

LIVING AS A CITIZEN OF
**God's
Kingdom**

Embrace His Blessings, Fulfill His Calling



TIMO GROOT

Timo Groot

Living as a Citizen of God's Kingdom
Embrace His Blessings, Fulfill His Calling
By Timo Groot

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FOREWORD AND PREFACE

Foreword

If we have to summarize the message of Jesus during His time on earth in one sentence, it is: the Kingdom of God is near. Jesus, Himself said the following to the people in Capernaum: “I must preach the kingdom of God (good news) to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.” (Luke 4:43)

In His ministry, He constantly spoke of the Kingdom and demonstrated its power through miracles and signs. After His death and resurrection, He spent another forty days with the disciples, where He was *seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God* (Acts 1:3). In short, the gospel is good news, but what is that good news? The Kingdom of God is here, and you can be part of it.

Despite what has been said above, it is impressive that many Christians cannot give a clear answer to the question: What is God's Kingdom? Timo took no satisfaction in not understanding these things, and his subsequent study resulted in this beautiful book!

Throughout this book, Timo takes you on a journey to explain God's Kingdom and its aspects. Timo has a simple, straightforward writing style that makes it easy for readers to comprehend the context of this book.

I remember how it impacted me when I first understood what the Kingdom or Kingship of Jesus meant. The result was that I wanted to live to the fullest, my fears disappeared, and I steadily grew in faith to apply the authority Jesus owned and shared with us.

Many people around the world are eagerly awaiting the return of Jesus. Me too. I believe He will come soon, but until then, He wants to prepare His bride. The church is His bride, and Jesus isn't returning for a weakened church without strength. He is returning for a glorious bride. For that reason, we will see one more mighty revival on this earth, and I bet it will result in a revival of the whole church. This means that all members will be active because *for the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God* (Romans 8:19).

FOREWORD AND PREFACE

But to witness this, we need to return to the basics—the message that John the Baptist proclaimed, that Jesus preached and that the disciples followed—the message of the Kingdom. This book is a wonderful tool for realigning believers to our true essence in Christ, and I pray that as you read it, by the power of the Holy Spirit, you will take the message and step out in faith! God's Kingdom is within you, and it is time for the world to see that.

Robbert-Jan van Capelleveen

Youth worker and speaker

Preface

What exactly is God's Kingdom? Throughout the Bible, it is all about God's Kingdom. God desires to establish a Kingdom where He is King and ruler. We see this already in the Old Testament, where God made a covenant with one group: the people of Israel. God planned to rule as King and bless the people abundantly if they kept His commandments. At times, this went well, but unfortunately, it went wrong many times because of the people's sins. God decided not to throw in the towel but devised a great plan. Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, a new Kingdom was created: God's Kingdom. Jesus rules in this Kingdom, and her citizens are abundantly blessed. This Kingdom already exists, yet not entirely. This Kingdom is spiritual but only becomes genuinely physical in the future. All believers are in this Kingdom, but not everyone knows the blessings and missions of the Kingdom.

This is why I decided to write a book about God's Kingdom. I had heard about the Kingdom myself, but if you asked me what the Kingdom meant, I couldn't get further than a few words. By researching the Bible and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I created a whole book about God's Kingdom. This book will significantly bless your personal life, and you will fully realize what Jesus' sacrifice on the cross brought us. God's blessing!

Timo Groot

C1 STARTING POSITION OF MANKIND

I think the first chapters of the Bible are exceptional and beautiful. We read how God created the heavens and the earth and how the creation became more and more attractive. First, the earth was made, but it was still desolate, empty, and dark. No life was possible, and the earth didn't have a shape. Then God decided to make the earth and heaven beautiful. He started on the first day with the light, and new elements were added every day. On the second day, an area was assigned for the sea and sky. Then, on the third day, borders were set for the sea, making the land appear. Every day, God worked on His creation, and the creation became more and more beautiful and orderly. The plants, trees, sun, moon, stars, fish, birds, and animals were created on the third, fourth, and fifth day, respectively. It was a beautiful creation, and the angels rejoiced over God's work of creation (Job 38:7). God made something wonderful, and today, we still recognize much of God's work of creation.

I think God's creation is extraordinary. God is a Creator who created everything: countless planets, stars, animals, trees, and people. Yet not one is the same. Look at human beings, for example. Each person has their own fingerprint, unique eyes, and characteristics. God created everybody individually, with your characteristics and character. No one on earth is like you. It was God's plan to create you, and your uniqueness was important to God that you were not a copy of somebody else. God is a God of greatness and a God of detail. God has everything in His hand, and at the same time, He knows how many hairs you have on your head. God is in control of everything, and it takes no effort on His part as Ruler and King of this world to control everything. Yet God devised a particular plan, and you are part of it.

For What Purpose Are We Created?

A common question is, "Why am I alive?" or "What is the purpose of my existence?" According to science, it is pure coincidence that you exist, and you are "just" a link between your parents and your children. According to the Bible, it is not by chance that you

exist. We read that God created you and that you are unique. You were created for a reason and a purpose. Some purposes are very personal, such as starting an orphanage in Brazil, taking care of the homeless in America, or translating the Bible for people who don't have one yet. Other goals God has set aside for His children include conforming to the Lord Jesus (Christlikeness) through the power of the Holy Spirit and living with God.

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Romans 8:29)

You were created for general and unique purposes. The general purpose we find in the Bible—which is the Word of God. Our unique purposes are received from the Holy Spirit. In Genesis 1 and 2, we read that God created the earth and the heavens. On the sixth day, God worked on His most beautiful creation, man. God had made everything look nice, but He wanted to make one more kind. Man was to become the most beautiful of all creation. Man had to become more attractive than the animals, the trees, the plants, and the stars. It had to be the crown of creation. Therefore, God decided to make man in His image and likeness. As a result, we possess similar feelings and characteristics of God! Unfortunately, in recent times, we haven't always dealt well with our free will, emotions, and characteristics, but at the beginning of creation, man was created to perfection.

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness (...) So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:26-27)

We are created in the image of God. God is perfect, knows no sin, and is righteous. The created man was also perfect, knew no sin, and was righteous. God first created two human beings: Adam and Eve. They were the image of God. After the Fall, this image was distorted by the wrong things we all do. Yet, we are still compared to the image of God (Genesis 9:6) and instructed to become more and more like Him in our walk and actions (Colossians

3:10). When man was created, God blessed him with the following.

(...) let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth! (...) Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth!" (Genesis 1:26-28)

God's first blessing on man is the superiority and rulership over creation. Man wasn't made to be enslaved but to rule and treat creation well. God had blessed us to be rulers.

The word "dominion" comes from the Hebrew word "*rāḏā*" meaning "to rule," "reign," "take," "triumph," or "ruler." To rule means to have power over something or to be the leader of something. Man had received the power and authority to rule over all creation. Often, the word "dominion" is used negatively. We compare this word to dictators and people who impose their will and have no regard for others. This isn't how God's blessing should be. We should never use terror and fear to dominate people or collect money. We were created to ensure that everything in the creation runs smoothly and is maintained. In fact, God gave the following task in chapter 2 of the book of Genesis.

Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. (Genesis 2:15)

God created the Garden of Eden. This was a large garden where He placed the first man, Adam. Later, Eve joined him. Adam and Eve got the authority to rule over the garden, which meant tilling and maintaining it. Adam and Eve ruled and walked with God through this garden.

Why did God create us? God created us to rule over creation and have a living relationship with Him to discover His greatness, faithfulness, and love. God did not create us to be slaves to creation, in which we must labor to make ends meet

God's opponent

We read that God created humans, animals, trees, and heavenly bodies. In addition to these, God created another kind of beings: the angels.

For by Him (Jesus) all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. (Colossians 1:16) (Also check Psalm 148 and Nehemiah 9:6.)

The angels were created before the earth (Job 38:7). Angels, like humans, have free will. Many angels serve, praise, and worship God. They have made a choice to serve God, and therefore, they are ministering spirits who help God in various ways (Hebrews 1:14). A minority of angels have made the decision not to serve God. The leader of this group is the devil. In the Bible, he is also called Satan, Lucifer, the evil one, the old serpent, or the dragon. For the purposes of this book, it is crucial to know who he is since the devil has also established a Kingdom. We will come back to this Kingdom in Part 3 of this book.

Let us begin with the origin of the devil. The text below contains a prophecy about the king of Tyre. The pride and conceit of this king are compared to that of the devil. Some portions of this text cannot speak of a man but only of the devil.

You were the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created. You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you. (Ezekiel 28:12-15)

If I asked a thousand Christians, "Describe the devil," I don't think anyone would give this as a description. When the devil was created, he epitomized perfection, wisdom, and beauty and could make harmonious music. He was a perfect angel of God and covered with stunning gems. The devil was allowed to walk freely in all areas. For example, he was allowed to enter the Garden of Eden and the mountain of God. This mountain is in heaven (Isaiah 14:13). The devil was one of the most powerful angels, and God created him for a significant reason. He had free access to God, yet he was a ministering spirit of God. God stood above him, and God made him. Even though he was one of the most powerful angels, God is enthroned above him, and God ruled. When the devil was created, he was perfect in all his ways. One day, iniquity was found in him. So, what exactly did the devil do?

For you have said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north. (Isaiah 14:13)

The devil was a high-ranking angel but desired more honor and praise. He wanted to make his throne equal to God's throne. He wanted to be worshiped like God. Jealousy filled the devil's heart, and, as a result, he began to sin. This sin caused several consequences. Some are still in the future, and some have already happened. The consequences are:

- The devil is cast down into the grave. This is hell, and it will happen in the future. (Isaiah 14:9-11 and Revelation 20:1-3 & 10)
- The devil is banished from the mountain of God and is no longer allowed to come to God. I believe this has already happened (Ezekiel 28:14). The devil is still present in the heavens, but no longer with God.
- The devil lost his beauty and his perfection. This has already happened.

When we mention the devil, two things are essential to know. The first is that our Lord Jesus defeated the devil. Jesus defeated him

on the cross of Calvary. He put the devil and his followers to shame on the cross and triumphed over them.

Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. (Colossians 2:15)

The Lord Jesus holds all power and authority, and He rules from heaven today (Matthew 28:18 and Hebrews 8:1). A child of God shouldn't fear the devil and his power because he is protected by the Lord Jesus and has received authority from the Lord Jesus over the devil and his henchmen. We will return to this later.

The second is that the devil still has the power to devour people on Earth. The devil still has a Kingdom on earth. This Kingdom is in decline, and when Jesus returns, this Kingdom will disappear, and the devil will be cast into the abyss and later into hell. The only thing the devil can do is fight it like a powerless rebel. He is defeated, and this has yet to be finalized. Some of the things the devil can do today to people who aren't firmly grounded in the Lord Jesus are:

- Proclaim lies. (John 8:44)
- Blaspheme God and people.
- Devouring people/killing people. (1 Peter 5:8)

It is important not to overestimate the devil but also not to underestimate him. In Christ, we have overcome him and don't need to fear him. But don't fall for his lies, blasphemies, and divisions, and live close to God.

God's Plan Disrupted

Before we discuss this paragraph, I want to caution you that it is intense. Studying the situation of the Fall is essential, and it doesn't give much hope. If we have accepted Jesus into our lives, this paragraph no longer applies to us. Jesus restored us from these things.

God's plan was for Him to have a living relationship with people and for people to rule or be king over creation. God is the supreme King, and He shared (some of) His power with men. The devil was envious of this plan and wanted to sabotage it. The devil had no power to kill or hurt man because man was still without

sin and, therefore, without guilt. The only thing the devil could do was spread lies about God and hope that man would believe them. What had happened to Adam and Eve?

God created the Garden of Eden and placed Adam and Eve there. Adam and Eve were the leaders of this garden, and all the animals were subject to them. God told them to take care of the garden and blessed them with the fruit of all the trees in the garden. They were allowed to eat freely at no cost. Yet God had introduced one small restriction. God wants people to obey Him, but at the same time, God doesn't want us to be obligated to obey Him. Like the angels, God had given man a personal choice—free will. Man could choose to (dis)obey God. And God commanded, "You may freely eat from all trees; but not of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17). God's blessing was upon man as long as man didn't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If he did, he was cut off from God and would die. God did not mean that his body would immediately drop dead. If Adam and Eve ate the fruit, they could still live for centuries. God meant that their spirit would die, and they could no longer walk with God. At the same time, this disobedience meant that God's blessing left man, and man came under the curse.

The devil was jealous of God and man. He wanted to sabotage this plan, so he devised a plan to break the connection between God and man. The only possibility was that Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil because that is how the connection would be broken. In the form of a serpent, the devil decided to lie to Adam and Eve and try to trick them into eating the forbidden fruit from the tree.

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman: Has God indeed said: You shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said to the serpent: We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said: You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die. (Genesis 3:1-3)

C1 STARTING POSITION OF MANKIND

The devil did what he does best: he lied. He lied to Eve, saying she shouldn't eat from all the trees. Eve said she could, and the only tree she couldn't eat from was the one in the middle of the garden because otherwise, she would die. Then, by his lies, the devil awakened a desire in Eve.

Then the serpent said to the woman: You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. (Genesis 3:4-5)

The devil desired to be equal to God and like God. He tried to give this desire to Eve, and he succeeded. The devil misled and deceived Eve, and Eve obeyed the devil, not God.

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. (Genesis 3:6)

Adam and Eve both ate the fruit. They trusted the devil instead of God. God said it wasn't good for man to eat the fruit. The devil said it was good, and their eyes would be opened. This had unpleasant consequences.

After Adam and Eve ate the fruit, their eyes opened, and they saw they were naked. This isn't about physical nakedness or the activation of sexual feelings but about missing protection and experiencing shame and emptiness. Adam and Eve experienced that something had been taken away from them so that they were no longer good, and they began to be ashamed of each other and God. This didn't stop there—this shame caused fear, and they no longer dared to face God (Genesis 3:10). Their goodness and protection had fallen away, and it was impossible to walk with God any longer. This applies not only to Adam and Eve but to every human being (Romans 5:19). Because of Adam and Eve's disobedience, it became impossible to walk with God, and because of this, we read that Adam and Eve were sent away from the Garden of Eden. The relationship between God and man was seriously disturbed. While God blessed man, man chose the curse and

stepped out of the blessing (Galatians 3:10). The curse involved the following.

To the woman He (God) said: I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you. Then to Adam He said: Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying: You shall not eat of it: Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return. (Genesis 3:16-19)

The curse entailed:

- Difficult pregnancies filled with pain.
- Men dominate women.
- Soil cursed: toiling all days, and the soil brings forth thorns and thistles.
- The soil takes man back: death.
- Forever separated from God.

Man was created to rule over creation, but eventually became a curse of creation, toiling every day until death took man away to Hades. The relationship with God was lost, and the game was over. In addition, man had fallen into sin and with him all creation (Ephesians 2:1-3). Man waits until judgment is passed (John 3:18), after which eternal punishment follows.

Unfortunately, the situation is about to get worse. Man had made a choice to obey the devil and disobey God. This means that man had appointed a new king over himself: the devil.

We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. (1 John 5:19) (See also: John 12:31.)

(...) I (Jesus) will deliver you (Paul) from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the

power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me. (Acts 26:17-18)

The devil had become the leader of the world and had been given the keys of death. This means that after the death of man, the devil has dominion over the dead (Jude 1:9, Romans 6:23 and 14:9). I do want to mention that in the Old Testament, the devil needed permission from God to do certain things, as we can read in the story of Job. Later in this book, we see that through His sacrifice, the Lord Jesus took these keys back from the devil, and since Calvary, the devil no longer has any right over people, and Jesus determines the fate of people. If Jesus hadn't intervened, man had no hope, and we had no promises from God of a good life or destiny after death.

(...) that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (Ephesians 2:12)

Consequences of the Fall
Living relationship with God is severely disturbed.
A new king rules over man: the devil and sin.
Man no longer lives in the promises and blessings of God.
Man lives under the curse.
Man no longer rules over creation.
Creation and man have become mortal.
Man must toil hard to his death.
Man awaits judgment and condemnation.

These consequences don't apply only to Adam and Eve. Adam left this inheritance to his descendants. All of us are descendants of Adam and automatically receive this inheritance. The inheritance is the result of the Fall and its associated curse.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned. (Romans 5:12)

For if by the one man's (Adam) offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:17-19)

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. (1 Corinthians 15:22)

Adam's sin continues to resonate in our world. Man has sinned, and the way to God has been cut off. Man lives a life on earth, and then condemnation and judgment await. Because of Adam's disobedience, all people are classified as sinners. Everyone does wrong things, and wars, abuse of power, and terror—ruin many human lives. The world in which we live is full of pain and sorrow. Man was made to be a blessing and to rule but has become a slave to sin and darkness. As Paul exclaimed, "I wretched man, who will deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24). Fortunately, there is an answer to this question, which we will address in the coming chapters. Paul says in one verse further that Jesus Christ can redeem us from death.

In Conclusion

This book, so far, is without much hope. Man was blessed to rule and has become a curse and slave of creation. It is crucial to realize that man chose the curse. Man allowed himself to be tempted by God's opponent, the devil. Even though God knew this would happen, it wasn't God's will for this to happen. Fortunately, a gracious God wants to forgive, edify, and restore man to his rightful place. The price to redeem man from sin was a great cost to God.

C1 STARTING POSITION OF MANKIND

God the Father had to send His Son to earth, and His Son had to die on the cross. Man destroyed the way with God, but Jesus restored this way for those who believe in Him. Part 1 of this book elaborates on this.

GOD'S KINGDOM

The spiritual kingdom

PART 1



1

C2 PRICE OF THE KINGDOM

The New Testament of the Bible is situated in the Roman Empire. A person could receive Roman citizenship in three ways. The first method is being born in the right place, like Paul. The second method is to serve twenty-five years as a soldier in the army, and the third method is by paying a lot of money (Acts 22:28). The price to become a citizen of the Roman Empire was very high, and most Israelites couldn't afford it. This civil right was there only for a few. Before we study what the Kingdom of God is, in this chapter, we'll look at how much this Kingdom costs. Like Roman citizenship, did we have to do things to get into this Kingdom, and did anyone have to pay anything to establish it?

God's Love for Us

In chapter 1, we learned that Adam and Eve sinned, and as a result, man came under the curse, and man was unable to have a living relationship with God. If God had decided to show no mercy to man and cast him off forever, then there was no turning back, and man remained under the curse. Man made a mistake, and God doesn't owe it to us to show mercy and grace. Yet there is a reason why God decided to intervene. Not because man was so good and God owed us things but because God is good and loves people. God loves everyone, and God's love was there before you knew God.

We love Him because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

God desires to show mercy and restore the relationship with man out of love for us. God goes very far in His love for us. No matter what we do on earth, God's love remains, and God continues to love us. God longs for people to choose Him and to enter into a relationship with Him. God will do anything for that.

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able

to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

No man or creature can stand between the love of God and you. However, it is possible to put asunder between the love of human beings. Unfortunately, because of gossip, envy, jealousy, or anger, people value each other less and consequently love each other less. Other people can spread gossip that becomes believable, so the love between people chills. With God, this isn't possible. No one can cause God's love for you to fade away. Everyone who has come to faith loves God because God loved them first. God created us to have a relationship with Him, and after Adam and Eve sinned, God was very eager to restore the relationship with man so that every person could walk with Him.

The Problem

Assuming God loves us, why did Adam and Eve have to leave the garden? Why couldn't God ignore this event? This is because, besides being a loving God, God is also a just God. God can't help but be a just God; it is His most profound being. People often twist justice and overlook things. If a friend steals a loaf of bread from the baker, it feels wrong to snitch on your friend while the baker is left with the damage. Maybe you think: oh well, it's just a two-dollar loaf of bread. The baker will survive. God doesn't think like that. God sees that there has been injustice and that the baker has suffered unjust damage. In addition, God regards every sin we do as a sin against Him. Because of the wrong things we do on earth, we become increasingly profoundly indebted to God. God wants justification for these deeds so that He will judge righteously. This also applied to Adam and Eve, and God couldn't ignore this. Adam and Eve had acted wrongly, and as a result, justice had to be done, and they were put out of the garden and out of the presence of God.

He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He. (Deuteronomy 32:4)

People now face a big problem. We all made mistakes and sinned, and at the same time, God can't ignore sin. God loves us but can't go against His righteousness.

After the summer vacation ended when I went to the fourth grade of high school, I first came to the math teacher's class. The teacher introduced himself and told me he wanted everyone to pass math. He said he would try to explain and help us get good grades. Then he said, "I want everyone to pass and get good grades. Yet, I have no problem giving an F if someone fails the test. I favor all of you, but I have no trouble passing an F as a grade." This is also how we can see the righteousness of God. God wants a living relationship with everyone and loves everyone, yet God remains righteous and gives the judgment that someone deserves. The difficulty is that everyone deserves the judgment, and no one can live with God.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (...). (Romans 3:23)

Solution

Despite God's righteousness, He still loved people. From the beginning, God had thought of a plan by which He could be both just and merciful so He could be in His right and still walk with man. Out of love for us, He devised a plan to restore everything singlehandedly. God knew that man couldn't do this, as our propensity to do bad things continued. Therefore, He knew that the solution had to come from Him. God knew there was one way to save man from the curse. There was one way to ransom man from all the guilt he did. There was one way to restore man as God intended. God Himself had to take action.

Whom (Jesus) God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed. (Romans 3:25)

Man deserves punishment and the wrath of God. Yet, God has made a decision. God appointed Jesus Christ as the means of reconciliation (restoration) of man's relationship with God. When a person believes in the Lord Jesus, that person no longer has to fear the righteousness and wrath of God but has been made righteous by the Lord Jesus. God overlooks the sins we have committed while He remains righteous. Someone has been punished for sin, thereby erasing the guilt. Who is the Lord Jesus? And why is He appointed as the means of reconciliation?

Jesus: the Price of the Kingdom

The Lord Jesus paid the price of the Kingdom through His reconciliation. Everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus may come and work in this Kingdom. In this section, we look at who the Lord Jesus is and what He did to reconcile us to God the Father.

The New Testament tells us about the Lord Jesus. It begins with the four gospels, which contain the stories and sermons of the Lord Jesus, and ends with the various letters of the apostles who saw Jesus. Before the Lord Jesus came to earth, He was God. Jesus was the One who formed us from the dust of the earth and breathed life into us (1 John 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:15-16). Jesus was not God alone because, in addition to Him, there are two other personalities: God the Father and the Holy Spirit. These three personalities make up one God: the Trinity. God decided to restore the relationship with man, which cost Him a high price. One of the Trinity, Jesus, decided to go to earth to live as a human being.

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. (Philippians 2:5-7, NAS)

The Lord Jesus had come to earth, and we read about how this happened in the book of Luke, where a woman who was still a virgin, Mary, received a special message from an angel.

Then the angel said to her: Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His Kingdom there will be no end. (Luke 1:30-33)

Jesus came out of a woman's womb. The Holy Spirit provided for the conception of Mary (the creative work of God brought about this), and then Jesus went through the same life as a normal human being. He grew in the womb, was born (Luke 2:6-7), and grew up as an infant, toddler, child, teenager, and young adult until He became an adult with a job (Mark 6:3). The Lord Jesus knows precisely what human life is like and what temptations and concerns a person experiences. Only the Lord Jesus did something that all other people couldn't do, namely, not to sin. While the Lord Jesus walked around on earth, He didn't do anything wrong (Hebrews 4:15). He was tempted on earth but didn't comply. The Lord Jesus decided not to sin and obeyed God the Father. Around the age of thirty, Jesus began proclaiming God's Kingdom, calling people to repent and saying that the Kingdom of heaven had come near (Matthew 4:17). As He did this for three years, one miracle after another happened: people got healed and set free and unique events happened.

But it didn't stop at this point. Jesus is also the Son of God, and He came to earth to proclaim that only through Him are people reconciled to God the Father. In one of His sermons, He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6). Since all man is evil, no one can reach God in heaven by his own power, and therefore the Lord Jesus is our only way to get to God. The path to God has been cleared through Jesus, and there is only one way to get there: Jesus Christ.

God the Father and Jesus Christ paid a high price for that path. This couldn't be accomplished unless Jesus lived an earthly life in which He didn't sin and then was crucified on the cross. The cross was one of the most horrifying instruments of torture used in the Roman Empire for notorious criminals.

The Lord Jesus knew in advance what awaited Him. After He celebrated Passover with His disciples, He went to Gethsemane to pray to God. While praying, Jesus was anxious and preferred to "let the cup pass by. Luke records that He was sweating blood because of fear and agony (Luke 22:44). He also prayed to God, "Father, if You will, take this cup away from Me; but let not My will, but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42). Then He was arrested, and His followers fled from Him. He was alone in His most difficult time and was led to Pilate, where He was falsely accused. While Jesus hadn't done anything wrong, He was sentenced to flogging and death on the cross. Roman soldiers executed the flogging, and they are known for brutality. The Roman flogging was extra painful, and their whip was designed to pull a lot of skin from the victim. There were stretch marks all over Jesus' body, and He had bled heavily. Jesus no longer looked like a human being (Isaiah 52:14). Without medical help, these floggings could turn deadly within a few days. After He was flogged, Jesus had to carry His cross to a hill outside Jerusalem. On His back, full of stretch marks and blood, the crossbar of the cross was placed, and He walked to the hill of Calvary. He was so beaten up that He couldn't carry the cross by His strength, at which point Simon of Cyrene took over the cross and followed Jesus to Calvary (Luke 23:26). Devastated and with broken skin, Jesus was nailed to the cross, after which the cross was hoisted upright. Jesus, the Son of God, hung on a cross outside Jerusalem. The Roman statesman Cicero described crucifixion as "the most cruel and repulsive capital punishment I know. Because Jesus' arms were spread out and He didn't have proper support for His feet, He hung bent over on the cross, unable to breathe. With every gasp of air, He had to raise His body, which caused tremendous pain to all His muscles and joints. Finally, the Lord Jesus was so tired that He couldn't continue doing that, so He probably suffocated. And then to realize that at any moment, the Lord Jesus could have called twelve legions of angels to save Him from the cross (Matthew 26:53), but He decided to avoid doing so out of love for us so that He could restore our relationship with man.

It wasn't cheap for God to redeem us. He sent His only Son into the world to break the power of sin and bear sin for our place. Because of this, no person has to be lost, and everyone may

return to God by believing in the Lord Jesus. Everyone can be restored.

After the Lord Jesus died on the cross, he was laid in a tomb, and a large stone was rolled in front of the entrance (Matthew 27:60). The tomb was sealed, and guards kept watch so that no one could steal the body. Jesus lived His life on earth from the manger to the grave and, therefore, experienced everything a human can experience without sinning.

Because the Lord Jesus never sinned, death couldn't take hold of Him. Death is the wages of sin (Romans 6:23), and since Jesus never sinned, death couldn't take hold of Him. This allowed the Lord Jesus to rise from the dead with the power of God's Spirit! Then Jesus showed Himself to several people, including Mary, the disciples, and the two disciples traveling to the village of Emmaus, and they saw that He was alive. After this, the Lord Jesus ascended into the clouds and took His seat at the right hand of God the Father, where He still resides to this day.

Through the love of Jesus, the way to God the Father is free, and man can be restored from all that was taken away by the Fall. Man can return from curse to blessing. The following Bible texts show that Jesus and God did this out of love for us and that God was not obliged to intervene.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

This is My (Jesus) commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. (John 15:12-14)

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. (1 John 3:1)

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

Our Price for the Kingdom

Faith and Obedience

The price of the Kingdom of God is very expensive, and Lord Jesus paid it. How can a person be transferred into the Kingdom of God? Do we have to do something about that, or does everyone automatically enter the Kingdom?

God has invited everyone to come into the Kingdom. God wants no one to be lost but for everyone to be converted and come into the Kingdom. (2 Peter 3:9).

The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since that time the gospel of the Kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. (Luke 16:16, NAS)

Imagine this: two close friends want to bless you with a beautiful trip of thirty days on a luxury cruise ship. They paid for everything and handed you the tickets with additional travel money, allowing you to do everything and eat out every day. This trip was costly but has already been paid for. It costs you nothing to get on board. You only have to do three things to join: accept the tickets, pack suitcases, and get to the ship on time. Your friends have already taken care of the rest.

The above analogy is akin to the Kingdom of God. The Lord Jesus paid the price on the cross of Calvary. He makes sure that everyone can enter the Kingdom. All you have to do is believe that the Lord Jesus paid the price for you and keep His commandments.

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these. (Mark 12:30-31)

When a person loves God and fellow man, that person understands what it takes to enter the Kingdom of God.

Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? (James 2:5)

In this chapter and throughout the book, I do not want to give minimal terms for being saved or getting into the Kingdom. I place this in God's hands. Knowing that only faith in the Lord Jesus can ensure we enter and walk in the Kingdom is essential. Paul calls this "the law of faith." It doesn't come by our works but by the grace of Christ.

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. (Romans 3:28)

Simultaneously, a logical consequence of our faith in Jesus should be that we love those around us, love God, and do what God asks of us. We obey His commandments out of our love for God, not out of obligation or because we are slaves, but because God has touched our hearts, and we no longer desire sin.

He who says: I know Him, and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. (1 John 2:4-6)

It is supposed to be an automatic process that a child of God progressively becomes more like Jesus. If we grow more like Jesus, we no longer have to keep the law and commandments of Moses out of obligation. It is an automatic principle. The more we become like Jesus, the more we automatically keep the laws and commandments. The more the Holy Spirit guides us, the more sacred we live. We can compare this to learning English. Through our parent(s), in elementary and high school, we learn to speak English. It starts with sounds, then we form words, and then we form sentences and stories. If I want to tell a story, I no longer have to think about how to pronounce the 'a' again. I know it. When I say "apple," I automatically know what sounds to produce. I no longer have to think about using my tongue and mouth.

I have learned it and can apply it automatically. We automatically keep the law if we are like the Lord Jesus and listen to the Holy Spirit. We do not have to think about what is and is not allowed; we just do the right thing. We have learned it from the Holy Spirit, and sin is no longer a joyful or enjoyable experience for us. We are dead to sin and have been made righteous by the Lord Jesus. We will come back to this later in the book. The text below clearly shows that if we emulate and conform to Jesus, we keep all the law's commandments instinctively.

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the Kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the Kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:17-20)

To Be Born Again

Faith is the primary condition for entering the Kingdom of God. Yet there are more instructions in the Bible for getting into the Kingdom and functioning better in that Kingdom.

Jesus answered and said to him: Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. (...) Jesus answered: Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. (John 3:3-5)

Jesus says that a person must be born again to see and enter the Kingdom of God. A synonym for this is rebirth. Being born again sounds strange because being born happens once, doesn't it? The one who conversed with Jesus had no understanding of this either. Yet, this is an essential condition for entering the Kingdom.

It is important to remember that a human consists of three parts: the body, the soul, and the spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

The physical body is our appearance on earth and allows us to move and be visible to people. The body is temporary, and after several years, it returns to the earth and becomes dust again. In the body, we find the soul and spirit. After God made Adam, there was a corpse on the earth. Then, God breathed His breath of life into Adam so that Adam could live.

(...) and the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (Genesis 2:7)

Then Adam was alive and able to move his body and could think of things. God breathed a spirit into Adam, and Adam was given a soul. The soul is the human side of our lives. It contains our thoughts, characters, personalities, emotions, and will. Our environment shapes the soul. If a person is often bullied in childhood, this can harm his soul. The mind forms our spiritual personality. Our spirit allows us to connect with God and the spiritual world and walk in the Holy Spirit's gifts and fruits.

In Chapter 1, we learn that Adam died because of the Fall. His body didn't die immediately, but his spirit did. This doesn't imply that Adam no longer had a spirit. It means that Adam's spirit was no longer functional in the realm of the spirit. His connection and union with God were gone, and as a result, Adam's spirit was dead. Just as television cannot do anything if it is not plugged in, the same way Adam's spirit could no longer do anything.

When a person is born, he is a living being. He can breathe, eat, drink, cry and move. However, he is still incomplete. The spirit remains inactivated; the connection with the Heavenly Father is missing. This spirit and the connection with God come alive while being born again. This means that he lives eternally spiritually and spends eternity with God. Those who aren't born again do live eternally but don't spend eternity with God; instead, they live forever separated from God. Peter explains the essential conditions for being born again.

Then Peter said to them: Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)

Peter lists three things to be born again. The first step is repentance. A Christian changes his thoughts and actions and starts serving the living God. The second step is baptism. In heaven, some have not been baptized (Luke 23:43). Yet adult water baptism is an essential part of being born again. The third step is the filling or baptism with the Holy Spirit. These parts need to be powerfully used in the Kingdom of God. The Lord Jesus also mentioned the last two steps to enter the Kingdom.

Jesus answered: Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God (John 3:5)

The water refers to the baptism in water, and the Spirit refers to the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Even though this is a beautiful topic, this book doesn't elaborate on it. We move on to the following conditions.

Righteousness

It is essential to fulfill God's will to enter the Kingdom of God. We split this condition in two. First, we look at what we should and shouldn't do. All these Bible texts speak of the Kingdom of God and were spoken by Jesus and Paul.

Not everyone who says to Me: Lord, Lord, shall enter the Kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. (Matthew 7:21)

Those who practice the Father's will shall enter the Kingdom. Some people pretend to be Christian. For appearances' sake, they address the Lord Jesus as Lord, but actually, they are false Christians and false prophets. Only those who love God and do what He says are the true children of God and may enter the future Kingdom.

But Jesus said: Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the Kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 19:14)

Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it. (Mark 10:15)

Jesus says we must become like children. The world is about becoming mature and independent. You did well if you could pay for everything and didn't need anyone to care for you. Jesus says that it is precisely children who receive the Kingdom. In a proper family situation, children depend on their parents and must trust that their parents will take good care of them. Children trust their parents will protect them even if they find themselves in new situations. Nothing is more admirable than to be in the trusted hands of mom or dad. Another characteristic of children is that they ask their parents for objects. "I would like a PlayStation for my birthday," or "Can I have a horse for Christmas?" Some questions are unrealistic. The parents can't afford it or know it's not suitable for the child. Still, we can and should learn a lot from children because they are closer to the Kingdom of God than the average adult. For example, children believe everything their parents say, and if a parent has ever made a promise, the child always reminds his parents of it. These are traits that adults may learn in their dealings with God. We may always remind God of His promises to us, trust Him in everything, and believe everything the Bible says.

Now, we will look at the things we shouldn't do. The Holy Spirit helps us resist the temptations of sin and the devil, and Jesus has made us righteous by His blood. Nevertheless, we need to demonstrate our righteousness through our actions and practices. The following Bible text is about the future Kingdom.

(...) the Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear. (Matthew 13:41-43)

Those who act unrighteous will be gathered at the end of time and cast into the furnace of fire. Those who act righteous will shine like the sun in the future Kingdom. It is important to be righteous.

No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren! Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the Kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:8-10)

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)

In the two texts cited above, Paul listed several people and sins that won't enter the future Kingdom. It is essential to add that Paul wrote this to believers, not non-believers. Later in this book, we will return to righteousness and how to act.

And another also said: Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house. But Jesus said to him: No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God. (Luke 9:61-62) (See also Luke 14:33.)

Somebody wanted to become a follower of the Lord Jesus but requested to say goodbye to his housemates. Becoming a follower of Jesus doesn't mean that you can't have contact with people who don't believe in Jesus. On the contrary, having good contact with your family members and friends is vital, provided they don't belittle you and negatively influence you. For example, think of friends who constantly offer you drugs. Putting his hand on the plow is a metaphor that means someone is at work in the Kingdom

of God. Just as a farmer plow and must look forward with concentration to make straight lines, a follower of Jesus must also look forward and focus on the Lord Jesus. The farmer doesn't look backward because then his lines will run crooked. Nor can a follower of Jesus look backward because it can cause him to become spiritually crooked and lose faith. When we think of things behind us, we can also think of the sins we used to do, such as theft, fornication, lying, cheating, cursing, or temper tantrums. A follower must always look ahead and keep his eyes fixed on Jesus. Otherwise, according to Lord Jesus, he is unfit for the Kingdom.

(...) but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:14)

Summary

In this chapter, we learned that God still loves man. Even though man has sinned against God, God's love remains. The problem is that God cannot overlook sins, so man must still be punished. God knew that man would be lost forever if He didn't intervene. That is why the Lord Jesus, part of the Trinity, decided to come to earth to die for humanity. This makes it possible again to walk with God and be restored as human beings. The Lord Jesus paid our "ticket," and we can enter the Kingdom through faith and obedience. We receive a good heart that no longer desires sin because we love Jesus, and the Holy Spirit dwells in us. Because of this, we have been made righteous by Jesus and live a righteous life on earth.

C3 IMPORTANCE OF THE KINGDOM

When I started this book, I knew that the Kingdom of God is one of the essential topics in the Bible. At the same time, I noticed that I needed to learn more about the Kingdom and understand many of Jesus' parables about the Kingdom. However, I did know the day would come when Jesus would physically become King on earth, but today's Kingdom was still a mystery to me in many ways. Before we get into the meaning of the Kingdom, in this chapter, we look at why the Kingdom is so vital to our lives.

John and the Kingdom

John the Baptist was a relative of Jesus. John was one of the greatest prophets who ever lived and paved the way for Jesus. John preached in the desert and baptized people with a baptism of repentance. However, after John came Someone (Jesus) greater than him. Before Jesus stood in His mission and traveled to Israel to preach and perform miracles, John's job was to prepare the people. John preached about an important subject.

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying: Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matthew 3:1-2)

John preached that the Kingdom of God was at hand. The King of this Kingdom had already been born, and He could reveal Himself at any moment. The King is the Lord Jesus. When the mother of Jesus, Mary, was still a virgin, she saw the angel Gabriel. Gabriel told her about the miracle God would perform in her—from her would be born the King, the Son of the Highest.

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His Kingdom there will be no end. (Luke 1:31-33)

John shared that this King is near. His Kingdom may become visible at any moment. In our time, part of the Kingdom has already been revealed to believers, and they may walk in this Kingdom. Another part of the Kingdom has yet to be revealed. The Lord Jesus is not yet the physical King over Israel and the whole world; this remains to occur during the millennial Kingdom. The Lord Jesus came to earth as King and Servant. When the Lord Jesus was born, wise men came from the East to visit Jesus and give Him gifts.

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying: Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him. (Matthew 2:1-2)

The wise men didn't ask if a King had been born but where He had been born. There was no doubt that an extraordinary person was coming into the world. Even John already knew that the King was born and that He might appear at any moment. John did crucial preliminary work, instructing people to repent, confess their sins, and be baptized. While John was baptizing, this King appeared. John saw Him and said this was the One He meant. He is the Son of God (John 1:34). The King of the Kingdom of God has been born and has come among men. God's Kingdom will be revealed from now on.

Jesus and the Kingdom

John baptized the Lord Jesus, and He was filled with the Holy Spirit. God anointed King Jesus, and His preaching of the Kingdom began. The Kingdom was finalized when Jesus died on the cross and conquered death. The devil knew Jesus had come to proclaim the Kingdom of God and wanted to prevent it at all costs. While Jesus was in the desert fasting, the devil tempted Him. The devil attacked Him on several points, one of which is about the Kingdom.

Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the Kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him: All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours. (Luke 4:5-7)

All the world's Kingdoms were under the devil's possession at that time. He gained power over the nations because of Adam's fall. Adam was no longer ruler but surrendered his power to the devil. The devil wanted to give this to Jesus under one condition: Jesus had to worship him. The Son of God had to worship the devil, and this was the devil's greatest desire. The Lord Jesus refused to do this and said, "Depart from Me, Satan, for it is written: You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him alone" (Luke 4:8). The Lord Jesus resisted and accomplished the work He had to do. He overcame the devil and his accomplices and established His Kingdom on earth. Today, it is for believers, and in the future, it will be for all peoples and nations.

Jesus' teachings often focused on the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom isn't just a short topic in the Bible; it is that for which Jesus came to earth. The Kingdom isn't just theory; it brought forth miracles and signs.

Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God, and saying: The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel. (Mark 1:14-15)

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. (Matthew 4:23)

But He said to them: I must preach the Kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent. (Luke 4:43)

More references about the Kingdom can be found, for example, in Matthew 6:33, 9:35, 10:7, 11:12, 12:28, 13:19, 18:3, Luke 8:1, 9:11, 11:20, 12:31, 16:16, John 3:3, 3:5 and 18:36.

The Lord Jesus often preached the Kingdom of God, and Jesus is the key to the Kingdom. He is the Head of this Kingdom, and to Him is given all power, authority, and dominion.

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." (Matthew 28:18)

This Bible text doesn't say, "To Me in the future is given all power in heaven and on earth," but "To Me is given all power in heaven and on earth." It has already happened. Jesus' Kingdom is more powerful than the devil's Kingdom. Jesus has all power and authority today.

The Disciples and the Kingdom

Jesus is the Head of God's Kingdom. However, this wasn't visible to everyone; this news had yet to reach many people. The Lord Jesus preached about the Kingdom of God for three years and reached many Israelites. Still, the Lord Jesus couldn't reach everyone in His time, so He decided to send His disciples out, and they had to proclaim the things of the Kingdom.

Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick. (Luke 9:1-2)

The disciples were not required to preach with words alone; they also received power and authority to demonstrate this with miracles. After Jesus sent out twelve disciples, He later sent seventy more. They needed to bring the same message.

(...) heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The Kingdom of God has come near to you.' (Lukas 10:9)

The Lord Jesus spoke about the Kingdom and commanded His disciples to preach it. The Kingdom is not a nice option for some people, but it is an essential Biblical point. The Kingdom came after Jesus died on the cross and was resurrected. The price of the Kingdom was paid, and Jesus received all power and authority. After His resurrection, what did He say to the disciples? What was Jesus talking about?

To whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. (Acts 1:3)

And what did the apostles preach about after Jesus' ascension?

But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. (Acts 8:12)

And he (Paul) went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the Kingdom of God (Acts 19:8)

To whom he (Peter) explained and solemnly testified of the Kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening. And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved. (...) preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him. (Acts 28:23-31)

We and the Kingdom

This chapter, until now, is an excellent theoretical study of the importance of the Kingdom from the Bible. The Lord Jesus thought this was important and sent His disciples to speak about it. However, this topic is also significant today. Today, we may

preach the Kingdom, and we, too, have been given power and authority to put it into practice. Believers have been placed in the Kingdom by God the Father.

He (God) has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the Kingdom of the Son of His love. (Colossians 1:13)

If you believe in Jesus, you are part of His Kingdom and may walk and dwell there. Our born-again spirit currently dwells in the Kingdom. The Kingdom wasn't just of the past, for the future, or only for after our death; it is here today and working today.

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (...). (1 Peter 2:9)

We are a royal priesthood and belong to a people whom God made His own. Believers today are in the Kingdom of God. The good news of the Kingdom is the existence of a completely new life under the rule of God. Today, we no longer have to live under the dominion of the devil with the curse, sin, and death but may live in the blessing and righteousness of God. We may remain in His Kingdom forever and belong to God's people forever. This applies to man until his physical death and the eternal period after death. From repentance, we are part of the Kingdom, and if we persevere in faith, we will remain in the Kingdom forever.

For so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:11)

The Kingdom of God is relevant today. In the next chapter, we will discuss the Kingdom and how we can live in it. The Kingdom is for all believers, and the promises are also for all believers. God wants to use everyone in His Kingdom, not just the "special" people.

The Lord Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there will also your heart be" (Luke 12:34). When you talk to someone, you quickly know what interests that person. One person talks only about his work, which sometimes takes hours. Another talks about the VIPs and knows all their facts. Yet another one knows all soccer facts and all the soccer players by heart. It isn't a mistake to love your work or have hobbies and interests. But what do you prefer to talk about? Is it the things of the world, or is it the Kingdom of God? When we read about Jesus and the apostles, they often discussed the Kingdom of God. Their whole heart went out to that, and you could notice this in their actions. Where is your heart?

Summary

In the Bible, we read that John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus, and the apostles proclaimed the gospel of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom isn't a minor topic in the Bible but is one of the main subjects of Jesus' teaching. However, we still find this a complex subject, and it is difficult to explain it to people. We may know that the Kingdom is present today and that believers may walk in it. So, this subject is a current topic, and the teaching about the Kingdom also applies today. Besides today's Kingdom, there will be a future Kingdom in which the Lord Jesus will rule the world. It is also an eternal Kingdom, and if we continue to persevere in faith, we may spend eternity in this Kingdom.

C4 INTRODUCTION KINGDOM

Now that we know that God's Kingdom is an essential part of the Bible and Jesus' teaching, it is significant to understand what the Kingdom is and what it means for us.

In England, the people live in a constitutional monarchy. This means they have a king, and various laws define his position and authority. England's power is in the House of Commons and the House of Lords, where a majority ensures a law is passed. The English King is the head of state and has hardly any power, his power is limited by British laws. This is very different from the Kingdom of God. King Jesus holds all the power and doesn't have to wait until a majority is reached. During His life on earth, He often preached about the Kingdom of God and was able to do great and extraordinary miracles and signs.

Greek meanings

The New Testament was written in Greek and has been translated from Greek into English and other languages. They have done this precisely, but a word can still mean something different than their original translation. This is not the translator's fault, rather, the Greek uses words differently from the English. Let's look at some essential words related to God's Kingdom in Greek.

The first word is "Kingdom." In Greek, it says "*basileia*," which means "Kingship" or "Kingdom." The Greek has no separate words for Kingship (someone who is a king) or Kingdom (the area over which a king rules). When the Bible says "Kingdom," it can mean both parts and does not necessarily mean Kingdom. We see this often in Jesus' teaching of the Kingdom. It is sometimes difficult to determine whether or not a text refers to Kingship or Kingdom. When John said, "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven has come near" (Matthew 3:2), John may also speak of Kingship. Or, translated differently, the King is approaching and taking all His dignity and greatness with Him.

The second word is "Christ." When we talk about Jesus, we often say Jesus Christ. The first verse of the New Testament speaks of Jesus Christ. But what does Christ mean?

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham. (Matthew 1:1)

The word "Christ" comes from the Greek word "*Christos*" and means "the anointed one." Jesus is the Anointed One of God. Hebrew uses the word "*Mashiach*," which means "Messiah." In addition, Jesus is a descendant of King David; therefore, He has the right to become King of Israel. In the Old Testament, the Kingdom of Israel existed. God anointed the kings of this Kingdom, and they were allowed to rule it. We see this in the case of King David (1 Samuel 16). Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit during His baptism, definitively beginning His Kingship. From this moment, He began to preach of the Kingdom of God. The Lord Jesus was anointed not only as King but also as Prophet and Priest. As a Prophet, Jesus proclaimed the will of God to the people, and as a Priest, He offered Himself as a living sacrifice to God for our sins. When we say "Jesus Christ," we confess that Jesus is the Anointed One of God who came to be King, Prophet, and Priest over us. Not only was He anointed two thousand years ago, but also today.

Earthly or Spiritual Kingdom

When we think of a Kingdom, we think of a country ruled by a king. Especially if we go back in time, we come across powerful kings ruling huge countries with great power. For example, consider Louis XIV, Charlemagne, Peter the Great, or Cyrus II. They possessed considerable power and could make many decisions themselves. This was because of the army that supported these kings, preventing or winning rebellions and threats of war. The army protected the land and ensured that the enemy couldn't invade. Yet all earthly kings have one thing in common: at some point, they die, and their power falls into other hands.

When we speak of the Kingdom of God, we don't discuss a Kingdom on earth with an army. We are speaking of a spiritual Kingdom with an everlasting King. When Pilate imprisoned and interrogated Jesus, he asked if Jesus was a King.

Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him: Are You the King of the Jews? (John 18:33)

If the Lord Jesus had answered this question with a simple "yes," Pilate and the scribes would have found a reason to kill Jesus. Jesus would have committed high treason against the Roman emperor because He rebelled. Jesus explained the situation to Pilate and that He wouldn't be a danger to the emperor or Pilate. Jesus is a King, just not over an earthly realm.

Jesus answered: My Kingdom is not of this world. If My Kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My Kingdom is not from here. (John 18:36)

Jesus answered honestly. He possesses a Kingdom, and therefore, He is a King. Only this Kingdom poses no danger to the Roman emperor because Jesus' Kingdom is spiritual and is not of the world. As an argument, Jesus indicated that He didn't order His servants to fight for His Kingdom (John 18:10-11). However, the Kingdom does affect the world, which we are about to discuss.

Pilate therefore said to Him: Are You a king then? Jesus answered: You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice. (John 18:37)

Next, Pilate wished to know outright whether Jesus was a King. Jesus says in this verse that He is a King and came into the world for this reason. Jesus surrendered His heavenly position to be born as King on earth. Jesus is the great King of the Kingdom of God, which is not an earthly but a heavenly Kingdom.

Let us also study the following verse to see that the Kingdom of God is spiritual.

Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said: The Kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say: See here!

Or See there! For indeed, the Kingdom of God is within you.
(Luke 17:20-21)

The Pharisees constantly challenged Jesus and asked when the Kingdom of God would come. They asked about the future Kingdom, the millennial Kingdom, in which a King will physically rule Israel and the world. Jesus answered that this Kingdom won't come in an observable way. You cannot specify where the Kingdom of God begins and ends. This is because the Kingdom is present all around and is among men. This applies to any place where Jesus is (spiritually) present. In the New Testament, this was where Jesus physically stood, but also where His Kingdom was preached, for example, by the disciples.

And as you go, preach, saying; The Kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. (Matthew 10:7-8)

Even today, the Kingdom of God is present on earth. Wherever Jesus is, the Kingdom is. If Jesus dwells in your heart, you are part of God's Kingdom.

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the Kingdom of the Son of His love. (Colossians 1:13)

God the Father has pulled us out of the power of darkness, which has already happened. From this verse, we see that the Kingdom is spiritual. When I came to faith, God transferred me from the power of darkness to the Kingdom of Jesus. This didn't involve being physically picked by God and moved from The United States to Israel. I didn't experience a supernatural transfer with my body. However, my spirit did transfer from the power of darkness to the Kingdom of God. I no longer live under the rule of the devil, but I live under the authority of God. Let us study another Bible text to see that the Kingdom is spiritual.

Jesus answered and said to him: Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. (...)
Jesus answered: Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born

of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (John 3:3-6)

The Lord Jesus says that only people who are spiritually born again can enter the Kingdom of God. The same is true for the eternal Kingdom in the future as well as the Kingdom of today. A wholesome being born again consists of repentance, water baptism, and filling with the Holy Spirit.

Paul was working in the Kingdom of God—not only Paul but also others who helped him communicate the gospel. This is possible only if the Kingdom exists spiritually. You see, nowhere do we read that Paul had an army to start a physical Kingdom. In addition, Paul's ministry began only after the ascension. This means that the Kingdom of God didn't stop the moment Jesus left the earth but is still actively present.

(...) and Jesus who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for the Kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me. (Colossians 4:11)

The power of the King

Jesus is the great King of the Kingdom of God. But what kind of King is Jesus? Is He a mighty King today, or has He yet to claim victory?

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying: All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (Matthew 28:18)

After Jesus resurrected from the dead and appeared to the disciples, He told them He had all power in heaven and on earth. He received this power from God the Father, and He is the supreme King. The battle between good (Jesus) and evil (the devil) is often portrayed as a fair fight with uncertainty about who will win. This isn't Biblical because Jesus says He has all the power. Jesus has already won and put the devil and his accomplices to shame.

Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. (Colossians 2:15)

Our Lord Jesus has disarmed all governments and powers and conquered them. Jesus holds all power, and where God's light shines, darkness will depart. Paul used an image of war. The moment the enemy was conquered, the leaders of the enemy were gathered together and displayed to the people (Judges 1:6 and 2 Kings 14:13). Thus, they were publicly put to shame, and everyone could see that these people had been conquered. In this way, the Lord Jesus put the devil and his accomplices to shame and triumphed over them. Jesus has already won, even from the devil.

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil (...). (Hebrews 2:14)

This verse says that through His death, Jesus defeated the devil. Jesus died on the cross, and as a result, He was victorious. He has conquered death and therefore has the keys of death in His possession (Revelation 1:18). Jesus, therefore, has all power in heaven, on earth, and over death. The devil is a lost enemy who has been publicly shamed by the Lord Jesus. All who have been placed in the Kingdom of God need not fear the devil. Indeed, believers serve The One who has all power.

After Jesus died and rose again, He returned to God the Father. His disciples saw Him ascend into the sky, and to this day, Jesus is in heaven, not in some ordinary place, but at the right hand of God. This is the designation of the most important place.

So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God (...). (Mark 16:19)

Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. (Hebrews 8:1)

Jesus sits at the right hand of God, and as a result, He may share in the dominion of God. Jesus is a Ruler in heaven.

So, let's look at what Jesus had power over during His life on earth. This is before Jesus was taken up and seated in the right hand of God. Jesus had limited power; now He has all power. Even when Jesus had limited power, He could perform many things. Not because He is the Son of God but because He was filled with the Holy Spirit. From His position as Son of God, He couldn't do anything on earth; He depended on God and the Holy Spirit.

Then Jesus answered and said to them: Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. (...) I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me. (John 5:19-30)

Jesus needed God's help on earth. Because Jesus trusted God and knew God's will, He could perform great wonders. Jesus' followers could also perform miracles by faith, which we will return to later. Jesus did only the things He saw the Father do. This means that everything Jesus did and wanted to do on earth was also the will of God the Father. When we look at the heart of Jesus, we see the heart of God the Father. The power of God and the Holy Spirit performed signs through Jesus on earth.

Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. (John 14:10)

God the Father worked through Jesus to manage all the healings, liberations, and miracles. Jesus was unable to do this in His own strength because He had lowered Himself from God to man. Therefore, on earth, He had to obey and trust God to do miracles throughout Him. Nevertheless, through the power of God, Jesus

did many miracles and signs. The table below shows some of the miracles.

Bible verse	Miracle
John 2:1-12	Turning water into wine
Matthew 12:15	Healing the sick
Matthew 12:22	Cast out demons
John 11:44	Raising the dead
Matthew 15:32-39	Multiplying food
Matthew 26:34	Prophecy
Matthew 14:22-34	Power over nature

Jesus received supernatural power from God. All the miracles represent miracles that cannot be explained by any natural phenomenon. They are supernatural miracles that happened because of Jesus' faith, trust, and the power of God and the Holy Spirit.

Gospel of the Kingdom

Next, let us look at what the gospel of the Kingdom is all about. If we ask a Christian, "What does the gospel of God mean?" chances are that the answer will be, "The gospel means that I have been forgiven of my sins and may spend eternity with God." This is true, except that this is one part of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom involves more, and God has blessed us with more out of His grace. It is grace upon grace. Yet many fail to understand the Kingdom of God, which causes deficiencies in our Christian life. God wants us to know His Kingdom so we can walk fully in the Kingdom. Our whole life changes when we experience the rebirth. If we only believe that our sins are forgiven and we can enter heaven, nothing changes on earth. Hence, either we know that we are forgiven, which may give us a good feeling, and then we continue with the life we have lived. Or we try hard to live well, and after we have sinned, we feel sad and realize that we need God's salvation (again). (Don't get me wrong: repenting of sins is good!) The Kingdom of God is more than forgiving sins; it involves a new way of living in a different location. We've been transferred from the Kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of God

and have received "tools" to function correctly. Consider, for example, the Holy Spirit, who helps and guides the believer to live a righteous and sacred life. When born again, we have received the power to be supernaturally redeemed and sanctified so that God Himself leads and helps us to live well. It is no longer me but God in me.

If the gospel of the Kingdom merely meant that we are saved and forgiven, we remain weak. Every time, we return to the point of receiving forgiveness and consider the fact that we are weak. Fortunately, the gospel of the Kingdom extends beyond the forgiveness of sin. The Kingdom is a whole new living world, the one of God. The gospel of the Kingdom makes you strong and turns you into a citizen of heaven and a child of the King with great authority in the name of Jesus. Through the gospel of the Kingdom, others assess your actions and works and see that you are a child of God. Supernatural miracles and signs will follow you, and your life will be a replica of the Lord Jesus. Let us summarize in three sentences what the Kingdom of God means.

The Kingdom of God is a spiritual reality we experience through the Holy Spirit and the reigning position on which Jesus has put us. Jesus has received dominion and passed this dominion on to His followers so that we can become citizens of the Kingdom. Today, we may walk on earth as emissaries of Jesus, and in the future, Jesus will physically rule on earth during the millennial Kingdom.

The Kingdom of God is a spiritual reality. This doesn't mean people never experience or witness anything about the Kingdom on earth. For example, think of casting out demons or healing the sick. The following section will examine the Bible's words about the Kingdom for each component. In this chapter, we will look at the verses in which Jesus spoke about the gospel of the Kingdom.

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. (Matthew 4:23)

This text says that Jesus was teaching about the gospel of the Kingdom. Jesus explained what this Kingdom meant. His work consisted not only of words; He also did extraordinary things. Jesus healed every disease and ailment of the people. The Kingdom of God isn't just a cool study; it has tremendous power and authority. This was true for Jesus, but also for us.

For the Kingdom of God is not in word but in power. (1 Corinthians 4:20)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. (Romans 1:16)

The Kingdom of God becomes apparent through signs, miracles, and the regeneration of lives by the power of the Holy Spirit. The gospel provides salvation for all believers. Salvation means that all believers are saved from the danger of death. Primarily, this is about our eternal destiny. It means believers are freed from judgment and everlasting punishment and will spend eternity with God. These aren't just fancy words but reality. The following Bible text shows that this gospel has not disappeared but may and must still be preached today.

And this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:14)

Jesus knew about the future and that the people would reject Him. In His life on earth, He told His disciples this repeatedly. Jesus was proclaiming the things of the Kingdom, and had He failed at one point, the Kingdom wouldn't come to fruition. Jesus now has all power, and the plan of God is accomplished. When the Lord Jesus died on the cross, He didn't say, "What a shame. My plan failed, and now there is no Kingdom." Jesus said, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). Jesus had obeyed God the Father in everything, even to the death on the cross. Jesus accomplished everything and did not make a mistake. Everything went how God the Father

wanted it. This applies to the teaching, miracles, signs, and atonement on the cross.

The Kingdom of God is not a failure but an ever-present reality and victory. It is even a command of Jesus to proclaim this gospel to people today.

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15)

When Jesus ascended to heaven, the disciples and His followers were tasked with continuously preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. In the book of Acts, we see the effects of this Kingdom and that miracles continued to happen. Philip also preached about the Kingdom of God.

But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. (Acts 8:12)

The Kingdom was present, the Kingdom is coming, and the Kingdom is here. The Bible doesn't say the Kingdom was meant to be there temporarily. Even when the King, the Lord Jesus, ascended into heaven, His followers continued proclaiming the Kingdom, and miracles and signs continued happening. Thus, many miracles and signs still occur today, and it is clear that God's Kingdom still exists. In the next section, we will look at the components of the Kingdom and what it means to walk in this Kingdom.

Summary

The Kingdom can be translated as Kingdom or Kingship. When the Bible speaks of the Kingdom, it isn't necessarily about an area or region. The Kingdom of God is a spiritual Kingdom in which believers are placed. This Kingdom is not only made up of words but also of power. The high King of this Kingdom is the Lord Jesus, and He has been given all power in heaven and on earth. In addition, He holds the keys of death. When Jesus lived on earth, He depended on God the Father and the Holy Spirit.

In the same way, we, too, are dependent on the Holy Spirit. Jesus had limited power then, yet He did great miracles and signs. Jesus often preached about the gospel of the Kingdom and commissioned us to preach about this gospel as well. We also see this in the book of Acts, where the apostles continued proclaiming Jesus' teaching. So, what exactly is the Kingdom?

The Kingdom of God is a spiritual reality we experience through the Holy Spirit and the reigning position Jesus has put us. Jesus has received dominion and passed this dominion on to His followers so we can become citizens of the Kingdom. Today, we may walk on earth as emissaries of Jesus, and in the future, Jesus will physically rule on earth during the millennial Kingdom.

GOD'S KINGDOM

Royal blessings

PART 2



2



C5 CITIZENS' BLESSINGS

Now that we know that God's Kingdom is spiritual and the Lord Jesus is the great King with all power, let us look at what this Kingdom does. In America, you have various laws and obligations that you must comply with, and at the same time, you are protected and receive services from the government. For example, citizens can access the police, emergency medical services, or the fire department. The government tries to protect its people and provide roads for its citizens. Citizens with lower incomes receiving allowances or food stamps from the food bank is feasible. Americans have rights and obligations. This is also the case in the Kingdom of God. God wants to bless us in various ways. This is a great grace of God and is entirely in His will and sovereignty. At the same time, God asks for something from us in return so that He can bless us. In this chapter, we cover the blessings of the citizen and the "laws" that come with these blessings.

The Blessings

When Jesus came to earth, He taught about the Kingdom and demonstrated its principles. When Herod Antipas imprisoned John the Baptist, John sent two of his disciples to the Lord Jesus to ask if He was the One who was to come. John thought of the Messiah, the anointed King.

And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him: Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said to them: Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me. (Matthew 11:2-6)

In this list of the Lord Jesus, we see parts of the Kingdom of God. The Old Testament depicts these signs concerning the millennial Kingdom (Isaiah 26:19, 29:18, 35:5-6, 42:7, 42:18, 61:1). Jesus

showed that these parts were already happening under His Kingdom. These parts will be completely fulfilled during the millennial Kingdom, but Jesus has made all these parts available to His followers now. Here is the list.

- Blind will see
- Lame will walk
- Lepers will become cleansed
- Deaf will hear
- The dead will be raised
- To the poor, the gospel is proclaimed

This is already possible today in God's Kingdom. God's Kingdom is bigger and more powerful than we think. God wants to bless us with more than we can imagine. We will cover the following blessings of the Kingdom in the coming chapters.

- Forgiveness of sins
- Redemption from sins
- Justified and sanctified
- In Christ: a sacred life
- In Christ: a life with authority
- Salvation from death and eternal life
- Healing from diseases
- Liberation from demons
- Breaking the curse
- Giving the blessing
- Living in prosperity
- Receiving the Holy Spirit
- Direct connection with God
- The body of Christ
- Protection
- Victories
- Grace
- Wisdom
- Peace and joy

How to Cope with God's blessing?

This is a large list of blessings that God wants to give to His citizens. Before we examine this list, I want to clarify some points in this section. We cover these points briefly and vigorously with a few Bible texts.

1. God wants to offer us blessings out of His love. God wasn't initially obligated to give us things regardless of our actions or how much we prayed. It was God's will to allow us into His Kingdom and give us the blessings of His Kingdom. God is sovereign. This means God Himself decides what He wants to do. God has chosen in His sovereignty to bring blessings to the people of the earth and have their best interests at heart. This is solely because of God's grace and the works of our Lord Jesus. Now that God has allowed us into His Kingdom, He wants to give us everything we need. Earthly parents want to give their children presents, nice clothes, good food, and enjoyable trips. A parent loves their child and wants to see them grow up happy and prosperous. The same is true with God. God is our Father, and He loves His children.

Therefore, God wants to offer us blessings as a gift and ensure that we bless those around us. The greatest thing God has given to us is His own Son, the Lord Jesus.

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32)

God wants to offer us all of it. If God the Father has already given His Son to us, how much more will God want to bless us with other blessings? We have a God who wants to give us blessings as a gift. It is God's will that we be blessed.

2. Looking at my own life, I enjoy the intimacy and relationship with God. We shouldn't "claim" or "demand" these blessings without entering into a relationship with God. Seek first God and His Kingdom. Put God first in your life and walk with God out of love. If you do that, God will bless you.

But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you (Matthew 6:33)

In Greek, "seek" means we unceasingly seek God's Kingdom. We must always put God's Kingdom first, and not just on Sundays between 10 a.m. and noon. Making God and the things of His Kingdom a priority will cause Him to provide us with everything we need. Let's see God's blessings as a relationship between man and God. We love God and want to serve God. God loves man and wants to serve man, just as Jesus washed the disciples' feet and healed the sick.

3. Because God wants to bless us doesn't imply that things can never rage or nasty things never happen. Most of the twelve disciples were mistreated and eventually killed. Paul also experienced moments of difficulty that weren't always going well. Conditions were sometimes appalling, yet the blessing of God remained in their lives.

From the Jews five times I (Paul) received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. (2 Corinthians 11:24-27)

Sometimes, things can get complicated, and we may not experience God's blessing for a specific duration. Despite the Bible text above, Paul experienced many blessings and prosperity (Acts 20:34 and Philippians 4:18). He was a Roman citizen with rights, and God often supernaturally protected him during challenging periods on earth. This happened, for example, during the shipwreck that Paul suffered. Despite this challenging time, he and the crew were saved (Acts 27:22). Even during difficult times, God remains faithful and wants to bless us.

This is something we see in Joseph's life. Joseph had experienced difficult times, yet God's blessing was always present. This was the case when he was with his family; he was a slave of Potiphar, imprisoned, and then became a ruler. God's blessing was always in his life despite the unsteady circumstances.

The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority. So it was, from the time that he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had in the house and in the field. (Genesis 39:2-5)

Circumstances showed that Joseph was struggling, but God's blessing continued. Not only on Joseph but also on his work, blessing his master's house. Then, through a trick of Potiphar's wife, Joseph had to go to prison.

Then Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison. But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper. (Genesis 39:20-23)

While in prison, Joseph also prospered and proved to be a blessing to all. Even when conditions were harsh, Joseph continued to receive blessings from God. Eventually, Joseph became the vice-roy of Egypt. Conditions were favorable then, and he was a bless-

ing to the entire nation. Because of Joseph, the people didn't perish during the famine, and Egypt could even sell food to other countries also affected by the famine.

4. We must study the Bible and relate closely to God's prophecies and promises. God wants to bless us supernaturally; however, it is essential first to know that God wants to bless us and in what areas of our lives He wants to bless us. It is necessary to receive revelation about a blessing and ask God for it. The following text illustrates that God the Father has blessed us with every possible blessing. The blessings we will discuss in the coming chapters apply to everyone who is a son or daughter of God, but it is essential to be aware of these blessings.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (...). (Ephesians 1:3)

What is the meaning of spiritual blessings? First of all, it refers to every spiritual blessing. It demonstrates that God's blessing is not limited to one or two blessings per person; God wants to bless us with all the blessings and promises of the Word of God. Secondly, it refers to spiritual blessing. This doesn't mean that God's blessing is only immaterial or available only in the future. It means that these blessings are made available to believers by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works in the hearts of believers so that they share in all the blessings of God through the Holy Spirit. Finally, the word "blessing": according to the dictionary, this word means "salvation," "prosperity," "help," or "a gift from God." When God blesses us, He helps us, makes us prosperous in our work, and gives good things and gifts to His children.

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. (2 Corinthians 9:8)

The Bible illustrates God's desire to lavish us with beneficial gifts. Simultaneously, many gifts function through a relationship

with God. God asks us to do certain things and then rewards us with gifts. We will discuss this later.

5. A critical action that applies to God's blessings is believing God wishes to give us something. Without faith, it is impossible to please God.

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)

What does it mean to have faith? Hebrews 11 answers this.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1)

At times, we cannot yet see the blessings of God with our physiological eye. It is crucial to believe that God wants to give us what He promises, even if there is an occasional deficit. We should know that God never lies and does as promised. Faith is firm ground and doesn't mean "maybe" or "maybe not." Faith is a reality, and it will happen. Faith is an assurance of things you don't see (immediately, but to be revealed in the future). Some blessings are still distant, and you may experience deprivation. However, believe in the invisible blessings of God, and they will become visible.

God asks us to believe in Him and rewards those who seek Him. Without faith, it isn't possible to claim the blessings of God. In addition, God rewards those who seek Him, that is, those who have a relationship with Him. We covered this in point 2.

6. God wants to bless us. It is, however, essential to ask God for the blessing. There is an expression in Dutch that says, "Who asks, gets skipped." In other words, someone who asks for certain things will not receive it. Regarding God, it is the exact opposite, and we can say, "He who asks will receive."

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and

he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. (Matthew 7:7-8)

If someone needs healing, the key is to ask God for healing. If someone needs provision, it's essential to ask God for provision. According to step 5, this should go hand in hand with faith.

7. It matters to take action. In the following chapters, we will discuss some of God's blessings. Some blessings work according to instructions. God asks us to do certain things and gives us blessings in response to our actions. We will address this point in the following chapters for each blessing.

8. Many of God's blessings work extraordinarily, as we can see in the stories of Abraham and Joseph. God blessed Abraham and Joseph, and in the end, they received many assets. However, Abraham and Joseph weren't the only ones who were blessed. In the story of Joseph, we learn that Joseph's lord was also blessed. Joseph's blessing affected those around him. This also applies to Abraham and us.

Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. (Genesis 12:1-3)

God's blessing was on Abraham and also on the people who were kind to Abraham. Similarly, God's blessing on our lives also benefits others. For example, consider your workplace. If you are prosperous, the workplace will be thriving. Simultaneously, we shouldn't only ask God for things and blessings for ourselves but also ask God to bless others. It would be best to grant others what you want to receive yourself.

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men (...). (1 Timothy 2:1)

9. Express gratitude to God for all He has done and will do in your life. Gratitude is an essential part of our relationship with God, and being thankful to God in every circumstance is equally essential. Whether we feel happy, sad, or angry, we thank God for all His good gifts and who He is.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God (...). (Philippians 4:6)

In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

10. Be patient to receive your blessing. There are times when God responds immediately to a question. Lazarus was a man who had died and had been lying in a grave for four days. The Lord Jesus, by the power of God, told Lazarus to come out of his grave, Lazarus immediately arose. God may answer our questions or requests immediately. But it is also possible that we must be patient and wait a moment. We find this principle in the story of Joseph. When Joseph was living with his family, he received a dream from God. His family members would bow down before him and honor him. For years, it appeared nothing would happen, and it seemed as if God had withdrawn His promise. Finally, this dream was fulfilled, and Joseph's family members knelt before him. Joseph's promise was fulfilled, but he needed patience. This was also true of Abraham. He received his promise of a son and offspring at an advanced age. Both situations were no longer possible naturally, but God's promises endured. Be patient, and God does what He promises!

Summary

In God's Kingdom, there are many blessings. Out of His sovereignty, God has decided to give us many blessings and gifts. We

will deal with these blessings in the following chapters. Before we discuss these blessings, knowing how we deal with them is essential. God likes to provide us with things, but this doesn't always happen automatically. The key elements we have discussed in this chapter are:

1. God wants to give us blessings out of His love.
2. We receive blessings through intimacy and a relationship with God.
3. It remains possible for circumstances to look bad. Yet God continues to bless us even in those circumstances.
4. We need to know God's blessings and how they work.
5. We must believe in God for the blessings.
6. We must ask God for the blessings.
7. We must take action to receive the blessings.
8. We are a blessing to be a blessing.
9. We should be grateful to God for all He does.
10. Be patient to receive your blessing.

C6 FORGIVENESS AND REDEMPTION

The most renowned blessing of God the Father is that He has forgiven us of our debts. But did you know that God has forgiven us and delivered us from the power of sin? In chapter 4, we read that we have been transferred from the devil's Kingdom to God's Kingdom. We have become citizens of heaven and citizens of the Kingdom. The general will of God is that everyone should resemble the Lord Jesus; therefore, by the power of the Holy Spirit, God has redeemed us from sin and made us sacred. We may be exemplary citizens in God's Kingdom, not by our strength, but by the power of the Holy Spirit.

For the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17)

Forgiveness of Sins

God is willing to forgive us of our sins. Often, sins aren't depicted as particularly bad; it can be something exciting, something naughty, or sneaky that is, in fact, forbidden. When the Bible talks about sins, sin isn't considered mischief or doing something naughty. Sin is terrible and is rebelling against God. Because of sin, man fails to fulfill his purpose and destiny. God had placed Adam and Eve in the garden to rule it, maintain it, and walk with God. Through the Fall, Adam and Eve missed this purpose and calling, and they missed the blessing and presence of God. In addition, sin destroys yourself, your fellow man, and the world. God's intention is for us to live in peace with one another. Sin causes peace to disappear. For example, this happens the moment we steal, cheat, kill, be unfaithful, or act unkindly. God equates sin against another human being with sin against Him. We can also sin directly against God by replacing Him with idols or not acknowledging Him as God. Sin destroys us. God thinks sin is so bad that He wants and must punish sin. The penalty for sin is very high, and God cannot simply condone it. It is an eternal punishment.

But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. (Revelation 21:8)

Furthermore, sinning is dangerous. It is a spiritual power that wants to take over your life and cause you to sin more frequently. We see this with addictions. It often starts very "innocently" with one time doing something: one time bullying someone, one-time doing drugs, one-time seeing porn, or a single lie. But when sin has you in its grip; it doesn't let go easily. Starting it is easy; quitting is, on your own, complicated. This is because sin wants to take over your life and gain dominion over your soul. Sin wants to be the lord of your life, so you are a slave to it.

Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin." (John 8:34)

For when you were slaves of sin (...). (Romans 6:20)

While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. (2 Peter 2:19)

Sin is an enslaver, a very nasty and unpleasant enslaver. The power of sin destroys lives. Think of the wars, addictions, broken families, debts from gambling, or the deterioration of the body through drugs and alcohol. In the end, God punishes every sin.

The first blessing we deal with is the forgiveness of sins. God has to punish sins and forgive everyone who trusts the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus paid the price through which our debts and sins could be ransomed. We deserve punishment, but God gives us the blessing.

Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins (...). (Acts 13:38)

When we say that God forgives our sins, it means that God no longer thinks about things we have done wrong in the past. God

overlooks our past mistakes and shortcomings. They are forgiven and forgotten, and God has taken away the charges and punishment we once deserved.

And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. (Colossians 2:13-14)

When we come to faith, all our wrongdoings are forgiven. Without any merit or any performance on our part, God decided to forgive us and erase the handwriting (in Paul's time, handwriting was a document in which a debtor wrote down his debts) against us. All our sins and disobedience are written in this handwriting. God has erased this handwriting. It has become a blank sheet, and we are no longer in debt to God. God does this because He loves us.

For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You. (Psalm 86:5)

Let us read a few more verses that let us know that God wants to forgive us through the work of the Lord Jesus.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (...). (Ephesians 1:7)

To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins. (Acts 10:43)

And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke 24:47)

Walking in Forgiveness

God is keen to forgive us of our sins. This is free, but at the same time, God urges us to do certain things to live well in this blessing.

1. God has said that He forgives all our sins. Yet repentance for sins is supposed to be a healthy attitude of a Christian. Repentance means that we regret something we did wrong. A healthy attitude of a Christian is that he wishes, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to be like the Lord Jesus. Nevertheless, we may commit wrong acts. At such times, we regret our choices and realize we are wrong. Sometimes, this feeling can be so intense that we can no longer talk or walk with God. This is a lie. God always wants to forgive us if we come to Him with repentance, no matter what we have done wrong.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. (1 John 1:9-10)

When we confess, we may trust that Jesus is loyal and righteous and wants to forgive us. John says that Jesus does this when we confess our sins. To confess sins means that in repentance, we say what we have done wrong and lay the sin before God. In response, God forgives us for our sins.

For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. (2 Corinthians 7:10)

We show repentance at the beginning of our walk with God. We live in the world and do some wrong things. Then we confessed and repented of our evil walk. That sorrow is according to the will of God. That sorrow causes repentance, and we do not regret this repentance. A sinful attitude of being forgiven is that we have a desire not to want to do the sin we have done again. We change our thoughts and walk. This doesn't only apply to the beginning when we came to faith; this applies to every day of our lives. God wants to forgive those who repentantly ask Him for forgiveness.

Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord (...). (Acts 3:19)

Repent of your sins and change your walk with God. If we do, our sins will be erased.

2. The Bible calls at different times to forgive others. This isn't an option; it is a condition from God to be forgiven. If you fail to forgive others, God cannot forgive you, and your debts will not be discharged. Forgiving others can sometimes be difficult. Know that you don't have to do this alone. God wants to give you strength and grace to forgive others.

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matthew 6:14-15)

And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses. (Mark 11:25-26)

We see this principle in Jesus's answer to Peter, who asked how often he should forgive someone.

Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, I repent, you shall forgive him. (Luke 17:3-4)

Forgiving doesn't mean avoiding hurtful or sensitive topics. For example, imagine someone steals fifty dollars from me, and I know it. Then, I may address that person. I may correct him in love and teach him that this is wrong. If this person repents and confesses, it is my job to forgive this person. As God forgives us, may we forgive others around us.

Redemption from Sins

God wishes to forgive us for our sinful acts. That is a great miracle. But God even wants to do more for us. God not only desires to forgive us of our sinful acts but also wants to redeem us from

the power of sin. To redeem means to deliver someone from an unpleasant and threatening position or to rescue them from danger. Thus, we are delivered from the devil, sin, and spiritual death. The moment we are born again, we are delivered from sin. This means that God empowers and authorizes us to serve sin no longer but to live in the freedom of the Holy Spirit. Sin, our early enslaver, has no control over our lives. When the angel visited Joseph to tell Joseph that Mary would give birth to the Messiah, the angel said:

(...) and she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21)

The Lord Jesus has saved the people from their sins. The power and consequences of sin no longer influence believers. Jesus has saved us from this power. Sin no longer requires an influence on our lives. We don't have to serve sin as an enslaved person.

Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. (Romans 6:6-7)

Our old man, namely the life we lived before our being born again, has been crucified along with Jesus. Our old man is full of sin and disobedience. As a result of being crucified together with Jesus, this life has been canceled out. This life has lost its power over us. Consequently, we no longer have to serve sin as an enslaved person. This means that sin must no longer have a grip over our lives and shouldn't have power over our lives. This is because our old man died on the cross. In Israel, there was a Jewish law that a person who had died was no longer liable for the sins he had committed. Thus, the death of our old man ensures that we can no longer be punished for the things we used to do and that we no longer live under the dominion of sin. Suppose you have an employer and an employee. If the employee is alive, he has to work for the employer. If the employee suddenly dies, the employer cannot require him to work. That is out of the question.

The first sin was our enslaver. Now, our old man has died, so sin can no longer demand us to sin. We see this in John's first letter.

Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. (1 John 3:6)

Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. (1 John 3:9)

These texts are often perceived as offensive, or readers understand them incorrectly. I believe that wasn't John's intention. John says that believers can no longer sin. This doesn't mean we can accomplish this through our works; it is God's work in the believer. We can no longer sin when we are born of God (born again). We receive the Holy Spirit, who gives us the power to break free from the chains of sin. We may sin and do wrong things, but according to John, we may confess our sins, and God forgives us. Jesus went to the cross to forgive us and deliver us from sin.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:2-4)

This is a rather complex text. Let's put the NIV next to it, which explains what it says well. It is important to read this text several times because it is powerful.

Because of what Christ Jesus has done, you are free. You are now controlled by the law of the Holy Spirit who gives you life. The law of the Spirit frees you from the law of sin that brings death. Jesus does for us everything the holy law requires. The power of sin should no longer control the way we live. The Holy Spirit should control the way we live. (Romans 8:2-4 NIV)

When we are born again, we receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit intends to guide our lives, and as a result, we live as God wants us to. This Bible text also states that we first lived under the power of sin and were, therefore, slaves to sin. After being born again, this is no longer the case. We are saved from sin. Jesus has set us free from sin.

Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.
(John 8:36)

But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God (...). (Romans 6:22)

Please remember that the Romans letter says God has already set us free from sin. This doesn't happen at our death; God did it already. God sets us free from sin, which isn't death's work.

Walking in redemption from sins

Two things are essential to walk in this blessing. The first is that Jesus dwells in us, and we are in Jesus. We are unable to stop sinning without the Lord Jesus. Deliverance from sin is a blessing from God, and we must trust that He has delivered us from the power of sin; as John 8:36 says, Jesus set us free, and therefore, we are indeed free. Because we are in Christ, we can overcome sin. This is because our old man died in Christ on the Cross of Calvary, and we live a new life with and in Christ. In a later chapter, we will return to being in Christ.

The Lord Jesus paid the price that allows us to live in redemption from sins. It is the Holy Spirit who performs this in believers. The Holy Spirit overcomes sin in our lives. We read this in Romans 8.

Because of what Christ Jesus has done, you are free. You are now controlled by the law of the Holy Spirit who gives you life. The law of the Spirit frees you from the law of sin that brings dead.
(Romans 8:2, NIV)

The Holy Spirit has already done this. This is not something of the future; this is the current situation. At the same time, the Holy

Spirit has no desire to take over our lives like a dictator. The Holy Spirit wants to establish a relationship with us. This means that we may listen to the Holy Spirit and obey Him.

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. (Galatians 5:16)

To conclude, a few practical tips. First, this fundamental principle must be established for you, even if it is not yet reality. Build your faith and know that you are dead to sin.

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:11)

Second, it is essential to say no to sin. Now that we know that sin is no longer the enslaver of our lives, we may say this to the temptations.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. (Romans 6:12)

Jesus released us from sin. It has already happened, and as a result, we no longer allow sin in our lives. We say no to sin and say yes to the things of God. We commit ourselves not to the service of sin but to the service of God.

And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. (Romans 6:13)

Third, it is important to confess our faults to God, and after we have sinned, make the decision to obey God again and walk according to the ways of the Holy Spirit again.

Justified and Sanctified

God has forgiven and redeemed us from sin. And God's grace doesn't stop there. God has decided that everyone who is born

again is justified. When God looks at you, He doesn't see sin, but He sees the righteousness of Christ in you. Jesus has made you righteous and declared you righteous. Righteous means everything is fair, and we do what Jesus did. It is often said, "But we all remain sinners anyway." This is not Biblical. Nowhere in the Bible is a letter begun with the initial greeting, "Dear sinners at ..." In our old life, we were sinners. In our new life, after being born again, we are righteous and saints. In many letters, Paul addresses the opening salutation to "the saints at ..."

To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints (...). (Romans 1:7)

(...) to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints (...). (1 Corinthians 1:2)

(...) to the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia (...). (2 Corinthians 1:1)

(...) To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus (...). (Ephesians 1:1)

(...) to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi (...). (Philippians 1:1)

(...) To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse (...). (Colossians 1:2)

Our identity is no longer that of a sinner but that of a justified one and a saint. Let us first look at the concept of justification.

(...) and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. (Acts 13:39)

Justification is the identity of the believer. Justification has nothing to do with following the law correctly; it is the position God has put us in. We cannot become justified by our works, and we

can only be justified by faith in Jesus. This happens in the future when we meet Jesus; at the same time, it is something we can walk and live in today. If you have accepted Jesus, you are not a sinner but a righteous one. When God looks at you, He sees the righteousness of Jesus in your life. It is a gift of grace from God.

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:21-24)

This text says again that God's justice applies to everyone who believes—not for a select few, but for all. Paul says the same thing in Galatians 2:16. We receive this righteousness because we have become one with the Lord Jesus. Because of this, we have received the righteousness of God. God's righteousness is in you through the power of the Holy Spirit and the work of Jesus on earth.

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

We are also saints of God. We read that Paul addressed many church members as "saints." Saints aren't just exceptional Catholics who are said to have done miracles and must be worshiped to receive a miracle. Every believer is a saint of God.

And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight (...). (Colossians 1:21-22)

In God's eyes, we are sacred, immaculate, and flawless. This isn't because of our good deeds but because of the atonement Jesus brought—as displayed on the cross of Calvary. When we stand before God's throne in the future, God will see us as believers without sin. All our sins have been forgiven, and we have been

delivered from the power of sin. Because of this, God can accept us. This applies not only to individual believers but also to the church of Jesus—globally.

(...) that He might sanctify and cleanse her (the church) with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. (Ephesians 5:26-27)

Through water baptism, the congregation is purified. As a result, it is without spots or wrinkles, making it holy and spotless. Without spot or wrinkle means that the congregation has no defects, and holy means that the congregation has been set apart by God and has become the property of Jesus.

God plans to place believers spotless and sacred before Him. Before the earth was made, this was already God's plan.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. (Ephesians 1:3-4)

We are chosen to be holy and immaculate. By "chosen," we shouldn't think that God has chosen some to be saved and others to be unsaved. God wants everyone to be saved and no one to be lost (2 Peter 3:9). "Chosen" involves not who is chosen and who is not. It is about the One whom God has chosen to bring about salvation for believers and how He is to do so. It is about Jesus Christ, who can reconcile people to God through His death on the cross.

Let us return to the opening verse of this chapter.

For the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17)

The Kingdom of God consists of righteousness. It is a significant part of the Kingdom, and only through the Holy Spirit can we receive and apply righteousness in our lives.

Walking in Righteousness

We receive God's righteousness when we are born again; it is a work of the Holy Spirit in the believer. If we want to apply righteousness in our lives and our relationships with others, it is imperative to be guided by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit searches God's depths and knows what is righteous and what isn't.

But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. (1 Corinthians 2:10)

I and the people around us sometimes think we know what is correct, but we remain limited. The Holy Spirit knows what is righteous and how we should treat others in every situation. The first step is listening to the Holy Spirit and doing what the Spirit tells us to do.

The second step is realizing that you are a saint of God. Even though circumstances say different things and you sin daily, God sanctifies and justifies you. You don't have to look at yourself and say, "I am a sinner; I remain a sinner, and it will always go wrong." You should say about yourself, "I am holy and righteous." Come to the realization of who you are in Christ and speak about yourself according to what the Bible says about you. Be aware of the position and identity God has given to you. At the same time, God wants to redeem us from the power of sin and forgive us from sin, which we have already covered in this chapter.

Step 3 is implementation. God says we are holy, immaculate, and justified; let us put that into practice. We can only do this by the power of the Holy Spirit. We may become as Jesus was on earth and walk as Jesus walked.

But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides

in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. (1 John 2:5-6)

Those who claim to be in Jesus must walk as Jesus walked. On the one hand, our righteousness is a gift from God and the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, God asks us to be holy, keep His commandments, and walk as Jesus walked. We must be holy because God is holy.

As obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written: Be holy, for I am holy. (1 Peter 1:14-16)

In our walk with God, we are His children. As children, we may obey our heavenly Father and imitate Him on earth. God is holy, and we are holy. Therefore, let us refrain from doing evil and chasing after our lustful desires and live sacredly in all our walks of life. Be holy because God is holy. Our whole life should be devoted to God and submitted under His rule. In addition, it says, "in all your conduct." This means we are to be holy on Sunday mornings between 10 a.m. and noon and throughout the week. Even on Monday mornings with that annoying co-worker or student.

Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:1-5)

So, living holy entails the following steps:

Step 1: Get rid of all the wrong things.

Step 2: Desire the things of God's Kingdom and God's Word.

Step 3: Focus on Jesus and taste that He is good and holy.

Step 4: Be guided by the Holy Spirit and be holy.

Summary

The first three blessings of God's Kingdom that we covered are forgiveness, redemption from sins, and justification by God. Sin is a terrible enslaver that wants to take over our lives. The consequence of sin is that we live—forever separated from God. All our misdeeds are recorded, and eventually, we are punished for them. God has decided to forgive us, which means He forgives, forgets, and erases all our wrong deeds forever. To walk well in this blessing, we must repentantly ask God to forgive us and others when they have done nasty things. God has not only forgiven us but also redeemed us from sin. This means that the power of sin has been broken, and we no longer have to sin. We may live free from sin because we are placed in Christ, and the Holy Spirit helps us overcome sin. Finally, we are justified by God. This means that God sees us as righteous and holy. This is a position God put us in at regeneration. It is essential to realize this and show it in our walk of life. On the one hand, this is a gift from God, and on the other hand, God asks us to live sanctified lives because He is holy. We do this by obeying the Holy Spirit, putting away all our wickedness, and focusing on the things of God's Kingdom, His Word, and the Lord Jesus.

C7 IN CHRIST

If we are born again, then we are in Christ. This subject is often discussed yet remains challenging and mysterious. I hope this chapter makes the term being in Christ practical and illustrates how we can live in Christ.

There is a mascot to entertain the audience during baseball or basketball games. In a theme park, we also find mascots entertaining children and older people; it is an additional feature. Disneyland, for example, has Mickey Mouse. Everyone thinks of him as a mouse. Did you know that this mascot doesn't exist at all? Did you know that it is either a man or woman dressed up as a mascot? Did you know that there is a man or woman representing Mickey Mouse? We are in Christ with our spirit and have 'put on' Jesus. We are no longer living alone; for ourselves, we are now living in Christ, and for Christ, and we have become one. We look like Jesus and have received authority from Him to heal the sick, expel demons, and perform signs and wonders in His name.

In Christ: A Sacred Life

In the previous chapter, we read that we have been forgiven, redeemed, justified, and sanctified. We are justified because we have received the righteousness of Jesus. This is because we came in Christ when we were born again. Water baptism significantly impacts coming in Christ, and Paul often links water baptism to being in Christ. Let's have a look at Paul's teaching.

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him. (Romans 6:3-8)

This is a long passage with complicated explanations. Let's examine it together to understand what is written here. Paul says that we came into Christ through baptism. Spiritually, we have experienced the events of Jesus' crucifixion. Through baptism, we are spiritually crucified and resurrected with Jesus.

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? (Romans 6:3)

The first thing that happened was that we were baptized into Christ's death. Before we came to faith, we were in sin and living for ourselves. This life was wrong and must disappear before we can walk in God's Kingdom. Our old life must be slain, and this happens during water baptism. Through baptism, we descend into the baptismal water. Spiritually, at that moment, our old life is slain and crucified in the Lord Jesus on the cross. Our old life, full of sin and unrighteousness, is slain through baptism.

Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. (Romans 6:6)

Our old life has been crucified with Him, so our old and sinful life has been wiped out. Our old life is gone, and therefore, we no longer have to serve sin but live in freedom from sin. The power and reign of sin are gone, allowing us to live a sinless life.

Imagine this: a father abuses, bullies, and scolds his children. He does this every day, and the children are used to it. One day, the children return from school and walk into the room. They expect to be scolded, but nothing happens. Their father lies motionless in the chair and has died. The father can no longer sin because he is dead; the same happens to our old life. Our old life is dead and no longer affects our present life.

However, we might still need to deal with the sins of the past. As it were, our old life has convulsions, sometimes allowing a thought or pleasure of sin to creep into our thinking. Paul urges us to leave our old life on the cross, even after water baptism. We are living a new life and must leave our old life behind.

And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Galatians 5:24)

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth (...). (Colossians 3:5)

Because our old self has been crucified, the power of sin no longer has any control over our lives. We are free from sin.

For he who has died has been freed from sin. (Romans 6:7)

Our old self has died. The second thing that has happened is that we have been buried in Christ.

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death (...). (Romans 6:4)

I suppose everyone has walked across a cemetery before. At the cemetery, you have headstones, and underneath is the coffin with the deceased. Everyone knows that the deceased remains dead and cannot be resurrected from the dead. (We ignore for a moment now that God brings everyone back to life at the end). No one expects anyone to come back to life. The same is true of our old life. Our old life was crucified, was slain, and is now buried. It would be unreasonable for our old life to resurrect and return to life. In Christ, our old life has been buried, and it remains buried. We have said goodbye to our old life. It is gone.

The third thing that happens during baptism is that we rise into a new life with Jesus Christ.

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4)

Our old life is gone, but this doesn't imply that we have nothing left after baptism. In fact, we receive a new life founded in the Lord Jesus. We no longer live alone but with Christ and the Holy Spirit with a new sacred walk of life. We receive the new life as

a gift from God, and at the same time, God asks us to walk in this new life. In verse 5, Paul further elaborates on our new life.

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection. (Romans 6:5)

We have been united with Jesus in His death; therefore, we will also be alike in His resurrection. If you have become one with Jesus, why would you still sin? Why, then, would you not lead a sacred life? This is a question Paul asks the church in Rome (Romans 6:2). This is because our old life has died, so we can no longer enjoy the sinful world. We were made new and live in Christ. We are a new creation with a new identity.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

After baptism, you become a new creation. The old sinful life is gone, and the new sacred life in Christ has begun. God has given this identity to all His children.

But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. (Galatians 6:14-15)

The only thing we can boast of is the cross of Jesus. The cross means the sinful world has been crucified for us, and we no longer have to look at our old lives. As a result of the cross, we have been redeemed from sin. Wherever you come from, no matter what your background is, we have all become new creations in Christ.

In Colossians 3, Paul explains what it means to slay our old life and put on our new life. We must no longer walk in fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, greed, anger, wrath, slander, and obscene language. We may walk in compassion, kindness,

humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, gratitude, and love. We are mindful of the matters above.

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:1-3)

You've probably seen wristbands that say WWJD on them. This is an abbreviation of What Would Jesus Do? By asking yourself this, you will know what is right or wrong. What would Jesus do to a homeless man? What would Jesus do in this situation? Paul says in Colossians that we should seek and consider the things above, where Christ is. Since we are now living in Christ, it is also appropriate for us to think and do the things of Christ and stop the world's sins and distractions. We do this because we are new creations; we believe in the things of Jesus and are filled with the Holy Spirit.

By being born again, you are in Christ. God has given you a new sacred identity, and you live in a new realm: the Kingdom of God. In this Kingdom are the people God appointed as His own—and you are a citizen (1 Peter 2:9). You belong to God and may increasingly resemble God and Jesus.

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Romans 8:29)

Steps to Be in Christ

How can we walk in Christ? It is essential to realize that this is the identity in which God puts us. When we are born again, we are in Christ. Our job is to recognize this and apply it in our lives. Because we now live with Jesus and the Holy Spirit, we desire to stop sinning and live sacred lives. The most crucial step to being in Christ is water baptism. Through water baptism, we come in Christ and are made equal in His death, burial, and resurrection. Then, the Holy Spirit guides us, and we receive the power of the Holy Spirit to walk in our new life in Christ. Additionally, the

Bible calls us to slay our earthly desires and lusts and renew ourselves continuously so that we increasingly resemble Jesus.

In Christ: A Life with Authority

Being in Christ does not only mean we live sacred lives and resemble Jesus in His righteousness. It also means that in Christ, we have been given power and authority to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom on earth. When the Lord Jesus resurrected from the dead, He instructed the disciples He appeared to and told them about the Kingdom of God.

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:18-19)

The Lord Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth. Everything is subject to the Lord Jesus; therefore, we may go and teach the people. The Lord Jesus doesn't have a little power or isn't a little more powerful than the devil and the demons; Jesus has all authority and stands well above the devil and the demons. We are in Christ, and that means we are together with Christ above the demons and devil. Jesus has given us the authority to heal the sick, for example. Our spirit is set in the heavenlies together with Jesus.

(...) and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, (...). (Ephesians 2:6)

It has already happened. By the heavenlies, we should think of different areas in heaven. For example, there is a part where the devil and demons have a say (Ephesians 2:2). The Lord Jesus and God the Father are seated in the supreme part of the realms, and we in Christ are also seated there. Just as Christ is above all power, strength, and dominion, we in Christ are also above all power, strength, and dominion.

(...) and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:19-23)

In Ephesians 1, Paul explains the power given to believers. The power that made Jesus rise from the dead is present in believers, and as a result, we have become a new creation. We are not powerless on earth but are full of power and authority. This is a power given by God to those who believe. God has given us some realms of authority and power to rule over these realms in Christ. We get to these parts in the following chapters, which include healing the sick and casting out demons. Jesus now sits at the right hand of God the Father and is far above all powers and forces. Since we are in Christ, we are also far above all powers and forces. We still have to battle against these powers (Ephesians 6:10-18), but we should know that we can overcome these powers if we remain in Christ.

Jesus received all authority from God the Father. Jesus also has all authority over the church, for He is the head of the church and thus leads the church and says what should be done. The Lord Jesus has delegated His received authority from God the Father to the believers. This doesn't imply that a believer can claim and manifest everything because Jesus has given limits to our authority. Nevertheless, it does mean that Jesus has given us realms to execute authority. Some realms are given to all believers, like healing the sick, and others are granted to individual believers, like a father over his family or a pastor over his congregation. Jesus has given us authority, and we have received it because we are in Christ. In the remainder of this chapter, let us examine what authority biblically means and how it works in God's Kingdom.

When the Lord Jesus was walking around on earth, a centurion (a rank in the Roman army) came to Him to ask Him to heal His servant.

Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented." And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." (Matthew 8:5-9)

In the Roman army, everyone is submissive to the emperor. All must listen to the emperor. However, the emperor cannot personally order everyone to do something. Therefore, the emperor appointed men under his authority and delegated certain authority to them to control the people under them. We also encounter this in the US Army. For instance, we know the ranks of general, colonel, major, captain, lieutenant, corporal, etc. Everyone is accountable to the one above him—from whom they receive authority over those below them. The centurion lived in such a system; hence, he knew he was under the authority of his superiors and had soldiers under him. He observed that the soldiers listened to him and did what he said. The centurion knew this was true not only in the physical world but also in the spiritual one. This works similarly in the Kingdom of God, and the centurion saw this from the authority of Jesus. This is how it works for us, too. We are all under the authority of God and have received authority from God so that those under us do what we say. So, who is under us? If we are in Christ, what/those under us are all powers, authority, and dominion in the spiritual world. When God gives us a mission, He also gives us the means and authority to accomplish that mission. We already see this in the ministry Jesus gave to His disciples.

And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. (Matthew 10:1)

The Lord Jesus didn't only do this with these 12 disciples. Later on, seventy others joined them. They were given the same assignment.

After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. (...) heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The Kingdom of God has come near to you.'" (Luke 10:1-9)

In the same way, Jesus gave these disciples the power to cast out demons and heal any disease, the Lord Jesus also gives His followers the power to heal the sick and cast out demons today. For believers it is normal that these signs follow. (Mark 16:17-18). It is what God wants to give to all believers, and our job is to pray for workers who will use their authority. Besides, what is the point if workers have no tools, are not allowed to do anything, and cannot do anything? I thank God that we may do the same as the disciples and do the same as Jesus.

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. (John 14:12)

Jesus has all power and authority and has given us power and authority to do the same as Him and even more than He did. We can and may do all the works Jesus did on earth because we are in Christ.

Steps to Be in Christ

God has put us in Christ, and that is the identity we have received. God has given us the power and authority to perform miracles. To function well in this, obeying God and understanding why and for

what God has given us authority is essential. We do this by studying the Bible and looking at what Jesus and God have given us and God's will in a situation. Besides the decision of will in the Bible in general, the Holy Spirit can reveal personal decisions of will to us. It is essential, therefore, to listen to the Holy Spirit. Subsequently, we stand in faith before the miracle that God will perform. Since we receive this authority in Christ, it is important to be born again and baptized. Later in this book, we will return to some areas of authority that God has given to citizens of the Kingdom, such as healing the sick and casting out demons.

Summary

When we are born again, we are placed in Christ. Our old sinful life is behind us, and from baptism, we live a new sacred life with the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The old has passed away, and the new has come. This means that we no longer have to sin but may live sacred lives by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul, therefore, calls us to put to death the sins and works of the earth, and in Christ, we live a holy life. In addition, in Christ, we live a life of authority. For example, God has given us the authority to cast out demons and heal the sick. We are workers of God, and God wants us to reap His harvest. God has given us various tools and authority to do this job well. Being in Christ is the identity that every believer has received from God and is allowed to walk in.

C8 HEALING AND DELIVERANCE

Miracles and signs. It is beautiful to see God at work, and that is why evangelism, healing, and deliverance services are so utterly fabulous. We serve a mighty God who wants to bless us abundantly and has our best interests at heart. We serve a God of salvation, healing, and deliverance. Not only pastors or important people can heal and deliver; God has given these blessings to all His followers.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases (...). (Psalm 103:2-3)

In this chapter, we study redemption from death, the healing of our diseases, and the deliverance from demons. Each topic requires more pages of text to give a full understanding, but this chapter only briefly discusses these topics. We are aware that there is much more to be written on this subject.

Redemption from Death

God has redeemed us from death. But how is that possible? Until now, everyone has died, and everyone will take their last breath at some point. This is because God talks about two different kinds of death. The first death is the death that everyone experiences. At some point, the body is exhausted, and a person passes away. His body stays on earth, and this is buried or cremated. The second death is a spiritual death, an eternal separation from God the Father. The Bible proclaims two kinds of death, as we read in Revelation.

Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:14-15)

Everyone experiences the first death, whether you have faith in God or not. However, not everyone experiences the second death; there is one exemption, and that is the people who are written in

the Book of Life. These are the followers of Jesus, and by Jesus' righteousness, they are redeemed from the second death.

John writes about future things in the letter of Revelation. You can order the book 'A Revelation of the End Times: Why the Pre-Tribulation Rapture is Biblical' from our web shop to learn more about this. John spoke here about death and the realm of death (Hades). Death is destroyed forever at the end of the present heaven and earth and will not happen again. Hades will be cast into the lake of fire (hell), and this will be an eternal destination. Hades is already here today, and this is a waiting room where the dead wait for God's judgment. After God's judgment, everyone present in Hades will be cast into hell. This is the second death. No one escapes it except those written down in the Book of Life. Let us read a few verses about the second death and see how a person's name enters the Book of Life.

But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. (Revelation 21:8)

God cautions people in Revelation 21:8. A fantastic future is available in God's presence. Yet the people in the above listing won't have any part in this future; they will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone. What an awful future! The key is to reach as many people as possible with the gospel of the Kingdom and tell them that they can be redeemed from the second death. The following Bible text illustrates the same idea.

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the Kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

When we talk about God's Kingdom in the text above, we shouldn't think about the present Kingdom we live in today. This refers to the future Kingdom, which will be eternal, where God will dwell with people. Again, a list of people who won't participate

in this. They won't enjoy eternity with God. Galatians 5:21 and Ephesians 5:5 also list people who won't obtain the Kingdom. Simultaneously, the following verse of Corinthians expresses hope. You can maybe identify with something from the above summary. By the grace of God, it is feasible to stop being a fornicator, idolater, adulterer, etc., and to live a completely new life in Christ. Indeed, Paul wrote to the church at Corinth:

And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:11)

Paul says some people failed to live righteously but were cleansed and sanctified by God, something we studied in the previous chapters. Therefore, a fornicator can become a saint. This is accomplished through the sacrifice of Jesus and His forgiveness of sins.

To be redeemed from the second death, the key is to live in Christ and apply this in our lives. We should not serve the sins of this world but live as saints. Again, this book doesn't aim to show how to be saved with the minimum conditions. This book wants to illustrate how to achieve the maximum output with God. I don't know who will and won't be saved from the second death; that's up to God. Nevertheless, 1 Corinthians 6 shows us a significant warning that we should not take lightly.

God wants to redeem us from the second death. The implication is that we won't be cast into the lake of fire but will be allowed to walk and live with God in the new heaven and earth. We can only do this if our names are written in the Book of Life. This is a book in which Jesus wrote down the names of His followers. These are His believers who have endured to the end. Being redeemed from death means having eternal life with God. When a believer experiences the first death and leaves his earthly suit, he enters heaven and will live forever. Let us look at a few verses about this glorious life.

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of

heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying: Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new. And He said to me: Write, for these words are true and faithful. (Revelation 21:1-5)

A fantastic future will come where we can live with God forever. It will be better than we can imagine. Everything will be brand new, and pain, sorrow, or trouble will no longer exist. Are you looking forward to this time?

The Lord Jesus often spoke about eternal life and said people only get eternal life if they believe in Him.

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. (John 3:36)

Faith implies not only that a person believes that Jesus lived but also obedience. That is why the second part of this verse says that those who disobey (i.e., fail to have faith) won't see eternal life. Believing in the above text means that we obey God's words, accept His testimony, and are faithful to His words. Then, God will give us eternal life.

Walking in Redemption from Death

He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God. (1 John 5:10-13)

In this paragraph, we already noticed some areas where we may walk to be redeemed from death. Of course, the important thing is to have faith in the Lord Jesus. In addition, the Bible warns us that some people, such as fornicators and thieves, don't gain the Kingdom of God but are cast into the lake of fire. Finally, we study one more aspect: perseverance. It is often said, "Once saved, always saved," but this is not Biblical. The Bible warns that we can still lose our salvation. Therefore, it is essential to persevere in faith and continue to run the race from start to finish.

And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight, if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister. (Colossians 1:21-23)

The text above reveals the condition for eternal life: a firm and established faith. Of course, we cannot do this alone, but the Lord Jesus helps us, as the following text shows.

Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:6)

With the Lord Jesus, may we live sacred and immaculate today, remain in God's presence, and obey Him forever—both today and in the future. In addition, we must do God's will today to stay with Him forever.

And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:17)

Healing Diseases

In God's Kingdom, there is health and healing. The first important thing is to live healthily and treat our bodies well to remain healthy. If diseases occur because of unhealthy use or diseases

that we cannot do anything about, God, by His grace, wants to heal us of the diseases. We cover this topic briefly.

How can we know that God wants to heal us? God has given Himself Names to make Himself known to us. The Lord God says to us that He is our Healer.

And he said: If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you. (Exodus 15:26)

God manifests Himself to us as Healer. Exodus is an Old Testament book and not a part of God's new covenant (including the blessings we discuss). If God had already included this in the old covenant, He would definitely include it in His new covenant.

So you shall serve the Lord your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you. (Exodus 23:25)

If we serve and obey God, He will eliminate all diseases. We have a Healer! Let us read some verses that will let us know that in God's Kingdom, there is health and healing.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases (...). (Psalm 103:2-3)

Wherever He entered into villages, cities, or in the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well. (Mark 6:56)

But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5)

Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes. (Mark 9:23)

Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed. (1 Petrus 2:24)

Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. (James 5:14-15)

Health and healing are blessings of God's Kingdom, and God wants us to walk in them. Healings aren't exclusive to the time of Jesus or the apostles but are also available today. I have seen plenty of healings and experienced them myself. God is the same yesterday, today, and for all eternity! God wants to heal us from our sickness. Whether we have a slight headache on one occasion or a severe health issue, God wants to set us free from disease. In the future Kingdom of God, the millennial Kingdom, no sickness will occur, and death will be rare. Everyone will live out their days, and many will live for a thousand years. Today, the followers of Jesus are already living in the spiritual Kingdom of God, and God gives the promise of health and healing. We see this in the book of James, where James says that faithful prayer will preserve the sick person. James did not say, "Maybe you will get well" or "Fast first to see if it is God's will for you to get well," but James said, "The sick person will get well. For James, there was no doubt that God wanted to do this. Finally, I advise the doctor to determine it after the illness has healed. This increases the value of the testimony, which is not unbelief but is found in the Bible.

Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said: Jesus, Master, have mercy on us! So when He saw them, He said to them: Go, show yourselves to the priests. And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. (Luke 17:12-14)

Walking in Healing

The first step to healing is believing that God will and can heal you. With the healings of Jesus, we can read that faith established the healing.

*But Jesus turning and seeing her said, "Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well." At once * the woman was made well. (Matthew 9:22)*

Before the blessing of healing can occur, faith is essential. You can build belief by studying the Word of God and listening to the testimonies of others. To have faith involves more than just hoping things will work out. It means actively engaging with God and saying goodbye to illness. It is trusting that God has made us healthy through the sacrifice of Jesus and that illness, therefore, bears no right to our lives. The disease is an illegal intruder and must disappear, and we may speak against this disease and thank God for the health we have received from Him in our new life.

For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain: Be removed and be cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. (Mark 11:23-24)

I recommend that you read the above text repeatedly. A great miracle is stated there, and God created us to speak against the mountain (for example, sickness). If we don't doubt in our hearts, it will happen. We read that healing and health are God's will for everyone. Therefore, we may know that we prayerfully desire healing and health. I want to give you many more tips and advice on this subject, but unfortunately, this cannot be done in the format of this book.

Deliverance from Demons

The following blessing we discuss is the deliverance of demons. Demons are spiritual beings that seek a home, a human being, to

live in. Because of this, demons may possess a person, or a demon may influence a person's life. For example, demons can gain entrance through the following:

- Repeated sins or grave sins.
- Sexual relations outside of marriage between husband and wife.
- Occultism, such as divination, horoscopes, tarot cards, summoning spirits, yoga, etc.
- Worship of demons or idols.
- Wrong things that ancestors have done.
- Curses.
- Deviations from sound doctrine. (In the Bible, this is also called the doctrine of demons.)
- Addictions.
- Drunkenness.

This can happen when someone isn't yet a believer and also when someone is a believer. For this reason, it is essential always to be wary of opening the door for demons. If someone suffers from demons or supernatural things, there is good news. In the name of Jesus, demons will depart because Jesus wants to free us from demonic powers. We see this in the lives of Jesus and the disciples. People were delivered from unclean spirits (demons).

For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. (Acts 8:7)

(...) who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed. (Luke 6:17-18)

Many people have been freed from evil spirits by sending them away in Jesus' name. Through the authority we have received from Jesus, we can tell demons on behalf of Jesus to leave people. It is a blessing of God's Kingdom that people are delivered from demonism and set free.

But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the Kingdom of God has come upon you. (Luke 11:20)

As it were, people are freed from chains and released from prison. Because of demons, people find themselves tied and can live a life of loneliness, fear, illness, drugs, alcohol, pride, addiction, anger, or other unpleasant problems. Demons lock a person in a cage and make him live a life where he needs something to feel suitable for a specific moment. Demons prefer to destroy people and influence other people through them (Mark 5:1-13). It is a spiritual prison. When Jesus came to earth, He had come to free people from this spiritual prison.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18-19)

Jesus came to preach liberation—freedom from sins, addictions, the law, and demonism. The King preaches to prisoners that they become free and their spiritual shackles are broken. Sin and the enemy don't have to lead us; we can live freely in the Kingdom of God. We are meant to be free. The demons are not allowed to influence a son or daughter of God.

Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. (John 8:36)

Living in Liberation from Demons

God wants His children to be free from demons. God wants to give this blessing to everyone, like all other blessings. If you suffer from demonism, sin, or addiction, the important thing is to express this to God and ask Him to set you free. You can pray for deliverance, but it can also help you confide in people and share the problem. In many churches, you have good brothers and sisters with experience in deliverance, and it helps to speak with them to expose the issues and ask them for prayer.

Finally, I would like to give a few tips for breaking free from demonism. The first tip is to avoid opening doors to demons. God has given all Christians who are born again all powers over demons, but at the same time, it is better not to allow the devil and demons to enter in the first place.

And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. (Matthew 10:1)

The second tip is to speak against demonic influences. The Bible says demons left people because Jesus spoke (one word). Speak in faith and authority, and demons will depart.

The third tip is to remove the influences through which demons have entered. You can think of Buddha statues, horoscopes, or stones. Should demons have entered through repeated sins, bad sins, or sexual relationships, it is necessary to terminate these sins and relationships and make the decision to live sacred before God. Concerning ancestral events or curses, it is important to break these curses and pronounce God's blessing over your life.

The fourth tip is to forgive people who have hurt us. We had read that God can only forgive us if we also forgive others. If we continue to walk in unforgiveness, it can significantly obstruct the process of deliverance.

The fifth tip is to find people with experience and ask them to guide you in delivering you from demons. God has given us—each other to encourage, comfort, and help one another. Go to the pastoral team and be honest about the problems.

Summary

In God's Kingdom, we are redeemed from spiritual death. We no longer have to live a life in isolation from God in a terrifying place. We are allowed to live a life in the presence of God. In addition, we can live in health during our time on earth. God wants to heal everyone and wants to touch people who are sick, causing them to receive health. The most important thing to be healed is having faith in healing. Finally, God wants to set us free so we are not under the influence of the devil and demons.

C8 HEALING AND DELIVERANCE

Through open doors, demons can enter, and in the name of Jesus, we may send them away. It is vital to be conscious of open doors to demons and close them immediately.

C9 LIVING IN GOD'S BLESSING

Imagine you are a parent and you have children. What would you want to happen to your children? Every good parent wants their children to thrive and discover Jesus. In addition, we would like our children to be healthy, do well in school, and make friends. When they get older, we hope they have a reputable and excellent job, are blessed with a partner and children, and can afford a lovely house. Bottom line: we hope our children will be blessed. It would be unhealthy for a parent to expect that their children are sick every day, experience a terrible life, or watch them remain lonely. God is a good God and wants to give us good gifts. If an "ordinary" good parent already wants his children to be happy and joyful, how much more does God want to provide us with good things?

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him. (Matthew 7:7-11)

In this chapter, we examine blessings and curses. God wants to bless us and doesn't want to curse us. Yet, it is often thought that God brings the curse on His children. For example, it is said, "God blesses you with this sickness," "Know that you live in poverty if you work for God's Kingdom," or "If you begin with God, you must know that misery begins." On the contrary, God wants to bless us with good gifts.

The Blessing and the Curse

The book of Galatians states that God has freed us from the curse and brought us under the blessing.

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written: Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:13-14)

In God's Kingdom, we experience God's blessing. We have been freed from the curse contained in the law and placed under the blessing of Abraham. Before we discuss this, in this section, we look at what the blessing and the curse entail.

The curse comes from the Greek word "*kataras*" which means "doom," "curse," or "trouble." The phrase implies a supplication or wish at someone's expense. If we return to the beginning of the Bible, we see that the curse came because Adam and Eve disobeyed God. As a result, the woman must painfully bear children, and the earth is cursed, leaving the man to toil to get food (Genesis 3). The curse influences a thing to be accomplished with effort. Here, you can consider many different things; this doesn't just apply to earning bread and money. When we read the Bible, we read about Moses and the people of Israel. The people were allowed to choose between the blessing of God or the curse. If they obey God, they receive a blessing; if they disobey God, they receive a curse.

Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law. And all the people shall say: Amen! (Deuteronomy 27:26)

With what, then, is man cursed? The greatest curse is that man can no longer live with God and, as a result, lives forever separated from God. Thanks to Jesus's work, every Christian born again is redeemed from this great curse. Yet, at the same time, the curse also involves other parts of our lives. It involves not only spiritual adversity but also material adversity. This overview can be found in Deuteronomy 28, beginning in verse 15. We list several curses after we have dealt with the blessing.

In contrast to the curse, we have God's blessing. God wants to bless us, and the first thing God did with man was to bless him.

*So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them: *Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth!* (Genesis 1:27-28)*

Before man could do anything or provide anything for God, God had already blessed him. There is nothing man can do or perform that makes God obligated to bless him. It is God's free will to bless man, and God wants to bless all who are obedient to Him. Whether you are a man or woman, young or old, or whatever country you come from, God wants to bless you. We have a good God!

God's blessing not only applies to spiritual things but also to material things. God wants to bless us physically, spiritually, emotionally, relationally, and financially. According to the dictionary, blessing means "to favor" or "to give abundantly." God wants to provide us with abundance and give us (spiritual) things according to His wealth.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. (Ephesians 1:3-4)

According to the law, let us see what is subject to blessing and curse. This overview comes from Deuteronomy 28 but is incomplete. For a complete overview, I recommend reading Deuteronomy 28.

The blessing	The curse
Financially blessed. (Verse 3, 5, 8 and 12)	Financial deficit. (Verse 16, 29, 30 and 33)
Everything you do is blessed, no matter where you go. (Verse 3 and 6)	Everything fails, and disasters occur. (Verse 16, 19 and 20)

Blessed and abundant is the food that you eat. (Verse 5)	Cursed and insufficient is the food you eat. (Verse 17)
Blessed are your offspring. (Verse 4)	Infertility and miscarriages. (Verse 18)
Your work and business thrive. (Verse 4)	Your work and business don't thrive. (Verse 18)
Victory against (spiritual) enemies. (Verse 7)	Losing the battle against (spiritual) enemies. (Verse 25)
Health, strength, and power. (Verse 13)	Disaster, sickness, and misery. (From verse 15)

Let us obey God and thereby enjoy the fruits of God's blessing.

Free from the Curse

In the previous paragraph, we saw a list of curses. I don't think anyone wishes to suffer curses but rather to enjoy life with God's blessing. Yet, the curse primarily belongs to everyone. From Jew to Gentile, from the less educated to the more educated, everyone falls under the curse of the Law of Moses.

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written: cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them. (Galatians 3:10)

All of us fall under the curse of the law. No one has succeeded in complying with the law, and everyone has made mistakes. As a result, the curse applies to everyone. It doesn't necessarily have to be that someone suffers all the curses of the law. For example, it can also be that someone suffers one curse in his life. A rich man or woman is financially blessed but may face divorce, illness, or lose the battle against a terrible sin. The worst curse is losing eternal life with God. Even if someone spends one hundred and twenty years living happily and blessed on earth, if that person doesn't believe in Jesus, everything has lost its value. Unfortunately, the curse applies to everyone because no one is righteous.

Yet there is a great blessing in God's Kingdom, for the inhabitants of this Kingdom are freed from the curse and brought under the blessing.

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written: Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree (...)). (Galatians 3:13)

Jesus accomplished this by becoming a curse for us. The Old Testament mentions that anyone who hangs on wood (the cross) is cursed (Deuteronomy 21:23). Jesus became a curse for us when He was nailed to the cross. In addition, the Lord Jesus had the curse of the earth on His head because of the crown of thorns He wore (Genesis 3:18). Consequently, the curse we deserved was borne by One who didn't deserve it. Jesus was turned into sin and a curse on the cross of Calvary. The One who never sinned became sin, and all the world's sins fell on Him. Because Jesus bore the penalty and curse of sin, we are no longer punished for sin but are made righteous in Him.

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Therefore, the curse has no claim over our lives anymore, for we have received God's righteousness. Jesus carried the sin and the curse, so we no longer have to live under the power of sin or the power of the curse. The curse has been broken, along with all the negative consequences enshrined in Deuteronomy 28.

We have been freed from the curse and ransomed from the law that contains the curse.

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. (Galatians 4:4-5)

We no longer fall under the authority of the law with all the curses of sins. We are now children of God and don't commit sin. Not

because we keep things written on stone but because God has renewed us and we have received the Holy Spirit, who leads us to sanctity. The book of Galatians says that we shouldn't enslave ourselves by keeping the law, but we should live in freedom of the Holy Spirit and reign in our lives. The power of the law has lost its power, and we have been adopted as children of God, and thanks to God's grace, we may live a holy life.

Brought Under the Blessing

We have been redeemed, ransomed, freed from the curse, and brought together with Jesus under God's blessing.

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written: Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:13-14)

Through Jesus' work, Abraham's blessing extends to Christians. When we read the story of Abraham, we observe how God gave Abraham many blessings.

I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. (Genesis 12:2-3)

In studying the life of Abraham, we notice that God blessed him to an extraordinary degree. He had many possessions, livestock, excellent health, and children. Abraham died at an advanced age under the blessing of God, who had blessed him in everything.

Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. (Genesis 24:1)

After many years, the Lord Jesus was born from the offspring of Abraham. The Lord Jesus had complete entitlement to the promise God made to Abraham because He was Abraham's offspring

and kept to the law. Jesus had the right to receive the full blessing. But Jesus decided to bear the curse on the cross, allowing us to experience Abraham's blessing in Him. We have been redeemed from the curse and may live in blessing. A great transformation took place during the crucifixion. Jesus had the blessing but accepted the curse for a while. We were under the curse, but through being born again, we may receive the blessing forever. The greatest blessing is that we get to spend eternity with God and receive the Holy Spirit as pledge, but at the same time, we also claim the blessings in the book of Deuteronomy. According to Galatians 3:14, we lay claim to the blessing of Abraham. In Genesis 24, we read that Abraham was blessed in all things, so may we also be and become blessed. We receive this blessing by faith. It is essential to always keep sight of the cross because, on the cross, the finished work of Christ was accomplished. This applies to forgiving sin, breaking the curse, and receiving the blessing. This applies not to a few believers but to every believer.

So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. (Galatians 3:9)

This isn't limited to just a few spiritual areas of our lives but to all areas of our lives.

And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)

Our faith incorporates us into the same covenant promises as Abraham. Let us look at several verses that reemphasize God's desire to bless us.

The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, And He adds no sorrow with it. (Proverbs 10:22)

So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. (2 Corinthians 9:7-8)

So keep the words of this covenant to do them, that you may prosper in all that you do. (Deuteronomy 29:9, NAS)

We read about God's blessing to the Israelites in the Old Testament. However, After Jesus' death and resurrection, He became a Mediator of a better covenant. The new covenant of Jesus surpasses the Old Testament covenant. If the people in the old covenant were already blessed, surely this applies to the people of the new covenant.

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. (Hebrews 8:6)

In this new covenant, the promises are better. We discuss these promises in this section of the book, with all the great blessings of God. The greatest blessing of God is written in the same chapter of Hebrews. We now belong to God's people (Kingdom), and He wrote His laws in our hearts and minds because we received the Holy Spirit. God even gave His son to us, so why shouldn't God give us everything else we need?

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32)

Free from the Curse and Living in the Blessing

We no longer live under the curse but in blessings. But how can we walk in these blessings?

First, we need to obey God and listen to His commandments. This was true for the Israelites in the Old Testament, when they could decide for themselves whether to walk under the curse or in the blessing. If they obeyed God, they lived in the blessing; if they disobeyed God, they lived in the curse.

Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high

above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God (...). (Deuteronomy 28:1-2)

The blessings we have listed in this chapter are all in consideration. If Israel listened to God, all these blessings would be for them.

But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you. (...). (Deuteronomy 28:15)

It is about the curses we have listed in this chapter. If Israel disobeyed and began to worship other gods, the curse would come upon Israel. The Israelites had to make a decision. Were they going for obedience and the blessing or disobedience and the curse? This isn't the only place where God links obedience and prayer. After Moses, who passed on these laws to the Israelites, passed away, Joshua was the people's new leader. When God appointed Joshua, He told him something important:

Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. (Joshua 1:7-8)

Joshua could only act wisely and make his ways prosperous if he followed the book of the law in all matters. If he followed the commandments, he lived in God's blessing; if he failed to follow the commandments, he lived in the curse, and his ways weren't prosperous.

Even in the New Testament, we often read about obedience and its blessings. Let us look at some examples.

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. (John 3:36)

Him (God) has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him. (Acts 5:31-32)

But to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness--indignation and wrath. (Romans 2:8)

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth. (Ephesians 6:1-3)

Secondly, it is essential to remain patient. There may be times when the promises of blessing are delayed, and this causes us to wonder if God wants to bless us. Nevertheless, it is essential to remain patient because when God promises something, He does it. (2 Corinthians 1:20).

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (Hebrews 6:11-12)

Through faith and patience, we inherit the promises of God. Initially, you can think of the promises of eternal life and eternity with God. It is good to wait patiently (or persistently) for these things. Besides this, it can involve other or specific promises from God. Think, for example, of Abraham. Only later in life did the accomplishment of an offspring manifest itself. Until his hundredth year, nothing was visible in the natural concerning this promise of God, and it was not until the age of a hundred that Abraham received a son. Abraham needed a lot of patience.

For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying: Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. (Hebrews 6:13-15)

We require patience to see our promises fulfilled. The following Bible text deals primarily with eternal life, but we can also apply it to other promises of God.

For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise. (Hebrews 10:36)

The Bible is filled with waiting patiently for the promise. Moses was eighty years old when he took leadership of Israel. Joseph was first sold as an enslaved person and entered prison before becoming a great leader in Egypt. Job had to endure suffering and sickness until he was blessed. David had to wait until King Saul died before he could become king. We can study many more stories like this where God made a promise, and patience was needed before the promise materialized in fulfillment.

Third, the blessing isn't just for ourselves. Our job is to share the blessings we receive with the people around us, first to the orphans, widows, the poor, and the Kingdom of God. In the next chapter, we will discuss this in more detail as we examine financial blessings.

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. (Philippians 2:3-4)

We need to be generous people by all means and bless others with our time, energy, matter, money, love, attention, etc. God has blessed us (made us prosperous), and our job is to bless others.

While you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. (2 Corinthians 9:11)

God has no problem blessing us with material goods. In most cases, people create problems for themselves. The reason is that a servant of God has been taught that he must be poor and needy. This isn't what the Bible says. God wants to bless us, enabling us to bless others. This is also an essential condition. We must have a giving attitude and allow people to share in our blessing. But when we don't have money, energy, time, health, or goods, how can we provide good gifts to others?

We can also bless those we don't like or those who don't love us. You can think of blessing them with words or blessing them with material goods.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. (Romans 12:14)

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you (...). (Matthew 5:44)

Summary

In this chapter, we discussed the blessing of God and the curse. Part of God's Kingdom is that we have been redeemed from the curse and put under the blessing of God. If we obey God, God wants to bless us, and we, in turn, will be a blessing to those around us. God's blessing is intended not only for ourselves but also for others. If we disobey God, we fall under the curse, and one or more curses may afflict us. We find an overview of the blessings and curses in Deuteronomy 28. In the chart below, we read again some of the blessings and curses from this chapter.

The blessing	The curse
Financially blessed. (Verse 3, 5, 8 and 12)	Financial deficit. (Verse 16, 29, 30 and 33)
Everything you do is blessed, no matter where you go. (Verse 3 and 6)	Everything fails, and disasters occur. (Verse 16, 19 and 20)

C9 LIVING IN GOD'S BLESSING

Blessed and abundant is the food that you eat. (Verse 5)	Cursed and insufficient is the food you eat. (Verse 17)
Blessed are your offspring. (Verse 4)	Infertility and miscarriages. (Verse 18)
Your work and business thrive. (Verse 4)	Your work and business don't thrive. (Verse 18)
Victory against (spiritual) enemies. (Verse 7)	Losing the battle against (spiritual) enemies. (Verse 25)
Health, strength, and power. (Verse 13)	Disaster, sickness, and misery. (From verse 15)

C10 LIVING PROSPEROUSLY

In the previous chapter, we learned that God wants to bless us, even financially. God wants to bless our finances, so we have no deficits and live prosperously. Speaking of prosperity, we shouldn't think of a Biblical trick where our bank account is piling up with the money, and nothing is done with it. Of course, it is good to have a savings account and build up savings to have a buffer and save for retirement, but if we want to swim in our money like Scrooge Duck and be stingy, then something is wrong. In the previous chapter, we saw that God blesses us so we can bless others with our blessing. It is similar financially. God blesses us so we can live well and abundantly, but God also blesses us to accomplish good deeds with money. This can happen by supporting your church or a ministry or giving money to the poor, orphans, and others in need. We discover that God gives us prosperity when we bless others.

Promises of Prosperity

The Bible is full of promises of prosperity. In this paragraph, let's read a few Bible verses that reveal that God wants us to prosper.

And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)

This is a remarkable promise from God. When we read it in context, it primarily addresses our financial needs. The Philippians, for instance, gave generously to Paul's ministry, and as a result, God promised to meet all their needs according to His glorious riches. These riches are not limited to money or any earthly measure. God's wealth surpasses all human understanding. He operates on a different economic system unrelated to the world's economy. With God, we can be assured of His provision, even in times of crisis, as we see with Isaac.

There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. (...) Then Isaac sowed in that land, and

reaped in the same year a hundredfold; and the Lord blessed him.
(Genesis 26:1-12)

What is impossible with humans is possible with God. A hundred-fold harvest during times of famine is rare. Isaac was blessed, and this is how God wants to bless us. David also experienced God's blessing and could say:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. (Psalm 23:1)

A shepherd was not unfamiliar to David. As a young man, he had often been the shepherd over a flock of sheep. David experienced that God was his shepherd and that He ensured that David had everything he needed. *I lack nothing.* The word "lacking" comes from the Hebrew word "*hāsēr*" which means "lacking" or "to have less or too little." David could say, "I lack nothing, I have nothing too little, I have enough." This word appears in Psalm 34.

Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing. (Psalm 34:10-11)

Those who seek the LORD have no lack of goods. The Hebrew word for good is "*ṭôb*" which means "good," "goodness," "best," "prosperity," "precious," "wealth," "beautiful," or "favor." What a great promise from God! Paul says the following:

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32)

God desires to give us all things. Not some things, but all things. Let's look at two more verses about God's blessing.

Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come, all are yours. And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. (1 Corinthians 3:21-23)

This Bible text teaches us that we have present and future things. We don't possess anything or anyone; we "own" everything. Many believe that we are blessed with God only in the future. "Only when you die is it good and prosperous." Of course, we can never compare our present with our future life. The future will be better in all aspects. Simultaneously, God wants to bless us with the present things. It is essential, however, to realize that we belong to Christ. We have been bought and paid for by Him; therefore, we are His property. Because of this, we don't ask for things that are against the will of God. Let us close this paragraph with what Jesus said.

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. (John 10:10)

Jesus came so we could have an abundant life—not a life we lack or a life where we have just enough, but one in abundance.

Living Prosperously

God wishes to bless us with our finances. However, it's important to follow God's rules that will allow us to live well and prosperously. At the beginning of this chapter, we read that we shouldn't love money like Scrooge Duck. Furthermore, we should not rely on our money. The Bible speaks clearly about this, as in the story of the rich young man.

Jesus said to him: If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus said to His disciples: Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. (Matthew 19:21-24)

Being rich isn't a sin; otherwise, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and many others would have had a severe problem. It is a sin,

however, to depend on your money and treat it as your possession. By the way, when this rich young man sold his possessions and donated them to the poor, he got back 100 times more. That is something Jesus says in the same chapter.

So Jesus answered and said: Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life. (Mark 10:29-30)

Jesus states that we can't serve God and mammon (money) simultaneously. How do you face life? Are you serving your money or God? What are you doing with your money? Is it intended only to take care of yourself and spoil yourself, or is your money God's?

To live prosperously well, the Bible gives several principles. Here are a few essential principles followed in this chapter.

Principle 1: Be a steward. Unfortunately, we are often too self-centered. Everything we use and we've earned for ourselves belongs to us. "This house is mine," "This car is mine," or "This bank account is mine." We view stuff and experience as our possessions. However, the Bible doesn't look at things that way and shows that everything belongs to God.

The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein. (Psalm 24:1)

Everything belongs to God, so all our possessions belong to God. All we possess isn't ours; it is God's. Does this mean we should offer everything we "have" to others? No. God has given it to us. God has given us understanding and talents through which we earn an income and, therefore, can buy a house, car, and stuff. God has entrusted it to us but wants us to use it properly. God has made us stewards over His property. A steward is a manager of his master's or lord's property. So, we are stewards of God's

goods, and God wants us to manage His money well. Then, we can ask, "How does God want us to handle money?"

First, God wants to care for us, which means He wants to bless us with goods and pleasant experiences. Secondly, He blesses us to be a blessing to those around us, especially those less fortunate. Third, He blesses us so we can sow back into His kingdom. This can be by blessing your church or an (itinerant) ministry of God. This is found in the book of Timothy.

Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy; let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share. (1 Timothy 6:17-18)

Principle 2: Donate money. The second principle is to donate money. You might think: How can I prosper if I donate money? This might sound like an odd principle, but in God's Kingdom, it is a great principle. We encounter this often in the Bible. Jesus and the apostles said that when we give, we receive. If we obey God and give, we can expect a harvest from God. God doesn't give us a harvest because He is obliged to; God wants to give to us because He is a good and loving God.

Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you. (Luke 6:38)

This is something we find in the Corinthian letter. This congregation blessed Paul with a financial contribution, and in response, Paul said that God would give them things according to His riches.

So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. (2 Corinthians 9:7-8)

When we give, it should be a joyful offering to God, not out of compulsion or reluctance. God desires our gifts to be given with cheerfulness. We can even test God's faithfulness in our giving, as the prophet Malachi reminds us.

Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this. Says the Lord of hosts: If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. (Malachi 3:10)

Principle 3: Seek first God's Kingdom.

But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (Matthew 6:33)

It is essential to put God's Kingdom first and involve yourself in the matters of the Kingdom. Seek God first, and God will reward you with all the material things other people want, such as clothing and food. Make God's priorities to be your priorities. Reading the Bible, evangelizing, and spending time in silence can be a general priority. You can also think about God's specific will for your life, such as starting an orphanage or missionary work in India. Focus on God, and God will provide the natural.

Principle 4: Don't be lazy. God wants to provide for you. This doesn't mean we have to quit working, sit on the couch, and wait for a hundred-dollar bill to appear on the doorstep daily to live on. God wants to bless us through our work. The Bible says He gives us the ability to make prosperity. Chapter 8 of Deuteronomy shows that God would bring the people of Israel to the Promised Land, where they wouldn't lack anything. If they obeyed God, there would be massive abundance and food in excess. God warned that they should never forget that this prosperity came from Him and that He was the One who made them rich. Then these two verses follow:

(...) then you say in your heart: My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth. And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth,

that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the Lord your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish. (Deuteronomy 8:17-20)

We must remember two important things when discussing God's blessing on our income. The first is that with our strength, we cannot acquire good wealth; it is the grace of God, and we should never forget this. The second is that God gives us the power to create wealth, so we have to do it ourselves with God's grace. This means that we cannot be lazy but active and use the power God has given us to make our ability. It is a collaboration between God and man. Always try to stick to this principle, even in challenging situations. You may have been turned down at work or cannot work in a company. Nevertheless, try to see if there is anything you can do with the power God has given you. Maybe this is encouraging people (over the phone) with the Word of God or with prayer. It could be making birdhouses and selling them via the Internet. This could also be volunteering or cleaning the local shopping street. After all, God blesses the work of your hands.

The LORD will command the blessing upon you in your barns and in all that you put your hand to, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God gives you. (Deuteronomy 28:8, NAS)

In addition to work, God blesses our stockpiles. In modern times, we must think of savings accounts and other commodities such as real estate. Being rich isn't a sin; it is a blessing from God. On the contrary, ensure that you don't rely on your money, start serving the money, or see the money as your property.

Principle 5: Honor God with the best of your income. It is essential to give our tithes and the best to God. When we do that, God blesses us for this. By providing the best to God, I don't mean a large amount but a sacred gift. Instead of giving God the 'leftovers' of the month that happened to be leftover or the change of products (it isn't wrong to give cash), give God the first part of your salary or income. It is essential, however, to give some to

God joyfully and not do so as an obligation. Giving the tithe or first fruits is often portrayed as 'Old Testament' or 'legalistic.' Looking closer, we see that providing first fruits didn't start in the law but began with Abel and Cain.

And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. (Genesis 4:3-5)

Abel gave his first fruits based on faith. Cain gave the leftovers. Abel was blessed, and Cain wasn't. Even our model of faith, Abraham, gave his tithes, not because it was in the law (it didn't exist then), but because it was a principle of God. Abraham didn't offer his tithes to Melchizedek (an image of Jesus) out of necessity or poverty but because he wanted to bless Melchizedek with his love offering. Similarly, we, too, may bless the Lord Jesus and His kingdom with our tithes and first fruits.

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High. (...) And Abraham gave him a tithe of all. (Genesis 14:18-20)

Principle 6: Sow in God's Kingdom. The last principle we focus on is that we may sow in God's Kingdom and that God blesses us for this.

But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. (2 Corinthians 9:6)

Paul compares the process of giving to God's Kingdom to sowing. When a farmer sows, he expects a harvest. A farmer never sows without expecting a harvest; that would be foolish. Paul compares our financial gifts to seeds that we sow, just like the farmer. As we sow, we expect a harvest. If someone sows very little, he will

harvest poorly. If someone sows bountifully, he will harvest bountifully. Sow in God's Kingdom, and God will provide bread (our necessities) and more seed to sow again.

Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. (2 Corinthians 9:10-11)

At the same time, we need patience. When a farmer sows, he expects a harvest within six months. A farmer must be patient. Suppose the farmer sows, goes for coffee, and returns one hour later. He sees that nothing has changed and says, "See! I shouldn't have sown!" When he says this to others, they say, "That isn't correct. You must be patient; in six months, it will be harvest time." This may sound strange, but many say this concerning our financial sowing. They give seeds to God, and within an hour, they lose faith in a harvest. Let us wait patiently for God to provide us with harvest, even if it takes a few days, weeks, months, or years. God does what He promises.

Summary

God wants to bless us financially. It is essential to manage this appropriately. We shouldn't love our money like Scrooge Duck and swim in it. God wants to bless us so we can bless others and God's Kingdom. To live prosperously, the six principles below are fundamental:

Principle 1: Be a steward.

Principle 2: Donate money.

Principle 3: Seek first God's Kingdom.

Principle 4: Don't be lazy.

Principle 5: Honor God with the best of your income.

Principle 6: Sow in God's Kingdom.

C11 RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT

The following blessing we discuss is receiving the Holy Spirit. We could write hundreds of books on the Holy Spirit, but we will cover this subject briefly and concisely. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God and explores the depths of God (1 Corinthians 2:10). This means that the Holy Spirit knows everything about God and is part of the Trinity of God at the same time. The Holy Spirit not only constitutes a power (Acts 1:8) but is also a personality with feelings (Ephesians 4:30), has a mind (John 16:7-13), the ability to speak (Acts 13:2), and a will (1 Corinthians 12:11). The Holy Spirit knows no beginning or end and lives eternally. At Pentecost, He came to earth to fill every believer. Before Pentecost, He rested on some important people, such as prophets and kings. After Pentecost, He came for everyone who is a believer. The Holy Spirit is a promise of Jesus and the Father and was prophesied in the Old Testament and during Jesus' life on earth.

And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, which, He said, you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. (Acts 1:4-5)

The Holy Spirit is a promise of a great blessing of God's Kingdom. It is one of the greatest miracles: the Holy Spirit, God himself, dwells in believers. Although the Holy Spirit is the pledge for every believer, some may allow the Holy Spirit into their lives more and experience it more intensely than others. In addition to the topics we cover here, the Holy Spirit is also actively engaged in the blessings of the previous chapters. We cannot separate the blessings of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. Let us look at some critical moments of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

The Repentance

The life of a Christian begins at repentance when a person gives his life to Jesus and decides to follow Jesus. The Holy Spirit is an

integral part of this repentance. It is actually impossible for someone to come to faith without the Holy Spirit. This is because the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and encourages righteousness and judgment.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper (the Holy Spirit) will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment (...). (John 16:7-8)

It is also grace from God that someone repents from this evil world and decides to follow Jesus.

Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. (Acts 16:14)

Whenever we read the Bible, we learn that God wants everyone to come to faith and no one to be lost (Ezekiel 33:11). I believe God does everything possible to reach people with His gospel. It isn't God's fault that people don't acknowledge Him as their Father. It is man's responsibility, and no one can apologize for not knowing (Romans 1:18-23).

Everyone receives the Holy Spirit during repentance. From the moment of repentance, the Holy Spirit assists us in various ways. In this section, we will briefly explore—what I believe—are five events that take place when a person Repents and accepts Jesus.

1. The Holy Spirit is 'the proof' that we belong to God and will deliver us from this evil world and take us into heaven in the future. The Bible talks about being sealed with the Holy Spirit and the pledge of the Holy Spirit.

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of

our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)

Being blessed with the Holy Spirit means that believers are the identifiable property of God. In addition, a seal implies authority and means that we have been equipped to do God's mission, which we will cover in Part 3. Pledge suggests that we have received the Holy Spirit as a down payment. We have received from God the Father His Spirit, enabling us to know that God will also pay us in total, and we may spend eternity with Him. With this 'down payment' of the Spirit, we may now stand in God's ministry, fulfill His mission, and live holy lives.

2. The Holy Spirit dwells in us. This means we no longer live according to our flesh, the sinful lusts of the past, but walk in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit helps us in our ways and empowers us to understand what we should and shouldn't do. This is a great miracle of God: through the sacrifice of Jesus, God can dwell in us, and we don't have to spend a day alone.

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. (Romans 8:9)

Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we have an ongoing connection with God the Father in heaven. We don't need human intermediate connections to get in touch with God; we need the Holy Spirit. Through this indwelling, God is always close to the believer.

3. The Holy Spirit testifies that we are a son or daughter of God the Father.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out: Abba, Father! The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. (Romans 8:14-16)

This implies the existence of a great love relationship between God and us. God sees us as His children, and the Holy Spirit testifies this to our Spirit. We are included in the family of God and may treat God as our heavenly Father.

4. The Holy Spirit guides us in our ways. This is because the Holy Spirit dwells in us and wants to guide us in our decisions. In this context, we consider big choices, such as choosing studies, changing jobs, or entering important relationships. We can also think of the 'smaller' decisions, where the Holy Spirit tells us what is right and wrong.

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:1)

This automatically brings us to point 5. The Holy Spirit wants to sanctify us on earth, and this sanctification starts with repentance. This ongoing process leads to our final goal: to become like Jesus.

But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. (2 Thessalonians 2:13)

For all these things, it is up to us to determine how much leverage the Holy Spirit has in our lives. If we give the Holy Spirit little or no space, He can't do anything. If we give the Holy Spirit a lot of space, He can accomplish a lot, and we will become more and more like the Lord Jesus.

The Baptism

After the Holy Spirit affects the believer during repentance and leads the believer in his ways, the Holy Spirit desires to do even more. This is called baptism in the Holy Spirit, and it involves a person being immersed in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. This can occur during, just after, or very long after repentance. God wants to give everyone baptism in the Holy Spirit, so

it depends on when we receive it. For God, it does not matter whether you ask for baptism in the Holy Spirit one minute or eighty years after repentance: He wants to give it to us. The promise of this baptism isn't for extraordinary people but for everyone. Nevertheless, it is essential to take notice of a baptism in the Holy Spirit and ask God for it. Let us first look at what baptism in the Holy Spirit does and then at how we can be baptized in the Spirit. We study some points made available by God. It is possible that someone has been baptized with the Holy Spirit but cannot yet do everything. When this is the case, you may ask God for this, and He will provide it.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is when a person is immersed in the Holy Spirit. The experience of the Spirit is important, and I don't believe it can go unnoticed. After Jesus' ascension, the disciples had to wait for baptism in the Holy Spirit. After this baptism in the Book of Acts, the disciples walked into Jerusalem, and Peter took the floor. He said what baptism in the Holy Spirit does.

And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maid-servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. (Acts 2:17-18)

1. Through the baptism in the Holy Spirit, all sons and daughters of God can have dreams and see visions. God wants to reveal His plans to His children, and this occurs through dreams and visions. Furthermore, they will prophesy. This is made available today and applicable to all believers. Anyone can prophesy and communicate God's words to others. There is a distinction between the ministry of the prophet and the gift of prophecy. The prophet has received the gift and revelation from God, which gives the prophet more authority. Believers with the gift of prophecy may prophesy but must be mindful always that it is for edification, comfort, or encouragement. In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul explains how prophecy works, showing that it is available to all. We can learn to prophesy, and we may aspire to do so.

Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. (...) But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. (1 Corinthians 14:1-3)

Prophesying, having dreams, and seeing visions are features we can learn from the Holy Spirit. The first important thing is understanding God's voice, which can also be an exercise. I recommend finding someone who has already discovered the gift of prophecy and asking to practice with this gift together.

2. Baptism in the Holy Spirit allows us to pray in tongues. Speaking in tongues is the language of the Holy Spirit and cannot be understood by anyone (unless the Holy Spirit explains it to someone). It is a direct connection between man's Spirit and God the Father with the help of the Holy Spirit. Tongue language is for your edification and is always the perfect prayer to God because the Holy Spirit prays for us.

And these signs will follow those who believe: (...) they will speak with new tongues (...). (Mark 16:17)

Speaking in tongues is something we can request from God. We may trust God to give it when we ask Him about it. It may be awkward or difficult to start speaking in tongues. Hence, it will help to find people who can speak in tongues and ask to practice together. It can also help people worship God with music and then move on to speaking in tongues. Let the Holy Spirit lead you to venture out speaking in tongues.

Finally, it is essential to note that there are different forms of tongues. One form is the personal tongues explained above. Another form is congregational tongues, which take place in the congregation. Congregational tongues need to be translated and serve to help the congregation. Personal tongues don't need translation and take place in personal prayer.

3. We receive power from God through baptism in the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus told the disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit until the Spirit comes upon them with power.

(...) for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. (...) But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:5-8)

Previously, when I read this text, I assumed it entailed only the power to persevere in faith. But if we study this word, it isn't just the power to persevere; it is also a supernatural power we receive from God. The word "power" comes from the Greek word "*dunamis*" which means "power," "ability," or "strength." If we search Bible texts that refer to the same word, we learn that Jesus also possessed "*dunamis*" and was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus didn't always have this power; it came after He was baptized by John the Baptist and spent forty days and nights in the desert. When Jesus went out of the desert, it says:

*Then Jesus returned in the power (*dunamis*) of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. (Luke 4:14)*

Jesus could perform miracles because He received the power of the Holy Spirit. We can also perform miracles, not from our strength but because we have received the power of the Holy Spirit. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is present and available to us.

*(...) and what is the exceeding greatness of His power (*dunamis*) toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places (...).* (Ephesians 1:19-20)

What was it that Jesus could do with this power? This is an essential question because everything Jesus was able to do with the power of the Holy Spirit, we are also capable of doing with the same power.

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. (John 14:12)

Let us examine some things Jesus did on earth. We have been blessed by God to do the same.

1. Healing the sick. (Luke 5:17 & 6:19)
2. Casting out demons. (Luke 4:36)
3. Resurrecting the dead. (John 11)
4. Performing supernatural miracles, such as food multiplications and speaking against the storm. (Acts 2:22)
5. Teaching and preaching the Word of God.

The Lord Jesus accomplished all this through the power of the Holy Spirit. In Part 3, we will explore this in depth. The power of the Holy Spirit is a significant and essential part of God's Kingdom because, from this power, we have been given authority and power to do the above things.

For the Kingdom of God is not in word but in power (dunamis). (1 Corinthians 4:20)

God's Kingdom consists of the power of the Holy Spirit, which is full of signs and wonders and transforms people's lives. The Kingdom does not consist of pious words and a powerless sermon; it consists of power and clearly showing people God is at work. The power of the Holy Spirit also consists of the gifts of the Spirit, which we will cover in Part 3 of this book. These gifts are intended to serve one another and are a command of God.

To experience the power of the Spirit in our lives, it is essential to invite the Holy Spirit into our lives and ask for the power of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus says we receive the Holy Spirit when we ask for Him.

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him! (Luke 11:13)

Furthermore, obeying the Holy Spirit and doing as He asks is crucial. This allows the Holy Spirit to work more through us (Acts 5:32). In conclusion, there is much power in prayer, worship, and fasting. It is good to worship God and elevate His Name. When we do so, we give the Holy Spirit more room to fill us with His power.

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 5:18-20)

4. The Holy Spirit provides boldness. The Holy Spirit grants us the courage to proclaim all about the gospel to those around us. God wants to make us courageous and strong, enabling us to reach others with the gospel of the Kingdom so they, too, will be blessed with the good news.

And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:31)

This text instantly shows how we can live in God's boldness. This is because we are praying to God for boldness, and in Acts 4, we read that the Holy Spirit immediately answered prayer and filled people with boldness. This is a blessing for ourselves, as we aren't afraid to express our deepest desires to others. Simultaneously, it is also a blessing for others as they hear the way to salvation and realize that we have a good God who wants to be their Father.

The Fruit

We will conclude by discussing the fruit of the Holy Spirit, an expression found in the Book of Galatians.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness. (Galatians 5:22)

In Chapter 6, we read about the blessing of salvation. We don't have to follow our inherent nature with all sinful lusts any more. Instead, we are redeemed from sin, which allows us to live a holy life. In Chapter 7, we read about the new creation in Christ. This creation results from the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, and consequently, we cease to do the past's sins and commit to doing God's good qualities. The fruit of the Spirit demonstrates the good qualities of God that we may apply in our lives. The Holy Spirit doesn't want us to mature into one or a few fruits. The Spirit wants us to mature in all the fruits, and we must grow in all the fruits as we progress in our journey with the Holy Spirit. Most importantly, it is the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit intends to give us these good fruits, guide us along our paths, and discipline us when we head in the wrong direction. In the second place, we shouldn't wait passively for the fruit to start growing out of the blues. Allowing the Spirit and the Word of God to guide us will enable the fruit to grow rapidly. So, these traits aren't automated processes that overwhelm us; we must allow the Spirit to actively lead us and say 'no' to our sins and lusts. From our nature, we pursue the following traits:

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)

These qualities are the exact opposite of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:17). In other words, we should realize, on the one hand, that a holy walk of life is a blessing from God and the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, it is our responsibility that the fruit grows. We cannot blame the Holy Spirit if, for example, we are overly impatient or lack self-control. We can compare it to the fruit in horticulture. It is the responsibility of man to sow a seed, water it, and tend it well. If man handles the seed and the fruit well, the fruit will grow. If man doesn't water and look after the fruit, it will die or not grow to its full potential. The same scenario applies to the

fruit of the Holy Spirit. If we don't handle the fruit carefully, it won't develop optimally, and we will remain stuck with bad qualities. If we manage the fruit appropriately and allow ourselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit, the fruit will grow and become great.

How do we live in the fruit of the Spirit? Besides the exhortations of chapters 6 and 7, we will highlight one principle: letting the Holy Spirit lead us. In the chapter on the fruit of the Spirit, Paul writes:

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. (Galatians 5:16)

Paul urges us to walk in the Holy Spirit. By 'walk,' Paul means our entire walk of life, i.e., our religious parts and every part of life—even life after Sunday morning. We should allow the Holy Spirit to lead us in everything, killing the flesh and growing the fruit. If one is led by the Spirit, the desires of the flesh will not be fulfilled, but he will live a holy life with the Holy Spirit.

This chapter isn't a comprehensive listing of everything the Holy Spirit does or can do in a believer's life. We have looked at some key points about the Holy Spirit's blessings, but the Holy Spirit wants to perform much more than has been covered in this chapter.

Summary

The Holy Spirit is a promise of a great blessing of God's Kingdom. It is one of the greatest miracles: the Holy Spirit, God himself, dwells in believers. The Holy Spirit enters the life of a believer the moment he repents and starts following Jesus. At that moment, the Holy Spirit is the believer's pledge and seal, dwells in the believer, and testifies with our Spirit that we are children of God. We receive His guidance and are sanctified by Him. In addition, Jesus wants to bless us with baptism in the Holy Spirit, causing us to have dreams, see visions, prophesy, pray in tongues, receive power, and become bold. Finally, we covered the fruit of the Spirit and saw that the Holy Spirit guides us to develop great fruit with the good qualities of God. In allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us, we will function in all these blessings.

C12 OTHER BLESSINGS

God offers much grace for us. It is no coincidence that Paul says he always prays that we may receive a revelation of all the blessings God wants to give us (Ephesians 1). God's goodness and power exceed all, and no book in the world can put God's complete goodness and blessing into words. In this chapter, we cover more blessings of God's Kingdom, but know that God wants to bless us with much more.

Direct Connection with God

We have a direct connection with God. Before Jesus died, there was a temple, and inside the temple was a small space where the Ark of the Covenant stood in the holy of holies. In this space, God 'dwelt' on earth. No one could enter, and no one could be in God's presence. This space was partitioned off from the holy place by a veil, and once a year, the high priest was allowed to enter this space. Before entering this space, he had to put on linen clothes, exuding holiness (Leviticus 16:4). He also had to first reconcile by offering a bull as a sin offering to God (Leviticus 16:11). If the high priest failed to do this, there was a good chance he would die by the holiness of God (Leviticus 16:3). God is holy and man is unclean, so no relationship on earth was possible. God's holiness would cause all the unclean to drop dead instantly. Only with an offering of reconciliation was it possible for the high priest to reach God and serve in the holy of holies.

That is how it is today. Only with the reconciliation sacrifice of Jesus Christ it is possible for people and God to be together. A great blessing of God's Kingdom is our direct connection with God. When Jesus completed His work on earth on the cross of Calvary, God didn't need to live apart from people anymore. From that time onwards, God could come to people. God Himself tore the veil that separated God from people.

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (...). (Matthew 27:50-51)

Jesus's crucifixion brought reconciliation to people. This means that God can live again with men. Today, the Holy Spirit's indwelling in believers achieves this. We may approach the throne and enter God's spiritual sanctuary with boldness. Jesus paved the way for us, and as High Priest, He atoned for our sins.

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:19-22, NAS)

In the future, this will occur in a visible form where God will dwell with people (Revelation 21:3).

Living in Direct Connection with God

How can we live in direct connection with God? Hebrews 10 shows some beautiful concepts that relate significantly to a living connection with God. We may approach God with a sincere heart and solid faith. An honest heart means a genuine and committed attitude towards God. This state is attainable because our heart is sprinkled and our conscience cleansed. The reason for this is the work of Jesus, by which we are sanctified and justified in Him. In addition, we have received the Holy Spirit, who has 'written' the laws of God in our hearts and minds. When the Holy Spirit guides us, we remain pure. This work is partly accomplished by water baptism, as mentioned in verse 22. Finally, it is important to encourage one another and not neglect the church's mutual assemblies. In this way, we pay attention to one another and are on fire together for God so we do not forget God in our lives and our connection with the Creator isn't broken.

Speaking to God

Despite knowing we have a direct connection with God—through Jesus and the Holy Spirit, it is crucial to know we have a direct line of communication with God—fellowship and intimacy. In an

earthly kingdom, the king has no time to speak to and build relationships with all the people. In God's Kingdom, things work differently. Every citizen of God's Kingdom has a personal line of communication with God the Father, and everyone can reach God—day and night. No matter what has happened or how 'bad' we have become because of sin, God always wants to speak to us and will forgive our sins if we come with repentance. God is always available and present to have conversations with His children. Here, we can also think of intercession, confession, a prayer of gratitude, praying blessings to others, or praise. Being grateful to God and honoring Him with our prayers is the key.

We are urged to keep praying and to talk to God continuously. This is often perceived as an obligation, but it is a great blessing from God. We may always and uninterruptedly pray and speak to God. God will not get tired of our prayers, will not become impatient, and will have plenty of time to talk to us. Indeed, God longs to speak to us all the time and show His goodness to us.

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving. (Colossians 4:2, NAS)

We can pray together with other believers or alone in private. When we pray alone, we know God is there and are rewarded for praying.

But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. (Matthew 6:6)

Besides, prayer is a bi-directional process. God wants to answer our prayers. This may be through a voice inside us, a Bible text, or a spontaneous thought that enters our minds. For example, God can encourage us, give us a mission to build His kingdom or give us a prophecy for someone else. We have a speaking God!

Finally, God promises an answer to prayer—either spiritual or material blessings when we pray.

Ask, and it will be given to you. (...) For everyone who asks receives. (...) If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him. (Matthew 7:7-11)

Living in Answer to Prayer

Several principles are essential for answers to prayer, which we will cover very briefly.

Principle 1: Ask God. This principle may sound redundant, but it is imperative. God gives us good gifts when we ask Him.

You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. (James 4:2)

Principle 2: Know God's will. We receive blessings in our lives only if they are God's will. Before we pray, we need to know His will to pray in faith.

Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. (1 John 5:14)

Principle 3: We must pray in faith. Unless we have faith that God hears our prayer, God cannot (or has difficulty) answering our prayer.

And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive. (Matthew 21:22)

Principle 4: The proper motive. We shouldn't ask God for things to fulfill our lusts and deal with blessings selfishly and inappropriately. God doesn't think it is wrong to pray for ourselves but wants the motive to be correct. For example, asking God for a car if we need or want it is legitimate so that we become more mobile. It is wrong to pray for a car if we want to make others jealous of us or to start a competition with neighbors asking, "Who has the nicest car?"

You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. (James 4:3)

Principle 5: Be patient. Sometimes, God's promises take a while to materialize. Be patient; if God promises something, He will give it!

The Body of Christ

The following blessing of God's Kingdom is that we are part of the body of Christ and the global church of Christ. We don't refer to the material body of Jesus on earth but to a spiritual reality in the Bible. The body of Christ is the church of Christ on earth. It is a great blessing not to be alone in our worship, walk of life, and ministry but to have millions of brothers and sisters. Together, we are building God's Kingdom on earth. The church is the body of Christ, and Jesus is the Head of this body.

And He (Jesus) is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning (...). (Colossians 1:18)

The body shows diversity and simultaneously forms a unity. Looking around us, we see different brothers and sisters with various ministries. One is a speaker and can give the most beautiful sermons. Another is a prophet who can communicate the words of God perfectly. Yet another has been given the gifts of healing, and many have been healed through his ministry. God uses everyone for a particular purpose and has placed each believer in the Body of Christ. One is meant to be a hand, while another—a foot. Everyone is needed in the Body.

The subject of 'the Body of Christ' is a blessing from God and a commission to us. It is a blessing because we are encouraged, admonished, or comforted by other believers and ministries. We can learn much from a Bible teacher, receive God's words through a prophet, or be accepted in love by a shepherd. God has not placed us alone on the earth but in a body and a family so that we can serve each other in love. There should be a lot of love in the church that meets the following:

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

With this being the starting point of a congregation, it is a great blessing to join one!

At the same time, being the body of Christ is a commandment. Others encourage us, and we, in turn, may inspire others with the ministry, talents, and love we have received from God. This is how we together ensure a perfect body of Christ, where no parts are lacking. The human body needs all organs and limbs to function perfectly. In the body of Christ, we need all ministries and all believers to function perfectly.

But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. (1 Corinthians 12:24-27)

Living in the Body of Christ

We will deal with two points for living well in the body of Christ. Firstly, we wish not only to receive from other ministries, brothers, and sisters but also to distribute ourselves with the ministries and gifts God has given us. We are the Body of Christ, and collectively, we strengthen each other. Secondly, meeting each other in a congregation. It is impossible to seek out every member of the body of Christ, as millions of people belong to this body. That is why God has given local congregations to each city or region. Paul calls us to attend mutual meetings in these local congregations to strengthen and encourage one another. (Of course, it is also possible to have an itinerant ministry to support several local congregations, like an apostle).

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

God's Protection

God protects and guards us. We see God's protection extending over various Bible figures throughout the Bible. For example, think of Elisha, who was protected by an angelic army of God (2 Kings 6:16-17). Think of David, who wrote several Psalms about God's protection over his life.

God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. (Psalm 46:1)

You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance. (Psalm 32:7)

Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, Even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling. (Psalm 91:9-10)

God protects us with supernatural protection. This doesn't imply that there can never be tribulation in our lives. Unfortunately, many Christians live in tribulation caused by people who want to terrorize or kill them. God protects all His followers, yet Christians cannot escape persecution or even death at times. Persecutions will remain until Jesus returns. Yet our God is our Protector and wants to protect us in our ways and guard us from danger. We may trust Him in any circumstance we encounter.

Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (2 Timothy 3:12)

Even if we are persecuted and Christians are killed because of their faith, God provides everyone with (spiritual) protection. We don't have to fear those who can kill the body. We have hope and security that are more powerful than death because our spirit is

secure with God in heaven. God protects us, no matter what happens to our bodies on earth. God is faithful and never loses sight of us.

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matthew 10:28)

Living in God's Protection

The assaults on our lives don't come from people but from the spiritual world. The spiritual world can use people to attack us with fiery darts. It is a promise from God that He will protect us from danger. Meanwhile, Paul calls us to arm ourselves against the day of evil. Let us read Ephesians 6 to see how we can arm ourselves, preventing the fiery darts of the enemy from striking us.

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints. (Ephesians 6:11-18)

For this paragraph, it takes us too far to analyze this text further. Our task is to arm ourselves to stand strong in any circumstance!

Victories

God wants us to be victors and not losers. God is a victorious God and doesn't lose. When we read the book of Revelation, we see that Jesus is victorious over the devil and the antichrist. Just as Jesus isn't a loser, we shouldn't be losers. By our faith, we are victors together with Him!

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith. (1 John 5:4)

With Jesus, we have conquered the world through our faith. This means we have defeated the devil (1 John 2:13) and sin (1 John 2:16). We are no longer meant to be losers in circumstances but victors. Jesus has given us power and authority over our spiritual adversaries.

Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. (Luke 10:19)

We are expected to have a victorious faith that moves mountains and defeats darkness. The Bible contains verses and stories where God achieves victory through people.

Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. (2 Corinthians 2:14)

Paul lived a life of victories. Things didn't go well from a human point of view. For instance, consider Paul's imprisonment, his shipwreck, and death threats. Yet Paul could say that He lived a victorious life with Jesus. He could speak about Jesus; people came to faith, and darkness was defeated. Sometimes, the circumstances around us tell us that we are losers or in the process of losing. If we stand firm in faith and authority, we can never lose and will always attain victory in Christ. We have been given vic-

torious faith and placed in God's Kingdom that never fails. Persecutions or temptations may come, but God protects us so we can attain victory.

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Victories apply to spiritual matters, relationships, work, health, finance, or school. God has given us victorious faith.

Living in Victories

There is constantly a battle. I don't refer to people fighting each other, but battles of the minds. The devil wants to attack us in our minds with lies and half-truths. To live in victory, it is essential to overcome our thoughts.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

We have to battle against the strongholds in our minds. These strongholds are false reasoning, disobedience to God, and incorrect thoughts. We battle against these strongholds and are allowed to bring everything to obedience in Christ. It is essential to continuously speak against the wrong thoughts by telling them the truth of God from the Bible or personal prophecies. For example, if a thought arises that says, "Surely God doesn't forgive you," we may say, "Yes, for it is written, 'For You, Lord, are good, mild to forgive and rich in mercy to all who call on You'" (Psalm 86:5).

Victories begin in our minds and trickle down to the (physical) parts of our lives. In addition, it helps to regularly seek God by praying, fasting, or studying His Word and asking Him

what we should do on earth. If we follow and implement God's will, no enemy or spiritual power can stop us. We then have an invincible God who is on our side. And finally, we sometimes need patience. It may be a process after which victory comes. During that time, may we continue to struggle and trust God.

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (1 Timothy 6:12)

Grace

God's Kingdom is a Kingdom of God's grace. We aren't placed under the law but rather under God's grace.

And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. (John 1:16-17)

Talking about grace, people often think that we are free in our lusts on earth. We live in grace, so I am allowed to steal, cheat, commit adultery, etc. This kind of grace doesn't exist in the Bible, and I don't preach it. We are free from the law and sin. This allows us to live in the freedom of the Spirit. We don't have to obey the law involving circumcision, keeping the Jewish feasts and sacrifices. We are allowed to live in freedom and let the Holy Spirit lead us. In the letter to the Galatians, Paul explains this principle by first addressing living under the law and then living under unholy freedom. He then proclaims the right path of grace and freedom.

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. (Galatians 5:1)

We are told to remain in that freedom and grace and not let a yoke of slavery weigh upon us. That yoke of slavery is the law with all its provisions and the goal of being justified before God by the law. In addition, we shouldn't be servants of the world with all its

lusts (Galatians 4:3). So how can we live? If we cannot be under the law and have unholy freedom? That is the beauty of God! He has a solution that allows us to live in holy freedom, receiving all God's provisions while not being slaves to the law. God has given us His Spirit, through which God takes the initiative and sanctifies and justifies us.

You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. (Galatians 5:4-5)

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. (Galatians 5:16)

Living in the grace of God means having the Holy Spirit lead our lives. Living in grace means that we (can no longer) do sin, and the power of sin no longer rules over us.

For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace (...) you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. (Romans 6:17-18)

We may serve God and righteousness because we no longer have sin ruling over us and are set free from it. What a great grace of God! He has freed us from the law and sin, allowing us to live in grace and true freedom!

Living in Grace

To live in grace, we will examine one exhortation: obedience to the Holy Spirit. If we listen to the Holy Spirit and walk in the ways of the Holy Spirit, we will live perfectly in grace.

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that

you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. (Galatians 5:16-18)

Wisdom

Another blessing of God's Kingdom is wisdom. God has given us His wisdom so we can make wise decisions.

For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding. (Proverbs 2:6)

God is the only right source of wisdom. Many scholars in the world think they are wise. I don't want to argue that today's scholars are knowledgeable and can make amazing inventions and discoveries. But knowledge is very different from wisdom. Wisdom is the ability to judge correctly and choose appropriately in life. Knowledge is having a lot of information or facts about a particular subject. According to the book of Proverbs, wisdom surpasses knowledge and comes from God. At the same time, people also receive knowledge and corresponding insight from God. In the Bible, apart from Jesus, Solomon was the wisest man alive. His wisdom was so profound that people worldwide visited him to ask questions. Solomon received this wisdom because he offered sacrifices to God and asked God for wisdom (1 Kings 3). In Proverbs, he tells how we, too, can become wise. The two main principles are: 1. Asking God for wisdom, seeking wisdom well, and realizing that wisdom comes only from God. 2. Observing God's commandments and living righteously.

Solomon was extremely wise, and the apostles, too, walked in the supernatural wisdom of the Holy Spirit, so they knew exactly what to answer.

And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. (Acts 6:8-10)

Finally, the key is to realize that God's wisdom is foolishness to the world. The world cannot understand the gospel's 'foolishness.' At the same time, God's 'foolishness' is wiser than all men. God's wisdom far surpasses all wisdom on earth; only the world fails to see and understand that.

(...) but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. (1 Corinthians 1:23-25)

God's wisdom is next level. For example, when considering provisions and prosperity, God says, "Give, and it will be given to you." The world wouldn't say this.

Living in Wisdom

How are we supposed to live with the wisdom of God? James explains this to us in his letter.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (James 1:5)

James makes it quite simple: If you lack wisdom, ask God, and He will grant it to you. We may ask God for wisdom, an answer, or a solution in a particular situation. When we ask for wisdom, we must believe that God will grant it, as James says in his letter.

But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. (James 1:6-8)

If we fail to ask or have doubts and unbelief, we won't receive wisdom (or other blessings) from God. In addition, Solomon calls us to seek God's wisdom (Proverbs 2:4). To conclude, there is one book in the world that contains all wisdom: the Bible. If you want

to be a wise man or woman, read and study the Bible, and you will receive wisdom.

Peace and Joy

The last blessing we address in this section is peace and joy. These are qualities that belong to God's Kingdom.

For the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17)

Because of Jesus' sacrifice, we can live in peace and joy with God and our brothers and sisters. Because we are justified, we live in peace with God. No longer considered enemies of God in an unclean body, we can live in peace with Him through our faith in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1)

Peace with God doesn't mean peace between two equal parties, as in a war or dispute. Peace is something God grants to us. Because Jesus has borne the punishment, God no longer has to punish us for sin, and we no longer have to live impure lives. After all, Jesus has borne this punishment for us. Consequently, we experience peace and serenity about ourselves that the world is unaware of. Things are working out well for us. In addition, we may live in peace and harmony with our brothers and sisters and spread God's peace throughout the world.

God's Kingdom also consists of joy in the Holy Spirit. This joy can suddenly erupt in church service while you are reading a Bible text or worshiping God. God is a God of joy and celebration.

I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance. (Luke 15:7)

God is a God of joy and wants to share His joy with us. We see this in the story of the lost son, in which the son returns home. The Father is pleased and encourages his older son to be happy for his brother.

It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found. (Luke 15:32)

Living in Peace and Joy

Joy and peace are fruits of the Holy Spirit.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness. (Galatians 5:22)

This means that the Holy Spirit may guide us, and we may grow in peace and joy. It is both something God gives to us and something we can grow in.

Summary

In this chapter, we have briefly discussed some of God's great blessings. God is a God of blessings, and His blessings abound. We have covered the following blessings.

Blessing	Description
Direct connection with God	Ever since the crucifixion, the distance between God and man has been removed. God dwells in our hearts through the Holy Spirit.
Speaking to God	We can speak directly to God through prayer or quiet time, and God answers.
The body of Christ	We have been placed in the body of Christ. This means we are in God's family, and we encourage, admonish, and comfort each other.
God's protection	God is protecting us and watching over us. We don't need to be afraid, but we can trust in Him.

C12 OTHER BLESSINGS

Victories	God promises us victories in our lives across different areas. We aren't losers but victors.
Grace	By God's grace, we don't live under the law or unholy freedom. We live in the freedom of the Holy Spirit.
Wisdom	If we ask God for wisdom in faith, He will give us wisdom and solutions.
Peace and joy	Through the Holy Spirit, we receive peace and joy in our lives. It is a feeling unknown to the world.

GOD'S KINGDOM

Commission of the kingdom

PART 3



3

C13 HOSTILE KINGDOMS

In the spiritual world, we distinguish between two Kingdoms. One of these Kingdoms is well-known to us, but what about the other? The Kingdom of the opponent? The Bible proclaims that there are two Kingdoms in total and that all are part of God's Kingdom or the Kingdom of Darkness. This chapter will examine the Kingdom of Darkness and discover how it functions. It is important to know what kind of kingdom we will deal with in the next chapters.

The Spiritual Battle

Because we tend to have a superficial and human perspective, we often see people as our enemies. One country opposes another, and in our private situation, there may be people who drive us mad. Occasionally, there is a battle between people. Yet Paul says we shouldn't fight against people, and we should not see them as our enemies. It is a spiritual battle at the root of this.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12)

Our battle is against the spiritual beings of the Kingdom of Darkness. These include demons, fallen angels, the devil, and other spiritual beings. Spiritual beings can cause damage to areas or countries but can also work through people. In the book of Ephesians, Paul calls us to put on our spiritual armor of God, which enables us to stand firm against these terrifying beings. We do this by faith, the truth of God, bringing the gospel, and having Jesus' righteousness, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit. It is essential to properly gear up our defenses to stand firm against the devil and his accomplices.

Simultaneously, the gospel of God doesn't only involve defending. It often creates an image where the devil is continuously firing arrows at us, and we are busy defending all the time. It is presented as a one-way traffic. If we look at Jesus's life, we

see He had to defend Himself when He was challenged in the desert. Jesus did this by speaking the Word of God and not responding to the devil's temptations. But we also see that Jesus went on the attack in full force, sending the demons out of oppressed people. In other words, Jesus enlarged God's Kingdom by conquering the territory of the Kingdom of Darkness. Furthermore, Jesus and the disciples proclaimed the gospel of the Kingdom and caused many to be converted and transferred from the Kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of God.

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the Kingdom of the Son of His love. (Colossians 1:13)

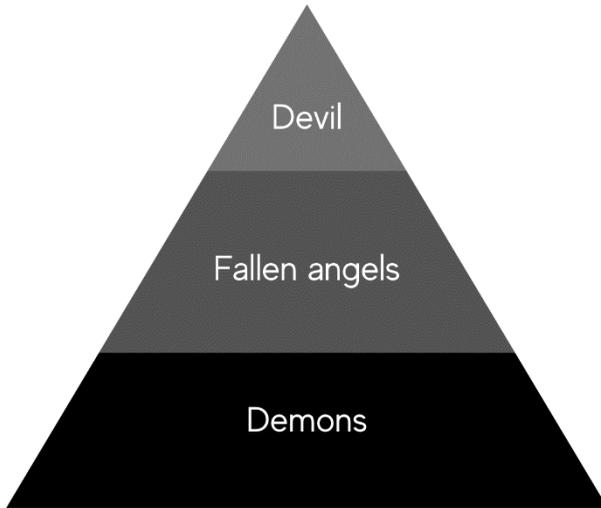
Jesus and the apostles weren't just defending; they were attacking. Similarly, we, too, may both defend and attack. In this section, we will study Jesus' mission and learn that we may attack the Kingdom of Darkness and free those currently oppressed by darkness from their evil ruler, in Jesus' name. Jesus has given us power and authority to rule over darkness.

The Kingdom of Darkness

To begin, let us explore how the Kingdom of Darkness functions. In Chapter 1, we see that the devil made Adam and Eve eat the fruit of the tree and thereby disobey God. The devil is the leader of the Kingdom of Darkness. But the devil isn't alone. In his fall, he took angels and other spiritual beings who served with him. The Kingdom of Darkness is a realm with a hierarchy. This means that a spiritual being is given a specific purpose or area, and he is under another being and controls other beings.

If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his Kingdom stand? (Luke 11:18)

Looking at the hierarchy in the Kingdom of Darkness, we end up with the following pyramid.



The devil rules the Kingdom of Darkness and controls the fallen angels and demons (Luke 11:15). He has been the opponent and is a defeated rebel. The fallen angels, along with the devil, have betrayed God. They chose the side of the devil and served him. Some fallen angels have become the rulers of empires on earth, as we can read in the book of Daniel. This isn't a human ruler but a spiritual ruler.

Then he said to me: Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. But the prince of the Kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia. (Daniel 10:12-13)

We read about two princes in the text above. Prince Michael is an archangel of God and assists the people of Israel. The prince of Persia obstructs God's work, and because of this prince, Daniel had to wait twenty-one days for his answer. Today, too, we can face struggles against the princes of heaven, the rulers, and their

powers. Our task is to stand firm and overcome them with our armor of God (Ephesians 6:12).

Among them, we find the demons. These are spiritual beings who are out to make people not believe in Jesus, and they want to torment people with terrible diseases and thoughts. Should anyone come to faith, they want to ensure he forms as little impact as possible. Later in this book, we see that our job is to cast out demons from people. In the next section, we will discuss demons and their actions. This will help us know what we need to cast out.

What are Demons?

Demons are spiritual beings without bodies. In the book of Matthew, Jesus explains how a demon lives. In the Bible, they are often referred to as evil or unclean spirits.

When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says: I will return to my house from which I came. And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation. (Matthew 12:43-45)

A demon or unclean spirit lives its life on earth. It can be found at first in barren places to seek rest. This could include desolate areas such as swamps or deserts (Isaiah 13:21, 34:14). However, a demon cannot find rest there because he wants to dwell in a person and provoke the person to do terrible things. A demon is looking for an empty dwelling. This is an indication of the absence of the Holy Spirit. The demon will leave if the Holy Spirit dwells in the house and no door is open. If the Holy Spirit is absent, the demon enters and takes its friends with it. The reason why we need to send demons out of people is because demons like to live in people.

Besides, a demon has a personality. It isn't a power or a name to indicate evil. Every demon, like humans, has a personality and has feelings, a mind, and a will. In Matthew, we read that a demon wants to dwell in a human being. It acts by its own will. Let us look at the texts that say a demon has a mind (can speak), feelings, and self-awareness.

Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, saying: Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are the Holy One of God. (Mark 1:23-24)

The demon had a mind. He knew who Jesus was and could speak through the man. The demon even knew that Jesus was the Holy One of God before people did.

You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe and tremble. (James 2:19)

The demons tremble before God. Tremble means 'to shiver with fear', which is a strong emotion. Demons have feelings and can transmit feelings to people—for example, fear or anger.

Then He asked him: What is your name? And he answered, saying, "My name is Legion; for we are many. (Mark 5:9)

The demon knew he existed. After all, he gave himself a name. Besides, he knew he wasn't alone. For he said, there were many living in the man. He was aware of himself but also aware of other spiritual beings.

The Work of Demons

Knowing now what demons are, we look at what demons do. Demons are terrible creatures who want to torment people and divert them from the truth of Jesus. For the rest of the book, we must know who we are against and what our enemies do. Demons work in the following ways, among others:

Demons lie

Demons tell lies, keeping people from the truth. We observed this with Adam and Eve when the devil lied about the consequences of taking the fruit. Besides, the devil is the patriarch of lies. When the devil lies, we may assume his accomplices do the same.

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. (John 8:44)

Every Christian must keep watch for the lies of the enemy. Sometimes, a thought can arise saying, "You can't trust God this time" or "Now God won't forgive you." These are lies of demons.

Demons Deceive or Seduce

Besides lying, demons can deceive and seduce us. This occurs not only in the world but, unfortunately, also in the church. Terrible deceptions of demons sneaked into certain churches. A well-known example is the buying off of sins that the Catholic Church introduced in the Middle Ages. Paul calls these teachings of demons and misleading spirits.

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons (...). (1 Timothy 4:1)

Demons Torment Mentally

Demons can torment mentally. Let's consider thoughts of depression or anxiety. Demons attempt to put people in isolation. It can be mental isolation by keeping secrets and doing sneaky things that shouldn't be done. It can also be a physical isolation by which people withdraw from the civilized world, as we see in the book of Mark. The Lord Jesus encountered a possessed man, and the possessed man had the following lifestyle:

And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones. (Mark 5:5)

Beating yourself with stones and living in the tombs isn't an everyday human occurrence. The demons tormented this man so much that they caused him to go into isolation.

Demons can Force

Demons can force people to do something. In this respect, we can think of Judas and murderers. Some explain that things turned black before their eyes, and they no longer knew what they were doing. This can be a spiritual power that temporarily takes over someone's life.

Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve. So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them. (Luke 22:3-4)

Demons can Make Addicts

In 1 Corinthians, Paul summons us to avoid bringing ourselves under a power. For example, if we use alcohol or drugs to feel good, we are dependent on them. This can put us under a demonic power, and it is challenging to break free from it.

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. (1 Corinthians 6:12)

Demons can make People Sick

I believe demons make people sick; however, I don't think every illness comes from a demon. Sometimes, it comes from our choices, like going outside without a coat when it is minus 10 degrees Celsius (14 degrees Fahrenheit). Yet illness and demonism often go hand in hand in the Bible, and frequently, a demon has to be sent away before healing takes place. I do believe that God wants to heal all diseases; whether it is because of demons, our own choices, or some other problem, it does not matter in this regard. Let us look at one Bible text where a demon caused the disease.

As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying: It was never seen like this in Israel! (Matthew 9:32-33)

Demons Can Tell Fortunes

Some demons are called fortune-telling spirits. They are eager to prophesy about people. A demon's prophecy may only sometimes be correct. Demons like to scare us and want us to believe things. A well-known speaker who often sent demons out of people heard a demon say during a deliverance service: 'Within two weeks, you will drive into a tree.' This is a prophecy from hell. We can do two things when a demon prophesies: believe it, allowing it to happen, or not believe it, preventing it from happening. The speaker decided not to believe in this prophecy and didn't drive into a tree. We see a fortune-telling spirit in the Book of Acts, for example.

Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. (Acts 16:16)

Demons Can Make Humans Super-strong

Demons can give supernatural strength. A well-known example is the Book of Mark, where Jesus encounters a possessed man and sets him free.

And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. (Mark 5:2-4)

We have no reason to fear demons if we stand in Jesus' authority. We have received the authority to cast them out.

Demons Can Make You Anxious

Demons like to scare people into not daring to do everyday things. Especially in God's Kingdom, it is essential to avoid fear and instead preach God's gospel to all people. We haven't been given a spirit of fear but the Holy Spirit of God.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)

Demons Can Connect with People

Demons often connect with people through an intermediate form. Examples include fortune-tellers, crystal balls, tarot cards, music, films, or summoning spirits. We see this in the case of King Saul, who went to a fortune-teller to contact a dead person. Obviously, this is strictly forbidden, and we shouldn't engage in demonism or enter the spiritual world without the Lord Jesus.

So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes, and he went, and two men with him; and they came to the woman by night. And he said: Please conduct a seance for me, and bring up for me the one I shall name to you. (1 Samuel 28:8)

These are a few examples of what demons are capable of doing. It is important to realize who our enemies are and what they do. With this information in mind, we will know better how to fight the enemy and his allies.

Who Has the Power?

We addressed two Kingdoms. God's Kingdom with its blessings and the Kingdom of darkness with terrible creatures that wish to torment our lives. But which Kingdom is more powerful? In the section 'The power of the King,' we notice that Jesus has all the power.

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying: All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (Matthew 28:18)

Knowing this is vitally important. Because when confronted with darkness, we may know that Jesus has all power. The Lord Jesus doesn't keep this power to Himself but shares it with His disciples. We may operate on earth in the name of Jesus and fight against the Kingdom of darkness. Jesus says we must do so. After saying He has all power, Jesus said:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen. (Matthew 28:19-20)

We may teach all people and remember that Jesus is always with us. This means that the One with all power always dwells in us. We are in Christ, and therefore, we have received authority to proclaim to the world that Jesus lives. This happens not only with words and love but also with miracles and signs. In the book of Mark, we read:

And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. (...) And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen. (Mark 16:17-20)

This applies to all believers. In the name of Jesus, demons are cast out, and the sick are healed. In verse 20, we read that the disciples preached the gospel of the Kingdom, and Jesus confirmed the Word by the accompanying signs. When we preach God's Word, signs should take place that confirm the Word. In other words, the Kingdom of God is expected to gain ground and the Kingdom of Darkness to lose ground. As the sick are healed, demons are cast out, and people become disciples; therefore, the Kingdom of God wins. We dwelt on this in the chapter on: in Christ: a life with authority. Yet we cannot stress the following often enough:

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. (John 14:12-13)

Christians are neither losers nor people without power; Christians have been given power and authority! With such power and authority, we can accomplish the same as Jesus and even greater things. If Jesus could heal people on earth, we can heal people in the name of Jesus today. If Jesus could cast out demons on earth, we can cast out demons in the name of Jesus today. God has given believers power. Paul prayed for good reason that we would realize the power at work in us. It must become a revelation, causing us to stand in authority and spread God's Kingdom worldwide. I pray that people today will say, "Do you want to recognize a believer? These are the signs by which you can recognize them: they always walk in love, they cast out demons, they speak in foreign languages, nothing will harm them, and the sick are healed." With God, this is not impossible but one hundred percent possible. Indeed, God wants this to happen because Jesus did this, and He is the perfect image of the invisible God.

God's Kingdom and its inhabitants have been given all power, and the Devil's Kingdom has already been disarmed and put to shame.

Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. (Colossians 2:15)

Summary

In the spiritual world, we distinguish two kingdoms: God's Kingdom and the Kingdom of Darkness. God's Kingdom is full of blessings, which we discussed in parts 1 and 2 of this book. The Kingdom of Darkness is one of misery, with the devil as its ruler. Under the devil, we find different kinds of spiritual beings, such as fallen angels and demons. We have to battle the fallen angels, and we can stand firm through our armor of God. The demons in the Kingdom of Darkness are spiritual beings without bodies who

seek a body to live in. Demons do terrible things and want to torment people and cause them to avoid knowing Jesus. If we look at the question of power, God's Kingdom and its inhabitants have all the power. The Kingdom of Darkness has already been shamed and disarmed. This means that in Jesus' name, believers can heal the sick, cast out demons, and proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom to all people.

C14 PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL

So, let us look at the commission of God's Kingdom. Just before Jesus left Earth during the ascension, He gave His disciples an important assignment. A task that is still valid today and will last until Jesus returns. Let us read the various texts that describe this moment.

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying: All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)

And He said to them: Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. (Mark 16:15-18)

Then He said to them: Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke 24:46-47)

(...) But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

This is the critical commission of God's Kingdom. When we read the section on the blessings of the Kingdom, we observed blessings for ourselves. God wants to bless us in abundance, and ideally, God wants to bless everyone. However, many people don't know this, so Jesus sent us all to tell the world the good news. We

cannot do this alone because Jesus and the Holy Spirit will be with us daily. The Lord Jesus will empower the gospel we bring so that everyone will see that we are speaking the truth. He does this through healings, deliverances, supernatural protection, and the power of the Holy Spirit, among other things. We receive blessings from God to distribute in the world and bring hope to all people. God's Kingdom has a great commission. Will you join us in completing this? After all, it is our responsibility to be a witness of Jesus in the world.

You cannot dissect Jesus' commission. One goes with the other. Yet, we are going to do it to keep this study practical. In this section, we will cover the following parts of the commission.

- Preaching the gospel and being a witness.
- Healing the sick and casting out demons.
- Discipleship and baptizing people.
- The Holy Spirit: encouraging each other through spiritual gifts.
- Fighting against the Kingdom of Darkness as victors.

Of course, the Lord Jesus may ask us other things we failed to include in the list above. But if every believer started with the list mentioned above and Jesus confirmed our work, the world would already improve significantly, and everyone would know that Jesus lives. One last thing: the above list doesn't have to be done in that order. For example, it is possible that someone might be healed of a disease first and then the gospel of God preached.

Proclaiming: Tell What Jesus Does

Let us start by proclaiming the gospel of God. It is tremendously valuable to tell people about Jesus' outstanding work and what Jesus wants to do for them. It is often said that we should be a testimony and that no words are needed. I believe we should be a witness in our lives and actions, but it should not be at the expense of proclaiming the gospel.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
(Matthew 28:19)

Jesus said, “Go and make disciples.” Jesus didn't say, “Live well, and people will automatically come to you to ask why you live well. Then say it is because of Me, but don't push it too much either.” Our job is to preach His gospel to our fellow human beings and the world. Of course, not every believer manages to communicate personally to the whole world that Jesus lives. That is why the church of Christ is one body, and the body helps each member-part to achieve this critical purpose. It is everyone's mission to proclaim the gospel, except for a Japanese in Japan, a Brazilian in Brazil, and a Dutchman in the Netherlands. (Or, of course, you are a missionary.) Proclaiming the gospel is also not just for the Billy Grahams, Reinhard Bonnkes, etc., but for every individual believer. Everyone was tasked with reaching out with the gospel of the Kingdom. The gospel is so good and contains many blessings, so why keep it to yourself? Why are we sometimes so hesitant to spread the good news? Jesus says: “Go and do.”

The first thing we may proclaim is everything the Lord Jesus commanded and taught the disciples. We may share these blessings and commands of Jesus with our family members, friends, acquaintances, colleagues, neighbors, and all others. Knowing the Bible and what Jesus taught His disciples and people are essential. We also use this message to preach the gospel. That is the beauty: we don't have to fabricate our gospel or method; we may directly copy the words, phrases, and actions of Jesus and the disciples. The question is often asked: 'How can we reach people with the gospel of God?' Even I sometimes wonder. The answer is directly in the gospels and the book of Acts. We may use everything Jesus and the disciples did to reach people in their time to achieve the goal of reaching people today. Sometimes, our thoughts and methods can be very creative, and we invent modern ways to preach the gospel. Think, for example, of Christian movies on YouTube. I am very much in favor of using technology and creativity to proclaim the gospel, but at the same

time, this should be an addition to the book of Acts and the methods of Jesus, not something that has replaced it. If Jesus had not arrived two thousand years ago, but today, He would have done the same thing. He might have used technology and media channels, but the message and the working out of the message would have remained the same.

Preaching and proclaiming the gospel can seem foolish to the world. However, this isn't something that only applies to this age, as Paul also says in his Corinthian letter.

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (...) For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Corinthians 1:18-24)

When we proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom to the world, we don't need to fabricate all sorts of things to make it look wise. We may 'just' tell the gospel, where the Lord Jesus died to make atonement for the world. This is terrific news because anyone can proclaim the gospel. You don't have to take four years of theology or Bible college to receive wisdom to proclaim the gospel; you may start preaching the gospel as early as day one of your faith life with Jesus. Sometimes, it is better not to be wise according to the worldly definition of wisdom. Tell very simply what the gospel of God means and that Jesus brings reconciliation between people and God.

Testimony: Everyone has a Unique Story

(...) But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

Every believer has a story about how they got to know Jesus and what Jesus is doing in their lives. It is essential to testify about the miracles and signs Jesus has performed in our lives. People must see that Jesus wasn't just a Man from two thousand years ago who lived well, but that Jesus is today, living and establishing a personal relationship with people. We are privileged to be witnesses and proclaim to people the amazing things Jesus accomplished for us.

In Acts 1:8, the Lord Jesus instructed the disciples to be His witnesses. After all, they had seen Jesus and saw with their eyes that He was alive. They often proclaimed this gospel to the people of the world.

This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. (Acts 2:32)

The disciples saw Jesus for themselves and were qualified to be a witness to Him. They told everyone what they saw Jesus do. Even though we don't see the Lord Jesus with our physical eyes, we, too, can be His witnesses. We do this by telling what Jesus did for us and showing how Jesus saved us from our problems. For example, consider a drug addict who quit his addiction overnight, a blind man who can see again, or a woman who is set free from depressive thoughts. Trust the promises of God so that you can be a witness of faith and be an example to the world. We see this in the heroes of faith in the book of Hebrews. None of the heroes of faith experienced Jesus' life on earth, yet they were all witnesses of faith and served as examples for us. This is because they trusted in faith in the promises God gave to them.

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us (...). (Hebrews 12:1)

Through their faith, the heroes of Hebrews 11 still bear witness to God's goodness today. May we, through our faith and God's grace, be a testimony to God and an example to the world.

Be a Testimony

In conclusion, it is important to tell and be a testimony. It is vital that people can see from you that Jesus lives in you. We do this through the blessings God has given us, such as sanctification and the power of the Holy Spirit. Through these, we show the world who Jesus is and what Jesus does. When Jesus walked on Earth, everyone could see the character of God. Jesus was the visible form of an invisible God.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. (Colossians 1:15)

Currently, the world is unable to see Jesus' face to face, and people have yet to learn who Jesus is and what Jesus does. It is wonderful to walk in Jesus' footsteps and see what Jesus is like! Just as Jesus was a picture of the invisible God, may our lives be a picture of Jesus's life. Just as God sent Jesus to show the world what God is like, Jesus now sends us into the world to show who He and God the Father are.

So Jesus said to them again: Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you. (John 20:21)

James discusses the faith we have and the works associated with it. James teaches that faith without works is a dead faith.

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? (James 2:14)

The moment we come to faith; then new fruit grows. We have tasted God's goodness and grace, causing our minds to be born again. As a result, we have repented and changed our minds. An important implication of our conversion is that we are given a heart of love. The two most significant commandments in the Bible are love for God and love for our fellow man. During conversion, a (small) fruit develops with love for each other and God. This tiny fruit must grow increasingly, creating more and more love in our hearts. What is the consequence of this love?

But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. (1 John 2:5-6)

When we observe all the words and commandments of Jesus and walk in Him, our love becomes perfect. This is a point we may grow towards—throughout our lives. The first issue that makes us witness is when we do what Jesus says, making the whole world experience God's love. The second point is when we have works that are consistent with love. Here, you can think of caring for people experiencing poverty or helping those in need. James elaborates on this.

If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (James 2:15-17)

It is imperative to do good deeds. How else can people know who Jesus is? In the section on proclaiming the gospel, we discovered the importance of preaching the Word, which we cannot replace with good habits or our works. When we study the Bible, preaching and doing good works is vital. We see this in the lives of Jesus and the apostles. They taught people about God's Kingdom and practiced it through their works. Here, we can think of 'normal' works, such as feeding the hungry or supporting the poor, and 'supernatural' works, such as healing the sick and delivering people from demons. We must believe and express our faith through the works and fruits we produce.

But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. (...) Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? (James 2:18-22)

Do you remember the chapter featuring the two hostile Kingdoms? By proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom, we tell the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Darkness that there is a better King and a better Kingdom. Our testimony, both in Word and deed, shows that this isn't a fictional story but a reality. God wants to free as many people as possible from the Kingdom of darkness and transfer them to the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Preaching the Word and being a witness are essential tools to achieve that.

Summary

The first task of the Kingdom we discussed is proclaiming the gospel. It is crucial to reach people with the good news of God and proclaim the things we have personally experienced with God. We may be witnesses to the world around us, both in Word and deed. James says that work matters and that believing and taking proactive actions work well together. As a result, we may share the good news with many people.

C15 TO HEAL AND DELIVER

Let us further explore two other assignments of God's Kingdom. Although many people say that God's Kingdom is not about healing or miracles, we often see this in the life of Jesus. Even if we look at the apostles a little further in time, we see that many people were healed. God's Kingdom is also about healing, and for God, His followers must perform this task so that Jesus is glorified through our work. In this chapter, we first look at the task of healing people and then at the task of delivering people.

And He said to them: Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. (...) And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons: (...) They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. (...) They went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen. (Mark 16:15-20)

Heal the Sick

Looking at the gospels, we see that God's Kingdom and healing the sick are connected. One belongs to the other. When Jesus walked on Earth, He proclaimed the gospel of the Kingdom and healed the sick.

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. (Matthew 4:23)

If we desire to imitate Jesus in His words and deeds, this includes looking after and healing the sick. Not only was this something Jesus could do, but He also commissioned His disciples to do the same. He not only gave them the command, but He also gave them the power to heal the sick.

And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all

kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. (...) And as you go, preach, saying: The Kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. (Matthew 10:1-8)

According to this text, Jesus and the disciples could heal the sick, not some diseases but every disease and every condition. An explanation for this is that Jesus gave the disciples power to do so. Instead of power, we can also say a power of attorney. In other words, they could heal the sick on Jesus' behalf. It isn't their strength or power but the power of Jesus Christ. They received authority to heal people of their diseases and conditions in His name.

Now comes the best part. This text mentions a select group of 12 people, but Jesus gives these disciples an essential command in Matthew 28.

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying: All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:18-19)

The Lord Jesus summoned the disciples to teach all nations what He commanded them. What did Jesus command the disciples to do? That is to preach the gospel and heal the sick. Jesus still wants to use people to heal the sick. What a great and gracious God we have! We see this in Mark 16:15-20, where Jesus says people can recognize believers by healing the sick. Jesus didn't stop healing the sick in the first century AD; Jesus continues to do so. He needs people willing to carry out this mission and perform it in faith. Jesus says in the book of John that we can do the same works as Him.

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. (John 14:12)

The Lord Jesus had a fantastic ministry in which He revealed God's Kingdom. Jesus says that we can and should do all the work He accomplished. This is also about the healing and miracles Jesus had done in His life. It isn't merely about the first century's disciples but everyone who believes in Jesus. Everyone has received the power and authority from Jesus to heal the sick. The only problem is that many Christians have yet to receive revelation and need to know what they can do through the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul knew this and prayed for revelation so we would realize the tremendous power given to Christians (Ephesians 1:19). This also applies to healing the sick. God has given us, through the Holy Spirit, the power to heal the sick, not some diseases, but all diseases.

How to Heal the Sick?

Let us focus on healing the sick. First, I don't want to put God in a box. We cannot limit God to a roadmap; God has free will to heal. Yet God works with some key characteristics to heal sick people through you.

First of all, faith is most important. God rewards those who seek Him in faith; the same applies to the healing ministry. If we pray for non-believers, the non-believer doesn't have faith in healing. This isn't a problem for God if you believe in a miracle. By God's grace, He wants to reveal Himself to non-believers and heal sick non-believers. Because of this, the person will realize that Jesus lives. Faith is essential to receive revelations from God. Revelations from God work beautifully. On the one hand, the Holy Spirit gives us revelations. But on the other hand, God's revelations work in a relationship. If I never pay attention to God, never read the Bible, nor pray, then I cannot receive any (or few) revelations either. If I spend a lot of time with God, then God is likely to speak more often in my life, allowing me to receive more revelations and create more faith for a healing or miracle from God in the lives of others. The moment I pray for someone, I am always taking time to listen to the Holy Spirit. I often receive words of wisdom, allowing me to know exactly what to pray for, say, or do. If we look at Jesus' life on Earth, we see that every

healing is unique, and Jesus doesn't always act similarly. Therefore, the course of action to heal people may change, so it is essential to listen to the Holy Spirit and do what He tells us to do.

Secondly, it is essential to know God's will. We recognize God's will by studying the Word of God and listening to the Holy Spirit. It is necessary to realize that the Holy Spirit and the Bible are always in harmony. The Holy Spirit never says or commands anything against God's Word. When we read the Bible, we see that God wants to heal people. We see this in the ministry of Jesus and in the teachings of the prophets and apostles. In the book of Exodus, God reveals Himself as a 'Healer' and says He will not bring any disease upon us if we obey Him.

And said: If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you. (Exodus 15:26)

This demonstrates God's will. God doesn't take pleasure in sickness and misery but in health and obedience. We see this in the blessing and curse in the book of Deuteronomy. Sickness is a curse and not a blessing. God wants us to live in blessing and not under a curse (Deuteronomy 28). God is a God who does great miracles and signs. God wants it and does it.

You are the God who works wonders; you have made known your might among the peoples. You with your arm redeemed your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph. Selah. (Psalm 77:14-15)

God has and will continue to do great wonders and signs. God's goodness did not stop in the first century of Christ, and His goodness endures forever.

Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more? Has His mercy ceased forever? Has His promise failed forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Selah (Psalm 77:7-9)

Of course, the answer to this Psalm's question is no. God remains eternally good and always does what He promises.

Third, we must go out and do what Jesus asks of us. At first, it may be challenging to pray for the sick, and we may sometimes get disappointed because little or almost nothing happens. Please refrain from letting this discourage you, but seek God, read the Bible, and build faith. We may grow in our ministries and tasks on earth, and if we proceed with the right desire, God will help us grow.

Cast out Demons

Jesus commands us to cast out demons. As Jesus says in the book of Matthew, casting out demons and God's Kingdom go hand in hand.

But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the Kingdom of God has come upon you. (Matthew 12:28)

The Lord Jesus cast out demons, and so did the seventy disciples. They had received power from Jesus to cast out demons and were under Jesus' authority.

Then the seventy returned with joy, saying: Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name. (Luke 10:17)

Here, we see that demons must listen to the Name of Jesus. If we stand in Jesus' authority, we have received the power and strength to cast them out of people. This applies not only to the time period of the disciples but also to today.

And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons (...). (Mark 16:17)

Also, this doesn't just apply to pastors, elders, and the pastoral team; it applies to every believer.

First, let us look at how to spot demonism in people. It is essential to learn to distinguish spirits (1 Corinthians 12:10). In this case, the Holy Spirit tells you that someone is suffering from

demonism or demonic influences, or you identify evil spirits. This may be a certain feeling, revelation, or the voice of the Holy Spirit. Demons can also be recognized by some nasty character traits in people. In Chapter 13, we read about what demons can do to people and how we can spot them by their strange behavior. During deliverance prayers or praying in tongues, specific complaints or negative characteristics may worsen in the person. We call these demonic manifestations, and because of this, we know for sure that someone is influenced by demons. Another form of manifestation is the changing of the eyes. During the deliverance prayer, the eyes can change to very dark or evil eyes. In your mind, you can see the demons sitting in the eyes, as it were. This helps us see a clash between God's Kingdom and the Kingdom of Darkness. It is critical not to stop when we see such manifestations but rather to send the demons out of the person. For example, if a person has a foul spirit, it can worsen during prayer. When the demon reveals itself, that is the perfect time to send it away and not the time to stop the deliverance.

How to Cast out Demons?

So, how do I cast out demons in other people? In Chapter 8, we read how we can be freed from demons ourselves. It works similarly; only now you teach someone else how to become free. At its core, Jesus' command is straightforward. After all, Jesus says: 'Cast out demons; I have given you the authority.' We don't find lengthy walkthroughs in the Bible with hundreds of steps to follow first. If we look at some ministries, every demon requires special treatment, and it is challenging to remember it all correctly. Sometimes, trajectories can take months or years. Even though some of these have good results, and I don't want to be pessimistic about these ministries, it should be possible to simplify things. Indeed, in Jesus's life, He was never in a long discussion with a demon, and the demons flew out within seconds. Jesus didn't have a questionnaire, but He had faith and authority. I long for this, and I believe it is possible. Jesus has given this power to all His followers. The following points are significant for being in the deliverance ministry.

Be Under the Authority of Jesus Yourself

It is essential to be under the authority of Jesus and a believer before you can cast out demons. Casting out demons isn't a particular ritual or formula that anyone can do. It involves authority and faith. In the Bible, we find a story where people copied Paul in casting out demons without being under the authority of Jesus. They mentioned the name of Jesus and Paul's name, but the name of Jesus only helps if you are under the authority of Jesus. It can be dangerous if you do this without the authority of Jesus.

Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying: We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches. Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. And the evil spirit answered and said: Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you? Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. (Acts 19:13-16)

So, it is essential to be in Christ and have His authority. If we have His authority, we won't have to fear because we know that the One who is in us is greater than the one in the world (1 John 4:4). This applies to the prayer and the receiver. The receiver needs to realize that Jesus delivers him and that you do not deliver him. Here, you can ask that person to put their faith in Jesus.

It is also vital that it is in a confidential environment. This means that the information and events are not shared with everyone. Of course, discussing specific details with a pastor or elders or asking for advice is good, but gossiping about it with other people is not the intention.

Have Certain Sins Confessed

Demons don't enter a person without a reason. A significant cause through which demons can enter is serious sins or repeated sins. It is essential that the person first confesses his sin(s) before the demons are cast out. This is because the demons have been given the 'right' to operate in a person because the person has let them in—through action. The perfect way to remove this foundation is

to confess the sin and ask for forgiveness from God. As a result, there is no more legal ground, and the demon cannot cling to anything. Being honest about sins is very important, and creating an atmosphere of trust is good.

He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy. (Proverbs 28:13)

Let the Person Break Away from Occult Matters

The person must break away from occultic activities. This could include Buddha sculptures, dream catchers, certain music, videos, games, and objects of other religions. All these must be discarded, destroyed, or burnt, and the person must have nothing more to do with them. We can also consider certain curses or religions this person has acquired or practiced. The person should also dissociate himself from these curses and religions and ask Jesus to take them away from him. For example, a person must repent from all occultism and all spiritual traditions practiced in the family. If a person is set free and does not repent, the chances are high that the demons will return and reinforce their oppression.

Let the Person Forgive Everyone

It matters that the person has forgiven everyone in their life. We already read that God can only forgive us if we forgive others. Without forgiveness, a spiritual obstruction is present, which can stop deliverance. For this reason, it is important to forgive everyone, regardless of what has happened. If there is sincere forgiveness, the demon no longer has power over one's life and is set free (Luke 6:37).

Send Away the Demon

After this is done, it is time to send the demon away. You can do this simply by addressing the demon and telling it to get out in Jesus' name. Usually, you experience immediately that something happens or the atmosphere changes. Now is also a proper time to listen to the Holy Spirit, so you may also have moments to listen to the Holy Spirit's voice. The Holy Spirit will tell you what to do and when you are done praying. Deliverance prayer doesn't always have to be a session of hours; it can last just a few minutes.

While praying, you can ask what the person is feeling. This can help you pray more deeply and know what is happening. If you have never done this, walk with a brother or sister who has experience. They can explain how to do certain things, and you can see how it works. In addition, deliverance service is a learning process. More and more, you learn to understand the voice of the Holy Spirit and know what to do.

Don't Fear Manifestations

During deliverance prayers, demons may begin to manifest in a person. This may manifest, for example, in screaming, frothing, rolling on the ground, aggression, and fear. This is what they do to intimidate, deceive, or distract us. Through the deliverance prayer, they notice they must leave a person. In their last minutes in a person, they try to make us anxious, causing us to stop praying and allowing them to stay in the person a little longer. This is something we shouldn't be afraid of. In the name of Jesus, we have been given all authority and power.

Don't Put Too Much Pressure on It

A delivery service may sound super intense and can cause anxiety for many people. This isn't meant to be. So don't put extra pressure on it, don't start shouting at demons, and always keep the peace and tranquility of God. From this peace, we may operate, and we may deliver people. Sometimes, a person is still not wholly delivered after the deliverance service. Then give homework and say, for example, what this person can do in the coming week to progress. This could include fasting, studying the Word, praying, or stopping certain sins. Also, be aware that you are not the deliverer but Jesus. Only some people want to be honest, and some, for example, don't confess essential sins. This prevents them from being set free, and it is crucial to put in some time so they can grow with Jesus.

Summary

This chapter deals with two supernatural commands of God's Kingdom that apply to every believer. The first command is to heal the sick. In Jesus' ministry, we preach the kingdom and heal

the sick—simultaneously. Everywhere Jesus went, the sick was healed. Jesus' apostles continued this pattern, and we also see many healings and miracles in their lives. In Jesus' teaching, we see that healing the sick was not just for the first century AD but applies to every believer. It is key to build faith and to know God's will well. Then, we may learn and grow by doing it. The second command is to cast out demons and set people free. This task also goes together with preaching the kingdom, which the Lord Jesus often did. The disciples, too, had to deal with this many times, and we can see from Jesus' teaching that this command also applies today. Jesus' command is straightforward. Namely, Jesus says, "cast out demons." Important concepts surrounding this command are repentance, forgiving people, and stopping occultism.

C16 BAPTISM AND DISCIPLESHIP

We aren't finished after proclaiming the gospel. After all, it is crucial for people to hear about Jesus and decide to follow Him, as well as to receive good discipleship and baptism to receive the blessings of God. The local church should be a place where new disciples are trained every year to ensure that they are well-positioned in the blessings and commandments of God and that they are trained to fulfill God's commission. If this is adequately facilitated, new people will join the congregation each year, and they will invite new people to come. On the one hand, this is something the congregation itself may do, but on the other hand, this is a mission for all believers. Educating people about God and being a good example to these people is an important task. In this chapter, we look at the command to baptize and the command to make disciples.

Start Baptizing People

We find the command to baptize people in the Book of Matthew.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:19)

It is a mission for everyone, not just a select few, to urge people to be baptized. Your local church may hold baptismal services; it is a welcoming and accepting place to send people to. It's not necessary to baptize everyone who has come to repentance through your help. Others may also take over this part. For example, we see this in the lives of Paul and Jesus. Paul brought the gospel worldwide but often left baptizing people to others. Paul believed strongly in baptizing people and the blessing this brought. Still, it was not always his job to do this (1 Corinthians 1:14). I believe it is crucial to encourage people to be baptized and tell them about the beautiful blessings that baptism brings.

Let us look at a situation where a person wants to be baptized directly by you, or you decide to baptize someone yourself.

The place of baptism does not matter. It can be in the church's baptismal pool, a bathtub, a river, or any other place with sufficient water. The key is to ensure the person can be fully submerged, from head to toe. It is not necessary to stand in the water yourself; you can just stand next to it. This is especially useful with a bathtub; otherwise, it will be very cramped.

We now turn to the question of determining when to baptize someone. Many congregations have developed special baptismal courses that should be followed, or Christians are required to believe for several months or years. Attending a course on a biblical subject is always good, but it is not necessary from a biblical standpoint to participate in a course before someone is baptized. The same goes for the length of time between conversion and baptism. The Bible states one condition of water baptism: believing in Jesus Christ. We see this in the story of Philip and the eunuch.

Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said: See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized? Then Philip said: If you believe with all your heart, you may. And he answered and said: I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. (Acts 8:36-38)

You may baptize people as soon as they believe (in their hearts) in Jesus. Furthermore, baptism may happen immediately. If someone gives their life to Jesus, they qualify and can be baptized. The Bible doesn't teach a "probationary period" of a few months or years in which we can choose an additional faith upgrade with water baptism. The Bible teaches that a person may be baptized immediately after conversion. Paul also says this in the book of Acts.

Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)

If a person fulfills this condition, then he may be baptized. There are no required courses or life skills; a person may be baptized immediately after conversion.

This is a condition that applies to everyone. This means that everyone independently makes the decision to be baptized. Consequently, it is not Biblical for babies or young children to be baptized. They don't fulfill this condition, so they cannot be baptized at this stage. When they reach an age where they can make a decision, they may be baptized.

Next, we consider how baptism should take place. Is it by sprinkling with water or by immersion? The Greek word for "baptize" is "*baptizo*" which means "immersion." Baptism in the Bible is immersion. This means that a person is put into the water from head to toe and then stands up again from the water. In the Bible, we don't read about a bowl of water or sprinkling someone during baptism. In the Bible, we read that people walk into the water to be baptized.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. (...) When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water (...). (Matthew 3:13-16)

So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. (Acts 8:38)

The person receiving baptism enters the water, is immersed in it, and, after a few seconds, rises again from it, just like Jesus did. Jesus went into the Jordan River, was baptized by John the Baptist, and rose again from the water. The baptized may imitate Jesus and be immersed just like Jesus.

When the person undergoing baptism is in the water, we should baptize that person in the name of Jesus. In the Bible, we read precisely what to say to baptize someone. It is essential to realize that it isn't you who is the Baptist but that Jesus is working through you to baptize someone. This is why we baptize people in the name of Jesus. On behalf of Jesus, we get to fulfill this mission and welcome them into the kingdom of God. The person being baptized proclaims his faith in Jesus. The significance of

this is very profound. A person is baptized because of faith in Jesus, and by believing in Jesus, a person becomes blessed. During baptism, the person being baptized proclaims his belief in Jesus Christ.

And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved. (Acts 2:21)

We also encounter this in Acts 22, which can be said in the water or just before.

And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord. (Acts 22:16)

In response, we baptize the person in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:19)

During water baptism, the baptized person becomes one in Christ. An additional prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to fill the baptized person is required to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. This is performed immediately after water baptism by laying one's hands on them. The baptized person may already be filled with the Holy Spirit before experiencing water baptism.

Baptism is one of the essential parts of the gospel of God. We come into Christ through water baptism, which we dealt with in the previous section. Therefore, baptizing people as soon as possible is a big deal, rather than waiting months or years. Even in Jesus' important commission, water baptism comes up, showing that it is not a ritual but a vital part of the Christian life.

Giving Discipleship

Before we discuss this subject, let us first see what a disciple is. The word "disciple" comes from the Greek word "*mathētēs*"

which means "disciple," "follower," or "disciple." Through discipleship, you teach other people to be followers of Jesus. You accomplish this by being a good role model or "master" yourself and encouraging people to live similarly. You are the master, and others are disciples who learn from you. A good master shows Jesus in his teaching and actions and teaches his disciples to become like Jesus.

Giving discipleship is another component that fits into an excellent local congregation. It matters to have a congregation that is actively engaged in discipleship and teaching people to observe the commandments of Jesus. This is the primary calling for some, while others find it difficult. Yet, teaching discipleship is deeply meaningful and part of God's mission for all of us. We don't have to know or have the ability to do everything before we can disciple young believers, nor do we have to teach long hours of courses to a group of young believers. Discipleship goes further than that and is about personally mentoring and teaching people what Jesus asks of us. It also involves leading by example and sometimes engaging in conversation to ask if there are problems. Discipleship isn't only about learning; it's about doing and building God's kingdom together, with one person teaching the other and demonstrating the right way. We can see this often in the Bible, and the nice thing is that it happens in a small group, so there is a great deal of personal attention. For example, think of Jesus and the twelve disciples or Elijah and his disciple, Elisha. Jesus and Elijah took their disciples by the hand, demonstrated what to do, and taught them all kinds of things. The remarkable thing is that Elisha and Jesus' disciples also received disciples, so more people became active in God's kingdom. This is how a church can grow properly because each disciple has his own "master" or "teacher" who gives him a lot of attention to grow. As time passes, these disciples will be "masters" or "teachers," helping to build God's kingdom quickly.

We'll begin to examine some of the points of giving discipleship. There are different ways and sizes of giving discipleship. The most familiar form of discipleship is the pastor teaching the congregation the Word of God on Sunday mornings. In addition, we can think of smaller groups, where a small group finds each other for more in-depth Bible studies and personal questions.

While the Sunday morning service is extensive, professional, and with a good speaker, the small group is small and informal, and each member can share something. You may find that your pastor or another leader asks you to prepare something from the Word of God, share a testimony, or give some other kind of teaching or study. In that case, you are, for a moment, a "master" teaching spiritual things to "disciples." However, this is not always something for everyone and may be a specific calling for some believers.

For now, let us look at discipleship that anyone may give. This is personal discipleship, in other words, one-on-one discipleship. Whether you realize it or not, you are a "master" anyway. People, within and outside the church, watch you and see how you live in the world. You affect your colleagues, family members, and congregation members. Let's take an example to make this clear. Suppose you work as a receptionist in a hotel. Every day, you are moody, and everyone wishes to avoid you. One day, you tell your non-believing colleagues that you are a Christian. As a result, the colleagues unconsciously learn that a Christian is always moody and unlikable. But what if you are always cheerful, help everybody, and let all of them know that you have integrity and trustworthiness, and then tell them you are a Christian? This unconsciously teaches colleagues that a follower of Jesus is cheerful, helpful, and trustworthy. That's already a lot better! Let's go further. What if, through your prayer, your non-believing colleagues are healed of diseases and experience God's love and goodness? As a result, people come to faith and want what you have. They watch you and want to imitate your actions and walk. In other words, they have become your disciples; you must show them Jesus. In this process, you have influenced your colleagues to come to know God and want to follow Him, and then you can further influence them to go to a church. This is Jesus' plan, and Jesus can only work through us to accomplish this.

Let's proceed one step further. Your colleagues have experienced God, learned that God does miracles, and faithfully attend church. The key is to disciple them. It is essential that these disciples also become "masters" and, in turn, tell other people about Jesus. You can accomplish this by introducing them to the provisions and commandments of God's Word. For example, you

can teach people that through faith and in the name of Jesus, people are healed of diseases. Through this teaching, and this doesn't have to be super professional, you create a new generation of "masters," each one training new disciples.

Let us look further at Jesus' command about making disciples.

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying: All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:18-19)

Its purpose is to teach nations all that Jesus commanded. Of course, each believer and "master" also remains a disciple of Jesus. Each day, we learn more and walk deeply in His calling. It is essential to realize that the believers of the early churches were referred to as disciples.

Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7)

We all remain disciples of Jesus Christ. Despite this, God appointed people to teach the disciples. In the earliest congregation, these were the apostles of Jesus, and in later ones, these were people who had been specifically appointed to do so, such as Timothy. So, what should these disciples teach? Everything that Jesus commanded! Often, challenging and complicated topics are handled in the congregation. Nothing is wrong with this, except that the key is first to teach people the simple things about what Jesus commanded. Give the disciples some milk first, and when they can digest it, provide them with solid food afterward. In other words, cover the basics of Jesus and His commands first, and after that, you can move on to solid food with difficult questions of faith. It's better to believe every word of the "simple part" of Jesus' teachings than to know everything but have no faith. I think the teaching on solid food comes primarily from Bible teachers God has expressly appointed. This is because God has given Bible

teachers specific insight, and they have been given specific talents to keep track of difficult questions of faith. The teaching of milk can be offered to everyone in word and deed. This, in turn, has everything to do with giving personal discipleship. On topics belonging to the milk, consider the work of Jesus on the cross, the promise of the Holy Spirit, repentance from dead works, etc. (Hebrews 6:1-2). This can occur in small groups, home circles, or private one-on-one conversations.

To conclude, let us elaborate more on the private one-on-one conversation of discipleship. A focus on each other characterizes this free form and interpretation. Here, you can think of two brothers doing fun activities together and, during these activities, asking each other how things are going. For example, one may have a gaming addiction, and the other brother can help him beat this gaming addiction. Of course, Jesus is the only and the best answer to addictions, but Jesus often works through brothers and sisters, and it is excellent and essential to confess one another's sins. I understand that not all people are comfortable confessing their sins on stage in a congregation of one hundred and fifty people, but one-on-one, this is confidential and is done more often. Notice that the text below mentions the prayer of one righteous person. It is in singular form, and it is unnecessary to notify a hundred people and ask them to pray before God intervenes. God also listens to the prayer of one righteous person.

Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. (James 5:16)

The one-on-one relationship facilitates confessing one another's sins and praying for one another. This is, therefore, an invaluable part of personal discipleship. It should be a confidential environment where these sensitive topics can be discussed. In addition, people can address individual questions or doubts, and they learn from each other how best to fulfill Jesus' mission. One might be further along in faith. He can demonstrate how best to achieve specific commands and tasks of Jesus. We find this in the story of Elijah and Elisha, where Elijah teaches Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21). Finally, this is also a place to admonish one another should

anyone (un)consciously make a mistake. This allows us to save people from death.

Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins. (James 5:19-20)

We recognize this in the life of Jesus as well. After Peter betrayed Jesus, Jesus took time to teach Peter one-on-one discipleship. Jesus led a group of 12, but sometimes, He would take one person separately to learn extra. This also applies to our discipleship today. We can lead a small group and sometimes give individual attention to a believer. Let's look at the "discipleship conversation" between Jesus and Peter.

So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter: Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. He said to him, Feed My lambs. He said to him again a second time: Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. He said to him: Tend My sheep. He said to him the third time: Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me? Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time: Do you love Me? And he said to Him: Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him: Feed My sheep. (John 21:15-17)

This was both a beautiful and challenging conversation. A few days earlier, Peter betrayed Jesus three times, and now he needed to say he loved Jesus three times. Discipleship may sometimes hurt, as long as the end goal is achieved, which is to resemble Jesus and follow Him.

Summary

We dealt with two significant commands of Jesus: baptizing people and giving discipleship. Baptizing people involves immersion, and any born-again Christian may baptize people. The condition for baptizing someone is for that person to believe in Jesus.

No special courses or studies are required. By baptizing people, they receive the blessings of God's kingdom and come into Christ. The practice of discipleship is something any born-again Christian can do. Sometimes, this is unconscious, and occasionally conscious. Everyone watches you; you are an example to your family, co-workers, friends, and church members. While some are called to lead large groups of people, every other believer is called to give one-on-one discipleship to the new converts. One-on-one discipleship can also happen unconsciously. This is when you ask about the well-being of a new convert and encourage and exhort one another.

C17 ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER

Let us look at another assignment of the kingdom of God. First, we focused mainly on Jesus' missions to reach people to proclaim and introduce the gospel of God to them. This primarily aims to reach people who aren't yet believers through the gospel. At the same time, God asks that we treat the brothers and sisters in the local church well. We may encourage and serve one another with the gifts we have received from God. We are one family with each other, and taking good care of the family is essential.

Commands for Encouragement

There are many Bible verses about encouraging one another in the Bible. God has called us a family, and we may treat each other as a proper family in love and faithfulness. If you are a good father, you wish your children to thrive. You want them all to have the best, and should they get into trouble, you do everything possible to resolve it. God intends for a family to love each other and raise children in safety and love. So, it is with the church of Christ. God has given us to each other, and we must love and care for each other. This can be with material goods, such as food, clothing, and shelter, but these can also be words of encouragement. Let us first look at material goods. It is important to meet the needs of church members who are in need. The "rich" of the congregation donate possessions, and the congregation passes them on to those in need so that no one suffers a deficiency. We find this principle in the first congregation.

Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. (...) Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. (Acts 4:32-35)

Do you notice the extraordinary nature of the first church of Christ? The believers had all in common, so no one was lacking.

God doesn't want any of His children to suffer deficiency. We see this in a typical family. As a child, you may use your parents' couch, television, refrigerator, microwave, bed, food, etc. The home is "communal," and your parents don't want you to starve while food is abundant. This thought also belongs in the church. We are one big family and do not want our brothers or sisters to go hungry or lack clothing. We may encourage and bless one another with material possessions. Of course, this can be done one-on-one, where the giver gives it directly to the recipient, but this can also be done through the congregation. For example, the giver gives two hundred dollars to the congregation, and the congregation buys food from this and gives it to those in need. We also see this principle in the first congregation (Acts 6:1-6).

Besides, help can be given to more than just the local congregation. It is also Biblical to bless other congregations with possessions when needed. We see this in the Book of Acts. The prophet Agabus predicted a great famine, and in response, the believers decided to set aside money to send to the brethren in Judea. They cared for people experiencing poverty in other congregations.

And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. (Acts 11:27-30)

In conclusion, let us read some verses urging us to care for one another.

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. (Philippians 2:3-4)

In this regard, Paul also speaks of the needs of others. We must look not only at our own needs but also at the needs of others (in the church).

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Galatians 6:10)

But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (1 Timothy 5:8)

1 Timothy 5 is about caring for family or household members. If they cannot care for themselves, our job is to properly care for or support them.

Let us now consider the words of encouragement. In addition to giving material goods, encouraging or comforting one another with our words is a big deal. The following Bible passage is about the fact that we will see our deceased believers again during the rapture of the church.

Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

In the book of Hebrews, Paul also calls us to encourage one another in the meetings.

And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:24-25, NAS)

The key is to watch out for one another. Paul doesn't mean here that we criticize and condemn one another; Paul intends that we encourage one another to do good works and to maintain love. We are to build each other up and not burn each other down. This is best accomplished in a congregation, so it is essential not to

neglect meetings. The meetings are meant to encourage one another to do good work in a loving way.

(...) and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)

In this Bible verse, Paul encourages us to be kind, merciful, and forgiving. These are three great qualities of a local congregation. Through love among congregation members, people outside the congregation will see that God is alive.

So, how can I encourage people? In the beginning, we should know people's needs. For example, one person may need more food. You can encourage such a person by sharing your food. Another, for example, may be sad because her husband has died. Then, we must listen to her story and speak words of comfort. In addition to human encouragement and gestures, we can encourage people with words from the Bible or words the Holy Spirit speaks to us. We can also encourage people with the gifts God has given to us, which the next paragraph talks about.

Gifts of the Spirit

The gifts of the Spirit are supernatural gifts that the Holy Spirit bestows on the believer. Initially, these gifts are given to the church of Christ so that everyone can contribute something valuable to the services and to help so that the church functions well. 1 Corinthians 12 talks about the gifts of the Spirit and shows several spiritual gifts.

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

All the gifts are supernatural gifts that the Holy Spirit is giving. There are various gifts, but it is always the same Holy Spirit who bestows the gifts. This is also true of the ministries and works associated with the gifts. The ministries and works differ, but they come from the same source. What I love about this text is that the

Trinity "works together" to equip people with the gifts and causes miracles and signs to happen. Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and God the Father are actively working to bless people with supernatural signs and wonders. This shows that the Trinity is one of will.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. (1 Corinthians 12:7)

The gifts of the Holy Spirit aren't given to you personally. The gifts are to bless and help to encourage others. Essentially, they are for blessing the brothers and sisters in the church (1 Corinthians 14:26) and allowing them to strengthen their faith. This verse says that the gifts of the Spirit are given to everyone. Every believer baptized with the Holy Spirit has a claim to one or more gifts. The ability to function with all gifts is possible; it is just that some gifts will be stronger than others. Sometimes, the gifts of the Spirit blend. Let us first look at the gifts in this chapter.

For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. (1 Corinthians 12:8-10)

It would take us too long to study all the gifts in this book. A miracle or revelation may require different gifts. For example, the gift of healing may cooperate with the gift of faith and the gift of a word of knowledge.

But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. (1 Corinthians 12:11)

The Holy Spirit gives the gifts and hands them out to everyone as He wills. This doesn't mean we can lean back quietly. The Holy Spirit gives the gifts as He wills, but our job is to strive to provide the best gift.

So you should earnestly desire the most helpful gifts. (1 Corinthians 12:31)

Striving for the best gift does not suggest that one gift is better. Striving for the best gift means that at a certain moment, you strive for the gift that is most needed. If someone wants to be healed, having the gift of interpreting languages makes no sense. At that moment, you need the gift of healing. Thus, we may strive for the best gift in every situation. Let's compare this to the natural. A carpenter has several tools. The moment he needs to saw, a drill is of no use to him. He then needs a saw. The moment he wants to drill screws, he needs a drill and not a saw. It depends on the situation and whether he needs a saw or a drill. This also applies to the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

These gifts come for the congregation and only apply to congregational service. It is everyone's mission to heal the sick, but in the congregation, you can have a bunch that has the gifts of healing and a bunch that does not, or less so. God instituted this to keep order. One is appointed for this and the other for that. It is essential to distinguish congregational service from "normal" life; otherwise, there will be great misunderstandings. Let us look at the texts that show that the gifts are given to the church.

And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way. (1 Corinthians 12:28-31)

The above Bible text speaks specifically about the congregation. In the church, there is a division of ministries. In "normal" life, the assignment is the same for everyone. Out of love, we may talk about Jesus' work and show why He went to the cross. Out of love, we may get out, both in the church and in the outside world. Through His love and goodness, we may walk in love.

Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel. (1 Corinthians 14:12)

In the text above, Paul again connects the spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 with congregational life. When Paul wrote about the spiritual gifts, he did so in light of congregational life. Then Paul explained how the spiritual gifts belong in the church and that each is needed.

How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. (1 Corinthians 14:26)

Every gift and every believer are necessary. Let us build the congregational service together and encourage one another with what God has specifically given us.

Taking Care of the Body of Christ

After Paul summarized the spiritual gifts, he talked about the body of Christ. In this context, caring for one another is essential, just as you would caring for your own body. We must know that each part of the body functions differently. With the ear, we can hear, and with the eye, we can see. It would be useless if the eye could listen because it is not the purpose of the eye to hear. So, it is with the body of Christ, the church. In the church, you can find many people, all with diverse ministries. Each ministry is equally important, and we need everyone in the body. We must take care of the body of Christ. You may serve this body with the ministry and talents you have received from God. If you are an encourager, then you encourage people in the congregation. If you are a speaker, you speak in the congregation. If you are a teacher, you teach in the congregation. If you have talents in cleaning, you help clean up the congregation. If you have skills in engineering, you help in engineering. This is how we care for one another and ensure the body of Christ functions appropriately. This is not possible without each other.

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:12)

Every believer is a unique creation and is precious in God's eyes. Every believer is a member of the body, and together with the other members of the body, we take care of the body of Christ together. Only together and not alone.

Summary

God positioned us all in one body, the body of Christ. Therefore, it makes sense to encourage and help one another in our walk on earth. If someone is struggling, supporting them with material goods and/or encouraging words is good. We all need to be encouraged, and we may encourage other people with our words or actions. We also encourage one another with the supernatural gifts that God has given us, and together, we build up a congregational service.

C18 THE VICTORS

In the past chapters, we saw the missions of the gospel of the kingdom. You may think: ok, I will start working on these commands immediately. Perhaps fear or guilt overwhelms you because you feel you are falling short. Whatever feeling you read the assignments with, it is essential to realize that we are more than conquerors, and we need not fear the kingdom of darkness. Despite the difficulties and persecution on earth, Jesus has made us more than conquerors. Sometimes, it seems just the opposite. Especially when we look at countries where there is much persecution of Christians and Christians have to fear for their lives every day. Despite everything Paul says:

As it is written: For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. (Romans 8:36-37)

Wow! Despite it all, we are more than conquerors. No matter what happens, you may realize you are more than victorious. This is because we may stand in the victory of Jesus Christ, and since Jesus overcame the world, we have also overcome the world through our faith.

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:3-5)

Fulfilling the mission of Jesus, we may realize that we may accomplish this mission in victory. Perhaps the persecution may seem so great at times, yet we are the conquerors of the world.

Don't Fear the Enemy

Let us look one more time at Jesus' commission.

And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. (Mark 16:17-18)

God promises us supernatural protection from the enemy. Hence, it isn't our task to pick up poisonous snakes and drink something that will kill us. By all means, don't do that! But God promises here that the serpent, a sign of the devil, cannot bring anything harmful to believers. In the command to cast out demons, for example, we don't have to fear the demons and the devil, but we know they can do nothing. This is because God protects us supernaturally. In addition, we read that Paul was protected when a viper bit him. We can also be protected from material or earthly dangers.

But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand. (...) But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. (Acts 28:3-5)

We need not fear the enemy because we are more than conquerors.

Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. (Luke 10:19)

What a tremendous promise! Again, the Lord Jesus didn't refer literally to serpents and scorpions. So don't go to the pet store to step into a terrarium of scorpions. Jesus meant spiritual beings and demons here. In the time of Jesus, snakes and scorpions were very dangerous. If someone was on the road, he could be bitten by these animals, and some of the bites were deadly. When Jesus says that we can step on serpents and scorpions, it means that we are supernaturally protected and have been given power over

these terrible creatures. We have been given the power to send the demons out of people in Jesus' name.

I often had to deal with scary creatures in my room when I was young. As a child, I didn't know how to cope with this. My mother, fortunately, knew this. I often called my mother in the middle of the night because there were scary creatures. These creatures stayed in my room, even with the light on. They also stayed in their places when my mother came into my room. Only the moment my mother started praying did they disappear in an instant. I learned through this that what Jesus says is true. We have been given power over the enemy through the blood of Jesus Christ. We don't have to be afraid or be fearful. No matter what happens, Jesus is always with us and has given us power. So often, we can be discouraged and become afraid in a given circumstance. Jesus knows this about us and says the following:

Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. (Matthew 10:29-31)

Living in Victory

So, we need not fear the enemy and may live a life of victory. We are more than conquerors in Christ and not losers. In the difficulties and tribulations on earth, we may invariably realize that Jesus has won the victory; in this victory, we may live.

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

God gave us victory through Jesus Christ. This implies that we will not be defeated, no matter what happens. Even (spiritual) death has lost its power, and we no longer have to be afraid. For a Christian doesn't die, a Christian changes location. We may already walk in this victory today. Even though our life does not always feel like a victory, God rewards us today and will also reward us for "our" victory in the future.

To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. (Revelation 3:21)

What an incredible promise from the Lord Jesus! We may sit with Jesus on His throne if we live in victory. What undeserved grace!

How can we live a life of victory? Let's examine some Bible verses to discover how to do so in our daily lives.

The first step in leading a victorious life is, of course, faith in Jesus Christ. Because we are part of Jesus, we are already conquerors. It is essential to realize this and see ourselves as overcomers. Even though it may not feel that way, we are conquerors. This principle can cause a conflict in our thinking. It is a matter of realizing that we are more than conquerors and that this seeps into all our thoughts and souls. It is crucial to break down all false thoughts and lies and fill our minds with the truths of God.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

The false thoughts may disappear, and we may fill ourselves, for example, with the following truth:

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:4-5)

We gain victory in our thoughts. If our thoughts are under the rule of Jesus, then we are absolute conquerors. We get to think about the things of God and then carry them out.

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:1-3)

Remember the good and pure things of God. The letter to the Philippians explains exactly what this means.

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. (Philippians 4:8)

Reflect on all the good things of God. This may include spiritual things, such as the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus and the revelations of God through the Bible, but we may also think about more 'earthly things.' It is okay to fill our minds with God's beautiful creation, the family we have received, our partner, work, relationships, and so much more, as long as they are reasonable, pure, and beautiful thoughts.

Let's look at another characteristic to live in victory. It is vital to overcome evil with good. Maybe you have an annoying colleague who constantly insults and belittles you. Or a family member keeps you small and doesn't believe in you. We can discover "enemies" in our lives who do not have our best interests at heart. How can we overcome these enemies? By doing good. Are your enemies short of food? Then, feed them. Do they need encouragement? Then give it to them. By this, we overcome our enemies and place burning coals on their heads, as they were. This involves hurting their conscience with shame and repentance for that which they do. Do not repay evil with evil, but repay evil with good. This is an essential step in living a life of victory.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:21)

Finally, our faith is a struggle. Some started with faith but abandoned it in the meantime. To be victorious, it is important to be

persistent and persevere in God's good characteristics, such as righteousness, godliness, love, and gentleness. Faith can sometimes be a struggle, and fighting the good fight of faith is essential.

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (1 Timothy 6:12)

But how do you fight the good fight of faith? First of all, we should always focus on Jesus. Jesus is the Perfecter of faith. Therefore, it is good to keep looking forward and focus on Him. Forget what is behind you and look at what is before you. Secondly, knowledge about the Word of God is essential. In the verses before, Paul talked about teachers of error and how these teachers of error seek to make money by twisting the Word of God. It is essential to decipher if something is a doctrine of error, and important to know God's Word and listen carefully to the Holy Spirit. As a result, we aren't bounced back and forth from one error doctrine to another but stand firmly grounded in the truth.

Summary

God has called us as victors. We serve a victorious God who wants to share this characteristic with His children. Because we are children of God and believe in Jesus Christ, we are victorious over the world. Because of this, we don't have to fear the ruler of this world, the devil. We need not fear the enemy because God has given us the power to tread on serpents and scorpions. To be a conqueror, it is essential to think like one. This is because the battle takes place in our minds, and it is necessary to make our minds captive to Jesus Christ. We do this by thinking about the good things of God and not the bad earthly stuff with all the wrong lusts. In addition, we overcome evil on earth by doing good and putting burning coals on the heads of our enemies. Finally, faith can be a struggle. We must fight the good war of faith by keeping our eyes on Jesus and knowing what the Word of God says.

GOD'S KINGDOM

THE PHYSICAL KINGDOM

PART 4



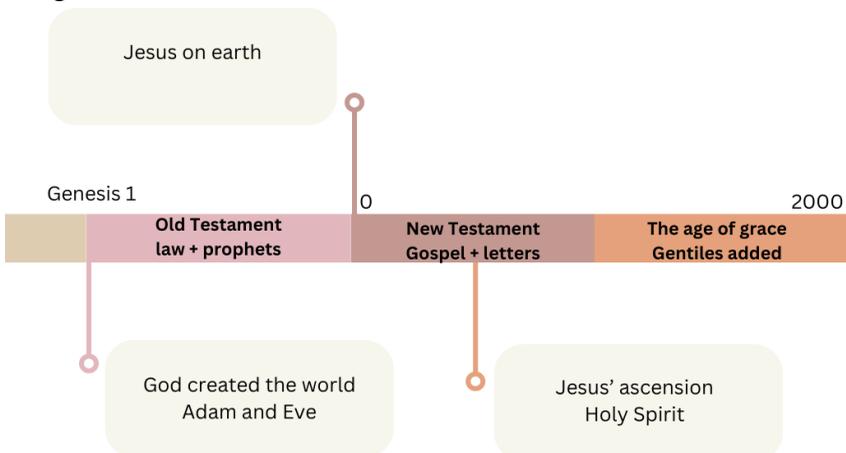
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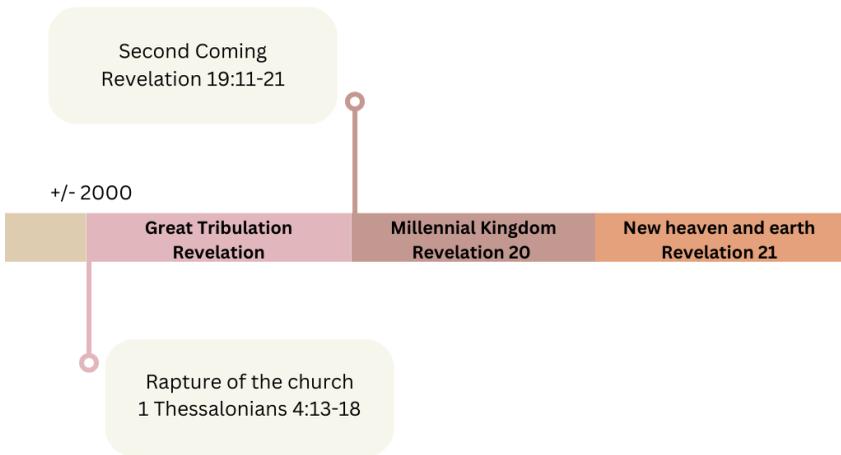
C19 INTRODUCTION END TIME

After looking at the present Kingdom of God with all its blessings and missions, it is time to look at the future Kingdom. We have to distinguish these two Kingdoms. The Kingdom of God has already arrived, but at the same time, we are waiting for a future Kingdom, which we will refer to for convenience as the millennial Kingdom. In the present Kingdom, we live in today, and the millennial Kingdom is an event that will take place in the future. Before we look at this, we must get a picture of the end times and what events will take place.

Time Schedule

The schedule below contains some critical points on God's timeline. Everything that happens on earth is in God's hands. God began with the creation of man and established a covenant with Abraham and the people of Israel in the Old Testament. Through the Lord Jesus, the Gentiles became partakers of the covenant with Abraham, and reconciliation was brought to all who trusted Jesus. Jesus confirmed the covenant by outpouring the Holy Spirit, and today, we live in the time of grace. This is the time between the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the next point on God's timeline: the rapture of the church. Let us first look at a simplified schedule and then briefly discuss the events yet to occur. This will give us a deeper understanding of the millennial Kingdom and when it will dawn.





The Rapture of the Church

An elaborate study on the rapture of the church is provided in my book "A Revelation of the End Times: Why the Pre-Tribulation Rapture is Biblical." In this section, we will briefly study what the rapture of the church involves so we can have a good idea of what God's timeline looks like. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 speaks clearly about the rapture and what it is like. The rapture has yet to happen and is, therefore, a future event that could occur at any time.

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

Behold, I (Paul) tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed--in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)

In the book of Thessalonians, we learn that the Lord Jesus will call the dead who are in Christ, and they will be resurrected. After

this moment, the living Christians will be taken up in the clouds, and we will meet the Lord Jesus in the air. The book of Corinthians adds that the dead and the living will receive an everlasting (immortal) body, and their present bodies will be changed to an everlasting body in an instant.

The church's rapture is when the Lord Jesus calls us (the Christians), our bodies are changed to immortal bodies, we are taken up into the heavens in an instant, and we will be with the Lord Jesus forever.

No one knows when the rapture of the church will happen. There are millions of Christians on earth, and one day, they will disappear. Some are driving a car, others are sleeping, and others are running errands. The rapture has yet to happen, and the millennial Kingdom only comes after the rapture of the church and the second coming. This means that we are not yet living in the millennial Kingdom today.

The Great Tribulation

A dreadful period would occur on earth after the Lord Jesus has taken His followers. God is going to judge the world during this period, and God's wrath gets poured out on the inhabitants of the planet. In addition, God protects His people, Israel, and all Israel will be saved. The Lord Jesus said the following about this period:

For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.
(Matthew 24:21)

It will be a tribulation that has never occurred before. We learn about horrific periods during history classes. Think of the world wars, the civil wars in the Soviet Union and China, and the crusades of the Europeans. Also, think of the famines, the natural disasters, the corruption and deception of certain governments, and the persecution experienced by Christians in North Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya, and Pakistan. Today, the world is "broken" badly in many places, and the Lord Jesus says, "For then

there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be." The great tribulation will be a dreadful period filled with wars, natural disasters, and hardship.

Christ's Return

After seven years of great tribulation, the Lord Jesus will intervene. He will come to earth with the saints. After His first arrival out of a woman and His "intervention" to collect His followers, it is time for Jesus to come to earth to rule as King over all nations during the millennial Kingdom of peace. During His first coming, He came to serve and suffer, while at His second coming, He came to rule. He will set His feet on the Mount of Olives, which is close to Jerusalem.

And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, Making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south. (Zechariah 14:4)

The Lord Jesus is returning to earth to defeat the devil, his demons, and anybody who serves the devil and establish a millennial Kingdom of peace in which He is King. All of us on earth will see the Lord Jesus come from the clouds, but this is not the case with the rapture of the church. If it wasn't obvious already, by now, everyone knows that the Lord Jesus is alive and has all the powers.

Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. (Revelation 1:7)

The Millennial Kingdom

The Lord Jesus rules on earth with His followers during the millennial Kingdom. The devil is kept in chains for a thousand years, and the earth's inhabitants must obey the Lord Jesus. A time of rest and peace dawns, and people will not wage war against each

other. Jesus will proclaim justice from Jerusalem, and all the nations must give Him honor. Next to the people, the earth will experience peace. Deserts will bloom like a rose, and the Lord Jesus will solve the climate crisis. Yet this time comes to an end because the devil is released after a thousand years and deceives people to wage war against the saints of Israel. Then will Lord Jesus destroy those who wage war, and the age of the earth will be over.

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:1-4)

Next is the new heaven and new earth, where the followers of God spend eternity in God's presence in a beautiful location.

Summary

The subject of end times is one large study. Nevertheless, I hope this short chapter has provided knowledge and insight. It is important to know the events that are yet to occur before the millennial Kingdom comes to reality. These are the rapture of the church, the great tribulation, and the return of Christ. After the Second Coming, the Kingdom of peace will take place where there will be a millennial peace with the Lord Jesus as the physical King on earth.

C20 MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

In this chapter, we should discuss the millennial Kingdom in more depth to distinguish this period from the present Kingdom of God. The next chapter is also in my book "A Revelation of the End Times: Why the Pre-Tribulation Rapture is Biblical."

There are different countries in the world. One country is preferable to live in than another. In one country, the government is considered a servant of the people; in another, the people are servants of the government. I am thankful to God that I live in the Netherlands, where I can practice my Christian faith. Nevertheless, every government has downsides that are ungodly and unholy, and it seems to worsen by the year. Because of this, we can ask ourselves, "Will there ever be a government that is one hundred percent good, incorruptible, and correct?" Many thought this was the antichrist during the great tribulation, but appearances proved false: the antichrist was worse than all the evil world leaders put together. After the antichrist and the great tribulation comes a good world kingdom that will not make one mistake. Even the animals will no longer attack each other. The King of this kingdom has been on earth before, and He showed that He loved people very much. He loved them so much that He died for them on the cross. This King didn't stay dead but rose again. Eventually, He will return and establish the Millennial kingdom. That King is the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this chapter, we will examine the main points of the millennial Kingdom. Many Bible texts from the Old and New Testaments refer to this time, and we will combine the texts to create a picture of the Lord Jesus' reign on earth and the effect it will have on the planet and its people. The Kingdom of Peace occurs after the great tribulation and is a literal Kingdom on earth. We notice from the many texts that the millennial Kingdom isn't a symbolic and spiritual representation that has occurred or is taking place today. Today's Kingdom of God and the millennial Kingdom have apparent differences.

Jesus Reigns on Earth

As we read, the Lord Jesus will reign on earth. A proper King will reign at last. Today, the Lord Jesus is exalted above all power and might (Colossians 2:10), and during the Kingdom of Peace, Jesus will be a physical King on earth and dwell with His people on earth. The Lord Jesus is associated with King David in the following texts. This is because God promised King David that his kingdom would endure forever and that a descendant of his would always sit on his throne (2 Samuel 7:16). The Lord Jesus is a descendant of David. Therefore, He may sit on David's throne and rule Israel and all the Gentile nations forever.

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His Kingdom there will be no end. (Luke 1:31-33)

And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse (Jesus Christ), Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious. (Isaiah 11:10)

Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," says the Lord. Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and they shall become My people. And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me to you. (Zechariah 2:10-11)

For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. (1 Corinthians 15:25)

Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. (Jeremiah 23:5)

(...) but they shall serve the Lord their God, And David their king, Whom I will raise up for them. (Jeremiah 30:9)

Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness and blessing in the last days. (Hosea 3:5 AMP)

Today, Jesus is King over His own Kingdom, God's Kingdom. Every born-again Christian is part of this Kingdom and has accepted Jesus as King over their lives. In the future, Jesus will become King of the earth and physically return to earth to sit on His throne.

His Followers Reign with Jesus on Earth

The Lord Jesus isn't the only One who rules during the millennial Kingdom. His followers may also reign with Him. I can hardly imagine being allowed to help the Lord Jesus during the Millennial Kingdom, yet the Bible contains many texts that speak of this. We have a great and gracious God! Jesus' followers are raised to life, enabling them to reign with Him. Paul wrote the following about the resurrection of Christians in the book of 1 Corinthians:

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. (1 Corinthians 15:22-23)

When will those who are in Christ be resurrected from the dead? At the coming of Christ, or in other words, during the church's rapture! Those who have come to faith during the great tribulation become alive after the great tribulation. Together, we may reign with Jesus. The following texts speak of our kingship with Christ.

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received

his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:4)

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? (1 Corinthians 6:2)

You are already full! You are already rich! You have reigned as kings without us--and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you. (1 Corinthians 4:8)

In the previous Bible text, Paul expressed criticism of the church at Corinth. They acted as if everything was accomplished and they had reached the highest point. Paul said ironically, "You have already become kings without us." Then Paul said, "If only you had become kings, we would be too." Paul did not say, "You cannot become kings at all." Paul said, "If only it were so, we would be too." This event takes place in the Millennial Kingdom.

If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. (2 Timothy 2:12)

But the saints of the Most High shall receive the Kingdom, and possess the Kingdom forever, even forever and ever. (Daniel 7:18)

Then the Kingdom and dominion, And the greatness of the Kingdoms under the whole heaven, Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, And all dominions shall serve and obey Him. (Daniel 7:27)

The twelve disciples of the Lord Jesus reign over the twelve tribes of Israel. This is their reward for following the Lord Jesus and proclaiming His Word to the people. Almost all of the disciples are martyrs, which means they were brutally killed because of their faith in Jesus. Yet they will live and lead the people of Israel during the Millennial Kingdom.

Then Peter answered and said to Him: See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have? So Jesus said to them: Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Matthew 19:27-28)

Today, in the Kingdom of God, we may rule over sin and reign over the powers of darkness. For God has given us authority. At the same time, most Christians aren't rulers of villages, cities, or countries. Jesus will provide us with a region where we may rule in the millennial Kingdom. Exactly what this will look like, I do not know, but I am already looking forward to this fact!

The Devil is Imprisoned for A Thousand Years

The devil constantly misleads and deceives people. The devil even tried to deceive the Lord Jesus in the desert but failed (Matthew 4:1-11). The devil wants to lure everyone into his trap and tries to destroy as many people as possible.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. (1 Peter 5:8)

During the millennial Kingdom, man, for the first time, has no trouble with the deception and lies of the devil, for the devil is imprisoned for a thousand years.

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. (Revelation 20:1-3)

Finally, man finds peace, and the devil no longer deceives him. Does this mean that man will not do wrong things in the Millennial Kingdom?

The Lord is righteous in her midst, He will do no unrighteousness. Every morning He brings His justice to light; He never fails, But the unjust knows no shame. (Zephaniah 3:5)

Early I will destroy all the wicked of the land, That I may cut off all the evildoers from the city of the Lord. (Psalm 101:8)

No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; For the child shall die one hundred years old, But the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed. (Isaiah 65:20)

Unfortunately, people continue to sin during the Kingdom of Peace. Many are unwilling to obey God. Today, they say, "We have no knowledge of God, so it's not fair," but during the millennial Kingdom, it becomes clear that many people are unwilling to serve God even though He reveals Himself to everyone. God gives every person a choice, and everyone gets to choose whether they want to spend eternity with God or live secluded in Hades. Is this disobedience only about individuals or an entire nation? Unfortunately, this concerns many people and nations. We will discuss this briefly in a moment. Below is a Bible text that speaks of the punishment of an entire country:

And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, on them there will be no rain. If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the Lord strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. (Zechariah 14:17-19)

Today, we live in God's Kingdom and have passed from the power of darkness into the Kingdom of God. This means that we

no longer live in the power of the devil, but it is still possible for the devil to tempt us. Today, we must resist the devil, but in the Millennial Kingdom, the devil will be imprisoned and cannot accomplish anything.

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)

People Live on Earth

In the Millennial Kingdom, people live on earth. I don't refer to born-again Christians raised to life; I refer to ordinary people like the ones we see today. Only these ordinary people have more blessings than today, and no one will doubt that Jesus Christ exists since He dwells on the earth. Here is an overview of the circumstances of people on earth.

1. They will live the entire thousand years. The aging process is slowed, so a hundred-year-old is labeled a young man.

No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; For the child shall die one hundred years old, (...) For as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people (...). (Isaiah 65:20-22)

2. People will obey the Lord Jesus. The texts below illustrate that this only sometimes results in joy. Some approach Him in fear and will be frightened. Yet they listen and obey Him.

They shall lick the dust like a serpent; They shall crawl from their holes like snakes of the earth. They shall be afraid of the Lord our God, And shall fear because of You. (Micah 7:17)

You have delivered me from the strivings of the people; You have made me the head of the nations; A people I have not known shall serve me. As soon as they hear of me they obey me; The foreigners submit to me. The foreigners fade away, And come frightened from their hideouts. (Psalm 18:43-45)

First, the previous Psalm spoke of David's kingship. This Psalm occurred historically. Simultaneously, the Bible often works prophetically, meaning that some Old Testament texts have taken place historically and will take place in the future (Hebrews 8:5). Many stories and prophecies were fulfilled by the first coming of the Lord Jesus, and this Psalm points to the second coming, during the Millennial Kingdom. The Gentile nations will obey the Lord Jesus even though they feign (pretend to be false) to submit to Him. In other words, they are pretending.

Say to God: How awesome are Your works! Through the greatness of Your power Your enemies shall submit themselves to You. (Psalm 66:3)

3. People come to Jerusalem to receive instruction in God's Word and celebrate. Fortunately, people also live in the Kingdom of Peace who want to properly obey the Lord Jesus, learn things about Him, and see His glory.

Many people shall come and say: Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. (Isaiah 2:3)

And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. (Zechariah 14:16)

Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people; But the Lord will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising. (Isaiah 60:1-3)

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord As the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:9)

4. People shall refrain from arms and wars. There will be a thousand years of peace in the Millennial Kingdom. Today, we see many weapons, wars, and terrorism around us with a lot of pain and sorrow. How hopeful the words sound that there will be no more war and the nations will know no more weapons.

He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore. (Isaiah 2:4)

‘(...) And I will abolish the bow and the sword and [banish] war from the land. And will make them lie down in safety.’ (Hosea 2:18 AMP)

5. The idolatry in the land disappears. People no longer cry out for their idols (including Baal) but for the true God.

Therefore by this the iniquity of Jacob will be covered; And this is all the fruit of taking away his sin: When he makes all the stones of the altar like chalkstones that are beaten to dust, Wooden images and incense altars shall not stand. (Isaiah 27:9)

It shall come about in that day,” says the Lord, “That you will call Me Ishi (my husband) And will no longer call Me Baali. “For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, so that they will no longer be mentioned or remembered by their names. (Hosea 2:16-17 AMP)

The people of the earth will call on the true God, the God of Israel, and God will answer their cries.

It shall come to pass That before they call, I will answer; And while they are still speaking, I will hear. (Isaiah 65:24)

6. During the great tribulation, the people going to Jerusalem will be reminded of God's judgments. God works with feasts and memorials so that man does not forget what He has done. This also happens in the millennial Kingdom.

And they shall go forth and look Upon the corpses of the men Who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, And their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh. (Isaiah 66:24)

7. In the Kingdom of Peace, sorrow remains. Even though people will live a thousand years and everything on the earth has been restored, sad things still happen. For example, think of the memories of the great tribulation and the terrible time the people of the tribulation experienced. God promises He will be the One who wipes the tears from all faces. I know there is no one who can comfort people better than God.

He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces; The rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; For the Lord has spoken. (Isaiah 25:8)

8. But the wicked and those who don't believe in the Lord Jesus remain dead and fail to appear in the Millennial Kingdom. They wait for the great white throne after the Millennial Kingdom.

But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. (Revelation 20:5)

After the Millennial Kingdom, they will arise to be judged according to their deeds (Revelation 20:12). It will be a dreadful punishment, and nobody will escape it. Only those who are written down in the Book of Life, the followers of Jesus, will escape the punishment.

Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. (John 5:28-29)

Israel and Jerusalem are Restored

God chose Israel to become His nation, and in Israel's blessing, all other countries will be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3). That blessing exists today but is especially evident in the Millennial Kingdom. It is utterly essential to bless the people of Israel and pray for the peace of Jerusalem. During Jesus' first coming, He mourned over Jerusalem. He hated that Jerusalem would be destroyed (which has already happened in the past, Luke 19:41-44). Yet Jerusalem will be restored, and Jerusalem will become the world's capital. The following points are going to happen to Israel and Jerusalem:

1. Jerusalem will be rebuilt. Today, Jerusalem exists as a beautiful city that attracts many tourists. Jerusalem will shine even more during the Millennial Kingdom, and Isaiah compares it to Eden and the garden of the LORD. Jerusalem is nicely restored today, but it will be magnificent. The prophecies below have already been partially fulfilled, but the best is yet to come.

For the Lord will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, And her desert like the garden of the Lord; Joy and gladness will be found in it, Thanksgiving and the voice of melody. (Isaiah 51:3)

For God will save Zion And build the cities of Judah, That they may dwell there and possess it. (Psalm 69:35)

The Lord builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel. (Psalm 147:2)

2. The pain and shame will be taken away from Israel. For example, Israel's shameful plight of rejecting the Messiah will be taken away. God will take that shame away from them and will dwell with them in Israel. Israel will be a place of eternal glory and joy.

He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces; The rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; For the Lord has spoken. (Isaiah 25:8)

(...) a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel. (Luke 2:32)

Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, So that no one went through you, I will make you an eternal excellence, A joy of many generations. (Isaiah 60:15)

3. Israel and Jerusalem will become the earth's center, and Jerusalem will serve as the world's capital.

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the Lord's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; (...) For out of Zion the law shall go forth, And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, And rebuke strong nations afar off. (...) So the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion From now on, even forever. (Micah 4:1-7)

The sons of foreigners shall build up your walls, And their kings shall minister to you; For in My wrath I struck you, But in My favor I have had mercy on you. Therefore your gates shall be open continually; They shall not be shut day or night, That men may bring to you the wealth of the Gentiles, And their kings in procession. For the nation and Kingdom which will not serve you shall perish, And those nations shall be utterly ruined. (Isaiah 60:10-12)

4. The temple is being rebuilt. The Lord Jesus comes back to earth and lives with His people. This means that, humanly speaking, the Lord Jesus needs a home. In the Old Testament, God dwelt in the tabernacle and later in the temple. From the Day of Pentecost, God, in the form of the Holy Spirit, dwelt in man, labeling man as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). The temple in Jerusalem will be rebuilt in the Kingdom of peace. During the great tribulation, there will be another temple in Jerusalem.

Then speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, saying: Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, And He shall build the temple of the Lord; Yes, He shall build the temple of the Lord. He shall bear the glory, And shall sit and rule on His throne; So He shall be a priest on His throne, And the counsel of peace shall be between them both. (Zechariah 6:12-13)

Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. The nations also will know that I, the Lord, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore. (Ezekiel 37:26-28)

The Ark of the Covenant, on which God's glory rested in the Old Testament, will no longer be there. People don't even think about the ark because the Lord Jesus physically lives with them, and the ark is no longer needed.

*Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days, says the Lord, that they will say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord. It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit it, nor shall it be made anymore. At that time Jerusalem shall be called *The Throne of the Lord*, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem. No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts. (Jeremiah 3:16-17)*

Furthermore, the temple services and sacrifices that the prophet Ezekiel discusses will be resumed. To understand what the temple will look like and what will happen there, read through Chapters 40 through 48 of Ezekiel. On the one hand, it is strange that the sacrifices are resumed since the Lord Jesus has reconciled once and for all with His blood between man and God. On the other hand, God likes to work with memorial objects and feasts so that the temple, with its sacrificial services, can be a moment where people remember what the Lord Jesus did. Just as the Israelites

used to do this to know that the Messiah would bring reconciliation one day, they would do this in the Millennial Kingdom by remembering that the Messiah has come to bring reconciliation.

Finally, there is a reference to a heavenly temple. This temple is presently in heaven, with an altar and a throne. When Moses made the Tabernacle, he did so because he saw an image of the heavenly temple/tabernacle. Without going further into this, this heavenly temple/tabernacle speaks of the Lord Jesus and is an image of the Lord Jesus. Likewise, the temple during the Millennial Kingdom will probably speak of the Lord Jesus and be an image of Him.

5. Israel lives forever in its land. Because of world peace, no one will attack Israel, and the Jews will live safely in their land.

Also your people shall all be righteous; They shall inherit the land forever, The branch of My planting, The work of My hands, That I may be glorified. (Isaiah 60:21)

The Earth is Restored

Today, we live in a fallen world. We recognize this through people doing terrible things. Consider, for example, all the wars, shootings, beatings, corruption, and deceit. Because of Adam and Eve's sin, not only humans but all of creation also fell. Animals attack other animals and humans; some animals are poisonous, so one bite causes physical discomfort or death. Creation is also restored during the Millennial Kingdom, and the animal world no longer attacks each other.

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. (Isaiah 11:6-8)

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, The lion shall eat straw like the ox, And dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, says the Lord. (Isaiah 65:25)

Beyond the animal world, God is solving our climate crisis. More recently, man has realized that he must take good care of the climate. As a result, energy sources are becoming more sustainable, and we see more and more solar panels and windmills. Awareness of the environment and being suitable to nature isn't bad, but man alone will fail to solve the climate crisis. Fortunately, God will solve it for us during the Millennial Kingdom as He restores the earth.

The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. (Isaiah 35:1)

I will open rivers in desolate heights, And fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, And the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar and the acacia tree, The myrtle and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the cypress tree and the pine And the box tree together, That they may see and know, And consider and understand together, That the hand of the Lord has done this, And the Holy One of Israel has created it. (Isaiah 41:18-20)

For the Lord will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, And her desert like the garden of the Lord; Joy and gladness will be found in it, Thanksgiving and the voice of melody. (Isaiah 51:3)

The End of the Millennial Kingdom

The texts above are lovely, and you would argue that things couldn't be more beautiful. Nevertheless, the millennial Kingdom is ending because God orders it. Don't panic! Something more beautiful will come in return! Only a few essential things happen before the new one comes.

1. The devil is imprisoned for a thousand years before the Millennial Kingdom. God decides that he will be released from his captivity shortly after the millennial Kingdom. The devil immediately does what he knows best: he starts deceiving people.

Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. (Revelation 20:7-8)

The devil will deceive many people. Their number will be like the sea sand, which shows a countless number of people. It hurts and saddens me that man is so quick to allow himself to be deceived. For a thousand years, they lived together with God, and yet they allowed themselves to be deceived by the devil to make war. Most people do not even know about war and weapons since there has been peace for a thousand years. Why does God unleash the devil when He knows this is the consequence? During the Millennial Kingdom, some people listened to God and the Lord Jesus; however, their conviction and submission were fake. They don't want to obey God. God wants to give everyone a choice: will you choose me? People living in the millennial Kingdom will also face this choice. Do we listen to God or the devil? Adam and Eve chose the devil at the very beginning of creation. You would think that man has learned something from history and life with God, but nothing could be further from the truth. Many choose the devil and go to war.

2. A final war is approaching, during which many people will fight against God, the Lord Jesus, and His saints. The people of the previous point are deceived and think they can defeat God. We are going to read what will happen. Will it be a tight race?

They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. (Revelation 20:9)

No! Fire from God falls on the earth and devours them. God is many times more powerful than men and the devil. God has won, and every man has made his own decision: live with or without God.

3. The devil gets his eternal punishment, and that is the lake of fire and brimstone. I don't know how to envision hell. The Bible mentions continuous torment—day and night and a fire that will never go out (Mark 9:43-44). It will not be a nice place to be in, let alone an eternal destination for the devil and his followers.

The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Revelation 20:10)

4. A final judgment is coming before the new heavens and new earth appear. The followers of Jesus aren't subject to this judgment. This judgment concerns only the dead, that is, those who have remained spiritually dead and do not believe in God and His Son. They receive a fair judgment from the Lord Jesus, and no one would earn acquittal by their deeds. Everyone who appears before this judgment will perish, and there will be no turning back. Before the judgment is passed, earth and heaven will flee away, and they will be no more.

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-15)

Every dead person is judged and tossed into the lake of fire. This is the same place into which the devil is cast with his henchmen and is an eternal abode. The only ones who escape this are those written down in the Book of Life. These are the followers of Jesus. Thanks to the sacrifice of Jesus, they will not be cast into the lake of fire but will participate in the new heaven and the new earth.

Summary

The Millennial Kingdom is a physical kingdom on Earth. During this Kingdom, the Lord Jesus reigns over the earth with His followers, and the devil is imprisoned and unable to deceive people anymore. The people in this Kingdom are more blessed than we are; for example, they become a thousand years old and live without war. In addition, nature and animals will be restored, and Israel and Jerusalem will become the earth's center. The Kingdom ends because God releases the devil, and the devil deceives the people. They engage in battle with God, and God destroys them with fire. While unbelievers are cast into hell, believers enter eternity with God.

A FOLLOWER OF JESUS

Now that we have covered all these topics and the blessings of God, there is only one question left. Do you want to become a follower of Jesus so you can become a blessed son or daughter of God? You may have already made this choice. If so, I hope this book has been a revelation to you. Maybe you still need to make a choice. Know that everyone can and may come to Jesus. It doesn't matter what you have done wrong: Jesus wants you to become a child of God—but how do you become a child of God?

The Gospel of God

The Bible refers to the gospel of God. Gospel means good news, but why is this good news? And does this good news follow bad news?

Bad News

The Bible says that everyone has sinned. This implies that everyone has acted in naughty and incorrect ways. This could include a mass murderer who committed an attack, but also someone who stole candy from grandma's closet or lied to his wife. Everyone has sinned, and therefore, no one can come to God in their strength (Romans 3:23).

The Bible teaches us that Adam and Eve, the first two humans, walked with God. It was perfect, and they had a beautiful relationship with God. But Adam and Eve decided to do wrong. They did not listen to God, so Adam and Eve could no longer walk with God. God is so good and holy that anything that comes near Him that is not good and holy falls dead immediately. In other words, it had become impossible for Adam and Eve to walk with God, and so it is also impossible for us to walk with God. Finally, sin has significant consequences. Sin must be condemned because otherwise, there is no justice. Today, we see injustice happening everywhere. Murderers, thieves, rapists, and swindlers come before the judge, and the judge decides the punishment they must bear. Thus, after death, everyone comes before the Divine Judge. Jesus condemns sin, and since Jesus and God the Father

are good and holy, every sin is subject to eternal punishment full of pain and sorrow (Romans 6:23 and Revelation 20:11-15).

Good News

However, the story doesn't stop with the previous sentence because God Himself (the Lord Jesus) has provided a just solution through which the penalty of sin is paid, and people have a hopeful future. In other words, Jesus is both a righteous and gracious Judge simultaneously.

Jesus did the following: He set aside His divinity and entered the world as a man (Philippians 2:6-7). In the world, the Lord Jesus did everything right: He did not sin (Hebrews 4:15). This means that the Lord Jesus does not deserve punishment and may "just walk" with God the Father, as Adam and Eve did in the garden. But the Lord Jesus considered man and decided to bear the penalty of sin for all men so that man would no longer have to do this themselves. The Lord Jesus had Himself crucified and died on the cross. At that point, the Lord Jesus bore the penalty of sin (Ephesians 1:7-8). Then, the Lord Jesus rose from the dead and was given control over who would be judged and who would walk with God. In other words, people no longer have to suffer eternal punishment but may walk with God.

Your Choice

God gives man the choice to utilize the payment of the Lord Jesus. Anyone who believes that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God and trusts in the work of the Lord Jesus does not have to bear the penalty of sin (Romans 3:23-27). However, anyone who does not believe in the Lord Jesus is already condemned (John 3:18). God wants no one to be condemned but everyone to walk with Him. God says, "Come!" What are you doing? (2 Peter 3:9 and Revelation 22:17.)

I Want to Follow Jesus!

The Bible says, "If your mouth confesses that Jesus is Lord and your heart believes that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9, NBV). It helps to pray to God in faith, and I want to help you with a simple sample prayer that you may say out loud:

Father in heaven,
I have made mistakes, and I have sinned against You. I am unable to come to You on my own strength. I believe and trust in the work of the Lord Jesus, and I believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Will You forgive me for all my faults and sins? And will You come and live in me and help me to live a good life? Lord Jesus, teach me to follow and obey You, and thank You for allowing me to become a child of the Most High God!
In the name of Jesus, Amen.

If you have prayed this with a faithful heart, you have become a child of God now! Getting to know God better and believing in the Lord Jesus is essential. You do this mainly by reading the Word of God because this is where the stories and texts describe God and show what God does. In addition, we worship a living God, meaning God wants to speak to us. You do this in your quiet time. Also, find a church near you and seek out Christians. They can help you with your questions about God and the Bible. Also, we should know that a follower of Jesus is always growing. If you have prayed the sample prayer, you have begun your beautiful walk with God here on earth. In addition, it is essential to be baptized.

LIVING GOSPEL

In this chapter, I want to tell you about myself and Living Gospel.

Who Am I?

My name is Timo Groot, and I grew up in a Christian family. From childhood, I attended several evangelical churches, where I experienced many beautiful sermons, good testimonies, and fellowship with my dear brothers and sisters. But the best part is that God moves in the churches and works through sermons, testimonies, and contacts! In my life, I have experienced and discovered God in various ways.

At the moment, I am working alone on this ministry and the books. Since the age of eight, I have experienced the Holy Spirit leading me to study the Bible. That year, I had read the Bible entirely for the first time, and as time passed, I read it a few more times. I have a love for God and God's Word, and I want to share God's Word with anyone interested. Many who read the book think I am an older man with his whole life behind him. This isn't the case. You may think I am old, but I was only born in 1999. I do everything voluntarily and have a part-time job besides everything I do for Living Gospel. I desire to build God's Kingdom full-time, and that time is bound to come! I want to see the world changed and for the world to be overflowing with the knowledge and power of God. People need Jesus, but many don't know it yet. With God's power, I want to reach people so that they make a radical choice for Jesus. In addition, I want to train people to evangelize and walk in God's kingdom.

Currently, I make videos with a Biblical topic and write books on Biblical topics. In these tasks, I see that God's Word is more relevant today than ever, and we have a God of miracles, and His love extends to all people. I desire to reach people with the Word of God and show that God is a living God working in believers today, as Mark 16 tells us.

And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no

means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. (Mark 16:17-18)

Origin and Social Media

Living Gospel was established in April 2020. We have since reached hundreds of thousands by teaching the Gospel of God through Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and the website www.TheLivingGospel.org. We look forward to the future and what God will do for the world!

You can watch Living Gospel through the following channels.

Website

On the website www.TheLivingGospel.org you will discover God's Word and see that the Bible is relevant today. On this website, you can watch videos and read Bible studies. While making the videos and Bible studies, I assume that God's Word is one hundred percent inspired by the Holy Spirit and that every Bible text can be used to learn from and educate us to live a good life. I hope this website will make you grow in faith and get to know God as He reveals Himself in the Bible. You can also find my books on the website.

YouTube

Living Gospel videos are available on YouTube. YouTube is the first channel where I started posting videos, and you can find an overview of all my videos here.

Facebook

Living Gospel has its own Facebook page! All videos are posted on this Facebook page, and it is possible to get in touch with me. You can find my page on Facebook via the link on my website.

Instagram

Instagram is also an option to follow me. All Living Gospel videos are posted on Instagram, and I send short messages and images of current events and encouraging quotes from the Word of God.

TikTok

Short videos about faith and the Bible appear on TikTok, and you receive short, encouraging quotes.

E-mail

For questions, comments, or words of encouragement, please use the e-mail address info@TheLivingGospel.org.

Vision, Goals, and Working Together

Living Gospel's vision is to ensure that you live in God's perfect grace, distribute God's grace to those around you, and live in God's perfect will and calling.

Grace: I mean all of God's gifts of grace, including:

- Forgiveness
- Redemption and righteousness
- Being in Christ
- Intimacy with God
- Baptism and fruits of the Holy Spirit
- Deliverance (Being free from demonic powers)
- Healing
- Provision and prosperity
- Speaking in tongues
- A life in authority.

Perfect will and calling: This is God's specific calling and plan for your life. Living Gospel wants to teach and train you to know and carry out God's plan for your life. This is achieved by:

- Uploading short Bible study videos.
- Written Bible studies and Bible subjects on the website, Biblical Characters, and commentaries on the books of the Bible.
- Writing books on Bible topics and commentaries.
- Using social media channels to spread God's word.

Are you blessed by this (e-)book and want to help me reach and equip many more people with the Gospel of God? Then, become a Living Gospel partner or make a one-time donation. Becoming

a partner can help build God's kingdom and reach people with the Gospel of God. Give your gift through the following link.

www.TheLivingGospel.org/giving

It is also possible to make a one-time donation. You can do this by using the same link. And, of course, thank you for reading this book. God's blessing!

Book A Revelation of the End Times



The Rapture of the Church is a remarkable prophecy from the Word of God. Due to the numerous theories and ideas about this event, many no longer know what is and isn't biblical. Timo Groot takes you through the Biblical data on the Rapture and why the Rapture is more relevant today than ever before. The Rapture is the hope of escaping the horrors that will occur on Earth and is the moment when the Church will see the Lord Jesus face to face in the Father's house.

The Second Coming of Christ is often confused with the Rapture. However, these are two different events. This book explains what the Second Coming is and what will happen after His coming. The Lord Jesus will physically return and establish a thousand-year reign on Earth. After reading this book, you will learn and understand future times and look forward to the soon coming of Jesus.

You can order this book at:
www.TheLivingGospel.org/webshop