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THE NEW TESTAMENT KINGDOMS
AND THEIR
RELATIONSHIPS TO THE AGES
AND TO THE WORLD

by

Charles W. Asbell, Ph.D.

FOREWORD

Forty-four years ago (1969) with the combined efforts of its technology and technologists, the United States succeeded in safely placing a human being upon the surface of the moon. Likewise, resident in the same overall design, plans and technological skills were “escape plans” for those three space-men to free themselves from the moon’s gravitational forces and propel them safely back to a safe earth landing – unharmed! What a feat this was. To say the least, it is certainly a commentary on the designers, planners, engineers and all of the untold thousands who contributed to the success of this momentous accomplishment. The overall accomplishment and success of this moon voyage required the input of thousands of minds, untold physical exertion, and incredible expenditure to achieve the ultimate goal. Reams and reams of data, blueprints, computations and, in the vernacular, all the “blood, sweat and tears” necessary to accomplish this goal of reaching the moon and returning safely required the total input and/or output of all of those individuals who became integral “cogs” in the wheel in this amazing project. Belated kudos to all of those involved!

But what, you may ask, does the foregoing have to do with KINGDOMS, THE AGES AND THE WORLD? A reason-

able question! Let me answer this query by suggesting the following. Consider such Bible passages as Romans 12:1-2, which speaks of “presenting of our/your body to God the Father” as being a “reasonable service.” This reasonable service is quickly followed by the Holy Spirit’s admonition to:

... be not conformed to this world [age – *aeon*] but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God...

What is implied when one conforms one’s mind to this world? This study will endeavor to shed some light on this question and at the same time help the recent convert to Christ in this mind-transforming process as he/she seeks the Spirit’s help in growing up in Christ Jesus.

I realize once started the believer’s spiritual growth is a life-time, continuous experience both intellectually (studying the Scriptures to attain personal, experiential knowledge of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and His varied activities relating to His human creation) and growing into the mature and Christ-like person God the Father has designed us to become. Pausing for a moment, remember the Apostle Paul had a personal desire to come to know Christ Jesus in a more intimate and knowledgeable way (Philippians 3:9-10). The Scriptures reveal he spent the rest of his lifetime in preaching and teaching the Word. I believe God would have us grow in Him, and when the occasion arises to share with those around us some of those profound and, yes, lofty insights which pertain to Him and His Scriptures. Let me also suggest the following. If our desire to serve the Lord consists of an evangelism emphasis only, with little or no emphasis in “growing up in the Lord,” I believe such an attitude is not following the admonition of the Holy Spirit when He states in 2nd Timothy 2:15*:

Study [be eager] to show thyself approved unto God, a

* Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are to be found in the Authorized Version (AV – King James) of the Bible.

workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

You will note from this quotation it is the approved worker who is a studier – eager, through effort (workman) to become unashamed and knowledgeable in or about the Word of Truth. Ephesians (4:12-13) more poignantly states what God expects for the individual believer as he/she strives for *perfecting* (maturity):

Till we come to:

- 1) ... the unity of the faith and the
- 2) ... full knowledge [*epignosis*] of the Son of God
- 3) ... at [eis – to, into] the complete measure [*teleion*] of the stature of the fullness [*pleromatos*] of the Christ.

This divine challenge and goal is the supreme provision God the Father offers His creation whom He loves – a mature workman seeking only to be clothed with the inner and outer “garments” of His Son, Christ Jesus.

Let us return for a moment to the earlier thoughts relating to the trip to the moon. As we have noted, to attain the ultimate goal of placing a man on the moon and safely returning to earth required (in a sense, holistically* speaking) the combination and compilation of thousands of large and small bits of information. By analogy, total spiritual and biblical knowledge is akin to this same idea. Let me propose the following. You as a student of the Word, by studying the Scriptures, accumulating biblical information (of all sorts), comparing Scripture with Scripture, word(s) with word(s), factoring in historical matters, praying

* Holism, according to Random House’s *Webster’s College Dictionary*, has for one of its definitions “the theory that whole entities, as fundamental components of reality, have an existence other than as the mere sum of their parts.” I elect to extrapolate this concept to include all the ideas, thoughts, human expenditures, physical materials, etc. which were exerted in achieving the goal of the voyage to the moon and the return experience.

while seeking for divine guidance and, finally, being willing to challenge and perhaps even change your own personal presuppositions and former convictions may aid another in maturing in the Word of God (just thinking out loud).

To learn and discover spiritual truth from the Holy Scriptures is wonderful. But this is not the end of the story. To incorporate these newly-found scriptural insights into your understanding of God's plans and purposes to/or for you is expected of the Bible student who should be eager to share these ideas and thoughts with others.

INTRODUCTION

The subject before us is quite lofty. As a whole, each of these three areas (kingdom, age and world) by themselves has been the subject and object of hundreds of theological volumes for centuries. However, I wish to challenge some of the conclusions and presuppositions leading to many of those conclusions made by some of the earlier biblical scholars. I do not wish to appear arrogant by this statement. However, if the Holy Spirit of God is still working today and all believers have access to His personal enlightenment and illumination of the very Scriptures which He has authored, aren't we challenged to study and share biblical insights which He reveals to us with others? In this spirit of searching the Scriptures and sharing the fruits of this research, this paper is posited.

Bringing things up to date, the World and the Age(s) have been the object of three recently published lexical/concordant research papers I consider to be theological landmarks and, as such, need to be integrated into the thinking of those who are interested in the informational arsenal of Bible students/exegetes. These include:

- 1) *Scripture Research*, Volume 4, Number 14¹, *Christ and the Kosmoses*
- 2) *Scripture Research*, Volume 14, Number 17², *AIΩN/-*

3) *Scripture Research*, Volume 6, Number 1³, *The Gospel of the Mystery/Secret*

The most recently completed article (“The Gospel of the Mystery/Secret”) also contains relevant and pertinent biblical research which augments and compliments the overall theme of this paper. The results and conclusions reached in the three citations above speak of major truths/doctrines which, I believe, should be referenced and utilized when evaluating, defining, comparing and explaining the differences in the several “kingdoms” shown in the table below (p. 7).

As you spend more time in the Scriptures (carrying out the admonition of 2nd Timothy 2:15), you will discover for yourselves Bible themes, truths and doctrines is an awesome and wonderful experience. However, such newly-found, Holy Spirit revealed informational treasures are not isolated fragments of Truth to be pigeon-holed in your mind, never to be called upon again. They should be placed in your spiritual super/infrastructure and holistically utilized when the Word of God is opened and you are allowing God through the instrumentality of His Spirit to illuminate you regarding the intent and/or meaning of a specific passage of Scripture or subject or term.

Let us proceed in our inquiry by asking, Does the term “kingdom” refer only to the domain of the entire inhabited world or a portion of it, or to humankind in general? Is its focus related narrowly to a specific race or group of people? Are the three subject terms “age” related? And, finally, let us ask the question, What are the ramifications for today?

Definitions and Terms

The title of this study consists of three critical terms or words. These are not just words or terms, but major pivotal Bible subjects/issues. Depending upon the Bible student’s interpretation or definition of these three terms, much hinges on the forma-

ion of his Christian worldview and how he interprets the Bible as a whole. Clearly, such areas of soteriology, eschatology and evangelism are directly impacted by the definitions assigned by a student of the Bible.

Kingdom

In a generic sense, the term kingdom (Gr. *basileia*) as defined by Dr. E.W. Bullinger⁴...

...denotes sovereignty, which requires the actual presence of a sovereign or king. There can be no kingdom apart from a king. We all know of countries which were once 'kingdoms' but are now 'republics,' for the simple but sufficient reason that they have no 'king,' but are governed by the 'public,' which is sovereign.

Arndt & Gingrich⁵ concur with Bullinger's definition, while Vine⁶ also provides us with the following:

... an abstract noun, denoting sovereignty royal power, dominion, then by a concrete noun, denoting the territory or people over whom a king rules.

Thayer⁷ simplifies the definition as follows:

1. Royal power, kingship, dominion rule.
2. A kingdom, i.e., the territory subject to the rule of a king.

In summary, all four exegetes^{4,5,6,7} are in general agreement regarding their definitions of the root meaning of kingdom (*basileia*), which are two-fold:

1. A ruler, sovereign, king is involved and reigns over a specific domain or territory.
2. A/this specific or unique territory or domain is the sphere where the ruler/sovereign/king exercises his/her kingly duties.

A review of *Englishman's Greek Concordance*⁸ provides us with every scriptural reference of the word **kingdom** in the New Testament (NT). By reviewing the numerous citations, five categories became apparent: 1) those references where the word "kingdom" by itself occurs, 2) those references where the phrase "the Kingdom of Heaven" occurs, 3) those references where the phrase "the Kingdom of God" occurs, 4) passages where the term "Kingdom of His Dear Son" occurs and, finally, 5) that passage where the phrase "Kingdom of Christ" occurs. By tabling this information, a number of interesting patterns surface.

OCCURRENCES OF THE WORD KINGDOM
IN THE NT LISTED BY CATEGORY

| <u>NT BOOK</u> | <u>KINGDOM(S)</u> | <u>OF HEAVEN</u> | <u>OF CHRIST</u> | | |
|---|-------------------|------------------|---------------------|---|---|
| | | <u>OF GOD</u> | <u>HIS DEAR SON</u> | | |
| MATTHEW | 18 | 5 | 33 | 0 | 0 |
| MARK | 6 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| LUKE | 12 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| JOHN | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| ACTS | 1 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| ROMANS | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 ST COR. | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 ND COR. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| GALATIANS | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| PHILIPPIANS | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| EPHESIANS | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| COLOSSIANS | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 1 ST THESS. | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 ND THESS | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 ST TIMOTHY | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 ND TIMOGHY | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TITUS | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| PHILEMON | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| HEBREWS | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| JAMES | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 ST PETER | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 ND PETER | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 ST , 2 ND , 3 RD JN. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| JUDE | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| REVELATION | 6 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

As you review the table above, you no doubt are impressed by where or in what books this term in its several derivations [kingdom of: God, heaven, Christ, His Dear son] is found. The preponderant number of occurrences is to be found in those NT books (the Gospels) which speak of matters primarily addressed to Old Covenant (OC) issues and to OC peoples, mainly the Jews prior to the crucifixion of Christ Jesus. Yes, they do address future events. However, the major teachings have to do with the children of Israel and their personal and political relationships to Christ (Messiah) Jesus Himself. As we proceed in this study we will also be discussing the other Kingdom(s) as they relate to the “World” and the “Age(s).” But, first, we must define and discuss what the New Testament’s “Age(s)” and “World” refer to in preparation for integrating the several “kingdoms” into the mix.

Age

To begin this section it is important we recognize the frequency in the NT of the term age (*aion* [noun] and *aionion* [adjective]).

- 1) There are 105 NT occurrences* of *aion*(s) in the noun form.
 - a. In the Gospel accounts – 32
 - b. In the Book of Acts – 2
 - c. In the Apostle Paul’s pre-Acts 28:28 epistles – 26
 - d. In the epistles of 1st, 2nd Peter, 1st, 2nd, 3rd John, Jude – 10
 - e. Hebrews – 13
 - f. In the book of Revelation – 14
 - g. The epistles of Paul after the close of the book of Acts (Ephesians & Colossians) – 8

*This count includes references and usages where there is more than one occurrence of age (*aion*) in the same verse.

- 2) There are 71 occurrences of *aionios* (adjectival form) found in the pages of the NT.

- a. In the Gospel accounts - 30
- b. In the book of Acts – 2
- c. In the Apostle Paul’s pre-Acts 28:28 letters – 21
- d. In Hebrews, 1st Peter, 2nd Peter, 1st John, Jude, Revelation - 17
- e. In the epistles of Paul after the close of the book of Acts – 1

Age (*aion*) ΑΙΩΝ/ΑΙΩΝΟΝ = αιων/αιωνον - what does it mean?

In 2012, a detailed grammatical/lexical/concordant study dealing with the subject "age" and/or "ages" was undertaken and subsequently published in *Scripture Research (ΑΙΩΝ/ΩΝ/ΑΙΩΝΟΝ: Measuring Timelessness and Timeliness*² [Vol. 4, No. 17]). As stated in closing paragraphs of this paper, the two authors (Drs. Asbell and Conklin) felt confident the conclusions from the research in this study concerning the NT meaning "age(s)" are valid and sound. Therefore, rather than reinvent the wheel and seek an alternate meaning or meanings of the subject term “age,” I choose to use and employ the work and conclusions in the SR, Vol. 4, No. 17's research. Listed below are several of the major conclusions reached in this study:

- 1) The Greek meaning of the term *aion* (ΑΙΩΝ/ΑΙΩΝΟΝ = αιων/αιωνον) as found in the NT does not primarily refer to quantitative time, but refers instead to qualitative concepts and is best defined in Archbishop Richard Trench’s book, *Synonyms of The New Testament*⁹ –

(Trench, quoting from Bengel, who is speaking of the walk of non-believers in the world [*kosmos*], Eph. 2:2, states) ...

We speak of 'the times,' attaching to the word an ethical signification; or, still more to the point, the age, the spirit or genius of the age, *der Zeitgeist*. All that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hope, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time

current in the world, which it may be impossible to seize and accurately define, being the moral atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale again inevitably to exhale — all this is included in the αἰών (emphasis added).

Based upon recent lexical/concordant research, it is further concluded:

- 2) The primary emphases, eschatological hope(s) and promises, etc., where biblical matters related to *aion/-aionos* are concerned, OT and NT covenant peoples (the Children of Israel, Jews, Gentile proselytes to the Jewish belief system) are the primary focus. This includes their hopes, purposes and their belief system, Judaism.

Let us now turn our attention to the term/subject “world.”

The World

Before we proceed in our discussions related to the “World” as seen in the NT, it is important that I introduce another term which is not often discussed when considering this matter or concept of what is “the World.” Lest there be any misunderstanding, world in the Greek text is often translated as *kosmos* (κόσμος, as we will see). However, another Greek term is found in the NT and needs to be considered under this umbrella, “the World.” The word in English is – *oikoumenē* (Gr. οἰκουμένη) and is defined in *The Analytical Greek Lexicon*¹⁰ as:

The habitable earth, world, the inhabitants of the earth, the whole human race, mankind.

(It should be carefully noted, in the lexicon⁷ referred to there is no intimation as to a specific race or tribe/group of people but to mankind as a whole.)

So then, let us turn our attention to the frequently used term

(185 occurrences) in the NT world, i.e., the *kosmos* (Gr. κοσμος). Perhaps one of the most misunderstood and mistranslated words found in the English translations of the New Testament is this word. I again draw your attention to a *Scripture Research* paper published in 2011, titled *Christ and the Kosmoses*¹. Subsequent to that date, after further concordant and lexical study, I am more confident than ever the research and conclusions stated in that publication are true and verifiable. I challenge you to read and evaluate that paper on your own.

| <u>NT Book</u> | <u>Number of Occurrences*</u> | <u>NT Book</u> | <u>Number of Occurrences</u> |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| Matthew | 10 | Mark | 3 |
| Luke | 3 | John | 77 |
| Acts | 1 | Romans | 9 |
| 1 st Cor. | 21 | 2 nd Cor. | 3 |
| Galatians | 3 | Phil. | 1 |
| 1 st Tim. | 3 | Hebrews | 5 |
| 1 st John | 22 | 2 nd John | 1 |
| James | 5 | 1 st Peter | 3 |
| 2 nd Peter | 5 | Revelation | 3 |
| Ephesians | 3 | Colossians | 4 |

Total occurrences of *kosmos* in the NT = 185.

*There are a number of verses in the NT which have multiple occurrences of *kosmos* in them. These occurrences are included in the overall count.

Please realize the following:

- There are five NT books which have no occurrences of the word *Kosmos* in them, 2nd Timothy, 1st & 2nd Thessalonians, Titus and Philemon.
- It is assumed the Apostle John authored the Gospel of John, the three Epistles of John and the book of Revelation. Also, note the 103 total number of occurrences

in the NT. This accounts for 52.8 % of the total number of occurrences.

- In those two letters (listed above) written by the apostle Paul after the close of the book of Acts (Ephesians and Colossians) there are seven occurrences: in Ephesians 1:4, 2:2, 2:12; in Colossians: 1:6, 2:8. and twice in 2:20.

There is an overriding caveat regarding these two books and (the) *kosmos*.

- 1) In these two books (only) is revealed the preaching/teaching of the mystery/secret (“hidden from ages [*aions*] and generations,” Col. 1:25-29, Eph. 3:1-9).
- 2) There is no question regarding the congruency and primary message found in these two letters as they revolve around the revelation of the gospel of the the mystery/secret to the citizens of the inhabited world (*oikoumenē*), including Gentiles and Jews. However, found in the book of Ephesians is another statement relating to the exclusivity and uniqueness of this gospel, i.e., Eph. 1:4-10. This election refers to those “called-out ones” who constitute the members of “His/Christ’s Body,” as stated in 3:1-6.

***Kosmos*, How is the Term Used in the NT?**

Previous, unabridged concordant and lexical work (*Christ and the Kosmoses*¹) dealing with this subject uncovered the following:

In the NT, virtually every reference (*Englishman’s Greek Concordance*⁸) where *kosmos* is found is directly related to:

- The Patriarch Abraham, his heirs (the Hebrews), Jewry (Judaism ~ the belief system of the Jews), the physical land (γη) of Israel given to Abraham in Genesis 15 (not the entire inhabited earth) is the primary site for God's activity

with His covenant people. Also, the Gentiles (proselytes) who through faith embraced the Hebrews' religion are to share in the covenant blessings with the elect Children of Israel.

- In the NT, Gentiles are not the primary objects of "things" pertaining to the *kosmos*.
- The Lord Jesus came into the *kosmos*, but was not of the *kosmos*.
- The Devil had a special relationship; he was the ruler of/with the *kosmos*.
- The religious system of the Jews (which, at the time of Christ had become corrupt), Judaism. Note what the Apostle Paul states at the time of his ministry (Titus 1:14-16):

(v.14) Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth, (v.15) Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled (v.16). They profess that they know God; but in works they do not know Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

Adding veracity to the above conclusions, consider the conversation the Lord had with His earthly siblings when they chided Him to reveal Himself to the *kosmos* (John 7:1-5 [v.4], i.e., at the Feast of Tabernacles [v. 2]). Also, in John 18:19-20 at the so-called trial of the Lord Jesus in responding to the High Priest's request for matters relating to His "doctrine," He made the following statement which directly relates to our subject (v.19):

JESUS ANSWERED HIM, 'I SPAKE OPENLY TO THE **KOSMOS**; I EVER TAUGHT IN THE SYNOGOGUE, AND IN THE *TEMPLE*, WHERE THE JEWS ALWAYS RESORT [COME TOGETHER]; AND IN SECRET HAVE I SAID NOTHING.'

It is now time to turn ourselves to the issue at hand, namely,

...THE RELATIONSHIP'S MATTER

Simply stated, how do the **AGES** and the **WORLD** impact or affect the teachings, doctrines or understandings related to the several **KINGDOMS** identified in the chart found on page 7 of this study?

To help me discuss this matter, I quote from Dr E. W. Bullinger's work found in Appendices 112 through 115 (pp. 154-156) of the *Companion Bible*.⁴ I encourage each of you readers to read these several Appendix notes, for they provide valuable insights into this subject matter. For our purposes I wish to quote from Appendix, Note 114, for there we find valuable insights on the comparisons and distinguishing characteristics between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God:

... the word kingdom, like the Greek *basileia*, has regard to *sovereignty* rather than *territory*, and to the *sphere* of its exercise rather than to its *extent*.

Using the word kingdom in this sense, and in that which is conveyed in its English termination -dom, which is short for dominion, we note that the former expression, the kingdom of heaven, occurs only in Matthew. But in the parallel passages in the other Gospels we find, instead, the expression the kingdom of God (e.g., cp. Matt. 11:11 with Luke 7:28).

The explanation of this seeming difference is that the Lord spoke in Aramaic, certainly not in the Greek of the Gospel documents. See Ap. 94. III.

Now 'heaven' is frequently used by the Figure *Metonymy* (of the subject), Ap.6, for God Himself, Whose dwelling is there. See Ps. 73:9; Dan. 4:26, 29; 2 Chron. 32:20; Matt. 21:25; Luke 15:21. (I have sinned against heaven is thus contrasted with the words and in thy sight, John 3:27.)

Thus, while the same in a general sense, the two expressions are to be distinguished in their meaning and in their interpretation as follows: with respect to the phrase **kingdom of heaven**, please note the following:

- The Book of Matthew is the only book in the NT where this phrase is used (33 occurrences). Further,
 - All of the references of the phrase “kingdom of heaven” occur prior to the death of the Lord Jesus.
 - Dr. Bullinger⁴ supplies us with further insights on what constitutes the kingdom of heaven.

The Kingdom (or Sovereignty) of HEAVEN

1. Has *Messiah* for its King;
2. It is *from heaven*; and *under* the heavens *upon* the earth;
3. It is *limited* in its scope;
4. It is *political* in its sphere;
5. It is *Jewish and exclusive* in its character;
6. It is *national* in its aspect;
7. It is the *special subject* of *Old Testament prophecy*;
8. And it is *dispensational* in its duration.

With respect to the phrase “**kingdom of God**,” please refer to page 7 and note the total number of occurrences (71) of this phrase in the NT. Below are the comments made by Dr. Bullinger⁴ in Appendix, Note 114.

The Kingdom (or Sovereignty) of GOD

1. Has *God* for its Ruler;
- 2 It is *in heaven, over* the earth;
- 3 It is *unlimited* in its scope.
- 4 It is *moral and spiritual* in its sphere.*
5. It is *inclusive* in its character (embracing the *natural* and *spiritual* seeds of Abraham, the heav-

only calling, and the church of the mystery).
Hence,

6. ...It is *universal* in its aspect.

7. ...It is (in its *wider* aspect) the subject of *New Testament revelation*,

8. ...and will be *eternal* in its duration.

* In support of this conclusion (above, item 4 [i.e., the kingdom of God, referring primarily to the moral and spiritual aspects of this kingdom]), John 3:2-7 adds credence and validation (see also Romans 14:17 and 1st Corinthians 4:20):

2) The same (referring to Nicodemus) came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, ‘Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.’

3) Jesus answered and said unto him, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’

4) Nicodemus saith unto Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?’

5) Jesus answered, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6) That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7) Marvel not that I said unto thee, ‘Ye must be born again.’” [Indeed, kingdom of God stresses the faith/belief/non-political emphasis in this kingdom.]

Kingdom of Heaven vs. Kingdom of God (as a side note)

Dr. Bullinger suggests that in all the passages where the two respective expressions occur, identical words were spoken by the Lord, “the kingdom of heaven”; but by putting them into Greek, Matthew was Divinely guided to retain the figure of spee-

ch *literally* ("heaven"), so as to be in keeping with the special character, design, and scope of his Gospel (see Ap. 96); while, in the other Gospels, *this was translated* as being what it also meant "the kingdom of God."

In the Matter of the Kingdoms As Found in the NT Accounts,
note the usage:

Found in the **Gospel** accounts –
(Matthew, Mark, Luke, John)

Separated as to category

| | |
|----------------------|------------|
| Kingdom(s), singular | = 40 |
| Kingdom of God | = 55 |
| Kingdom of Heaven | = 33 |
| K. of His Dear Son | = 0 |
| K. of Christ | <u>= 0</u> |
| Total | = 128 |

Within the framework of the **Book of Acts**

| | |
|----------------------|------------|
| Kingdom(s), singular | = 1 |
| Kingdom of God | = 7 |
| Kingdom of Heaven | = 0 |
| K. of His Dear Son | = 0 |
| K. of Christ | <u>= 0</u> |
| Total | = 8 |

Found in the **pre-prison letters of the Apostle Paul** (Romans, 1st, 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1st, 2nd Thess.1st, 2nd Timothy [many believe the Apostle Paul to be the author of Hebrews]).

Separated as to category

| | |
|----------------------|-----|
| Kingdom(s), singular | = 8 |
| Kingdom of God | = 7 |
| Kingdom of Heaven | = 0 |
| K. of His Dear Son | = 0 |

Separated as to category (Contd.)

| | |
|--------------|------|
| K. of Christ | = 0 |
| Total | = 12 |

Found in the **Epistles to the Circumcision**
(James, 1st, 2nd Peter, Jude)

Separated as to category

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| Kingdom(s) singular | = 2 |
| Kingdom of God | = 0 |
| Kingdom of Heaven | = 0 |
| K. of His Dear Son | = 0 |
| K. of Christ | = 0 |
| Total | = 2 |

The letters of 1st, 2nd, 3rd John = 0

Found in the **Book of Revelation:**

Separated as to category

| | |
|----------------------|-----|
| Kingdom(s), singular | = 6 |
| Kingdom of God | = 1 |
| Kingdom of Heaven | = 0 |
| K. of His Dear Son | = 0 |
| K. of Christ | = 0 |
| Total | = 7 |

Found in the **prison letters of the Apostle Paul after the close of the book of Acts** (Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon):

Separated as to category

| | |
|----------------------|-----|
| Kingdom(s), singular | = 0 |
| Kingdom of God | = 1 |
| Kingdom of Heaven | = 0 |
| K. of His Dear Son | = 1 |

Separated as to category (Contd.)

| | |
|--------------|------------|
| K. of Christ | <u>= 1</u> |
| Total | <u>= 3</u> |

As you review the above list of occurrences of the term “Kingdom” found in the various books of the NT, a number of interesting trends becomes obvious. I will take a moment and explain what I mean. **Notice carefully!**

- The phrase, the kingdom of heaven, is not found in the post-Acts epistles of Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon. Concomitantly, ...
 - ...the phrase, the kingdom of God occurs only once (Col. 4:11) in this same three-book historical and dispensational context. As you compare the messages found in the books of Ephesians and Colossians, you would find them to be characterized by the preaching and the revelation of the mystery, heretofore hidden in the mind of God (Col.1:23-29); not the Kingdom of Heaven!
- Repeating, the phrase **kingdom of heaven** is found only in the book of Matthew (see page 7) and:
 1. Has *Messiah* (Christ Jesus) for its King;
 3. It is limited in its scope;
 4. It is political in its sphere;
 5. It is Jewish and exclusive in its character;
 6. It is national (exclusive to Israel) in its aspect. It is not global (international – *oikoumenē*) in its missionary outreach;
 7. It is the special subject of Old Testament prophecy.

Further –

8. It is not the subject of the gospel of the mystery/secret (found in the epistles of Ephesians and Co-

lossians).

9. Christ Jesus (the Messiah), during His pre-Calvary ministry, went exclusively to the Jews in the land (likewise His disciples).

- With respect to the phrase **kingdom of God** –
 1. As stated above, with the exception of Colossians 4:11, there are no other occurrences of this phrase in the post-Acts letters.

In the context of Colossians 4 you will not find any reference to a/the prophesied/predicted kingdom which the children of Israel anticipated; instead, in verse eleven I believe it is safe to say is found the spiritual, moral, non-political truth/characteristics emphases (as concluded by Dr. Bullinger⁴) associated with this kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of His Dear Son

The tables on page(s) 7 (THE OCCURRENCES OF THE WORD KINGDOM, etc.), 11 (OCCURRENCES OF THE WORD *KOSMOS*, etc.) and 17-19 (the kingdoms as found in the NT accounts, etc.) speak volumes. Follow me:

- The phrase kingdom of His dear Son only occurs once, i.e., in the epistle to the Colossians (1:13). No doubt written after the close of the book of Acts and after the Apostle Paul made his declaration in chapter 28:25-31:

25) And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, “Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, 26) saying, ‘Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: 27) For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull

of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.’

28) Be it known therefore unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it 29) And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves. 30) And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came unto him, 31) Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

It is my conviction that Paul, at this point in his overall ministry, was in this context ministering to an audience of a number of Jews who no doubt held to the Jewish, Old Covenant belief system consisting of “types” and blood sacrifices. It is also important to notice the apostle was imprisoned in the then capitol of the known world. Also, if you follow his journeys during the book of Acts and the message he proclaimed, you would conclude that the “good news” he taught to those assemblies and synagogues of Jews and then to the Gentiles consisted of a New Covenant message/gospel, based upon the finished work of Christ Jesus on the cross.

Before we proceed further in this study (or for that matter any lexical/concordant study), it is important to appreciate that the presence or absence of a matter or thought in biblical contexts may (and without hesitation, in some cases, does) weigh heavily in influencing a conclusion. It may reveal a hitherto unknown truth to the Bible student. Reader, as you consider the Scriptures let me also encourage you to bring and exercise other interpretive tools in your repertoire to determine what the Holy Spirit had in mind when He guided the hand of those who first “penned down” the Holy Writ found between the covers of the Bible that is before you. As you study or consider any and all biblical matters, I suggest you factor in such matters as:

- The historical setting when the subject under review

occurred or will occur, i.e.:

- The Old Testament and/or the New Testament
 - Prior to the giving of the Law to Moses
 - During the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus
 - The events following the death, burial, resurrection of the Lord Jesus
 - The events covered with or by the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus
- The impact of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus and their relationship(s) on all matters in the Scriptures. Consider:
 - Mankind as a whole
 - The peoples of the covenants (Old and New [the children of Israel/the Jews])
 - The non-Jews (Gentiles)
 - The celestial beings/creations (principalities, angels [“good” and “evil”])
 - Eschatological – matters/issues/hopes

CONCLUSIONS

MANKIND AND THE NEW TESTAMENT KINGDOMS

Let me begin by refreshing your thinking as I take you back to the FOREWORD portion of this study. In those several initial paragraphs I stressed to you the importance of utilizing a number

of sources of biblical thought, definitions or conclusions in the researching of a given subject. In this present study, this has been my “modus operandi” as I have attempted to reach the ultimate goal of being both truthful and verifiable.

Because of my previous studies^{1,2,3} (this includes the *AIQN/AIQNON*² study co-authored with Dr. Tim Conklin), I was impressed by the lexicologist’s findings and conclusions of the words *Kosmos* and *AIQN/AIQNON*. However, I was and am not currently impressed as to how the scholars/NT translators transposed the Greek text into the English versions of the Bible. The concept of “concordant” comparisons (as seen in *Rotherham’s translation* of the Holy Scriptures) of a number of Greek words was not consistently used. I also believe there was a “church”/“religious” bias employed by some of the translators (both then and now) in the translation of some of the early manuscripts which made their way into some of the English versions of the Bible. In this study I have endeavored to be consistent in the application of the subject words of this research to all of the numerous NT contexts.

The concluding issue at hand is a simple question, “How do the NT Kingdoms, the Ages and the World impact on God’s creation, MAN?” The several tables (pp. 8, 12, 18-20) found in the body of the text speak volumes as to purpose and intent to the open-minded student of the Word.

After you have looked and “digested” the obvious numeric lessons seen in the several tables (pp. 7, 11, 17-18) and incorporated or factored in the definitions of the terms world (*kosmos*) and age (*AIQN/AIQNON*), it is now time to introduce the final thoughts and conclusions to this study. I begin by considering God’s creation, Man, into the mix.

It is no great secret that in NT Scriptures there are two primary/ethnic groups of people spoken of in the twenty nine latter books of the Bible and with whom God was and is directly involved: 1) the Hebrews/Jewish, and 2) all of the other non-Jewish peoples, the Gentiles. In one way or another, the NT kingdoms, the ages, the world are either directly or indirectly

affected or impacted by these two areas of biblical thought. At this point in the conclusions I wish to inject a serious belief system “flaw” in biblical interpretation and teaching, for it directly and negatively impacts on our subject at hand, namely...

... the Leaven of Replacement Theology

(*see footnote at the bottom of page 25)

Rampant from today’s pulpits is the exercise or preaching of the tenants of Replacement Theology (RT). In a nutshell, nearly all Protestantism, both liberal and conservative camps, limit their teachings and belief system to a “New Covenant” based paradigm. This viewpoint believes the Old Covenant (OC, which stresses the more legal aspects of the Mosaic covenant worship system with all of its ceremonies, legalistic practices, and eschatological hopes and promises) was superseded by the sacrificial work of the Lord Jesus Christ in His crucifixion on the cross and subsequent resurrection 2000 years ago. Please remember, the night before His death, reclining with His disciples in the upper room, He instituted the New Covenant (NC) to be based upon the shedding of His blood which occurred on the morrow [1st Corinthians 11:23-26]. Common reason should prevail in the mind of those who love the Scriptures that the OC (with all of its legalism and types) was then superseded by the teachings relating to access unto God the Father via the shed blood of Christ as the foundation of the NC program and teachings. This NC gospel also included its own new and unique legalistic ceremonies, an eschatology of future events, and its own special hope. In addition, the exponents of RT consider the message to the church which is His body found in the latter epistles of Paul to be a part of the New Covenant. This belief system fails to discern or distinguish the uniqueness and obvious differences between the two systems of faith. Many RT exponents are often guilty of utilizing Old and New Covenant practices/rituals in their worship services. In the first place, these “types” were given by Jehovah to His ancient peoples and not addressed to any other ethnic group. Secondly, these “types” were nailed to the same cross (Col. 2:11-15, 14) with our Lord and were replaced and filled up (fulfilled) by the perfect antitype, the Lord Jesus in His death, burial, resurrection and ascension. Also, in the RT system of belief, most of the advocates espousing

this position fail to take into consideration or acknowledge the uniqueness and/or importance of the latter epistles (Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon) of the Apostle Paul. For here is found the teachings associated with the church which is His body heretofore hidden in the mind of God, but revealed by the teachings/ministry of Paul after the close of the book of Acts. Many, if not most of those exponents of this RT system of biblical thought, consider the gospel of the mystery – which concerns the “good news” to the church which is His body – to be the same as the NC gospel. **Lest there be any misunderstanding, these two gospels are not the same. One is covenantal related while the other concerns a message directed to the world of the Gentiles, not directly related to any covenant.** We will discuss and distinguish between these two belief paradigms shortly.

The Jews/Hebrews/Israelites/Circumcision

In Romans 9:3-5, the Divinely inspired Apostle Paul identifies and defines who this group of NT people are. He also provides commentary on these same people, i.e., the Hebrews/Jewish peoples/nation.

- 3) For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:
- 4) Who are Israelites; to whom *pertaineth* the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service *of God*, and the promises;
- 5) Whose *are* the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ *came*, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.
- 6) Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they *are* not all Israel, which are of Israel.

With this people identification, the apostle provides other Jewish (H/J) pertinent, relevant information regarding them

*For a wonderful discussion dealing with Replacement Theology I encourage you to review the Wikipedia web site under the heading of “Supersessionism” for some valuable insights and very relevant information regarding the Hebrew/Jewish (H/J) peoples.

which will be used in the further discussions and conclusions of this study. For the record:

- The Apostle Paul is an ethnic H/J, Israelite (vss. 3 & 4).
- The Israelites had a very special relationship with the covenant God (Jehovah) and were the recipients of the:
 - Adoption (vs. 4)
 - The glory (the shekinah [vs. 4])
 - Covenants (this includes both the old and the new [vs. 4])
 - The service of God (the tabernacle and temple services, ceremonies and the shedding of the blood of animals for atonement) (vs. 4)
 - The promises to the patriarchs, the children of Israel as a nation (vs. 4).
 - Whose are the Fathers –

Abraham

Isaac

Jacob (later Israel)

the 12 sons of Jacob

- Christ Jesus (in His humanity) was an Israelite and therefore an ethnic descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

It bears repeating that further insights to this NT “people identification” earlier in the study (pp. 8-10) *AIQN/AIQNON* was defined and included the following:

The primary emphases, eschatological hope(s) and promises, etc., where biblical matters related to *aion/-aionos* are concerned, OT and NT covenant peoples

(the children of Israel, Jews, Gentile proselytes to the Jewish belief system) are the primary focus. This includes their hopes, purposes and their belief system, Judaism. The primary emphases, eschatological hope(s) and promises, etc., where biblical matters related to *aion/aionos*" are concerned, OT and NT covenant peoples (the children of Israel, Jews, Gentile proselytes to the Jewish belief system) are the primary focus. This includes their hopes, purposes and their belief system, Judaism.

Also included was the land promised to Abraham, Canaan.

You will note in this parade of information, there is no mention of the other ethnic group of people who were not covenant related to Jehovah God, the Gentiles.

The Gentile Peoples, The Uncircumcision

While the ninth through the eleventh chapters of the book of Romans clearly identifies who the Jew/Hebrews/Israelites are, it also describes their unique privileged position and relationship with the covenant God, Jehovah. By way of contrast, the Book of Ephesians (2:11-13) provides commentary as to who the Gentiles are and to their relationships with the Israelites and to God Himself:

11) Wherefore remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands, 12) That at that time ye 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: 13) But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

When the Apostle Paul wrote this epistle (no doubt after the close of the Book of Acts) it is important to note the position of the Gentiles with respect to God, Israel and the religion of the Jews.

Allow me the opportunity to parse these three verses –

- In vs. 11, please note the past tense setting of this phrase. I think it is safe to say the apostle is referring to the scriptural and historical past before the revelation of the church which is His body (the mystery), as found in the letters of Ephesians and Colossians.
- A synonym (in the Scriptures) for Gentiles is uncircumcision, who were characterized as:

→ Without Christ (Messiah)

→ Aliens (a person who has been estranged or excluded) from the commonwealth of Israel, and as such

→ ...strangers from *the* covenants (both old and new!) of Promise

...having no hope

...without God in the world (*κοσμῶ*)

Such was the state of affairs for the non-Jews at the time of the very ministry of the Lord Jesus prior to and subsequent to His crucifixion!

The very profound and weighty two passages (Romans 9:2-5 and Ephesians 2:11-12) above provide us with the segue to address and finalize our thoughts concerning the three main subjects spoken of in the title of this paper, i.e., the kingdoms, the ages and the world.

The Peoples of the New Testament,
Their Relationships
to The New Testament Kingdoms

The Israelites/Jews/Children of Israel/the Circumcision (IJC)

By the definitions just put forward (pp. 27, 28) we see

what the Scriptures tell us about the IJC peoples. Now let us integrate the information seen on page seven (OCCURRENCES OF THE WORD KINGDOM) into this study. It can be observed that the teachings/truth concerning the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are primarily addressed to the Old and New Covenant peoples (IJC)! The one glaring exception is Colossians 4:10, which speaks to the spiritual relationships with God, not of things political in nature. Ninety-nine point nine percent of the occurrences found in those books deals with matters directed to and involved with Old and New Covenant peoples. When Gentiles become involved and embrace the beliefs of Judaism, they are termed Jewish proselytes.

Of note is the fact that the Apostle Paul during his early ministry (i.e., during the Acts period) preached and ministered primarily to his kin (the Jews/Hebrews) scattered in Asia Minor, the Greek peninsula, Macedonia, Thrace, etc. and to the Gentiles. His ministry is summed up in Acts 24:14-16. However, in his actual preaching (both to the Jews and to the Gentiles) the apostle maintained a strict protocol in those cities where he ministered. The book of Romans (1:16, 2:9-10) spells out this formula.

1:15) So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. 16) For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

2:7) To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life. 8) But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, 9) Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile. 10) But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

With the conversion of Saul in or near Damascus, it is instructive to follow the immediate post-conversion events of this chosen apostle as he begins his unique ministry, first to the Jews

chosen apostle as he begins his unique ministry, first to the Jews only and later as he began to minister to the Gentiles also.

18) And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

19) And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. 20) And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.

21) But all that heard *him* were amazed and said, "Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?" 22) But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. 23) And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill **him**. (Acts, chapter 9)

There are numerous passages past chapter nine in the book of Acts which speak of the apostle's ministering to his kinsmen in the flesh and the message he heralded. Acts 26:4-8,19-23 summarizes this mission and its message to his Roman captors (King Agrippa) in Caesarea:

4) My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; 5) Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. 6) And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: 7) Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving *God day* and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. 8) Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead ?

19) Whereupon, O, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision, 20) But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts

of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. 21) For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill *me*. 22) Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: 23) That Christ should suffer, *and* that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles (“to the Jews first and then the Gentiles” [Romans 2:10]).

(emphases mine)

In the final few verses in the Book of Acts (chapter 28), Paul succinctly states to his Jewish brethren:

19) But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. 20) For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see *you*, and to speak with *you*: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. 21) And they said unto him, “We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of thee. 22) But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against.” 23) And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.

24) And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not...28) “Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it.” 29) And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves. 30) And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, 31) Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence,

no man forbidding him.

From the pen and lips of the Apostle Paul during the period covered in the latter chapters of the book of Acts, the message he declared to the Jewish and Gentile peoples was New Covenant based. Hence, it was not the same gospel found in the books of Ephesians and Colossians (the gospel of the mystery, i.e., message heretofore kept secret in the mind of God, also known as the church which is His body). Paul the apostle did, unmistakably preach of the kingdom of god (7 occurrences: Roman 1, 1st Corinthians, 5, Galatians, 1). The phrase “kingdom of heaven” does not occur during his pre-Acts 28:28 ministry.

What was the divine reason for the Apostle Paul’s dual ministry (...to the Jew first and then to the Gentiles, 2:5-16) as is recorded in the book of Acts? Romans, chapter eleven, supplies us with the answer, with verse 14 encapsulating the gist of this divine purpose statement...

...If by any means I may provoke to emulation (I may provoke to jealousy) them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

The Peoples of the New Testament: **Their Relationships** **to the Ages**

As a refresher, I encourage you to review pages 8 through 11 of this study to determine the definitions and conclusions of the term age(s); *aion* ΑΙΩΝ/ΑΙΩΝΟΝ = αἰών/αἰώνων. Briefly encapsulated:

- When this term is found in NT contexts, its primary meaning does not have a “time” or “quantitative” emphasis, but refers to “qualitative” matters. Archbishop Trench⁹ provides us with the following:

We speak of ‘the times,’ attaching to the word an

ethical signification; or, still more to the point, 'the age,' 'the spirit or genius of the age,' '*der Zeitgeist*.' All that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims speculations, hope, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time current in the world, which it may be impossible to seize and accurately define, being the moral atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale again inevitably to exhale — all this is included in the αἰων. (emphasis added)

- The NT occurrences of *aion/aionos* can be seen in the summation data found on pages 8 -11. First of all, I wish to comment on those occurrences/references found in the epistles of the apostle Paul which form a part of his post-Acts writings and ministry. I will then return to those other groups delineated in this same summation data.

The Gentiles, the Uncircumcision (Paul’s Post-Acts Writings and Ministry [Ephesians and Colossians])

The evidence is demonstrable and verifiable which will show the close relationships, similar eschatological hope of the believers, and the truths and doctrines related to the church which is His Body found in the epistles of Ephesians and Colossians. With this being said, please refer to Colossians 1:25-26¹¹ (see also Ephesians 3:9), where the matter of the *aion/aionos* is put into proper perspective and dispensational/historical context with respect to God’s dealings with the NT Gentile peoples –

whereof I am made a minister, according to the
 ης εγενομην εγω διακονος κατα την

dispensation of God which is given to me for
 οικονομιαν του θεου την δοθεισαν μοι εις

you to fulfill The word of God 26) *even*
 υμας πληρωσαι τον λογον του θεου

the mystery which hath been hid from ages
το μυστηριον το σκοπεκρυμμενον απο των αιωνων

and from the generations but now
και απο των γενεων νυν δε

was made manifest to his saints (of Him)
εφανερωθη τοις αγιοις αυτου

- Therefore, based upon the lexical/concordant work of Asbell and Conklin² and with the inspired apostle's declaration that this gospel now being revealed to him is/was hidden from the των αιωνων (this word in the Greek text is plural [vs. 26]), it can safely be stated and asserted that this gospel of the mystery/secret (found in this epistle and also in Ephesians) addressed to the Gentile peoples after the close of the book of Acts, could not or was not found in the earlier epistles of Paul, and for the record, this same apostle emphatically states (2nd Corinthians 3:3-18, 6) he was an able minister of a different gospel, the new covenant.
- And who do or what do the "generations" in verse 26 refer to? I think it is safe to say the apostle had in mind his kinsmen who were referred to in such passages as:

Acts 26:4-8

vs. 4 – "those among mine own nation (the Jews)"

vs. 6 – "promises made of God unto our Fathers"

vs. 7 – those of the twelve tribes (sons of Jacob/
Israel)

Romans 9:3-5, 7

vs. 3 – "my brethren, my kinsmen according to the
flesh"

vs. 4 – "who are Israelites"

vs. 5 – "who are the Fathers"

vs. 7 – "the seed of Abraham"

The *Analytical Greek Lexicon*¹⁰ states: Primarily birth, hence, progeny; a generation of mankind.

The Jews, Hebrews, Children of Israel, the Circumcision

The Old Covenant

As a reminder, stated on page 10 we read, “The primary emphases, eschatological hope(s) and promises, etc., where biblical matters related to *aion/aionos*” are concerned, OT and NT Covenant peoples (the Children of Israel, Jews, Gentile proselytes to the Jewish belief system) are the primary focus. This includes their hopes, purposes and their belief system, Judaism.

- In Matthew 12:32 the Scripture reveals there are at least two *aions* (this *aion* and the *aion* coming). This *aion* was in progress during the time of the Lord’s earthly ministry and prior to His crucifixion (see also Mark 10:30, Luke 18:30). You must remember, John the Baptist, the 12 Disciples, and the Lord Himself called for the Children of Israel to repent. See:

Matthew 3:1-2 – John the Baptist

4:17 – the Lord Jesus

10:1-23 – the 12 Disciples

This kingdom of heaven’s message to the children of Israel consisted of what?

The Lord Jesus stated to the Jews of His time and before He was crucified:

17) Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill, 18) For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

19) Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20) For I say unto you, That except your righteous-

ness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew, chapter 5

This kingdom of heaven gospel was limited to the OC peoples. (However, any Gentile wishing to embrace the covenant God and keep the Law/commandments would be welcomed into the fold of Israel as a proselyte.)

The kingdom of heaven's gospel, according to the Lord Himself, was based on the Law of Moses and the prophets – vs. 17.

However, the numerous “types” and “figures” which punctuated the legalistic practices of the Law given originally to Moses were soon to be fulfilled (*pleroma*), filled up, in the sacrifice of the anti-type, the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ.

Matthew 13:39 states there is an end (completion - συντέλεια) of the then *aion*. It is also closely associated with the *kosmos* and the kingdom of heaven (vs. 38 and 44). Further, the completion/conclusion of this *aion* is to be accompanied by the judgment of God and recognition of the righteous (vss. 40-43, 49). For an expanded commentary on the judgment(s) spoken of here in Matthew 13, I suggest you read chapters 23-25 of this same book. (Reflect for a moment: aren't these Matthew judgments the same as those found in the book of Revelation? Let me be bold by stating the completion of that age [prior to the crucifixion of Christ Jesus] was Jehovah's dispensing His judicial sentence on the covenant peoples for their failure to honor and keep their agreement with Him and for crucifying their King, Messiah Jesus.)

In Romans 10:4 the Scriptures declare:

For Christ is the end (τέλος) of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.

His [the Lord Jesus Christ] death the day after the institution of the New Covenant (Luke 22:13-20) marked the completion, end, total fulfillment, terminus of the OC with all of its types. However, with the τέλος achieved, the Lord Jesus then instituted the NC which, as the Scriptures state, was based on His shed blood. Although judicial sentence had been pronounced, it did not immediately occur. It would appear that the prayer uttered by the Lord on the Cross,

...Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.... (Luke 23:34)

...was heard and honored by God the Father, for the covenant God withheld actual sentence for some 40 +/- years, when Titus the Roman General with his legions leveled Jerusalem, leaving no stone of the temple upon another (Mark 13:2). This 1st century holocaust experienced by the occupants of the land of Canaan and Jerusalem itself was not a mere blip on the curve of Israel's history. No, it was the result of Divine vengeance by the long-suffering covenant God. The analogy seen in the parable of the vineyard owner and the husbandmen (Luke 20:9-19) well describes the God of the covenant, Jehovah, and the husbandmen-leaders of Jewry throughout Israel's history. The husbandmen refused throughout Israel's history to honor the owner of the vineyard by not sending fruit to Him. In fact, they abused, beat and killed the vineyard owner's representatives, culminating in casting His beloved Son out of the vineyard and killing Him. The Father had seen and put up with enough. They had killed His beloved Son. Vengeance was very quick in coming as the Father's instruments, the armies of Rome, administered Divine justice. This same justice included the destruction of all the genealogies, records and Judah's scepter itself, as it was taken as a spoil of war (Genesis

49: 9-12, 10).

Lastly, when Paul the apostle compared the OC glories and its chief earthly representative Moses, with the glories associated with the NC, he wrote in 2nd Corinthians 3:11,

For if that which is done away [*καταργουμενον*¹⁰-*katagargoumenon**] was glorious, much more that which remaineth [the NC and the resurrected Christ] is glorious.

* Notice the tense of this verb, i.e., present, passive, participle. Green¹² provides us with the following: ‘the perfect denotes an action or event as now complete; its point of view is, therefore, in the present.’ Arndt and Gingrich⁵ add the following: ‘...be released from an association with someone or something.’

The actual word in the NT has been translated the following way:

1. To render useless or unproductive
2. Occupy unprofitably
3. To render powerless
4. To make empty, unmeaning
5. To render null
6. To abrogate, cancel
7. To destroy, annihilate
8. To free from, dis sever from

Arndt and Ginrich⁵ add: cease, pass away.

I believe it is safe to conclude that with the “doing away” of the OC accomplished at Calvary, everything OC-related was destroyed and annihilated (see no. 7, immediately above)! Now, brace yourself for what I am about to say. The promised OC Messianic earthly kingdom and its hope, including temple worship hope, was not also set aside, but was cancelled! The rulers (religious and political) and the Jewish citizenry as a whole rejected and crucified the owner of the vineyard, Messiah Jesus Himself.

When you read and study the NT Gospel accounts, there is no hint of a gap or the idea that the judgmental events of Matt. 23-25 or the events found in the book of Revelation have been postponed for a future time. Repeating, Paul states in 2 Corinthians 3 they were at his time in the process of “passing away.”

Before we proceed to the next section I think it is imperative that I stress to you the mind and workings of God as He covenanted with his OT family, the children of Israel. Please turn to Exodus 19, for there you will find the agreement (Old Covenant) and the stipulations He made with His recently freed peoples from Egypt.

2) For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come *to* the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness, and there Israel camped before the mount.

3) And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; 4) You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. 5) Now, therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth *is* Mine: 6) And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel."

7) And Moses came and called for the elders of the People, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him.

8) And all the People answered together, and said, "All that the LORD hath spoken we will do."

And Moses returned the words of the People unto the LORD.

This pattern laid down by Jehovah God with His ancient people can be simply stated in current jargon, "If ye will obey Me and keep My agreement, I will respond by honoring my agreement and promises which I made with you." This same principle was employed in nearly all the covenants/agreements made by God

with His OT, OC people, the children of Israel. The promised Davidic kingdom was no exception; Its realization depended upon the OT peoples being faithful to Jehovah and keeping the laws and regulations which He spelled out in the agreement.

The New Covenant

I do not want you to lose sight of our goal in this section. In the last paragraph on pages 34-35 there was a statement made regarding the Matthew 12:32 passage which indicated there were, at that point in time, at least two *aions*, one of which they were currently living in (prior to the crucifixion of Christ Jesus) and a coming one. I believe it is safe to say with the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord, a new and different *aion* was ushered in. The events which occurred in the 40-day period after His resurrection, His ascension, and the arrival of Pentecost with the amazing display of gifts of tongues no doubt ushered in a new age.

Lest we forget, the Apostle Paul writing about matters concerning “his brethren, kinsmen according to the flesh” in Romans 9:4, states:

...Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth –
the adoption
and the glory
and the covenants
and the giving of the law
and the service of God
and the promises.

In this Romans 9 body of truth, the apostle does not write “..to Israelites and Gentiles pertaineth...” No, immediately following the inauguration of the NC, after the veil in the temple had been ripped from top to bottom exposing the Most Holy Place in

the Temple complex, the believers were soon assembled together (40 days after Passover) looking for the restoration of the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:3-9). Question: did the followers of the risen Christ continue to preach and teach the OC message? Unquestionably there was a kingdom involved (1:6). However, this kingdom was not of this world (*kosmos*). To verify this statement, follow the dialogue in John chapter 18 between Pilate and the Lord Jesus:

33) Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto Him, “Art thou the King of the Jews?”

34) Jesus answered him, “Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?”

35) Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?”

36) Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world (*kosmos*): if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.”

37) Pilate therefore said unto Him, “Art thou a king then?” Jesus answered, “Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world (*kosmos*), that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”

38) Pilate saith unto Him, “What is truth?” And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, “I find in this man no fault *at all*.”

(emphasis added, cwa).

And to what kingdom is the above passage referring? Unhesitatingly, the kingdom of heaven!

During the 40-day seminary training administered to those followers of the risen Christ (found in Acts 1:4-9), a number of important charges were given to those same followers. These included:

1. They were not to depart from Jerusalem but wait for the promise of the Father, the Comforter (no doubt referring

to the promise of the Spirit of Truth (John 14:16-18, 26).

2. The baptism of holy spirit (not the Holy Spirit, but power from on high; Acts 1:8, Luke 24:49).
3. The followers were to be witnesses to:

Jerusalem

Samaria

Uttermost part of the earth (γῆς – land, the promised land, not *oikoumenē*, inhabited earth)

Most of the Lord's disciples with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and His siblings* being in the upper room continued in prayer at this time.

Next, it was necessary to fill the vacant spot left by Judas Iscariot. Matthias was then “numbered with the eleven apostles” (Acts 1:16-26).

With the arrival of the day of Pentecost (50 days after Pass-over, a very important Jewish feast day), His followers were “all with one accord in one place” (Acts 2:1). Suddenly, from the hand of God Himself, He filled those followers with “power from on high,” and they began to minister to some of the Pentecost participants (devout men, vs. 5) from the lands outside the land of Canaan (vss. 5-11). Amazingly, these participants heard the message of the followers of Christ Jesus in their own native tongue (v. 6), and those who heard this display of God thought the ministers of Christ were “full of new wine” (2:13-15).

What was the message on the day of Pentecost which the

* Brothers: (As an unrelated thought, what had happened to the Lord Jesus' human family members since His verbal exchange with His brothers found in John, chapter 7, as they did not believe in Him, John 7:2-10, 5). Apparently these siblings now “believed” in Him (had a spiritual rebirth).

followers of Christ Jesus declared? It could not be the truth associated with the wonderful things pertaining the revelation of the secret/mystery found in the epistles of Ephesians and Colossians, since this secret message had not even been received by the apostle Paul (he was not yet even “saved” at this point in time!).

What then, did the followers of Christ preach at Pentecost? Joel 2:21-32. supplies the answer to this question:

23) Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for He hath given you the former rain moderately, and He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first *month*.

24) And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. 25) And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer worm, My great army which I sent among you.

26) And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, That hath dealt wondrously with you: and My people shall never be ashamed.

27) And ye shall know that I *am* in the midst of Israel, and *that I am* the LORD your God, and none else: and My people shall never be ashamed.

28) And it shall come to pass afterward, *that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: 29) And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out My spirit.*

30) And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars *of* smoke.

31) The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.

32) And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD

shall call.

Given the limits and identification information listed on page 40, which was derived from Romans 9:4, note verses 23, 27 and 32, it is clear the people of Joel's prophecy are none other than:

1. Children of Zion (v. 23)
2. I [Jehovah God] am in the midst of My people, Israel (v. 27).
3. "...in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance."

A very interesting phrase in verse 32 pertains to the remnant within the nation of Israel who are called by the LORD, not to the nation of Israel as a whole! I take this to mean only the elect of God out of the nation of Israel, those who "shall call on the Name of the LORD" will enter into the (one) coming kingdom spoken of in Matthew 12:32.

According to both passages (Joel 2 and Acts 2), the message delivered on the day of Pentecost concerned only Israelites (and those foreigners, non-Jews, who embraced Judaism) with all of their hopes and covenant promises. Nowhere in these two contexts is there any inkling of truths related to making known or revealing the message associated with the church which is His body, as seen in Ephesians and Colossians.

In the Joel 2:28-29 context, those prophesied events (written approx. 488-477 BC) were then beginning to occur at Pentecost, 50 days after Passover (and 50 days after the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus). But stop for a moment to look at the entire context and realize very few people pay attention to those apocryphal events (vss. 30-32) which are also a part of this same prophecy. Without hesitation, everything in this entire context concerns those peoples of whom the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 9:2-6. As you recall, Luke the physician wrote the book of Acts, in addition to his gospel account. If the events of chapter 24:44-53 are compared with those in Joel, chapter 2, and Acts, chapters 1 and 2, you will find some marvelous congruencies, as well as additional and pertinent informa-

tion which aids in understanding and interpreting the events which were about to transpire in these same Scriptures.

The Divine Missionary Program and Outreach Given by the Risen Christ Jesus to His Followers.

In the Lukan account (24:44-49) is found the blueprint for the spread of the gospel of the finished, redemptive work of the now-risen Christ (Messiah) Jesus the Lord. Follow along:

1. Referring to the gospel (as it was written in the Scriptures) itself (vss. 45-47)

- it behooved Christ to suffer
- to rise from the dead on the third day
- repentance and remission (forgiveness) of sins should be proclaimed to all nations beginning at Jerusalem (see also Matt. 28:19).

The Markan account (16:15) provides an additional point of interest as to who were to be the recipients of the good news of the gospel. The preaching (initially) was directed to every creature in all the world (*kosmos*). From page 13 (repeating) *kosmos* refers to —

The Patriarch Abraham, his heirs (the Hebrews), Jewry (Judaism, the belief system of the Jews), the physical land (γη) of Israel (given to Abraham in Genesis 15), not the entire inhabited earth, is the primary site for God's activity with His covenant people. Also, the Gentiles (proselytes) who through faith embraced the Hebrews' religion are to share in the covenant blessings with the elect children of Israel.

Just prior to the Lord's ascending to heaven (Acts 1:9-11), He prescribed the outreach plan to spread the good news of the gospel. It proceeded in this manner:

First, the disciples were instructed to remain in Jerusalem in anticipation of being endued with “power on high.”

Secondly, the message was to spread to Judea – the regions immediately surrounding Jerusalem.

Thirdly, the message was to be heralded to the inhabitants of Samaria, the country north of Judea ranging up to Galilee.

Finally, the gospel was to be preached unto all the peoples (“to the uttermost”— Gr. extremity [εσχρατου – farthest, last, last extremity¹⁰] of the earth – Gr. γης) In the AV, this word is translated as follows:

1. The ground
2. Surface of the earth
3. The land
4. World
5. Inhabitants of the earth
6. A...
 - ...land
 - ...region
 - ...tract
 - ...country
 - ...territory
 - ...the chosen land

What it does not say is, “*oikoumenē* (inhabited earth).

I have every confidence this earth, land, territory (γης) referred to is none other than the land-grant (Canaan) given to Abraham and his promised covenant family, the children of Israel. This deed was given by Jehovah in about 2000 BC (Genesis 15:18) and consisted of all the land (γης) from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates river.

In Matthew 10:1-16 (obviously, prior to His crucifixion), the Lord sent the 12 disciples to preach only to the “lost sheep of the House of Israel.” They were told not to go to the Gentiles or

the Samaritans. If the twelve were told not to go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans, their ministry was no doubt confined to the limits of the original land-grant given to the Patriarch, Abraham, for here, in this same land, all of the covenant promises (including the kingdom of Heaven) were to be realized.

What followed after the original dispersal of the ministers of the New Covenant (for, by definition, the Lord had just instituted the NC at least fifty days prior)? Let me supply a few highlights in response to this query.

The Scriptures reveal the apostles and leaders of the followers of Christ remained in Jerusalem and ministered to the peoples of Jerusalem and Judea. Their message centered around the crucified, buried, resurrected and ascended Christ. Also, the believers were expecting to experience the restoration of the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6).

As the ministry in Jerusalem continued, thousands of Jews responded positively to the heralding of apostles and followers of Christ. This same message found no home with the Jewish leaders, as they rejected it, and, in fact, it caused displeasure and anger with them. The brethren were commanded to cease from their ministering. On those same occasions (Acts 4:1-22, 5:17-41), when the apostles and followers of Christ were brought before the Jewish councils, the Spirit-filled Apostle Peter accused the religious and political leaders of crucifying and murdering the “Prince of Life.” This, in turn, caused these leaders to be “cut to the heart.” In Acts 6:9-7:60, Stephen, a man full of faith and power, was brought to the council, whereupon he eloquently spoke of the history of the nation of Israel from its inception through a number of important OT incidents, leading to the then present time. Stephen then laid a scathing accusation on the leaders by stating (7:51-55):

51) “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: [as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye]. 52) Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them (which showed before the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been

now the betrayers and murderers): 53) Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it*.” 54) When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth. 55) But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory, 56) And said, “Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” 57) Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, 58) And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. 59) And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” 60) And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep. 8:1) Saul was consenting unto his death.

In verse 53, Stephen (a man full of faith and holy spirit, 6:5) makes a forensic/legal charge. The leaders of Israel in Jerusalem, the capital of the land-grant real estate deeded to Abraham and his descendents, had “received the Law (of Moses) by the disposition of angels and/but they did not keep it! Hence, the penalties and the sanctions which were spelled out in the original agreed-upon covenant (the Law) made at Mt. Sinai were declared. The actual sanctions were administered or carried out by Jehovah-God’s Sergeant at Arms Titus, the Roman General, in AD 70. (At this point let me inject the following: Israel as a people, with their religion, their capital city, the site of the government of Israel, Jerusalem, in the eyes of God, on a covenantal basis after the destruction of Jerusalem and the leveling of the Temple are a non-entity. They, like any of the other peoples of this inhabited globe, must approach God on the basis of faith only in His Son’s finished work on Calvary. God only provides the way to Him!

Back to the events of the book of Acts: With the death of Stephen...

...8:1b) there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad

throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

With the scattering of the believers from Jerusalem, the gospel was then spread by those scattered throughout the cities and territories within the scope of Palestine/Canaan. However, some left the confines of the original land grant and journeyed to Asia Minor and to the Greek peninsula. The message they preached was not the gospel of the secret/mystery (found in Ephesians and Colossians). Nor was it an Old Covenant message. No, they preached the resurrected Christ based upon the truths related to the newly-instituted New Covenant, since they were deemed “able ministers of the New Covenant (2nd Corinthians 3:1-6). This same message was initially preached to those who frequented the synagogue(s), the Jews (only).

The record shows the Apostle Peter ministered in the household of a Gentile, Cornelius, located in Caesarea. Later on, he ministered via epistles to those elect “strangers” of the *diaspora* located in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

With the conversion of Saul, he initially only preached to Jews in the synagogues. However, in the 13th chapter of Acts, with the unbelieving attitude and negative reception of those Jews now becoming apparent and rampant, Saul (now Paul) in the synagogue at Antioch declared (Acts 13:46-47)...

46b)...it was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you (Jews); but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. 47) For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, ‘I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth’ (γῆ).

At this point it is pertinent that an important prophetic matter be resurrected, for the implications derived from the parable of the vineyard owner and the husbandmen of the vineyard, seen in Luke 20:9-19 and Matthew 21:33-46, are unmistakable in their

applications to this Acts 13:46-47 context. Follow me. When the evil husbandmen cast out the beloved son of the Lord of the vineyard, the owner states:

...He the Lord would come and destroy the husbandmen, and give the vineyard to others. (Matthew 21:43 states, "...the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation (*ethnei* – Gr. εθνει; Gentiles [translated nations = εθνη]).

The remainder of the book of Acts is primarily concerned with the ministries of the Apostles Paul, Barnabas and Silas in the cities and territories of Asia Minor, the Grecian Peninsula and Canaan or the cities of Caesarea and Rome. (In Acts, Paul's ministerial activities are the most prominent of the three apostles.) It bears repeating, the Holy Spirit's declaration found in 2nd Corinthians 3:1-6 identifies the ministerial office or role ("able minister of the New Testament [covenant]") the Apostle Paul exercised in his outreach to "the Jews first and then to the Gentiles." Those other apostles and co-ministers of Paul's who accompanied and labored with him in the preaching of the Word of God also shared in the rigors and trials of this evangelistic work. They were beaten, thrown into prison, persecuted, brought before councils and kings and, more often than not, these trials were instigated by their own countrymen, the legalistic adherers to the OC. As the Book of Acts records, the Apostle Paul was nearing the end of the charge which the risen Christ had given him (Acts 9:15-16; 26:16-19). It was apparent that most of the ethnic, religious Jews with their legalism and OC beliefs and practices were not receptive to the NC message which the apostles were heralding. This was the case of the Jews in "the Land." It was also true of those Israelites outside "the Land."

For the record, it is important to identify the contents of the message the Apostle Paul preached both to the Jews and the Gentiles:

1. The message preached throughout the book of Acts by the followers of Christ and the apostles concerned the fulfillment of Joel's (chap. 2) prophecy. This mess-

age also recognized the Messiahship of Jesus Christ and was centered around His finished work on the cross of Calvary, including the teachings of the Book of Hebrews, which identifies the Lord Jesus as none other than the Antitype: THE—divine High Priest, sacrificial lamb and go-between, spanning the great gulf between fallen man and the absolute righteous and loving God, the Author of the new and better covenant.

2. The message was addressed to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles, with the hope the ethnic Jews might be jealous about the extension of the gospel to the Gentiles, and cause them to repent (see Romans, chapters 9-11).

I believe it is a mistake to believe that Paul and the other ministers preached at this time the gospel of the mystery of the grace of God as found in Ephesians and Colossians. It was not revealed until some years later. I am also convinced there was no overlap/transition in the ministries of the apostles during the latter Acts period, i.e., with the ministry of the grace of God/gospel of the mystery/secret as being preached to the Gentiles and, simultaneously, the preaching of the New Covenant to the Jews of the dispersion. Paul the apostle confirms this statement in the following passage (Acts 26: 14-23):

14) And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.”

15) And I said, “Who art thou, Lord?” And He said, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

16) But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to *make* thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee, 17) Delivering thee from the people, *and from the* Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, 18)

To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to

light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me.”

19) Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: 20) But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. 21) For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill *me*.

22) Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: 23) That Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

As the book of Acts closes, the Apostle Paul now bound and in prison, is in the then capitol of the known world, Rome. Also, he winds down his “to the Jew first and then to the Gentile” ministry! He is surrounded by some of his countrymen who have come to hear him out regarding the message he was espousing (Acts 28-23-24).

23) And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into *his* lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and *out of* the prophets, from morning (till evening).

24) And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

After the reasoning (vss. 29, et.al) the apostle then pronounces the benediction on those unbelieving Jews out of the land:

25) And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, “Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, 26) saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye

shall hear, and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: 27) For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, *and* I should heal them.’ 28) Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it.”

29) And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves. 30) And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, 31) Preaching *the* kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

Insofar as the next major biblical and historical event have which involved and affected the covenant peoples, whether conservative Christianity (and/or Christendom as a whole) accepts it or not. Is the 70 AD holocaust of Jerusalem and the land of Israel. I am convinced these events are not only historical but were vividly spoken of and predicted in Matthew 23-25, Daniel, chapter 12, and the book of Revelation. With the covenant-God administering justice and judgment at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11), He closed the door on the totality of the Old Covenant with all of its types and legalism, including the non-repentant OC peoples. At this same Divine judgment those elect believers from Israel and the believing Gentiles who were listed in the “Books” (Revelation 20:11-15) received their reward(s) and were then joined/united with the “by the Faith only” saints listed in Hebrews in chapter eleven, and were ushered into the New Jerusalem’s heavenly precincts. First Corinthians 15:51-56 and 1st Thessalonians 4:16-17 describes the entry of the elect into this “prepared place,” i.e., “My Father’s house” (John 14:1-4).

8) By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

9) By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10) For he

^^^^^^^ looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder
^^^^^^^ and maker is God.

11) Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. 12) Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, *so many* as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable.

13) These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14) For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. 15) And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

16) But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city.

17) By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, 18) Of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called: 19) Accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

20) By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

Hebrews, chapter 12:22-24, provides further commentary, explanation and insights to the 11:8-20 passage:

22) But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, 23) To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24) And to Jesus the mediator of the **New Covenant**, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh

better things than *that of* Abel.

(emphasis mine)

Returning to Revelation 20:11-15's judgment scene, those individuals not found in the "book of life" (vs. 15) were cast into the lake of fire (vs. 14).

As a precursory comment, on pages 32 and 33 of this study, when the discussions relating to age and ages and the OC peoples were made, the pre-crucified Lord Jesus in Matthew 12:32 concerning this very fact identifies two individual ages:

And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world [the age – Gr. – τῷ αἰῶνι] nor in the world* to come. (*This latter term "age" (*aion*) in this sentence is not in the Gr. text. However, when the Holy Spirit uses the phrase "to come," an *aion* is implied.)

Let us conclude this section of the study with these simple thoughts:

1. The Old and New Covenant peoples are the primary focus of God's activities with His human creation.
2. I believe it is safe to say, with the rejection and subsequent crucifixion of Christ (Messiah) Jesus by the Jewish people (as a whole), the covenant-God Jehovah brought to an end that age/*aion*. With "breaking" and "not keeping" the covenant (Law of Moses), God's judgments and penalties were carried out at/with the holocaust of 70 AD. (The White Throne judgment of Revelation defines who the guilty covenant breakers were and their subsequent fate.)
3. With the total destruction of OC Judaism with all of its variations on a theme being accomplished upon the cross, a new covenantal program and *aion* ("the coming age" spoken of in Matthew 12:32) was immediately instituted and administered by the apostles, disciples

and followers of the newly-risen Christ Jesus as defined in Acts, chapters 1 and 2.

4. The Book of Acts records the activities of the spreaders of this new truth, which is none other than the New Covenant gospel. Lest there be any confusion, the gospel of the mystery/secret had not been revealed to the Apostle Paul and those other ministers at this point in time (Ephesians 4:11-13).

THE KINGDOMS OF HIS DEAR SON AND OF CHRIST, THEIR RELATIONSHIPS TO THE WORLD, THE AGES AND NOW

Nearing the completion of this study I wish to remind you of the original holistic research methodology I used in pursuing some of the elusive and not so elusive information sources which relate to our original themes, the KINGDOM(S), the WORLD, the AGES and, finally, to the 2013-2014 citizens who now occupy this globe. It is now time to apply this same principle to integrate the several informational findings which have been in the body of this research paper.

To begin with, let us refer to the kingdom occurrence information found on page 7 and note the following:

EPHESIANS 5:5 – THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST AND OF GOD

1. The phrase **Kingdom of Christ** occurs only once in the NT, in Ephesians 5:5:

For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the **kingdom of Christ** and [Gr. και, Eng. and] **of God**.

- You will observe there is also the companion phrase **kingdom [implied] of God** in this same verse. Interesting! Further, the conjunction “and” connects the

two phrases.

Green¹², in his *Handbook To Grammar of the Greek Testament*, supplies us with the following:

Kai (and) is a conjunction of annexation and can in many cases, be used for:

- “rhetorical emphasis,” reason or purpose
- or
- “explanatory” or “exegetic,” reason or purpose
- or
- “enumeration of particulars,” reason or purpose

Let me propose that the phrase “in the kingdom of Christ and of God” can also be translated, “in the kingdom of Christ,” *that is to say, or in reality is*, the kingdom of God.

On pages 15-16 of this paper, Dr. Bullinger⁴ supplies discussions and definitions based upon biblical usage for the phrase “kingdom of God” as found in the NT. A detailed list of the characteristics of this kingdom are also enumerated. Succinctly, however:

- It is *moral and spiritual* in its sphere
- It is *inclusive* in its character (embracing the *natural* and *spiritual* seeds of Abraham, “the heavenly calling” and the “church” of the mystery.

Hence,

- It is *universal* in its aspect.
- It is (in its *wider* aspect) the subject of *New Testament revelation*; ...
- and will be *eternal* in its duration.

After reading Philippians, chapter two, with its apologetic on the relationships of the Son, Christ Jesus, with the Father, I believe it is safe to say the kingdom of God is the domain of all of the “by faith” elect of all the ages/*aions* and all the generations and all the dispensations from Abel to and including those elect global citizens of 2013-2014 AD.

COLOSSIANS 1:13 – THE KINGDOM OF HIS DEAR SON

The phrase “kingdom of His dear Son” is unique only to the book of Colossians, chapter one:

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the **kingdom of His dear Son** (v.13).

Paul the apostle in the first few verses of Colossians, chapter one, elaborates on:

- God the Father’s will in appointing him (Paul) as an apostle and Timotheus a minister to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ in Colosse (vs. 1, 2).
- Thanksgiving and praise for the believers in Colosse (vss. 2, 3).
- ... and for the hope being laid up for the believers in heaven of which they have previously heard in the word of truth of the gospel (vs. 5).
- ...which has come unto you, as is in all the world (*kosmos* [vs. 6]).
- The apostle prays for those in Colosse to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, be fruitful in every good work, and increase in the (full) knowledge (*επίγνωσιν*) of God (vs. 10).
- Literally, “with all power [*dunamis*] having been empowered [having been ‘*dunamized*’] according to the of the glory of Him [the Father] to all endurance and longsuffering, with joy giving thanks to the Father having made fit you for the part of the lot of the saints in the light (vss. 11. 12).

→ Who (the Father [vs. 12]) hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the **kingdom of His Dear Son** (vs. 13).

Given the discussions, research and the conclusions reached in the former pages of this study, let us now determine the characteristics and truths associated with the **kingdom of His dear Son**. (It is not out of line in this conclusion to also include those **kingdom of Christ** (Ephesians 5:5, pp. 59-60) matters with their conclusion(s). The epistles of Ephesians and Colossians are very closely akin, doctrinally, eschatologically and dispensationally.) With this said, the letter of Ephesians no doubt speaks more eloquently to the matter of the kingships of His dear Son and of Christ than those found in the book of Colossians. Therefore I will point out two passages in Ephesians which I believe address this regal matter.

Ephesians 1:17-23

17) That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: 8) The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19) And what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, 20) Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, 21) Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22) And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, 23) Which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. (emphasis added)

And with respect to our relationship with our heavenly Sovereign, Christ Jesus, His Dear Son, and in His heavenly domain—

Ephesians 2:6

[the Father] has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

The Kingdoms of Christ and of His Dear Son...

...And the World (*Kosmos*)

The occurrence/frequency data found on page 11 shows there are seven occurrences of the term *kosmos* found in the NT Scriptures. However, the following modifying declaration is in order at this juncture:

- 1) In the body of the foregoing text, it has been determined that in these two books only is revealed the preaching/teaching of the mystery/secret (“hidden from ages [*aions*] and generations”), Col. 1:25-29, Eph. 3:1-9.

Ephesians 1:4 also makes it clear this Ephesian/Colossian gospel concerns an election designed by the Father before the foundation of the **world** (*Kosmos*). Further...

- 2) ...there is no question regarding the congruency and primary message found in these two letters as it revolves around the revelation of the gospel of the mystery/secret to the citizens of the inhabited world (*oikoumenē*), including Gentiles and Jews.

Usage of *Kosmos* in the New Testament

What is or how do you define the term *kosmos* as it is used in the NT? Exhaustive lexical and concordant research¹ shows, encapsulated in a terse, simple four-word phrase, *an y and everything Jewish*. And what is everything Jewish?

The Patriarch Abraham, his heirs (the Hebrews), Jewry (Judaism ~ the belief system of the Jews), the physical land

(γεν) of Israel (given to Abraham in Genesis 15), and not the entire inhabited earth is the primary site for God's activity with His covenant people. Also, the Gentiles (proselytes) who through faith embraced the Hebrews' religion are to share in the covenant blessings with the elect children of Israel.

- In the NT, Gentiles are not the primary objects of things pertaining to the *kosmos*.
- The book of John reveals that the Lord Jesus came into the *kosmos*, but was not of the *kosmos*.

(Please refer to pages 10-14 for the full discussions related to matters concerning the *kosmos*.)

...And the ages (ΑΙΩΝ/ΑΙΩΝΟΝ = αιων/αιωνον [anglicized, *aion*])

What better way to continue our discussions than to, once again, refer to the occurrence information stereotyped on pages 9 and 10. Reviewing, there are 119 occurrences of the subject word *aion* in the NT, with nine being found in the Ephesian/Colossian context. Within this same two-epistle context there are two passages which directly impact on this study. The first is found in Colossians 1:24-28 (the second will be discussed shortly), and I quote:

24) Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church: 25) Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of Go 26) Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages (*aion-αιων/αιωνον*) and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints:

27) To whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: 28) Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom

that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.
(emphasis mine)

The two underlined phrases need very little explanation, as I have gone to great lengths to address the importance of these matters earlier in the main text of this paper.

I also wish to re-emphasize the point that the Greek meaning of the term *aion* (ΑΙΩΝ/ΑΙΩΝΟΝ = αἰών/αἰώνον) as found in the NT does not primarily refer to quantitative time, but refers instead to qualitative concepts.

By substituting the phrase penned by Trench into Colossians 1:26, we find the following:

Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages [i.e., All that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hope, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time current in the world [*kosmos*], which it may be impossible to seize and accurately define, being the moral atmosphere which at every moment of our lives (*and theirs*) we inhale again inevitably to exhale] **and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints.** (My insertions and emphasis, cwa)

An extremely important fact is seen in the frequency data associated with the usage of the adjectival usage form of *aion* (i.e., *aiōnios*, Gr. αἰώνιος). This interesting adjective is translated into the English (in the AV) as “everlasting life, eternal life,” etc. Out of the seventy one occurrences of this subject term, this data reveals there is not a single occurrence of it in the post-Acts letters of Ephesians and Colossians. Is this not significant? This qualitative type of life promised to the New Covenant citizens, which I do believe to be unending, is exclusive to the children of Israel and to those Gentile proselytes who by faith embraced Messiah Jesus and His finished work on the cross. Since (by definition) this life is relegated to the covenant-related peoples, what of the “in Christ life” promised to the believers spoken of in Ephesians and Colossians? An excellent question! We will discuss this shortly.

The Ephesians 3 context provides us with a wonderful apologetic on some very important truths, issues and matters which fall under the purview of the kingdom of His Dear Son and the kingdom of Christ. This passage speaks to the second important occurrence of *aion* needing clarification (alluded to on page 61) and found in Ephesians 3:1-12. From the King James Version of the Bible (AV, KJV) we find:

- 1) For this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,
- 2) If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:
- 3) How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; [as I wrote afore in few words;
- 4) Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ,]
- 5) Which in other ages (lit. generations) was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;
- 6) That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel:
- 7) Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power.
- 8) Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;
- 9) And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ:
- 10) To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,
- 11) According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:
- 12) In Whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him.

Narrowing our focus, the purposeful statement found in verse 11 is the vehicle I choose to employ in concluding my research and commentary on the kingdoms, the world and the ages. From the interlinear Greek-English¹¹ texts we read the following:

κατα προθεση των αιωνων ην
according to (the) purpose of a the ages which

εποιησιν εν τω Χριστω τω κυριω ημων
he made in the Christ the Lord of us

By comparing the AV's translation of this verse with the Greek text, we see the former as translating the phrase as "eternal purpose of the ages," while the Greek translation renders it, "according to the purpose of the ages." This latter wording is no doubt closer to the meaning found in the original manuscripts. With this disclosure, new light is shed on the interpretations we will shortly make.

Since the *aion* issue/matter appears to be the first truth to surface in the summing-up phase of this study, I will therefore address it first. The particulars in this area of our studies are dealt with on pages 28-30. Hence, at this point I will not elaborate further except to state...

...the primary emphases, eschatological hope(s) and promises, etc., where biblical matters related to *aion/-aionos* are primarily concerned, (OT and NTcovenant peoples -- the Children of Israel, Jews, Gentile proselytes to the Jewish belief system -- are the primary focus. It also included detail on the land-grant deeded to Abraham.

The Apostle Paul makes it clear that these Jewish/covenant "things" were not the subject of the message or gospel (with their unique and special eschatological hopes) which was declared by the apostle in those letters written after the events associated with the close of the book of Acts period. But wait! According to verse 11, the Holy Spirit, through the stylus of this same apostle, now declares this new revelation (vs. 3) is in reality the divine purpose or goal of all of the previous and foregoing *aions*. They are their goal, purpose and fulness!

Let us return to the beginning of Ephesians, chapter 3, and scroll down to determine the wonderful characteristics of this program which Paul the apostle now declares.

Verse

1) Paul states his divinely appointed office as “Prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles [*ethnon*].”

2) The dispensation of the Grace of God was given to the apostle for you [the Gentile peoples/nations].

3) By (a) special revelation, the truths concerning the mystery/secret were revealed to the Apostle Paul, about which he wrote previously [Colossians; see vs. 4].

4) Paul exhorts the readers of the Ephesian letter to recognize and understand his understanding of the mystery of Christ...

5) ...which in other ages [i.e., generations] was not made known to the sons of men as it is now revealed [apocalypsed] to His apostles and prophets in spirit.

6) That the Gentiles should be:

joint-heirs [*sugkleronoma*] – see Eph. 2:13-15. We are co-heirs with the Jews and, in the process, God the Father creates [*ktise*] in Himself out of the two, one new man [humanity]

and

joint-body [*sussoma*] – consisting of the elect of the Jewish and Gentile races, i.e., the one new man.

and

joint-sharers [*summetoxa*] of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. This is none other than the hope and inheritance which God the Father gave to His Son, defined and expressed in Eph. 1:18-23.

7) Another title and office given (as a gift of grace) to Paul by God the Father is “minister” as He revealed or uncovered the intricacies and details of the mysteries of Christ which he preached to the Gentiles and also wrote of in the Ephesian and Colossian letters...

8) ...To Paul, least of all saints, was given “the” [this] grace to preach to the Gentiles [nations] the unsearchable riches of the Christ (see 1:17-18)...

9) ...and to bring to light what is the dispensation of the mystery/secret (mysteriou) having been hidden from the *aions* in the God who had created all things by Jesus Christ

10) in order that [for the intent] now might be made

Known to the rulers and authorities in the “upon” the heavens through (through the instrumentality of) the church (the called out ones) the manifold wisdom of the God, 11) according to the purpose of the ages [αἰώνων- plural] which He made in the Christ Jesus, the Lord of us.

I would direct your attention to several very important defining items in the passage immediately above.

- This prison ministry, divinely given to the Apostle Paul by God the Father to minister to the Gentiles/nations (vss. 1, 2, 6, 7, 8).
- This special ministry Paul received is termed the “dispensation of the grace of God” (vs. 2) and concerns “things” and “matters” pertaining to:
 - The mystery/secret of Christ which was hidden from other/former generations (vs. 4-5).
 - However, it is now being revealed to His holy apostles and prophets..
- This formerly hidden mystery/secret which pertains to the preaching of the unsearchable riches of Christ to the Gentiles/nations, which is the unique and special “joint” (co-) relationships of Gentiles with Jews with or to Christ Jesus, namely (vss. 6-8):
 - “fellow heirs” } with the Jews and
 - “joint body” } with Christ
 - “joint sharers” of His promise }
- Succinctly stated, Paul’s prison ministry (enumerated above) was designed by God the Father to use the apostle to bring to light (*photisai*) the hidden (in the mind of God) things resident in the *aions*, the *kosmos* and the generations which are now identified and codified in the post-Acts letters (as they constitute a major part of the gospel of the dispensation of the mystery/

secret itself) of the Apostle Paul. In addition, they are also now on display to the celestial realm(s).

- This divine expression of the handiwork of God to the rulers and authorities (angelic realm and beings) in the heavenlies (*epouraniois* – *ep* [on or upon] the heavens) using the instrument of His church as the method to display His love and grace.
- All of the foregoing (3:1-10) describes in part the mind of God the Father and His activities with His earthly creations, the peoples of the covenants – the Jews and the non-covenant peoples – the Gentiles/ nations. With the revelation of His secret and hidden purposes revealed in the letters of Ephesians and Colossians,

by Divine Fiat –

The Father, because of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son (also the Head of the Body of Christ, the Church) on Calvary declares:

THIS IS THE PURPOSE OF THE AGES (ΑΙΩΝ/ΑΙΩΝΟΝ)

WHY? WHY? WHY?

Why, you ask? This simple one word question speaks of some of the divine motives of God the Father which He poured out on those of His creation who embraced His calling thousands of years ago and later to us today in 2013-14. We have been redeemed by the blood of His Son. Ephesians 2:4-5 identifies this great motivational exhibition:

4) But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith he loved us, 5) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved);

6) And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus: 7) That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus.

The Scriptures state (Ephesians 1:3-6) that God the Father sought and created a whole new humanity (Ephesians 2:15) from Jew and Gentile raw materials, and then adopted them as co-heir sons and daughters with His Son through the vicarious instrumentality of the Son of His love. And this was “according to the good pleasure of His will.”

Another purpose statement of the Father’s intent is found in chapter one, verse ten. From the Interlinear NT¹¹:

εις οικονομιαν του πληρωματος των καιρων
for (a) stewardship of the fulness of the seasons

ανακεφαλαιωσασθαι τα παντα εν τω Χριστω
to head up the all things in the Christ

τα επι τοις ουρσνοις και τα επι
the things upon the heavens and the things upon

της γης εν αυτω
the earth in Him

In an attempt to gain a deeper appreciation for this divine message of intent, which is seen in this short phrase, we will employ some linguistic tools to parse the language which the Holy Spirit employed to express the Father’s purposes and will. Follow closely –

- In the AV, the verse begins with the clause “that in the” dispensation. In the Greek text this small word is “εις” (Eng., *eis*). In my opinion the translators took questionable liberties in their rendering of this preposition. Green¹² defines *eis* in the following manner:

→ Denotes motion to the interior of something

→ Unto

→ In composition, it implies motion into or towards

There does not appear to be the thought or concept of some time in the future.

Within this same time frame of divine revelatory activities (Ephesian, ch.3, being made known to men [vs.9] and the angelic host [vs.10]), Paul the Apostle, being inspired by the Holy Spirit, states (vs.10) that these events are now (Gr. νῦν) transpiring, not some time in the future. Perhaps the terms “for” or ”into” will better express the intent of God the Father in this verse 10 context, “for/into” a dispensation.

- Considering the entire Ephesians 3 context, it would appear to me that the phrase “the dispensation of the fullness of the times [*kairon*, at this very season, critical, opportune time] is now currently in operation of being completely filled to the brim [*pleroma*].
- “...gather together (Gr. *anakephalaivosasthai* – “to gather together into one,” “to sum up under one head,”¹² ”to “reduce under one head, several things under one head”¹⁰). Ah! but consider the verb properties the Holy Spirit used with this word (1st aorist, infinitive, middle) and the revelatory truth and impact it brings to the interpretation of this passage:

1st aorist infinitive in Greek usage implies - a single completed act in the indefinite past (not the future).

A verb in the middle voice denotes – action on one’s self or for one’s self.

A rhetorical question: What was “headed up in Himself” (vs. 9), for Himself? Answer, “The all things in the Christ.”

- The all things (*ta panta*. restrictive, not universal) in the Christ, the Beloved Son, in Whom we share in the inher-

tance (vs.11) promised to our Head by our and His Father.

Also, geographically speaking –

- The those all things being or which are in Christ –
 - The things upon (Gr. *epi*) the heavens. }
} in Him
 - The things upon (*epi*) the earth (Gr. *ges*) }

All of this (“the all things” above) is in accordance with the counsel of the Father’s own will (vs. 11). For (*eis*) we (Jews and Gentiles [we and ye, vss.12 & 13]) should be (perhaps implied) “designed for” the praise of His glory (or because of what He has done, we bring praise to Him. After all, we are His workmanship (Ephesians 2:10).

Concluding, then, all of the foregoing research and study relating to the kingdoms, the ages and the world have been analyzed, the ultimate motives with their resultant completions, which were designed by God the/our Father, become apparent in the twin epistles of Ephesians and Colossians (those citizens in/of the Kingdoms: of His Dear Son and of Christ). Chapter one of Ephesians provides us with a short, succinct commentary which speaks to the “mind of God,” carrying out His programs and activities which are extended to His earthly creations, the covenant(s) peoples, the Jews, and the non-covenant peoples, the Gentiles.

- 1) Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: 2) Grace *be* to you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3) Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: 4) According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love:
- 5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by

Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6) To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved: 7) In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; 8) Wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; 9) Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: 10) That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in Him, 11) In Whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will: 12) That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ. 13) In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in Whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, 14) Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory. 17) That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.

When all has been said and done about mankind's access to God, when all of mankind's attempts to reach and be approved by the God of the universe have been deemed empty and futile, God Himself stepped in and provided an avenue of acceptance. Despite what mankind with all of his religious practices and legalism promises in regard to access to God, there is only one way into His presence. But it was a costly way, since God's justice had to be addressed, as mankind did not keep the statutes God required for communion and fellowship. The guilty parties must die and their blood be shed to appease the righteous God, seeing the total inability of mankind to bridge the huge gap between them and Him, He exercised His great love and, in operational grace, He sent His pure and sinless Son to die as a substitute in the place of His aberrant, sinful creation, mankind. By accepting the Son's sacrificial work on the cross and subsequent burial and resurrec-

tion, the righteous Judge's legal/forensic requirements were met.

Finally, in the ultimate Divine message embedded in those Scriptures having to do with the kingdoms, the ages, and the world-*kosmos* is tied the very nature of God, His justice and mercy, His great love and His operational ethic of Grace in dealing with His helpless creatures.

Look above, verse 4, “**the purpose of the ages...**”:

...for mankind.

**ACCORDING AS HE HATH CHOSEN US IN HIM
BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD,
THAT WE SHOULD BE HOLY AND WITHOUT
BLAME BEFORE HIM IN LOVE.**

The Purpose of the Ages and the Dispensation of the Grace of God

Hopefully, this study has revealed to the spiritually curious students of the Word a number of important truths which are unique only to the Ephesian and Colossian letters and thus (by conclusions reached in this study), to the kingdom of His dear Son and to the kingdom of Christ. In those several discussions which related to the distinguishing characteristics and relationships matters between those five NT kingdoms (as they are/were impacted by the world [*kosmos*] and the ages [*aions*]), several absolutes in understanding, interpreting and “rightly dividing” the Scriptures were uncovered. If these same absolutes are carefully employed in biblical studies and research, I believe they will provide aid, clarification and understanding as the Bible student seeks to grasp the overall plan of God the Father for humankind, and, on a personal level, for them as individuals. Please recall:

- The kingdoms and the characteristics, hope, doctrines

of the two kingdoms (i.e., of: His dear Son and of Christ) seen only in the Ephesian/Colossian epistles are to be found only in the Apostle Paul's post Acts epistles. Also, they are not the subject of OT prophecies.

- By definition I believe it has been demonstrated:
 - The **world** (*kosmos*) and those matters pertaining to it have to do with the covenants and the peoples of the covenants (Jews, Hebrews, Jewish proselytes) and not to the non-covenant peoples and to the kingdoms of His dear Son and of Christ
 - With the exception of the age/*aion* in which we are now living (which Ephesians 3:10-12 defines as being the purpose of the [former] *aions*), Paul the Apostle declares in Ephesians 3:9 that the truths, doctrines and hope unique to the kingdoms of His dear Son and of Christ were hidden in God and thus not previously revealed to humankind. Consequently, they were not the subject of the previous *aionic*-matters!

The Dispensation of the Grace of God

In the revelatory phrase heralded by Paul found in Ephesian 3:1-4 (below), it would appear the apostle is incorporating all of the vast scriptural treasures which constitute the messages found in gospels of the mystery/secret, mystery of Christ and the grace of God under a single designation which, being led by the Holy Spirit, he declares to be the dispensation of the grace of God.

18) The eyes of your understanding being enlightened that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19) And what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power,

20) Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set *him* at His own right hand in the heavenly

places,

21) Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world [*aion*], but also in that which is to come: and hath put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, 23) Which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all

Oh, wonderful grace! Because of the Lord Jesus' sacrificial work on Calvary's cross, followed by His Father's acceptance of this work, we now have total unencumbered access directly to the/our Father. Sin no longer hinders or keeps us from Him. He has totally, once for all, forgiven us. We did nothing to earn this! He did it because He loves us. All of the types, legalistic ceremonies and substitutionary animal sacrifices characteristic of OT Law and its ritualism have been absolutely, totally done away with because of the blood of that righteous Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. Bringing matters up to date, any and all of Christendom's types, legalisms, ceremonies and ritualisms as a means of access to the Father are a waste of time and no doubt are an affront to Him. God accepts a "by faith" only attitude on the part of those seeking and wishing to worship Him

This gracious and loving mindset seen in the Father's personality, because of His Son's sacrifice, is the law (*nomos*) which now is the Divine governing principle ("compass" if you will) by which we are to live and conduct our everyday affairs. Above all, it is the spiritual context by which we are to commune and fellowship with God Himself.

To expand upon this grace-matter and add to the final touches to this detailed and complex paper, I am going to call on my personal friend and brother in Christ Jesus, Dr. Doug Falk. His wonderful comments are found in *Scripture Research*, titled *What is Grace?* Volume 4, Number 2¹³, pages 42-44.

...Grace is favor! Generally, favors are granted because they are at least partially 'earned' or 'deserved' by that person, or for a possible future advantage or payback, or because of a friendship, or blood relationship, again

earned by that person. However, Biblically, favor is granted not due to some debt owed, works performed, law kept or broken, but because of divine motives and carried out through Christ and Him alone— not of ourselves, that we may not boast (in ourselves). A crucial aspect of Grace is that it is not only favor but, of necessity, NOT of ourselves. It is not deserved (by us), it is not earned (by us), not granted out of debt, nor as an obligation, as in earning a favor. However, Grace is, in fact, earned; it is conditional. To answer our previous questions, God does not grant Grace without reason, God is not reckless in His favor, God does not grant Grace that is unearned or unmerited, God does not grant Grace randomly and haphazardly, God is not irresponsible in His granting of Grace. However, Grace is not earned by us, or conditional on us. It is solely earned by and conditioned on and in Christ!

So the issue comes full circle, finding that Grace is really an issue of our very heart and that it cannot be known or extended without a change of heart – a change most difficult, yet once done, it is most easily accepted and conditioned on and in Christ!

NO CHRIST, NO GRACE.

KNOW CHRIST (and nothing else), KNOW GRACE.

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