

A Study of the Kingdom of God I

Fred R. Coulter—September 21, 2013

Greetings, brethren! Welcome to day three of the Feast of Tabernacles, 2013. The whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, reveals the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of God is the most important thing that there is.

We are told in Matt. 6:33 to ‘seek first the Kingdom of God.’ That’s the whole focus of what we need to be doing. That’s the whole reason that we are here for the Feast of Tabernacles, so that we can learn of the Kingdom of God and understand:

- what it is
- what it’s going to be
- how it functions in our life today
- how we will function as kings and priests, rulers and teachers in the Kingdom of God when Jesus returns

Let’s begin in Acts 20, because here we’re going to see something very interesting, and also one of the reasons why Protestantism has it so wrong. I want to remind you that on Church at Home [churchathome.org] we have an extended series of 21 half-hour presentations of *What is the Kingdom of God?* Protestantism, on the other hand, thinks that everything in the New Testament is just about the grace of God. Well, the truth is that the grace of God is *part of* proclaiming the Kingdom of God, but it is not all that there is.

Paul was going back to Jerusalem and he came by Miletus and he called for the elders to be there. He witnessed to them and told them that he was going to Jerusalem and he wanted to leave them with a lasting memory, and for them to understand what they had to do in feeding the flock, and also to remind them that the Church of God *is God’s*, not theirs!

Acts 20:22: “And now behold, I am bound in the spirit, *and* am going to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall happen to me there; except that the Holy Spirit fully testifies in every city, saying that bonds and tribulations await me. But I myself do not take any *of these* things into account, nor do I hold my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to fully testify the Gospel of the grace of God” (vs 22-24).

When you read that, that’s very interesting. The Protestants want the grace of God, the love of God, but they leave off the Kingdom of God and the rule of God. Therefore, they have accepted many false doctrines such as ‘going to heaven.’ They do

say that Jesus is going to return, but their understanding of it so far off that it really is not worthwhile looking at as far as Truth goes.

Let’s see what else Paul says, because this becomes very important for us to realized, v 25: “And now behold, I know that you all, among whom I have gone about proclaiming the Kingdom of God, will see my face no more.” From that comes the Gospel of Grace, because that’s part of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

This fills the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and how it’s going to come to serve mankind. But beginning with Adam and Eve, they wanted to *decide for themselves* what was good and evil so they ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Therefore, they cut themselves off from God and cut all of humanity off from God except those whom God would deal with.

Let’s see what else he says, and this tells us something also interesting concerning the Churches of God, v 26: “Wherefore I testify to you on this day that I am pure from the blood of all, for I have not held back from preaching to you all the counsel of God” (vs 26-27).

Isn’t that interesting? What did we cover—on Trumpets—about Ezek. 33? That if we don’t warn, if we don’t teach, the blood of those that God is going to correct will fall on the messenger. Here Paul is saying that he is “...pure from the blood of all, for I have not held back from preaching to you all the counsel of God.” He didn’t leave anything out:

- preached the Truth
- preached righteousness

showed about

- repentance
- conversion
- baptism
- loving God
- walking in faith
- believing in hope
- living in love

All of that Paul taught them! Notice that he gives a warning, and this is very interesting here, too:

Verse 28: “Take heed, therefore, to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, **to feed the Church of God**, which He purchased with His own blood.”

Every minister and elder, all those serving the people, *the brethren belong to God!* God has given the Holy Spirit to them. Our job is to do like Paul did: teach, give the full council of God, warn when there are problems and difficulties. But the main thrust of everything that we do, in order to not deviate from what Jesus taught and from what we find in the Bible, is to understand that it is all wrapped up in the Kingdom of God. Everything comes right back to that place.

Let's see what he says, because he knew what was going to happen. We lived through this very similarly ourselves—haven't we? Verse 29: "For I know this: that after my departure grievous wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will rise up speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves.... [so, he tells them]: ...Watch, therefore..." (vs 29-31). That's what we need to do while:

- while we're growing in grace and knowledge
- while we're learning and overcoming
- while we're developing the character traits so we can be:
 - ✓ the kings and priests
 - ✓ leaders and teachers

in the Kingdom of God under Jesus Christ. We all have to watch ourselves, but especially those who are teaching the brethren. We are to teach the brethren so they can attain to the Kingdom of God. The brethren have their own independent relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit of God.

We are like coaches on the sideline. The coach is the one who gets all the players to do what they need to do, but the players have to do all the work and exercise what they need to do. Similarly, in teaching the brethren.

We have to be careful, v 31: "Watch, therefore, remembering that *for* three years I ceased not to admonish each one night and day with tears. And now I commit you, brethren, to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (vs 31-32). That's quite a farewell address—isn't it? It emphasizes the point that the Kingdom of God preaches:

- the rule of God
- the Spirit of God
- the forgiveness of God
- the grace of God
- the faith of God
- the Word of God

All of that! The Kingdom of God, or as Matthew mostly says, 'the Kingdom of Heaven.'

Again, with that there has been a difficulty with the churches in the world, especially the Catholic Church. What they do is say that the Kingdom of Heaven is 'where we're going to go when we die. The Kingdom of God is on the earth, and that is the Roman Catholic Church!'

I seem to remember a man who was the leader of the Church who kept saying that 'if the Catholics ever had anything right, it is church government.' Really? *They don't have it right!* We're all to be servants, as Jesus said.

Now let's see some things concerning some other Scriptures. Let's first of all understand: What does it mean that the Kingdom of God is in the midst of you?

Let's understand how many times Jesus said that the Kingdom of God is not going to come with observation. He also told that if 'He's in the desert, come and see'; don't go there. 'He's in secret chambers somewhere; don't believe it' (Matt. 24). Christ is going to return in power, so it isn't going to come by observation.

Luke 17:20: "Now, when the Pharisees demanded *of Him* when the Kingdom of God would come..." This is interesting because the Sadducees and Pharisees expected the Messiah, so they're testing Him if He is the Messiah or not. They expected the Messiah to unite *with them*, and come into *their* political structure and into *their* structure of the priesthood. *Not so!* This is why they demanded to know, because they wanted to know: Are you the Messiah or not?

They wanted to know when the Kingdom of God would come, and "...He answered them and said, 'The Kingdom of God does not come with observation'" (v 20). You are not going to be observing and all of a sudden find it. No, it doesn't come that way!

Verse 21: "Neither shall they say, 'Behold, *it is here!*'" or, 'Behold, *it is there!*' For behold, the Kingdom of God is *standing* in the midst of you."

Here is the key verse that is completely misunderstood, and the Protestants say, 'the Kingdom of God is in your heart,' because the *King James Version* says the Kingdom of God is 'in the midst of you.' That doesn't mean *within your heart*. Never, *never* does the Bible say that! Here is the correct translation: "...For behold, the Kingdom of God is *standing* in the midst of you."

What does that mean? ***Jesus is the King of the Kingdom of God! He was the One and only true Representative of the Kingdom of God on earth, directly sent from God the Father!*** Therefore, whatever He did was under the auspices of the Kingdom of God:

- everything connected with preaching the Gospel
- everything connected with bringing the New Covenant
- everything connected with revealing the Father

All of those are the activity of the Representative of the Kingdom of God; Who, at that time, was Jesus. Remember what Pilate said to Jesus, ‘Are You a king?’ He said, ‘It is as you say! For this reason I was born, and for this reason I came into the world. But My kingdom is not from here’—this world. *It’s not of the world!* It’s going to come from God the Father and Jesus Christ out the heavens. So, this is very important for us to understand.

Now Jesus clarifies it for them: “...For behold, the Kingdom of God is *standing* in the midst of you” (v 21). In the middle; it the midst because they were all around Him wanting to know.

Verse 22: “Then He said to the disciples... [after the scribes and Pharisees were no longer there] ...‘*The days will come when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and shall not see it. And they shall say to you, “Look here,” or “Look there.” Do not go, neither follow them. For as the light of day, whose light shines from one end under heaven to the other end under heaven, so also shall the Son of man be in His day.... [that is the day that He returns from heaven] ...But first it is necessary for Him to suffer many things and to be rejected by this generation”* (vs 22-25).

Whenever Jesus healed or cast out demons, the Kingdom of God has come upon that person, individual or those involved; because this is the action of Jesus Christ the Messiah Who came, not to do His own will, but the will of the Father Who sent Him. Jesus said, ‘Of Myself I can do nothing!’

The Greek is very interesting here, because ‘from’ is the Greek word ‘ek’—meaning *out from*. In other words, Jesus did not use His own inner ability—which He had; He did not use His own thoughts—which He had; but *everything was coming from the Father*, and He did *nothing* except as He saw how the Father did, was taught by the Father to carry out the will of God on the earth. Whenever He healed someone, whenever He cast out demons, the Spirit of God—and Christ in person—*brought the power of the Kingdom of God* as a foretaste at that

particular time.

After they accused Him of casting out demons by Beelzebub, He said He didn’t, but: Matthew 12:28: “But if I by *the* Spirit of God cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you.” That’s really interesting. It’s upon the one whom the demon is cast out, and upon those who saw it, because they saw the action of the Kingdom of God in the person of Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit.

Let’s see how the Apostle Paul applies that to us who have been called, repented, baptized and received the Holy Spirit of God. We are under the jurisdiction of the Kingdom of God, but we are not *in* the Kingdom of God. Christ has not brought us to the earth, yet.

So, let’s see what Paul wrote. This is very profound for us to understand. This is why we need to be faithful to the end. This is why we need to love God.

- God is the One Who has called us!
- God is the One Who has brought us out of all the difficulties of our lives!

There was a day in our life, before we were converted—there is a point where each one of us said, ‘O God, where are You? Help me!’ In one form or another, maybe not exactly those words. But what happens after we are baptized and receive the Holy Spirit.

Colossians 1:1—Paul always starts out this way, and then he gives a blessing from God: “Paul, an apostle by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ *who are* in Colossi...” (vs 1-2). This then is written and preserved for us, so it’s to all the saints and faithful wherever they are in the world These are the words of God that are Spirit and Life, inspired by Jesus Christ and God the Father.

“...Grace and peace *be* to you from God our Father and *the* Lord Jesus Christ” (v 2). Never forget that! We have direct connection *spiritually* with God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Verse 3: “We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying for you continually.” He knew that everything they were doing and understood—even though he taught them—came from God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Verse 4: “Since hearing of your faith in Christ Jesus, and the love that you *have* toward all the saints; because of the hope that *is* laid up for you in heaven... [we’re not going to receive our reward until Christ returns] ... which you heard before in the

Word of the Truth of the Gospel” (vs 4-5).

The Gospel, as we’ve pointed out, of the Kingdom of God covers everything necessary so that we can—through repentance, conversion, receiving the Holy Spirit, growing and overcoming, develop, build the character of God—enter into the Kingdom of God. That’s why Jesus said to ‘seek first the Kingdom of God.’ We’re to do that everyday! Remember what the model prayer is? What is the first thing that we say? *Our Father Who is in heaven, Holy is Your name! Your kingdom come! Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.*’ On earth means *in our lives*, showing that we’re always to look toward the Kingdom of God. That’s why we keep the Feast of Tabernacles, because this shows when we will be doing what we are being trained for.

Isn’t that a marvelous thing? The world doesn’t know us! They don’t care if we live or die! There may be some people who care whether we live or die, but as far as the world is concerned, they don’t care. But God is doing a work in each one of us to prepare us to rule and reign with Christ. As we saw yesterday [day two of the FOT], the throne is established by love and Truth.

Verse 6: “Which has come to you, even as *it* also *has* in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, just as *it is* among you, from the day that you heard and knew the grace of God in Truth.” See how it’s all wrapped together here. We need to understand that.

Verse 7: “Even as you also learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ for you.” Again, showing the ministry is teaching, loving, helping, feeding, serving.

Verse 8: “Who has also informed us of your love in *the* Spirit. For this cause we also, from the day that we heard *of it*, do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (vs 8-9). This shows how we are to grow in grace and knowledge and the fullness of God’s way. In doing that, God is writing His laws and commandments, His Word, love and faith on the inward parts of our mind—in *our hearts!*

Verse 10: “That you may walk worthily of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God.” That’s what it is today. Remember, the whole Bible was never available to English-speaking people until William Tyndale started translating it. It was always locked up in the churches. The people could never read it; they never understood it in the worldly

churches. Down through time, the people of God had various parts of the Bible, but we have the whole Bible. We have, in addition to that, everything we need to know. A lot of those past histories that we need to understand are readily available today; which weren’t available as they are now, even 20 years ago. Everything that God wants us to know, have and understand is being revealed. That’s profound!

Here’s what we need to do: Instead of being weak, dead, duplicitous, serving idols, eating things sacrificed to idols—as the warnings were (Rev. 2 & 3)—here is what we are to be doing:

Verse 11: “Being strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory, unto all endurance and long-suffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father...” (vs 11-12). Notice that Paul never turned them to him. The most he ever did in that was to say, ‘Follow me as I follow Christ.’

“...Who has made us qualified...” (v 12). The *Father* is making us qualified. I tell you, that is great! Think of it! That God the Father Himself

- *loves you*
- *has called you*
- *is teaching you*

Christ is our High Priest; He is our Savior; He is coming as King to rule over the whole world; He has called us to rule with Him! That’s the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

But now we are going to see that we are under the jurisdiction of the Kingdom of God. We are not of the world, as Jesus said. Jesus said that ‘they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.’ How is that, though we live in the world? We have the *Holy Spirit of God and our lives are dedicated to God!*

Verse 12: “Giving thanks to the Father Who has made us qualified for the share of the inheritance of the saints in the light... [notice what God has done for each of us]: ...Who has personally rescued us from the power of darkness and has transferred *us* unto the Kingdom of the Son of His love” (vs 12-13). That means that we’re under the jurisdiction of the Kingdom of God, which means:

- the laws of God
- the love of God
- the faith of God
- the grace of God

All of those things apply to us!

Yes, in the world we’re to live in the world and be an example. Yes, we are to understand what’s happening in the world. Yes, we are to be witnesses

to the world and to others. All of those things apply. But I want you to know and understand that since you have the Spirit of God *you* are under the jurisdiction of God the Father and Jesus Christ, and are *spiritually responsible!*

It comes through Jesus Christ, v 14: “In Whom we have redemption through His own blood, *even* the remission of sins.” That’s why every day we are to ask God to forgive us. What does it say in Psa. 103? *He heals all of our diseases and all of our sicknesses and forgives all of our sins and removes them as far as the east is from the west!* That’s how we stand before God! All of that is through the jurisdiction of the Kingdom of God through the power of the Holy Spirit given to each one of us. That’s really quite a thing when we understand it.

We’re going to do some surveying in the book of Matthew, because Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are the Gospels. I think if you would get out a concordance and do a word search, you would see that the Kingdom of God is talked about over and over and over again. This is the preaching of the Gospel, and it begins with John.

John the Baptist

Matthew 3:1: “Now, in those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, ‘Repent, for **the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand**’” (vs 1-2). The Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God are used interchangeably by Matthew. He uses Kingdom of Heaven more than he does the Kingdom of God.

John was the one preparing the way for Jesus Christ. He makes it clear, v 3: “For this is he who was spoken of by Isaiah the prophet, saying, ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness, “Prepare the way of *the* Lord, make straight His paths.”’” So, the full authority of that preaching came from God.

You go back and remember what happened concerning the birth of John the Baptist. He was the son of Zacharias who was a priest, and his wife Elizabeth was also from the tribe of Levi. They were old and didn’t have any children. Gabriel came and told Zacharias that he was going to have a son. He didn’t believe Gabriel, so he was mute from that time forward until after the circumcision of John the Baptist.

Think about what it was like in those days. How many people were at the temple when he came out and couldn’t speak, going through everything to let them know, and they perceived that he had a vision. Imagine what he had to tell Elizabeth when he got home. He had to write the whole story out and she read that and said, ‘Really?’ They were

probably both in their 70s.

Being a closed close community, don’t you know that everyone knew about this? Don’t you think that all during the nine months that Elizabeth was pregnant that they were talking about how he could not speak? *Yes!* So, when John was born they knew this was a miracle birth, but they didn’t know what was going to happen. John remained with his family in the wilderness until the day of his appearing.

- Don’t you think that all the priests and all the Levites were talking about this?
- Where is his son?
- Why is he not up here learning how to be a priest?
- Remember how he was born?
- Remember his wife was over 70-years-old when she gave birth?
- Is that right?
- *Yes! This is a sign from God!*

Now he appears preaching repentance, because the Kingdom of God is near at hand.

Jesus Christ

Jesus was preaching the Kingdom of God all the way through and after His temptation by Satan the devil and after He recuperated from that, let’s see what happens:

Sidebar: How many things say that it is fulfilled by the Prophet? A lot of the things concerning Jesus Christ came from the Prophet Isaiah. But remember that in the Old Testament everything is ‘line upon line; precept upon precept; here a little, there a little.’ There is no direct story flow or time chronology, because you have some verses that talk about the first coming of Christ and then His second coming right in the next verse or next couple of verses.

So, everyone was waiting for things to happen, because they knew it was near the time, but they didn’t understand it.

Matthew 4:14: “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, saying, ‘The land of Zabulon and the land of Nephthalim, *by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people who were sitting in darkness have seen a great light; and to those who were sitting in the realm and shadow of death, light has sprung up.*’ From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, ‘**Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.**’” (vs 14-17)—because He was bringing it!

- He was bringing the teachings of it
- He was the future King

- He was the representative directly sent by God

Prophesied beforehand, beginning with Moses. Here, too, is, “the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” Then He chose the disciples.

Let’s see what Jesus teaches about the Kingdom of Heaven in Matt. 7. Not anyone can just enter into the Kingdom of God. Even those who *think* that they are religious, and *think* that they are doing good. They can’t just automatically get into the Kingdom of God.

That’s why Jesus, in Matt. 7:13 made it clear. It’s not going to be mass induction into the Kingdom of God. It is going to be difficult. It is going to be by calling. It is not going to be by human effort. We have our effort; we have what we have to contribute. But we first must be following God and then repentance and conversion and receipt of the Holy Spirit, etc.

Here’s what He’s teaching, Matthew 7:13: “Enter in through the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it.” Look at the world, isn’t that what’s happening? *It’s broad! It’s easy! Yes, indeed!*

Verse 14: “For **narrow is the gate and difficult is the way that leads to life...**”

- that’s why we have the difficulties and problems that we do
- that’s why we have the challenges that are confronting us
- that’s why these things come, so that we can learn to have faith in God the Father and Jesus Christ
- that we can learn to do the will of the Father

We’re going to see that’s the most important thing! I’ve been thinking about this ever since the great tornado hit in Oklahoma and tore up the town of Moore. A lot of those people there are good Protestants. They use the name of Jesus. A lot of them will say, ‘I prayed to Jesus and He saved me.’ Probably did, because they’re not against Him; they are for Him.

However, *they are not taught the Truth of God!* They are not converted, because if they were converted they would be keeping the laws and commandments of God and the will of the Father.

It’s not that we are good that God calls us. It is that we’re probably very troubled and not good. That’s why God calls us! Maybe they [Protestants] have the ‘Job syndrome’; that they’re self-righteous

and they think that they are good. Well, sooner or later they’re going to have to learn.

“...and few are those who find it. But beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, for within *they* are ravening wolves. You shall know them by their fruits....” (vs 14-16)—the fruits of God! They may be nice, kind, considerate, but unless they keep the Sabbath and Holy Days of God, as well as the other laws of God, they can be as good as they can be, but that is not of God.

“...They do not gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles, do they?... [No they don’t; they don’t do that.] ...In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a corrupt tree produces evil fruit” (vs 16-17). And look at the result now of Protestantism today.

Verse 18: “A good tree cannot produce evil fruit, nor can a corrupt tree produce good fruit. Every tree *that is* not producing good fruit is cut down and is cast into the fire” (vs 18-19). Don’t you think that’s happening today to a lot of those Christian-professing, Sunday-keeping, holiday-keeping churches? *Yes, indeed!*

Verse 20: “Therefore, you shall assuredly know them by their fruits.”

Here’s a key verse we all need to understand. It’s applied to those who are false prophets, but let’s apply it to ourselves: Verse 21: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’...” Remember, all those people there in Judea and Galilee, it was a Sabbath/Holy Day-keeping nation. Even in keeping some of those things, if you’re not really converted, and you’re out doing it all on your own without the Spirit of God, then they’re not going to enter into the Kingdom of God.

“...shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven... [this is one of the most profound sentences in the New Testament]: **...but the one who is doing the will of My Father Who is in heaven**” (v 21). We need to do the will of God.

Let’s see something very interesting about what Jesus said. Let’s understand this very carefully, so that you can get the setting: Jesus was teaching in the temple. There were a lot of Jews who supposedly believed on Him. Jesus was telling them some of the things that were going to take place. They came to the temple because they wanted to do ‘good,’ and considered themselves ‘good.’ But unless you’re converted and have *circumcision of the heart* you have not done ‘good.’ You have done human good, but can human good get you into the Kingdom of God? *No!*

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What we're going to see is that Jesus was saying the same thing to those who were at the temple; those who were practicing Jews. They would come to the temple, they would do their works, they would do whatever they had to do. They thought: 'because we come to the temple, we're God's people.'

They may have been through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but to be God's people with the New Covenant is an entirely different matter. Let's see what Jesus said:

John 8:23: "And He said to them, 'You are from beneath... [they didn't countenance to that very well] ...I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. That is why I said to you that you shall die in your sins...' (vs 23-24). Wait a minute! Weren't they there practicing righteousness, supposedly, at the temple? God wants the righteousness *within*; He wants the conversion *within*. You must receive the Holy Spirit to do it. That's the whole message of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, the Gospel of Grace!

Let's see what else Jesus said. This is important to understand: "...for if you do not believe that I AM... [they understood what that meant] ...you shall die in your sins" (v 24).

The Jews were taken aback from this and, v 25: "Then they said to Him, 'Who are You?' And Jesus said to them, 'The one that I said to you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge concerning you... [Jesus always judged *righteous judgment*; He said that in John 7—*judge righteous judgment!*] ...but He Who sent Me is true, and what I have heard from Him, these things I speak to the world.' *But* they did not know that He was speaking to them of the Father" (vs 25-27). Jesus came to *reveal the Father* personally to all of those whom He calls. This is really something that we need to understand. They still didn't get it.

Verse 28: "Then Jesus said to them, 'When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you yourselves shall know that I AM...'—because of all the prophecies that is in the Old Testament they *you have*, which, 'if you would believe, you would know that I AM.'

"...and *that* I do nothing of Myself. But as the Father taught Me, these things I speak..." (v 28). Not only is that a tremendous revelation from Jesus Christ to them, but it's also instructive to all of us. Do we do what the Father has inspired and taught. Are we responding to the calling of God the Father Who has personally 'rescued us from the

power of darkness'?

Brethren, it is so fantastic and marvelous for the Kingdom of God to be over us. We're not in it, because *flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God*, as Paul wrote, but we are under the jurisdiction of the Kingdom of God, because we have

- the Spirit of the Father
- the Spirit of the Son
- the Word of God

and we are to do the things that God says! They didn't understand that. They didn't know who He was, or who the Father was.

Verse 29: "And He Who sent Me is with Me. **The Father has not left Me alone because I always do the things that please Him.**" *And so can we*

- through Christ in us
- through the Spirit of God in us

that

- we love God
- we love Jesus Christ
- we keep His commandments
- we love the brethren
- we walk in the ways of God

That's pleasing to God. Look at what's happening in the world. Look at the way the world is going. Then God looks down here and there are His people. That's how God needs to view it. "...**because I always do the things that please Him.**"

We can do that. Here at that Feast of Tabernacles, keeping the Feast of Tabernacles:

- to love God
- to learn of His way
- to love the brethren
- to fellowship together

That is pleasing to God. Remember this, Jesus said that where 'two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am in the midst.' Brethren, we're important to God. Not because of who we are of ourselves, but because of what God is doing in our lives. *He always speaks those things, always does the things that please Him!*

Verse 30: "As He spoke these things, many believed in Him." Oh yes, those are good sounding words. So, they believed!

Verse 31: "Therefore, Jesus... [gave them a test] ...said to the Jews who had believed in Him, '**If ... [there are always conditions] ...you continue in My Word, you are truly My disciples.**'" Something happens as we grow in grace and

knowledge, as we grow in understanding, as we learn more from the Word of God. And the Word of God is layered and layered with so many things in it that every time we read it, we learn new things from it, even though we may have read it over dozens and hundred of times.

Verse 32: **“And you shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall set you free.”**

- the Truth of human nature
- the Truth of repentance
- the Truth of baptism
- the Truth of conversion
- the Truth of the grace of God
- the Truth of the love of God

You shall know the Truth! Living in these last days we will be wise to understand the Scriptures. Not because of who we are, but because of who Jesus Christ is and God the Father is. That is the Gospel of the Kingdom of God! Now what did they do?

“...you shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall set you free.”

- set you free from sin
- set you free from Satan the devil
- set you free from the lies that have just enveloped this whole world

As we spoke of earlier, when Christ returns, He has to break the lock of the deception that Satan has on the world!

Verse 33: “They answered Him, ‘We are Abraham’s seed... [Don’t you know who we are?] ...and have never been in bondage to anyone. What do You mean by saying, “You shall become free?”’ Jesus answered them, ‘Truly, truly I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a servant of sin. And the servant does not live in the house forever; *but* the Son lives forever. Therefore, if the Son shall set you free, you shall truly be free” (vs 33-36).

- free from sin
- free from the world
- free from Satan the devil

We are to be ‘pillars of light’; the ‘salt of the earth’—all of those things together!

Now then, come back to Matt. 7 and let’s read these things again, and let’s understand what it says. It’s not *who* you are, it’s not what *you think* you may be. *It is who you are with God’s Spirit in you*, with a repentant attitude and yielding to God and growing and overcoming in grace and knowledge, preparing for the Kingdom of God! That’s why we’re here at the Feast of Tabernacles.

Matthew 7:21: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; **but the one who is doing the will of My Father Who is in heaven.**” That’s exactly what He said in John 8.

Verse 22: “Many will say to Me in that day... [there’s a judgment day] ...‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy through Your name?...’” How many have used the name of Jesus just like He prophesied would happen: *Many will come in My name saying that I am the Christ, and deceive many.*

Notice what else that they did: “...And *did we not* cast out demons through Your name? And *did we not* perform many works of power through Your name?” (v 22). *We did this, and we did that, Lord. We were for You!* Really?

Notice what Jesus will say because they weren’t doing the will of the Father in heaven above, v 23: “And then I will confess to them, ‘I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who work lawlessness.’” That’s the way it is in the world.

Let’s hope and pray, brethren, that it’s not in our lives and in the Churches of God. How are the Churches of God deceived? *Incrementally, a little at a time*, because they are not diligent in maintaining the relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ! They want the things that are pleasing to the flesh, rather than doing the things that are pleasing to God. Let’s see what Jesus said. Remember, the will of the Father Who is in heaven. You have to be doing it. Let’s carry this forward even more:

Verse 24: “Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and practices them...” It’s the will of the Father and Jesus taught the will of the Father, spoke the will of the Father, always did the things that pleased Him. Those are the words that the Father taught Him to speak. “...everyone who hears these words of Mine and practices them...”: you live by them. That’s why we’re going through and surveying the Kingdom of God in the book of Matthew. There are a lot of lessons here for us, and we need to stick to the wholesome words of Jesus Christ.

“...I will compare him to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock; and the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; but it did not fall, for it was founded upon the rock” (vs 24-25). That’s another way of saying that *nothing can be against you!* IF you yield to God the Father and Jesus Christ

- you will overcome
- you will be building the character
- you will be building the love of God

- will be practicing the Truth and doing the things that please God

What about those who build on the ground, just on the sand?

Verse 26: “And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not practice them...”

- Oh, He didn’t mean that.
- This is not the way we understand it.
- We don’t have to follow the things in the Old Testament
- We’re New Testament Christians.

Really?

If you do not practice them you “...shall be compared to a foolish man...” (v 26). Go back and study the Proverbs concerning the wise and the foolish; the diligent and the lazy, etc.

“...who built his house upon the sand; and the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it” (vs 26-27). They were amazed at His teachings! *I guess so!*

Let’s look at another comparison in Matt. 11. We’re going to see something very interesting here. It’s talking about John the Baptist. John was in prison before he was beheaded and he didn’t know what was going to happen. John the Baptist did not have a clue that his ministry was going to be short and it was going to be stopped. That he would be thrown in prison; that his head would be presented to the daughter of Herodias on a platter. John the Baptist was more righteous than any other man on earth except Christ.

John sent a couple of disciples to find out, ‘Are you really the One we’re looking for,’ because maybe John expected his ministry was going to last a whole lot longer. It didn’t last very long; a little less than a year or maybe a little more than a year.

Matthew 11:4: “Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Go and report to John what you hear and see: *The* blind receive sight, and *the* lame walk; *the* lepers are cleansed, and *the* deaf hear; *the* dead are raised, and *the* poor are evangelized. And blessed is everyone who shall not be offended in Me.’”

I have to give a sermon that I gave a long, long time ago, *Would You Be Offended by Jesus Christ?* Many of the things that Jesus said offended, and today people don’t like to be offended; you have to use ‘politically correct’ words. How about using the words of God? Yes, “...blessed is everyone who shall not be offended in Me.”

Verse 7: “And as they were leaving, Jesus

said to the multitudes concerning John, ‘What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by *the* wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Behold, those who wear soft *clothing* are in kings’ houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and *one* more excellent than a prophet. For this is *he* of whom it is written, “Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who shall prepare Your way before You.” Truly I say to you, there has not arisen among *those* born of women *anyone* greater than John the Baptist. But the one who *is* least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he” (vs 7-11).

Let’s see what else Jesus said, based upon that. Here’s a difficult verse to understand, which many people don’t understand. This is why they think that Jesus did away with the Law and the Prophets, even though Jesus clearly said in Matt. 5:17. ‘Don’t think—meaning don’t let it enter into your mind—that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill!’ That means *bring it to the full!* Fulfill the prophecies that apply to his life. Bring the Law and commandments of God to their full high spiritual measurement.

Verse 12: “For from the days of John the Baptist until now, **the Kingdom of Heaven is taken with a great struggle...** [Jesus said, ‘Difficult is the way’] ...and *the* zealous *ones* lay hold on it.”

Here is that difficult Scripture, v 13: “For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John.” Hooray! The Law and the Prophets are done away with! NO! No, *no, no!*

Verse 14: “And if you are willing to receive *it*, he is Elijah who was to come.... [then He left them all hanging, by saying]: ...The one who has ears to hear, let him hear” (vs 14-15). How do we understand this, because people turn here and say, ‘Oh, yeah! It was until John. Jesus was after John. All we have to do is follow Jesus.’ But remember, if you don’t have *His Words* dwelling in you, you don’t belong to Him.

Let’s see the parallel account, Luke 16:13: “No servant is able to serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and he will love the other... [sooner or later going to take sides] ...or he will hold to *the* one and will despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” Mammon represents money and all the physical things in the world.

Verse 14: “Now the Pharisees who were also covetous, heard all these things; and they ridiculed Him. And He said to them, ‘You are those who justify themselves before men, but God knows

your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination before God.’ The Law and the Prophets *were* until John; from that time the Kingdom of God is preached, and everyone zealously strives to enter it. But it is easier *for* heaven and earth to pass away... [Are heaven and earth still here? *Yes, indeed!*] ...than *for* one tittle of the Law to fail” (vs 14-17).

He’s upholding it to a higher standard! The higher standard of the laws of God is that which is preached by the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Notice that it has to do with your heart

- must be conversion, circumcision of the heart
- must be repentance and baptism; that’s how circumcision of the heart is applied

It is more binding, not less! As a matter of fact, in the Bible we have one appendices comparing the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. {appendix I}. You will see everything is elevated to a higher level, a spiritual level, an obedience from within. Not just the letter of the law without. That’s the message of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Matthew 13—there’s a lot here. As a matter of fact, I think there are seven parables about the Kingdom of God. We’ve understood many of these things in the past, and we’ll go over them again so that we can understand that there is an absolute dividing line from God’s perspective—and also in our lives—between the world and those who are God’s; those who have the Spirit of God.

He talks about the sower and the Son of man is the sower. The seed is the Word of God. The message goes out and it has varying affects upon varying people, but God sends it out there and we all have to choose. We all have to yield to God. Many don’t!

- Many are excited to hear it!
- Many are excited to know the things that it says!
- Many are excited to understand that we have the Word of God and to hear it said or read!

But do they do it?

Let’s look at some of these parables, and it’s always good for us to go over these things, because it has another impact upon our mind, and gives us greater understanding and helps us yield to God even more.

The disciples wanted to know why He spoke to the multitudes in parables, Matthew 13:11: “And He answered *and* said to them, ‘Because it has been

given to you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it has not been given.’” *Mysteries* means secret, a secret being revealed in the Word of God of the Kingdom of Heaven.

There are many secrets, and God has revealed some of them to us. But we won’t know all of them until we’re resurrected and in the Kingdom of God. Think on that for a little bit! But what we are to know has been given to us to know. “...but to them it has not been given.” It hasn’t been given to the world. Why? Some may say that they’re willing to receive it. But when it gets down to the nitty-gritty, they say, ‘Oh, those are hard words.’ Let’s see what happens here:

Verse 12: “For whoever has *understanding*... [understanding of the will of God] ...to him more shall be given...” That’s why we grow in grace and knowledge and understanding; more will be given. Listen, everything we have comes from God! Given to us

- by revelation
- by Word
- by Spirit—His Spirit within us
- by living God’s way

“...and he shall have an abundance...” (v 12). We’re going to see that in another application of a parable concerning the Kingdom of God.

“...but whoever does not have *understanding*, even what he has shall be taken away from him” (v 12). We see that operating in the worldly Christian churches. That which they have is being taken from them, and they’re all being setup for the final deception of Satan the devil with the one-world religion.

Verse 13: “For this *reason* I speak to them in parables, because seeing, they see not... [How many people have the Bible, read it and don’t understand?] ...and hearing, they hear not...” They’re not willing to listen to what Jesus says when He said, ‘he who has an ear let him hear’; and what Jesus says to all the seven churches: ***‘The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’***

- all of the correction that is given there
- all of the blessings that are given there
- all of the things that He commends the churches for
- and condemns the churches for

‘He who has an ear, let him hear.’ They’re not willing to hear! One of the first things that people come across and everyone comes across this; all of the Sunday-keepers know it: that is the Sabbath/Sunday controversy. When it comes to the

Sabbath: ‘Oh, that was for the Jews! God gave it to set them apart and curse them.’ Not so!

- the Sabbath is a delight
- the Sabbath is a pleasure
- the Sabbath is good
- the Sabbath is what God uses to teach us:
 - ✓ to give us understanding
 - ✓ to reveal the things concerning the Kingdom of God

“...neither do they understand” (v 13). Then they get involved with their worldly pursuits and everything is gone.

Verse 14: “And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, ‘In hearing you shall hear, and in no way understand; and *in* seeing you shall see, and in no way perceive; for the heart of this people has grown fat...” (vs 14-15).

Let’s talk about the heart for just a little bit. We are to understand with the heart. We are to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and being. God is the heart-knowing God. He has given His Spirit to us!

“...and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed...” (v 15). Listen, this is explaining the choices that they have made. They don’t want to listen and they don’t want to see.

“...lest they should see with their eyes, and should hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them” (v 15). The Protestants ought to read that very carefully, because they think that they have to go out and convert the world, which they should be doing. But they need to do it *God’s way* and not *their way*. They think that if you are not converted—a lot of them think this in predestination—in this life, you are going to burn in hell forever and ever!

Remember what Jesus told the Laodiceans, because they were lukewarm: ‘I wish that you were hot or cold, therefore, be zealous and repent!’ God is letting them close their eyes and their ears, and He is not calling them to conversion at this time; He is putting them into the grave for the second resurrection. Think what is going to happen when they’re resurrected and they say, ‘Oh, I saw Jesus. I heard Him speak. But I was too busy and didn’t have time, I had to go my way.’

Amazing! That’s why the first resurrection is so good. But notice, v 16: “But blessed *are* your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. For truly I say to you, many prophets and righteous *men* have desired to see what you see, and have not seen; and to hear what you hear, and have

not heard” (vs 16-17).

Brethren, that’s how it is with us! That’s why we need to

- yield to God
- use the Spirit of God
- always be in an attitude of repentance:
 - ✓ changing
 - ✓ growing
 - ✓ overcoming
 - ✓ preparing for the Kingdom
 - ✓ preparing for what God has for us
 - ✓ developing the mind of Christ and the character of God.

Now then, He explains the parable, v 18: “Therefore, hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the Word of the Kingdom and does not understand *it*, the wicked one comes and snatches away that which was sown in his heart. This is the one who was sown by the way” (vs 18-19). Missed the ground! Isn’t that the way it is? Look at it! Satan comes and takes it away! Snatches it away!

He will let people have some of it, if they follow him and keep Sunday, Easter, New Years, Christmas, Halloween and all this sort of thing. He will let them use the name of Jesus and come to church on Sunday. Isn’t that wonderful? ‘We’re such nice people.’

Verse 20: “Now, the one who was sown upon the rocky places is the one who hears the Word and immediately receives it with joy; but *because* he has no root in himself, *he* does not endure; for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the Word, he is quickly offended” (vs 20-21). In each case this also involves choices:

- you choose not to hear
- you choose not to see
- You choose not to obey

This is so true today, v 22: “And the one who was sown among the thorns is the one who hears the Word, but the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful.” That’s why the Gospel goes out: *many are called, few are chosen*. Few respond to *choose God!*

Let’s have all of us be in this category; this is what we need to be doing, v 23: “But the one who was sown on good ground, this is the one who hears the Word and understands, **who indeed brings forth fruit and produces...**”

- using the Word of God
- using the Spirit of God
- understanding what it is

- living by it

All of those things are there!

“...—one a hundred-fold, another sixty-fold and another thirty-fold” (v 23). Remember: ***The one who is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than John the Baptist!*** That is an amazing thing—isn't it? *Yes, indeed!*

We'll pick up tomorrow on *A Study of the Kingdom of God #2*.

Scriptural References:

- 1) Acts 20:22-32
- 2) Luke 17:20-25
- 3) Matthew 12:28
- 4) Colossians 1:1-14
- 5) Matthew 3:1-3
- 6) Matthew 4:14
- 7) Matthew 7:13-21
- 8) John 8:23-36
- 9) Matthew 7:21-27
- 10) Matthew 11:4-15
- 11) Luke 16:13
- 12) Matthew 13:11-23

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Matthew 6:33
- Ezekiel 33
- Matthew 24
- Psalm 103
- John 7
- Matthew 5:17

Also referenced:

- Church at Home: *What is the Kingdom of God?* (churchathome.org)
- From *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter: Appendix I: *A Comparison Between the Old and New Covenants*

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