt 23-25, commonly known today as his *apocalyptic discourse*.

The destruction of the Temple involved *the closing of a previous religious dispensation or system*, and the *inauguration of a new and final system*, the *last or final dispensation and system* of God's eternal plan of redemption.

After all, the word *eschatology* is built of the Greek word ἔσχατος, *éschatos*, meaning *end, final, last, or closing*. The inauguration of the *eschatological kingdom* implied the *closing* of a Jewish *traditional national kingdom perspective* and an appropriate *refocus on prophetic fulfillment* of Old Testament prophesies of a *global kingdom* which would *inaugurate the final element of God's eternal plan of redemption*.

Eschatology stresses the focus on the *end*, the *passing of former system with a final last system*.

The *inauguration* of God's *messianic kingdom* was *eschatological* since it defined God's *final fulfilled act of redemption in history*.

Eschatology is *historical* since it *takes place in history*, and is *theological* since it speaks of *God's final divine act redemption which was far more significant than history*.

Apocalyptic is a unique genre of *communicating God's final or decisive act in history* that is far more significance and serious than the history which it defines or communicates.

Biblical apocalyptic incorporates the *mystical themes and expressions* of its *environments, Babylonian, Greek, and Jewish mysticism*, to express the *otherworldly divine nature* of its actions.

Apocalyptic eschatology draws on the *mystical genre* of its age or culture to *describe God's final divine acts in otherworldly mystical language* that shifts the power from *the normal human source* to the *divine realm*.

The thesis of this paper is that unless one stands in the shade of apocalyptic eschatology one will not be able to understand the theological import of kingdom theology!

In my own life I have defined my academic or theological field in Systematic Theology as *Eschatological Apocalypticism*.

As early as 1964 in South Africa, prior to my theological studies at Abilene Christian University, I had challenged nascent premillennial theories that were beginning to make inroads into the South African British/Norwegian Baptist churches. This Premillennial thinking was disturbing the anti-Calvinistic thinking of my home Baptist church. Some Baptist ministers, having recently graduated from the Moody Bible Institute and the Dallas Theological Institute in the USA, were introducing a Southern Baptist, Calvinistic view of theology into the Norwegian/British theological agenda of Baptist circles. When I asked for biblical support of this viewpoint, I was encouraged to leave such serious theological issues to the clergy.

In 1964 I was granted a Bible scholarship by Abilene Christian College in the USA, which I accepted with much anticipation! The missionary who had encouraged me and June to have our faith more Scripturally defined was an alumnus of the Bible Department of Abilene Christian College which was located in the *hotbed* of Southern Baptist theology, Dallas and Fort Worth!

Premillennial debates which had *bled over* from the Southern Baptist churches to Churches of Christ in Tennessee and Texas, leaving serious scars on Church of Christ theology, notably on studies in the Book of Revelation!

The *hotbed* of Premillennial debates between Church of Christ biblical scholars located in Nashville, Tennessee, the *Gospel Advocate* journal, and Austin, Texas, the *Firm Foundation* journal had divided Churches of Christ in the South Western United States for over fifty years. Into this matrix of theological discomfort I arrived at Abilene Christian College in the Fall of 1965!

One of my favorite studies at ACC was a course in Revelation under Professor J W Roberts.¹⁴ Roberts had been charged by some poorly informed ministers of being *Premillennialist* in his thinking.

¹⁴ For the perceptive and precise readers, there are no periods after J and W, for his name was simply J W!

The impact of this mindset on Churches of Christ was *popular kingdom views* which had surfaced after the 1860s American Civil War where Alexander Campbell had championed a *Postmillennialist* view of the arrival of the *peaceful kingdom* in the *Great Awakening* movement of early nineteenth century in Kentucky and Pennsylvania.

The American Civil War effectively destroyed any positive aspects of *Postmillennial* thinking with *an arrival a religious and social kingdom* of Christ mindset. The nineteenth century Restoration Movement under Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Scott, and others, had left many Church of Christ thinkers prone to the dangers of an emerging Dispensational view of John Nelson Darby's *Premillennial kingdom* theories. Darbyism had been imported into the USA from Ireland by a lawyer, Schofield, settling in Chicago and moving into Dallas, Texas in the Dallas Theological Institute.

Church of Christ opposition to the Darby Dispensational view following the questionable Postmillennial views of Campbell was divided, some under Robert Henry Boll favoring a Premillennial view with others influenced by Foy E. Wallace Jr., bitterly opposing any slight view of Premillennialism.

The kingdom theological "*battle field*" was so sensitive that any person venturing into the discussion surrounding Campbell's faulty *Postmillennial* thinking was defined as *Premillennial*. As a result of this sensitivity, two Christian College leaders, one a President the other the head of the Bible Department, had been branded as *Premillennial* because of the "*theologically sloping kingdom field!*"

One result of this theological "*mine-field*" was that few Church of Christ ministers, or scholars, ventured into writing commentaries on Revelation for over half a century in the early twentieth century. One who did, Foy E. Wallace Jr., became the champion of anti-Premillennial Revelation kingdom thinking. However, since Wallace was a prominent preacher, anyone challenging his views resulted in being banned as a *Premillennialist!*

Into this *hazardous theological vortex* stepped an ACU Professor, J W Roberts, PhD in Greek and New Testament from the University of Texas. He challenged the theological stalemate¹⁵ on Revelation with an advanced course in Revelation. His knowledge of *eschatological apocalyptic* literature and Greek was extensive and set him in a position where Church of Christ scholars few challenged him, especially within the slippery Premillennial atmosphere! His textbook for the course on Revelation was one by the Oxford scholar, G. B. Caird, who was an influential International and British New Testament scholar. Caird's commentary, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, published in England was not "bound by a Southern Baptist Premillennialist predisposition."¹⁶

Roberts' knowledge and expertise of the Greek New Testament was superb to where few were willing to challenge his credentials in Greek literature, New Testament, and *eschatological apocalypticism*.

The fields of *eschatological apocalypticism* were for many *too new and mysterious*, and therefore espousing *heretical* viewpoints; better ignored than researched! The study of *apocalyptic eschatology* was still in the early 1960s in the USA in its formative years! H. H. Rowey's seminal book, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic*, 1950, was still making its way into Biblical studies. J. J. Collins's *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 1984, was for many still a new exploratory field.

It was Professor Roberts, along with Professor Abraham J. Malherbe, who opened the door for me into *apocalyptic eschatological theology*. They, along with Professors J. J. Collins and his wife Adella

¹⁵ If you are uncomfortable with this *stalemate* statement, do some research and find any commentaries of the latter 19th and early 20th centuries written by Church of Christ scholars!

¹⁶ Whenever I think of scholars like C. F. D. Moule, C. H. Dodd, G. B. Caird, F. F. Bruce, C. K. Barrett, Richard Bauckham, N. T. Wright, I am reminded of the cryptic amusing comment by F. F. Bruce, "Theology was *Invented* in Germany, *Corrupted* in America, and *Corrected* in the UK!"

Yarborough Collins, and Professor Andre Orlov, challenged me to engage the enlightening world of *Jewish mysticism and apocalypticism*.

It is surprising that numerous modern New Testament “scholars” like N. T. Wright, and would be Dispensational Raptor *scholars*, in their discussion of heaven, the recreation of the physical earth after the “second coming” *overlook, ignore*, or are weak in their appreciation of the genre of Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism! The whole *Left Behind* theology of Hal Lindsey and David Jeremiah totally ignore the symbolism of Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic.

This *ignorant or shallow* understanding of *apocalyptic eschatology*, or of *eschatological apocalyptic* reference to the kingdom, results in Premillennial *temporal literalization* of the *eschatological non temporal* use of time, and the *repeated recalculations* as to when Jesus will return with the *Rapture and kingdom, located in a physical new Jerusalem Temple system*. A striking point of these miscalculations and misunderstanding of Premillennial thinking is that Jesus cannot return until the City and Temple have been restored, hence Premillennial concern for supporting the Nation of Israel against alien “Palestinian” occupation of the city! *The depth of Premillennial heresy can mainly be attributed to their failure to understand apocalyptic eschatology, and Jewish and Christian mysticism!*

The “Beginning of the Beginning and of the End”!

The Apostle John at **John 1:1** opened the door to all *discussions of the beginning* with the simple yet profound, enigmatic statement regarding Jesus’ origin, “¹ ***In the beginning*** (Ἐν ἀρχῇ¹) ***was the Word*** (ῥῆν, imperfect indicative active verb, already existed²), ***and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*** ² ***He was in the beginning with God;*** ³ ***all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.*** ⁴ ***In him was life, and the life was the light of men.*** ⁵ ***The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.***”

This expression introduces one of the heaviest loaded theological paragraphs in the Bible! *The eternal pre-existence of Jesus with God.* It clearly emphasizes that Jesus was *with God before the beginning for he was the Word of God before the beginning!*

When the “beginning began” Jesus was *already there* with God to bring everything about! Obviously this referred to the *creation of the earth and humankind.*

Passages like **Eph 1:3-14** clearly state that God already had some plan to save or redeem his creation from the consequences of disobedience and the ultimate death of sin, total ruin, separation from God and his loving grace!

“³ ***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,*** ⁴ ***even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.*** ⁵ ***He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,*** ⁶ ***to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.*** ⁷ ***In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace*** ⁸ ***which he lavished upon us.*** ⁹ ***For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ*** ¹⁰ ***as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.***

¹¹ ***In him, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will,*** ¹² ***we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory.*** ¹³ ***In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,*** ¹⁴ ***which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.***”

¹ Zodhiates, “ἀρχή *archē*; the beginning, ἀρχή, denotes an active cause, as in Col. 1:18; Rev. 3:14 (cf. Rev. 1:8; 21:6; 22:13). Christ is called “the beginning” because *He is the efficient cause of the creation*; “the head” because He is before all things, and all things were created by Him and for Him (John 1:1–3; Col. 1:16–17; Heb. 1:10). *Archē* may also mean the pass. beginning of something, as the beginning of a line, road, and so forth The line or road is conceived in one’s mind, but where he touches the paper to draw the line is the pass. beginning of the line (Matt. 19:8; Mark 1:1; 10:6; 13:8). *Archē* also means the extremity or outermost point (Acts 10:11; 11:5); rule, authority, dominion, power (Luke 20:20; 1 Cor. 15:24). When it refers to time, it means the beginning, commencement, relative to an event or a situation such as in Matt. 24:8, “the beginnings of sorrows”; Mark 1:1, “beginning of the gospel”; Mark 13:8, “beginning of sorrows”; Heb. 7:3, “beginning of days”; Sept.: Job 40:14; Hos. 1:2. When it does not refer to a restrictive event, situation or time, it is used in an absolute sense as in John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word.” It does not delineate what beginning. Here it means before there was any beginning whatsoever, the Word had been. There is no art. before the word *archē*. Before the creation of the world there had been the Creator, the Word (*Lógos* [3056], which primarily means intelligence and the expression of that intelligence in making the world, the creation ... Of all things, *from everlasting* ... With the prep. *en* ... *in, en archē, in the beginning of all things, of the world* (John 1:1, 2; Sept.: Gen. 1:1); or of any particular thing, e.g., of the gospel dispensation or Christian experience, meaning at the first (Acts 11:15; Phil. 4:15).

² Zodhiates, “perfect active indicative of εἶμί *eimí*... a verb of existence, *to be, to have existence.* In the metaphysical sense as in John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word,” meaning *it had been before there was any beginning or existed before the beginning of anything.*”

The History of the “beginning of the beginning” of the Kingdom

We have in Jesus’ remarkable prayer a striking emphasis on the kingdom of God. Jesus taught his disciples to pray that the *kingdom of God would come on earth just as it is in heaven*³!

The *kingdom of God* had existed in the “*heavenly realm*” with God and Jesus long before it came to earth in Jesus preaching and ministry! Scripture, Old and New Testaments, is replete with references to God’s eternal kingdom. Peter sums these references up **2 Pet 1:11**, “*Therefore, brethren, be the more zealous to confirm your call and election, for if you do this you will never fall; ¹¹ so there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*”

The kingdom Jesus preached and inaugurated on earth was an eternal kingdom with its “root” or beginning with God in eternity!

When Jesus inaugurated the kingdom during his ministry, Matt 12:28, he was not creating a new kingdom, but only inaugurating a new concept of sovereign leadership, vastly different from Israel’s earlier kingdoms under Saul, David, Solomon, *et al*, and Moses and the Temple *Torah* and Priesthood in Jerusalem.

Jesus’ kingdom was not a temporary earthly kingdom, it was the fulfillment of God’s sequential eternal redemptive strategy for his creation. In order to emphasize the extraordinary nature of God’s eternal kingdom the scribes of old, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, *et al*, Jesus and his apostolic leaders and teachers chose to describe the kingdom of God in the mystical genre of *apocalyptic eschatology* already common among the Babylonian, Greek, and Egyptian, scribes.

The kingdom Jesus and the Apostles proclaimed was mystical, cosmic, other-worldly, beyond the limitation of human power and wisdom. Early readers of the Prophets and the developing apocryphal and pseudepigraphic genre recognized the other-worldly nature of this new kingdom and wisely chose the apocalyptic eschatological genre to impress the saints with the divine eternal nature of this kingdom.

The section of the *eschatological* language and genre used by Jesus and the apostolic witnesses to Jesus’ life established that the kingdom of Jesus was the *final* “era” of God’s redemptive work in Jesus which inaugurated the *end, eschaton – final, last, end!*

Notice Acts 2:17 and Heb 1:1, Peter’s great Pentecostal sermon, and the Hebrew Preacher’s striking observation, Acts 2:17, “*this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ ‘And in the last days (eschatais⁴ hemerais) it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams ...’*” Heb 1:1, 2 “¹ *In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; ² but in these last days (ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν) he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.*”

The kingdom which the Old Testament prophets foretold, which Jesus and the apostles proclaimed, the kingdom of God and Christ, *had its roots in eternity with God*, was *inaugurated by Jesus in his ministry*. The kingdom *preached by the apostolic church, ushered in the end, the final days of God’s redemptive work*. After this ***eschatological final-end kingdom Jesus will return, save those still alive together with those who had been resurrected with Jesus, and judge the world with final judgment***, 1 Thess 4:13-18, 1 Cor 15:51-58.

³ Matt 6:9, 10,

⁴ Zodhiates, *eschatais, final, end, last!*

Jesus' Preaching of the Kingdom in the Gospels

Kingdom verses Church in the New Testament

As we have already noticed, *Jesus* had more to say about the *kingdom* than any other person in the New Testament. *Kingdom* is an important Gospel topic. The New Testament writers record of the word *kingdom*:

New Testament – 160 times
Gospels – 126 times
Rest of New Testament – 34 times
Matthew – 32 times
Mark – 17 times
Luke – 32 times
John – 2 times
Paul – 8 times
Revelation – 4 times

Kingdom - Church

In contrast to the word *kingdom*, the word *church* is mentioned only three (3) times in the Gospels, once (1) in Matt 16:18 and twice (2) times in Matt 18:17.

However, the word *church* is mentioned 115 times in the New Testament, mostly in the apostolic Epistles.

What is the Difference, and Why the difference?

In one sense, there is no difference between kingdom and church, for both refer to the same *people of Christ*, the *disciples* of Christ!

Churches - Local geographic assemblies serving God and Christ under the New Testament and Bishops, Elders, Minister-Evangelists, and Teachers

The real difference in terms or organisms lay in *geographic differences*. The churches were *local church congregations*, like Colossae, Ephesus, Thessalonica, and Corinth, which functioned under *local bishops, elders, evangelists, teachers*. There is no mention of a Pope, Archbishop, Bishop when describing the governance and leadership New Testament *local churches*. No universal global church is described, not even in Rome or Jerusalem. which assumed authority over other local churches! The churches mentioned in the New Testament were individual local churches functioning as local congregations with local evangelistic and benevolent responsibilities.

The word *church*, defined in the New Testament referred to an *ekklesia*, a *group of people called by God to meet together and bring honor to God and Christ*. The *local church* meets each Sunday under bishops and elders to worship God and Christ, celebrate Christ's death and resurrection, bring glory to God by doing benevolent needs of their people and community.

In a universal vision these local congregations combine under Christ to form the global people, the kingdom of God!

Churches, as local congregations, are microcosms of the universal kingdom of Christ.

The commission of the local churches is to evangelize, witness for Christ, teach the gospel message, shepherd the flock, oversee the local disciples, teach, and in benevolence take care of the poor and disenfranchised. ²¹

²¹ Cf Matthew's Sermon on the Mount.

Kingdom - The universal global kingdom of churches serving God under Christ and Scripture

Whatever sovereignty there is in the kingdom it is reserved and restricted to Christ, who gave himself for the universal global church, and Scripture. There are no Popes, Archbishops, or ecclesial Synods who legislate for the kingdom of Christ!

Christ is the only king who leads through his written word of authority, Scripture, not Ecclesiastic Synods.

In the *universal kingdom of Christ* the Christians are *led in local congregations-churches under Scripture, Bishops, Elders, Evangelists, and Teachers*. Universal Popes, Archbishops, Bishops, and Synods are not heard in the New Testament local churches.

*The kingdom is a **macrocosm** of local churches; a representation of smaller units or entities by a larger one, presumably of a similar structure.*²²

The commission of the kingdom is missional, to go, make disciples, baptize and teach converts to follow Christ, and to plant new local churches.

²² Several major English dictionaries as in the Cambridge and Oxford dictionaries,

The Church and Kingdom in Apocalyptic Eschatology

Jesus' and the church's *apostolic leaders and teachers* needed to elevate the *local congregations* and *kingdom* from the local cultural and political understanding of ἐκκλησία and βασιλεία, both common concepts in the Roman and Greek worlds, to different level of appreciation.

The **church**, ἐκκλησία, was more than a normal local congregation of people, it needed to be a *special spiritual congregation of Christian disciples*.

Likewise, the **kingdom**, βασιλεία, was to be vastly different from all contemporary Roman and Greek kingdoms. *It was the supreme kingdom of God, not of the Romans!*

Fortunately, Jesus and the apostolic teachers and writers already had a medium available to them in the mystical genre of apocalyptic. Apocalyptic, although prominent in the Judaism of Jesus' day was already a widely known genre among the Babylonian, Greek, and Egyptian traditions. Mysticism had already raised the level of understanding among the Jewish community with a centuries old prophetic tradition in the *Tanakh*, Old Testament books, prophetic works most of which were heavily influenced by mysticism.

The Church and Kingdom in Apocalyptic finery!

The books of the Old Testament apocalyptic canon, *1 Enoch, Tobit, Testament of Levi, Sibylline Oracles, et al*, were already widely recognized as revealing a deeper understanding of the Jewish faith than what was being taught by a corrupt Temple priesthood, hence the rise of the Essenic rebellion and the Dead Sea Qumran community.

By describing the message of Christianity influenced through Jewish Mysticism the early church apostolic leaders taught and produced literature, the Gospel of Matthew¹, the Epistles of 1, 2 Peter, Jude, and Revelation, *et al*, incorporated expressions from the *established Jewish Mysticism canon* to describe the church and its mission, and the kingdom in the esoteric genre of apocalyptic thought. We have already commented on scholarly views that apocalyptic genre and eschatology were the mother of New Testament theology!²

Professor Amy Richter in her PhD dissertation has addressed Matthew's Apocalyptic heritage in Jewish Mysticism by demonstrating Matthew's awareness of the spiritual apocalyptic contribution to Judaism in 1 Enoch.

"In addition, by seeing the particularly Matthean aspects of the Gospel in light of the Enochic material, *this dissertation contributes to our understanding of Matthew's association with apocalyptic literature*—the apocalyptic book of 1 Enoch, in particular. The prominence of apocalyptic eschatology in Matthew's Gospel, and even the understanding of Matthew as an "apocalyptic gospel," has come to the fore during the last fifty years. However, this dissertation, by linking Enoch and the Enochic watchers' template with Matthew's Gospel, shows more clearly how Matthew's apocalyptic vision is present even within the first two chapters of the Gospel. Further, in focusing on the story of the watchers' transgression, this dissertation shows Matthew's familiarity with 1 Enoch separate from a discussion of the Book of Parables, also known as the Parables of Enoch and the Similitudes of Enoch (1 Enoch 37–71). Although scholarly consensus may be moving in the direction of accepting a date for the Book of Parables, or at least of the traditions within the Book of Parables, which might pre-date the composition of the canonical gospels, there is a great advantage in establishing the possibility of Matthean knowledge of Enochic traditions while avoiding the pitfalls of arguments concerning the date

¹ It is widely held by scholars that Matthew, being a Jew and writing for a Jewish readership incorporated Jewish Mysticism and apocalyptic in his Gospel.

² Käsemann, Rowley, Cullmann, Bruce, et al.

of the Book of Parables. Very few studies have been done, outside of those linking the Son of Man of the Book of Parables with the Son of Man in Matthew's Gospel, which show the influence of Enochic material on the Gospel of Matthew. Perhaps those who accept a date for the Book of Parables as early enough to provide source material for the writers of the canonical writers see no need to look further afield in 1 Enoch since the Son of Man material in the Book of Parables provides plenty of grist for the mill of finding parallels between 1 Enoch and Matthew. In any case, this book finds evidence that Matthew was aware of Enochic material outside of the Book of Parables that influences his Gospel."³

³ Richter, Amy E., *Enoch and the Gospel of Matthew*.

By describing the *church* and *kingdom* in an *apocalyptic genre* Jesus and the apostolic leaders were describing the church and kingdom *in a deeper spiritual sense than the normal understanding of ἐκκλησία and βασιλεία!*

The church, ἐκκλησία of Jesus reference in Matt 16:18, was a real community living in a specific geographic region, but in addition it also bore *supra-physical* spiritual sense. It had no reference to a *geographic location* but had enormous spiritual implications for God's eternal kingdom which had been prophesied for centuries in Jewish prophetic history. The ἐκκλησία of Jesus was the *spiritual living body of Christ* which was intended to carry out Jesus' life and message in their local communities!

However, all Jesus' disciples, beginning with his chosen 12 apostles, carried within them the global *missional kingdom* genetic commission of Matt 28:16, Acts 1:6-8, *et al.*

Kingdom Ministry in Eschatological finery – It has End of the World Significance and Implications

There is nothing mundane, ordinary, this worldly, about the eschatological commission and ministry of God's kingdom plan!

The *kingdom* of Jesus, the new βασιλεία, is a new and special "community," vastly different from the Roman or any other kingdom/empire.

Jesus' kingdom is the *final and last age* of God's eternal plan of redemption and forgiveness. The closing of Jesus' kingdom age would usher in the end of this world and its ages.

At 1 Thess 4:13-18 Paul encouraged the Thessalonian Christians to not fear death for in Jesus God had conquered death and had introduced a new and *final eternal kingdom*.

"¹³ But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵ For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; ¹⁷ then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words."

Thus Jesus' kingdom mission was *to go throughout the world spreading the great news that God's final stage of forgiveness had arrived*.

The kingdom of Jesus operated under a *divine missional commission to go into the world preaching* of the gospel, *evangelion, good news*, of God's and Jesus' grace and love for all people, *making disciples, baptizing and teaching them*.

Feeding the poor, healing the sick, ministering to the impoverished, and reaching orphans are all Jesus' type ministries, but they dim and fade away *in the light of kingdom ministry, saving souls by introducing people to God's eternal final plan of salvation*.

The kingdom of Christ does not spread itself by power, warfare, and conquering, or even by doing good deeds. It has no "*physical location*" or *physical address*, like the Jerusalem Temple. It is a *spiritual kingdom, housed with God*, made up of saints, dead or alive saints, who are transformed into disciples of Jesus the Christ *by going preaching, baptizing, and gathering them into local communities* where they can worship God and Jesus and do good deeds, serving others in need! Benevolence is not part of Jesus' great kingdom mission! It is the result of disciples engaging in the commission of going and making disciples. That is what *kingdom mission work* is!

Jesus was the final fulfillment of *God's Abrahamic promise to bless all nations*. *The kingdom mission is fulfilled, carried out, by going, making disciples, baptizing them into Christ, and being faithful to Christ and God's purposes.*

Jesus as God's messiah and king is the final and only head of God's eternal kingdom which promises eternal life, not physical life.

*The everlasting commission of the kingdom of Christ is **magnificent, missional, going** to all nations, **making disciples of Christ, planting churches, baptizing and teaching** them to be disciples of Christ.*

*Kingdom mission is described in **magnificent apocalyptic eschatological language** to lift it out of the mundane into the eternal realm of God.*