

DISCIPLING MEN'S HEARTS THROUGH KINGDOM THEOLOGY

By

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation focuses on the biblical and Neo-Calvinistic understanding of the kingdom of God to provide the church a vision of kingdom discipleship, which is compelling enough to capture the masculine heart. The methodology for this study is a combination of exegetical, theological and historical research.

The research presents a description of the kingdom of God, using the biblical framework of creation-fall-redemption (Chapter 2). The concept of the kingdom of God is rooted in God's creation of Adam to be the king of creation. He and Eve are to rule over their kingdom on behalf of The High King, God himself. Through the fall, Adam's kingdom is given over to the powers, Satan, sin, and death, which enslave Adam and his descendents. But Christ, the second Adam and promised messianic king, invades Adam's kingdom to overthrow Satan, sin, and death. The kingdom of God has arrived. King Jesus reigns over the whole planet right now and has begun to restore Adam's kingdom to wholeness and to establish God's righteous rule over the earth.

The paper researches the Neo-Calvinist understanding of kingdom discipleship in the life and writings of Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck, and Herman Ridderbos (Chapter 3). It refutes the current Two Kingdom theology of David VanDrunen.

This paper delineates and expounds seven parallel motifs discovered in my research on the biblical and Neo-Calvinistic views of the kingdom of God, as the basis of

discipleship that reaches men's hearts (Chapter 4). These are: 1) viewing God's workings in history through the lens of creation-fall-redemption, 2) understanding the glorious nature of creation and our responsibility to discover and develop it, 3) recognizing that though man's fall into sin has had a catastrophic effect on the created order, creation itself remains good, 4) understanding redemption to be the restoration of the whole of creational life, 5) understanding Christ's mission to be the establishment of his kingdom over planet earth, 6) understanding the kingdom of God to be the sphere in which his righteous rule is established, 7) recognizing the already/not yet aspects of the kingdom.

This paper combines these key elements of kingdom theology into a practical model for today's church (Chapter 5). The six perspectives that we need to cement in men's minds are that kingdom discipleship calls men: 1) to a big enough mission to capture their hearts, 2) to a clear vision to inspire commitment to specific objectives, 3) to a profound understanding of how perfectly God has designed them and their circumstances to maximize kingdom impact, 4) to vocation as continuing the very work of God in developing the potential of his creation, 5) to be the warrior protectors of each sphere of the creation where they dwell, 6) to supreme allegiance to The High King, their creator and redeemer.

This study concludes by identifying three obstacles to be overcome if the church is to make kingdom disciples of its men. These obstacles are: a vague understanding of the concept of the kingdom of God, a low view of the greatness of creation, the failure to equip men to engage modern culture in the battle for truth.

535 words

Dedicated to
my wife
Sandy
and my children
Kim, Karen, Brian, Tim, Josh
the treasured members of my kingdom at home.

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The writing of this doctoral dissertation was only possible because so many have contributed to my life and ministry. That list of key contributors begins with my high school Young Life leader, John Hartsock and his wife, Lorraine. John came into my high school world, grabbed hold of my heart and took it to Jesus Christ. Even forty-five years later my understanding of reaching the heart of a male is rooted in his ministry to me.

Closely behind them are Bill and Jeanette Ingram my older brother and sister in the Lord, whose impact in my life over the years has been enormous. Bill worked for the Coalition for Christian Outreach in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and later worked on my staff at Shady Grove PCA. I had no idea how much Bill shaped my thinking about the kingdom of God until I began to work on my thesis. Bill must have known, before I ever wrote this thesis, that kingdom theology will capture the heart of a man—because he made sure it captured mine.

I am grateful for the staff of RTS Orlando for updating my thirty year-old seminary education. In particular, I have appreciated Steve Brown's embodiment of the truth that grace is everything. Though I am a veteran church planter, Steve Childers gave me the right vision for church planting—not so much building a church in Germantown as showing the reality of the kingdom of God in Germantown. I especially love the RTS counseling department from whom I learned a great deal about the masculine heart. I wish we could get them to RTS DC.

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The seven-year pursuit of this degree required the time to read over twenty thousand pages, write eight major papers besides the 183-page dissertation, and travel to Orlando for eight week-long classes. Not once did my wife, Sandy, complain about this time away from her. She is a great treasure, and her godly strength has made her a perfect partner in the ministry to which God has called me.

There is one other partner in this process, who is still alive, but doesn't grasp how much God has used him to make this degree a reality. That is my father. Not only has he supported our ministry regularly and generously, but through the prudent management of his financial resources, he built the A-frame cottage in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, where nearly all of the work for this D.Min. was accomplished. I will always have precious memories of taking my father with me to the cottage to sit out on the deck enjoying the sunshine while I plowed through the two thousand pages of reading required for a course.

Finally, I am grateful to my God. Anyone who has been given as much as I have ought to be consumed everyday with an overpowering love for God. My cold heart is not. But even in this sin, he covers my shame with his blood, shed at the cross.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

It was the nineteenth anniversary of the church I had planted. I stepped to the podium and announced, “After much prayer and thought, Sandy and I believe God is calling us to leave Shady Grove so that I can devote myself full time to the passion that has captured my heart—helping the church disciple its men to be the spiritual leaders of their homes.” So, despite having four kids in a great youth group and no clear direction where we were going, we announced that within nine months we would be leaving the church we loved so that I could embark on the quest to help churches better disciple men.

Since then, I have started a nonprofit ministry called Family Builders, Inc. and serve as the Executive Director of its men’s division, Forging Bonds of Brotherhood. I have written a number of short books and Bible studies on topics that I thought needed to be addressed. I have joined forces with other men’s ministries, notably, Man In the Mirror, and serve on their speaking faculty. Four years ago, I began to receive a small stipend as the Men’s Ministry Consultant in my denomination, the Presbyterian Church in America. I have spoken to thousands of men and helped hundreds of churches build more effective discipleship ministries for men. The passion that caused me to leave pastoral ministry burns more brightly as each year passes.

The truth is that the men of today’s world are not doing well. In fact, behind nearly every one of our nation’s social problems—divorce, abortion, teen pregnancy, teen

suicide, father absence—lies the failure of a man. It was a man who did not set out to fail; but he did. The picture is not good. The spiritual failure of men in our culture is epidemic.

Consider just one segment of our culture—our crime statistics:

1. 90 percent of all major crimes in America are committed by men.
2. 100 percent of all rapes in America are committed by men.
3. 95 percent of all burglaries in America are committed by men.
4. 91 percent of all abuse cases against children are committed by men.
5. 94 percent of all drunken drivers are men (Lewis 2000:1).

If men in a culture are failing as spiritual leaders, the question arises, “How effective is that culture’s church at reaching men?” The answer is, “Not very.” The statistics reveal that “While the U.S. population is split fairly evenly between men and women, sixty-one percent of those in the pews are women, thirty-nine percent men. This difference is found in every age category, so the fact that women live longer does not explain the gender difference in religious participation” (US Congregations 2003). “More than ninety percent of American men say they believe in God, and five out of six call themselves Christians, but only two in six attend church on any given Sunday” (Murrow 2005:8).

The failure of today’s church to attract men cannot be explained by arguing that men are less religious than women. Dave Murrow points out, “Male and female participation is fairly equal in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism. In the Islamic world, men are publically and proudly religious—even more so than women and Islam is growing rapidly” (2005:8). Since 1950, the number of Christians in the world has doubled, but the number of Muslims has tripled (Brierly and Wraight 2000:54). Islam is growing in the U.S. and more than ninety percent of converts to Islam in America are African American men (2005:48).

Sadly, the men who are drawn to the Christian church in America are not demonstrating much fruit from such involvement. For every ten men in the church:

1. Nine will have children who leave the church.
2. Eight will not find their jobs satisfying.
3. Six will pay the monthly minimum on their credit card bills.
4. Five will have a major problem with pornography.
5. Four will get divorced—affecting one million children each year.
6. Only one will have a biblical worldview.
7. All ten will struggle to balance work and family (Clemmer, *et al* 2006:33).

Perhaps the condition of men inside the church is linked to the fact that so few men are engaged in any kind of a discipleship process. Pat Morley (2008:80) cites statistics showing that of the one hundred eight million men in America, about forty-two million claim to have made a profession of faith in Christ. But of the forty-two million, only six million are in a discipleship ministry. Only one in eighteen men in America is being shown how to be a godly husband, father, and member of society. If eighteen men went down to a field to play baseball, but only one of them had ever seen a baseball game, the result would be chaos. Similarly, spiritual chaos rules in homes, neighborhoods, and communities across our nation because only one man in eighteen is learning to be a godly man. No wonder the culture is in the condition it is in.

It is worth noting that this failure of the church to disciple its members is far more prominent with men than with women. Compared to men, researcher George Barna has found that in the American church women are:

1. 100 percent more likely to be involved in discipleship.
2. 57 percent more likely to participate in adult Sunday School.
3. 54 percent more likely to participate in a small group.
4. 46 percent more likely to disciple others.
5. 39 percent more likely to have a devotional or quiet time.
6. 29 percent more likely to share their faith (2000:3).

The question arises, “How did a faith founded by a man and his twelve male disciples become so popular with women but unpopular with men?” The church of the first century was a magnet to men. Jesus’ strong leadership, blunt honesty, and fierce confrontation of hypocrisy mesmerized men. Fisherman dropped nets full of fish to follow him but today’s church can’t get men to drop their remote controls for a couple of hours to come to worship or a Bible study.

In his book, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, Dave Murrow suggests that the church’s failure to attract men is the setting of its spiritual thermostat. It is set to repel men:

Almost everything about today’s church—its teaching style, its ministries, its images of Jesus—is designed to meet the needs and expectations of a largely female audience. Church is sweet and sentimental, nurturing, and nice. Women thrive in this environment. But few churches model men values: risk and reward, accomplishment, heroic sacrifice, action, and adventure (2005:14).

Murrow further elaborates these two sets of values, one reflecting a feminine security orientation, the other revealing a masculine challenge orientation.

<u>Security Oriented</u>	<u>Challenge Oriented</u>
Safety	Risk
Stability	Change
Harmony	Conflict
Predictability	Variety
Protection	Adventure
Comfort	Competition
Nurture	Daring
Duty	Pleasure
Support	Independence
Preservation	Expansion

He asks, “Which values is a worshipper likely to encounter Sunday mornings?” He then observes that Jesus confronted the hypocrites, comforted the needy, but challenged

everyone else. “Challenge was the master’s default setting. That is why men loved Jesus: men love to be challenged....A church that challenges its members is a church where men will thrive” (2005:29).

Murrow is saying that today’s church is failing to engage the hearts of men because it is not challenging them. He is right. I have shared with hundreds of men the advertisement that Antarctic explorer Ernest Shackleton posted in 1913: “Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages. Bitter cold. Long months of complete darkness. Constant danger. Safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in case of success.” Over five thousand men applied for twenty-eight positions (2005:162). Men universally tell me that these words resonate with something deep in their masculine soul.

A survey of the action movies men love reveals the same hardwiring of the masculine heart. Men dream about accomplishing a great feat, doing it against overwhelming odds, defeating a powerful foe, winning a beautiful woman in the process, and then riding in the front chariot of the victory parade. Above almost everything, men want to win. They yearn to accomplish. They are made for mission. They crave respect. They fear failure, and are driven to succeed. Men dream in the color of challenge.

Men are more than willing to make heroic sacrifices, if their hearts are captured by a great enough cause. That is why our fine troops give their lives and limbs in Afghanistan. But, in today’s church, men often do not find a cause worthy of their total devotion.

If church-going held the prospect of risk, adventure, and daring, you’d have an abundance of men, teenagers, and young adults signing up. That is precisely what the persecuted church is doing today. It was also the situation in the early church when Christians were routinely stoned, beaten, or fed to hungry lions. When it is dangerous to be a Christian, men are more likely to count themselves in (2005:21)!

Today's church is failing to call men to discipleship in a way that engages their masculine hearts. John Eldredge makes this point when he says:

Christianity as it currently exists has done some terrible things to men. When all is said and done, I think most men in today's church believe that God put them on the earth to be a good boy...If they try real hard, they can reach the lofty summit of becoming a *nice guy*. Now let me ask my male readers: In all your boyhood dreams growing up, did you ever dream about becoming a *Nice Guy* (2001:7)?

Eldredge is saying that we are missing men's hearts because we are not giving them a big enough vision of what it means to be a follower of Christ. This paper is written to explore how a better understanding of kingdom theology might supply that vision, empowering Christian leaders to more effectively engage men's hearts in discipleship.

Thesis Question

How can kingdom theology be used to disciple men's hearts?

Definitions

The following terms will be used in this study:

1. Will of God: This paper will be careful to distinguish two separate biblical uses of the term, *God's will*. The first is God's decretive will, by which God has ordained whatsoever comes to pass. This understanding of God's will is clear in Acts 4:27-28, "for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place." The second is the preceptive will of God, also known as the moral will of God or that which pleases him. In 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Paul

uses the word, *will* this way: “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality.”

2. Gospel: The good news that righteousness is from God. The eternal son of God, that is, the second Adam, came to earth to redeem man and his kingdom from the tyranny, consequences, and presence of sin. He became a man, defeated Satan and sin, by living a perfect life, and dying in the place of sinners. He was raised from the dead, defeating death and has been exalted to the right hand of the father where he reigns to advance his kingdom over every sphere of life, restoring all of fallen creation, and promising freedom from sin’s power and penalty to all who will repent and trust him as their Savior and Lord.

3. Kingdom: kingly rule (Brown 1975:372). When used biblically, it is the realm of submission to the moral will of Christ. The kingdom is not a geographical sphere but the sphere of human life where there is surrender to Christ’s righteous rule. Such surrender to Christ’s rule refers not to his sovereign rule, but to his preceptive rule. That is to say that Christ’s kingdom is being manifest to whatever degree Christ’s righteous agenda is being followed in each sphere of life on planet earth.

4. Heart: the non-material part of man, which is the seat of his affections. *Affections* are understood to refer not merely to superficial feelings, but to “the inclination and will of the soul.” (Edwards 2004:24) Edwards further defines the will as “that by which the mind chooses any thing” (1969:4). The heart, then, includes man’s motivations (or inclinations), his attitudes (the perspective he chooses), and the decisions he makes.

5. Discipleship: the process by which a believer grows up into Christ the Head of the church, shaping his life according to his calling to Christ, to be like Christ, and to exercise dominion for Christ. Effective discipleship goes beyond behavior modification to effecting heart transformation in the true disciple.

Significance

Jesus built the church by discipling men. He taught them about the coming of his kingdom and engaged their hearts, calling them to heart-driven passion for him and his cause, the reversal of sin's curse and establishment of his righteous rule over every part of creation.

Today's church has lost its focus on men, lost its focus on disciple-making, and lost its focus on the kingdom. Even in the PCA, the gospel we preach is too often the gospel of personal private salvation, instead of the gospel that the second Adam has come, overthrown Satan, sin and death and begun to make all things new. To seek first the kingdom of God is to participate with our King in the greatest enterprise in the history of the world—the establishing of his eternal kingdom. It is a cause a little bigger than growing up to be a “nice boy;” it is a cause worthy of engaging the full capacity of the heart of a man.

I currently serve as the executive director of a ministry called, Forging Bonds of Brotherhood. The research for this paper is directly applicable to two of our three mission objectives. First, we provide biblical teaching that is specific to men. I frequently lead men's retreats on the topic, “*Focused and Effective: Shaping Your Life According to Your Mission.*” I believe that our mission as Christ's disciples is to exercise dominion over

every sphere of our lives for Christ our king, which is kingdom discipleship. This paper deepens my understanding of the biblical concept of the kingdom of God and how that teaching can be a paradigm for better understanding discipleship. These insights will help me more effectively challenge men to respond from their hearts to Christ's call to discipleship.

The research for this paper also helps me achieve a second objective of our mission: helping local churches build men's discipleship ministries. As I have stated, the church today is not effectively discipling its men. When we do make the effort, it is less effective than it could be at engaging men's hearts. I believe the reason is that we are not challenging men to a big enough vision—the call to follow King Jesus in the conquest of his kingdom throughout the earth. I am already teaching a kingdom approach to discipling men but expect this dissertation to fine tune my thinking and sharpen the tools I am using.

On a personal note, my growing understanding of the gospel of the kingdom over the past thirty years has had an enormous impact on the way I live. I carry a Day-Timer that is organized according to the various spheres of my life with Christ's agenda and my plan to follow that agenda written out in each section. However, when I go beyond my own life as a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church in America, I want to be careful not only to teach a kingdom view that is scriptural but also be able to defend it. Writing this paper gives me the opportunity to study the biblical concept of the kingdom in-depth as well as examine how a kingdom perspective changes one's view of discipleship.

This study expands the disciple-making and educational resources of Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida. It also contributes to the body of discipleship

material being developed for discipling men. Specifically, it helps Christian leaders engage the hearts of men in the discipleship process by giving men a clearer vision of the gospel of the kingdom.

Goals

The overarching purpose of this study is to empower church leaders with a vision of discipleship that awakens men's hardwired desire to sacrifice themselves for a great cause. So long as men understand the gospel to be the gospel of personal private, salvation, this desire is unlikely to be awakened. But, the more men are given a vision of the gospel of the kingdom, the more likely it is that their hearts will resonate with Christ's call to discipleship. As I explore the biblical teaching on the whole gospel—the gospel of the kingdom, there are four primary goals.

1. **Biblical/Theological Goal (Chapter 2 Goal)**

A biblical and theological description of the nature of the kingdom of God as a paradigm for understanding Christ's call to discipleship.

2. **Historical/Literature Review Goal (Chapter 3 Goal).**

A description of the nature of the kingdom of God as it applies to everyday discipleship in the works of Neo-Calvinist thinkers: Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck, and Herman Ridderbos. This section will also include a brief look at the current Two Kingdom controversy generated by the writing of Dr. David VanDrunen, Professor at Westminster Theological Seminary, California.

3. Analysis Goal (Chapter 4 Goal).

An evaluation of 1) the biblical/theological findings concerning the nature of the kingdom of God as a paradigm for discipleship (Chapter 2) and 2) the historical/literature review findings concerning kingdom discipleship as understood by the Kuyperian school (Chapter 3) resulting in the development of parallel themes.

4. Synthesis Goal (Chapter 5 Goal: A Model).

A suggestion of how these descriptions and evaluations can be used as a paradigm for a kingdom discipleship system that engages the hearts of men.

Assumptions

The following assumptions have been made prior to beginning the research:

1. The primacy of the church's mandate to make disciples. The business of the church is disciple-making. All other activities of the church are to be seen as either the means to making disciples (e.g., preaching, use of the sacraments, Sunday school classes, etc.) or the outcomes that result from making disciples (mercy ministry, evangelism, etc.)
2. The creation distinction between men and women. God created humans as male and female. He assigned them different tasks. He gave them different bodies and different hearts. In creation, the carton goes with the content. The female body belongs with a feminine soul. The male body is an expression of the masculine heart. To limit masculinity to the physical realm only is to be guilty of the same heresy as Gnosticism, separating body from soul. The Christian world

and life view keeps body and soul together. Therefore, the masculine heart is different from the feminine heart.

3. The centrality of kingdom thinking for understanding discipleship. Spiritual maturity requires understanding Christ (the Anointed One) as Prophet, Priest, and King. Understanding the covenant of grace enables us to understand Christ's role as Prophet, who prosecutes God's covenant lawsuit. Understanding the priestly rituals and sacrifices in ancient Israel enables us to understand Christ's role as High Priest. Just as surely, understanding the nature of Christ's kingdom is required to understand Christ's role as King. This is paramount for discipleship.

4. The value of Abraham Kuyper, Herman Ridderbos, and Herman Bavinck to help better understand the gospel of the kingdom. These Dutch thinkers were unaffected by the premillennial view of the kingdom of God, which swept across America in the twentieth century. Premillennialism minimizes the present reality of the kingdom and leads inevitably to a view of discipleship that encourages separation from the world while awaiting the arrival of the kingdom. In contrast, these Dutch thinkers believed the kingdom is not just a future hope; it is also a present reality with tremendous implications for how we live our lives as disciples of Christ.

Research Methodology

The methodology is a combination of exegetical, theological, and historical research. Data is collected from primary documents. The resources for review are written

materials. The literature encompasses two basic areas: 1) selected biblical texts, primarily from Genesis 1-3 and the gospels on the subject of the kingdom of God, and 2) selected writings on the subject of the kingdom of God from Dutch Neo-Calvinist writers, notably Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck, and Hermon Ridderbos as well as the writing of contemporary author, David VanDrunen in his work, *Living In God's Two Kingdoms*.

Primary literary resources will be utilized for understanding the biblical, theological, and historical perspectives of Jesus concerning the kingdom of God. Primary resources will also be utilized to study the original writings of Bavinck, Kuyper, and Ridderbos which address the subject of the kingdom of God. These primary resources will be acquired from the library of Reformed Theological Seminary located in Orlando, Florida, and from the A. R. Wenz Library of Lutheran Theological Seminary, in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Some reprints of original documents, including the Stone Lectures at Princeton, are available for download on the Internet.

Exegetical research will be conducted to ascertain the meaning of “kingdom” as it was understood generally by the biblical writers and specifically by Jesus in the Gospels. This exegetical study will also focus on Genesis 1-3 where the concept of kingdom is introduced to Adam and Eve who are to rule over it.

Theological research methodologies will be utilized for the study of the theological concept of the kingdom of God. Besides consulting systematic theologies, the original writings of Kuyper, Ridderbos, and Bavinck will be consulted.

Historical research methodologies will be utilized in studying the lives of Herman Bavinck and Abraham Kuyper, with a special focus on how their views of the kingdom

affected their approach to life and to the culture in which they lived. Primary resources via the Internet and theological journals will be used to understand the Two Kingdoms argument set forth by David VanDrunen and the Neo-Calvinist response.

Chapter Summary

Today's church has lost its focus on men, lost its focus on disciple-making, and lost its focus on the kingdom of God. The gospel we preach is too often the gospel of personal private salvation, instead of the gospel that the second Adam has come, overthrown Satan, sin and death and begun to make all things new. Discipleship is too often understood as keeping a few rules, rather than joining the King of Kings in the greatest mission in the history of mankind, the conquest of Christ's kingdom over every part of the world, which he claims as his own.

Contemporary approaches to discipleship too often fail to capture men's hearts. I believe this happens because we are not giving them a big enough vision of what it means to be a follower of Christ. This paper is written to explore how a better understanding of kingdom theology might supply that vision, empowering Christian leaders to more effectively engage men's hearts in discipleship.

CHAPTER 2

THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDERSTOOD BIBLICALLY AND THEOLOGICALLY AS A PARADIGM FOR DISCIPLESHIP

Introduction

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he gave his followers one primary goal that was to be the focus of his church: discipleship. He said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt 28:18-20).

Discipleship Today

Charles Dunahoo, in his book, *Making Kingdom Disciples*, (2005:8-11) identifies three current approaches to discipleship, which he suggests are inadequate. The program-based model delivers biblical content in a community setting. The individual model, popular in many parachurch ministries, stresses the one-on-one relationship of the disciple to the discipler. The small-group model focuses on caring relationships much more than on program or content. All three models have value, but that value is limited, argues Dunahoo, if the concept of discipleship is not understood through the lens of the biblical teaching about the kingdom of God (2005:11).

Jesus' Call to Kingdom Discipleship

Jesus' command to make disciples begins by establishing the fact of his kingship. "All authority on heaven and earth has been given to me" (Mt 28:18). Indeed, Jesus had begun his ministry by calling attention to the cataclysmic intrusion of the kingdom of God into time. "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mk 1:15). The good news that Jesus preached was not just a message of personal private salvation, but the gospel of the kingdom. "And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people" (Mt 4:23). The good news Jesus proclaimed was about the kingdom. Jesus' followers could not separate the concept of *gospel* from the reality that the kingdom of God had come. In fact, the very message that was such good news was the fact that the kingdom of God was at hand.

Jesus constantly taught about the kingdom of God. In Matthew alone, Jesus used the word kingdom over forty times in his teaching.¹ More of his parables are about the kingdom of God than any other subject. Jesus not only taught his disciples about the kingdom of God, he equipped his disciples to teach others about the kingdom. When Jesus sent out the twelve to accomplish their first mission on his behalf, the topic of the disciples' teaching was the kingdom of God. "And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Mt 10:7). The same was true when Jesus sent out the seventy-two. "Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to

¹ Most scholars agree that Matthew's term "kingdom of heaven" is synonymous with "kingdom of God."

you.’ But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you.’

Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near” (Lk 10:9-11).

The original disciples never understood the gospel apart from the coming of the kingdom of God, which is why “his followers have always understood that to be a ‘Christ person’ is to be a ‘kingdom person’” (Plantinga 2002:107). Being a disciple of Christ involves much more than changing a few behavioral patterns; it requires “a complete re-ordering of one’s life around living in the kingdom, with Jesus as the King.” (Dunahoo 2005:ix). Kingdom discipleship changes our perspective on every aspect of life, engages our heart with a passion to see our King’s agenda established over the entire world, and gives us a paradigm for exercising dominion over every aspect of our lives for Christ, our King.

Kingdom Discipleship in the Biblical Framework of Creation-Fall-Redemption

Kingdom discipleship is best understood when viewed against the backdrop of God’s redemptive plan for the universe. The story, which our sovereign God is writing, is composed of three major divisions: creation, fall, redemption. The kingdom of Christ, the second Adam, can only be understood by examining the creation of Adam to be king of creation, the loss of his kingdom to the tyrants—Satan, sin, and death—and the recovery of that kingdom by Christ our Redeemer-King.

Creation: Kingdom Discipleship Begins With Adam's Original Calling

A kingdom disciple is one who, through the work of Jesus Christ, is being restored and empowered to exercise the original calling of Adam to exercise dominion for The High King over planet earth. Our study of the kingdom of God must start, therefore, in Genesis with God's creation of Adam.

Genesis 1: Man Called To Exercise Dominion

Genesis 1:27-28 reveals that Adam and Eve are created to be the king and queen of creation:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth (Gen 1:27-28).

Bruce Waltke observes the significance of this text for understanding man:

Fundamental to Genesis and the entirety of Scripture is the creation of humanity in the image of God. The expression, "image of God" is used uniquely with reference to human beings and so sets them apart from the other creatures. Whereas the other creatures are created, "according to their kinds" (Gen. 1:21,24,25), humanity is made "in the image of God." Being made in God's image establishes humanity's role on earth and facilitates communication with the divine (2001:65).

There are three aspects of being created in God's image that are relevant for this study. First, being made in God's image means that we are created with a capacity to communicate with God. "A human being is theomorphic, made like God so that God can communicate himself to people. He gave people ears to show that he hears the cry of the

afflicted and eyes to show that he sees the plight of the pitiful (Ps 94:9)” (2001:65).

Deeply rooted in the concept of being made in God’s image is the truth that we were created to enjoy fellowship with God himself, portrayed in Genesis 3 as walking together in the garden in the cool of the day.

Waltke identifies a second aspect of being made in the image of God: “An image represents the presence of the one represented” (2001:66). We are to be like God. Created with a spiritual nature, we are called to reflect his moral presence as we rule over our kingdom. The irony is that our parents wanted to be like God in authority and status, rather than like him in holiness. To be made in God’s image is to be given the high calling of showing his moral attributes to the created world.

Waltke explains a third, foundational aspect of being made in God’s image: representing his kingly rule. “Inseparable from the notion of serving as a representative, the image functions as a ruler in the place of the deity” (2001:66). Noting the close syntactical and grammatical connection to the subsequent phrase, *to rule over* creation, Waltke cites the scholarship of Hart who writes:

In the Ancient Near East it was widely believed that a god’s spirit lived in any statue or image of the god, with the result that the image could function as a kind of representative of or substitute for the god wherever it was placed. It was also customary in the ANE to think of a king as a representative of a god; obviously the king ruled, and the god was the ultimate ruler, so the king must be ruling on the god’s behalf. It is therefore not surprising that these two separate ideas became connected and a king came to be described as the image of God (1995:318).

This functional understanding of *image* in Genesis 1:27 is now widely accepted as foundational to understanding what it means to be created in the image of God (Waltke 2002:66). Therefore, Genesis 1:27 makes clear that the concept of kingdom occurs in the very first chapter of the Bible at the creation of man and woman. “The text is saying that exercising royal dominion over the earth as God’s representative is the basic purpose for which God created man...Man is appointed king over creation, responsible to God the ultimate king, and as such expected to develop and care for creation” (Hart 1995:318). Adam, with Eve at his side, is created king over creation; but he is accountable to The High King of creation for the way he exercises his dominion as God’s image bearer.

Genesis 1:28 sheds further light on Adam’s role as king of creation. “And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’” To understand this text it is useful to think of God’s work of creation as taking place in three stages. The first stage is described in Genesis 1:1-2. It is creation *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. In the beginning there was only God. He brings the stuff of creation into existence out of nothing.

Having made this basic stuff, God’s creative work continues. Genesis 1:3-2:3 is stage two, diversification. God brings about order by distinguishing and separating. He separates the light from darkness, the atmosphere from the oceans, the dry land from the seas, the birds, fish, and animal kingdoms from each other. Finally, he makes Adam from

the ground and Eve from Adam. Throughout this process God's creative work is shown in ordering, separating, shaping the material of creation.

Although we might assume that God has now ended his creative process, there is a sense in which God is still creating by assigning to Adam and his posterity the third stage of creation. Humankind is now assigned the task of generating life by reproducing, so that the earth is filled. "God's creation plan is that the whole earth should be populated by those who know him and who serve wisely as his vice-regents or representatives" (ESV Study Bible 2008:51). Adam also continues God's creative work of ordering, i.e. shaping the material of creation by subduing the earth. To subdue the earth is to explore the created world and harness its laws for the good of mankind. From police officers who keep order in civil society to engineers who harness the laws of creation in order to solve human problems to scientists who discover those laws, the human concept of vocation is rooted in God's call to mankind to subdue the earth.

God places creation in the care of people who are to develop it. The potential God has created is to be released. The possibilities are to be explored. People are to explore these possibilities with honor and industry.... In fulfilling this responsibility, they found joy, meaning, and identity. It was no token job. They were to rule, fill, subdue, and cultivate as they were empowered by God. This was the third stage of creation (Frey, *etal* 1983:5).

The commands to populate the earth and to subdue it are called the *cultural mandate*. In the words of Richard Mouw, the cultural mandate is "God's charge to our first parents to 'transform untamed nature into a social environment' by cultural formation that fits God's design" (1983:16). Not only is Adam to exercise dominion by

creatively harnessing the laws of nature for the good of mankind but he is to exercise dominion over the society that grows as the population expands. Cornelius Plantinga, in his book, *Engaging God's World*, observes:

God's good creation includes not only earth and its creatures, but also an array of cultural gifts, such as marriage, family, art, language, commerce, and (even in an ideal world) government. The fall into sin has corrupted these gifts but hasn't unlicensed them. The same goes for the cultural initiatives we see in Genesis 4, that is, urban development, tent-making, musicianship, and metal-working. All of these unfold the built in potential of God's creation (2002:32).

As the image bearers of God, human beings are charged not only with caring for what God has already created but also with developing a godly culture. Plantinga points out that this development of culture can be seen in the fact that at the end of time, God's people do not return to the garden of Eden. Their destination is the holy city, the new Jerusalem. He writes:

Because "the earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof" (Ps.24:1, RSV), all the centuries of human obedience to the cultural mandate will have produced some human treasure by the end—trash too, but also treasure. If this is the "fullness" that belongs to God, then we may think of the holy city as the garden of Eden plus the fullness of the centuries (2002:32).

In summary, Adam, as God's image bearer, is created to be a king and given the world as his kingdom. His fundamental calling is to do what kings do, i.e., exercise dominion over his kingdom. He is to raise up additional image bearers of God to help rule his kingdom. He is to explore the created order, using his creativity to develop creation's full potential. Part of that potential is in human beings who have the capacity to

love, laugh, and play, write literature, compose music, etc. King Adam is to encourage the development of such gifts while exercising dominion over the culture they create. But there is one caveat concerning his rule. He must reign for The High King. His submission to The High King's authority is required in order for Adam to exhibit the holiness of God. As the image bearer of God he must exhibit God's holiness to the world. Therefore, he must shape his kingdom according to the righteous standards of The High King.

Genesis 2: Adam's Distinctive Masculine Calling

In order to better understand kingdom discipleship, we have seen in Genesis 1:27-28 that Adam and Eve were created to be king and queen over the created order. We now turn to the subject of King Adam's specific calling as a man. If we are to use kingdom theology to disciple the masculine heart we must understand what it means to be created masculine. As John Piper points out, masculinity and femininity are not merely superficial concepts that relate merely to sexual union. "Over the years I have come to see from Scripture and from life that manhood and womanhood are the beautiful handiwork of a good and loving God. He designed our differences and they are profound. They are not mere physiological prerequisites for sexual union. They go to the root of our personhood" (2001:13-14). Kingdom discipleship is an approach that is designed to impact every aspect of a human being. It cannot therefore ignore a person's gender since a human being has either a masculine or a feminine soul. "Sexuality permeates one's individual being to its very depth; it conditions every facet of one's life as a person. As

the self is always aware of itself as an “I,” so this “I” is always aware of itself as a *himself* or *herself*” (Jewett 1975:172).

The second chapter of Genesis provides a series of clues about the essence of masculinity and femininity. Adam’s orientation is towards working the ground in the garden. Adam is made from the ground (vs. 7). He is brought by his creator to the garden to work the ground (vs. 8). His name, Adam, means *ground*. In Genesis 3, after the fall, Adam’s curse falls upon his relationship to the ground. Eve’s focus, in contrast, is on her family. She is made from Adam (vs. 22). She is brought by her creator to Adam (vs. 22) to tend to his needs (vs.18). In Genesis 3 we learn that Eve’s name means, *the mother of living things*. After the fall, the curse that falls on her makes her relationships in her family difficult. This clear delineation of roles makes it obvious that any approach to discipleship for men, which ignores the centrality of a man’s call to the work place, is deficient. He is made to tend and care for the ground.

Genesis 2:15 gives a clear picture of King Adam’s calling to exercise dominion as a male. “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.” The verb that is translated, *work* in the ESV translation is the Hebrew word, *avad*, which most often means, *work, serve, labor, or cultivate* (Phillips 2010:12). To work the garden is *to act upon* the garden to bring about change. It means impacting our environment. We can distinguish three strands of meaning in the word, *avad*, which explain, in part, the motivations of the masculine heart.

First, *avad* has a task orientation. Men are action oriented and physically active. They are driven to accomplish, wanting to know which hill needs to be taken. They are project oriented and naturally focus on getting the job done. Men are designed to accomplish a mission and that is what they dream about. Dave Murrow observes, “Boys do not dream of sitting in a cubicle; they dream of slaying the dragon, rescuing the princess, and absconding with the treasure” (2005: 99). When men look for recognition, it is for their accomplishments.

The word, *avad*, has a second connotation. It means *to provide for*. Adam’s calling to cultivate the garden was to provide what was needed for the growth of the inhabitants of the garden. Those inhabitants were not just the plants that needed an irrigation system. They included Adam’s wife and the children that were to dwell with him in the garden. Phillips makes this point when he says,

Of course our “garden” includes not merely things but people....men’s calling to cultivate means we are to be involved in the hearts of people placed under our care—people who work for us, people we teach and mentor, and most especially our wives and children. A man’s fingers should be accustomed to working in the soil of the human heart—the hearts of those he serves and loves—that he might accomplish some of the most valuable and important work of this life (2010:15).

The third connotation of *avad* is *being fruitful*. Men want, above everything else, to succeed. Murrow observes, “Men want to succeed at everything they do. Competence is very important to them. They never stop to ask for directions because they know that doing that would call their competence into question. Men are also competitive. They want to win in every situation” (2005:16). Men love adventure, risk-taking and

challenges because they find pleasure in overcoming obstacles in order to win. They are hard-wired with a willingness to sacrifice themselves for a great cause. Men love to build things and have an expansionist mentality. Richard Rohr and Joseph Martos are right when they argue, “When male energy is absent, creation does not happen either in the human soul or in the world. Nurturance happens, support and love perhaps, but not ‘that new creation out of nothing’ that is the unique prerogative associated with the masculine side of God.” (1996:93) Adam’s calling to work the ground reflects not only the masculine mission orientation, which includes providing for those under his care, but also his willingness to sacrifice whatever it takes to succeed in that mission.

In summary, the masculine expression of Adam’s kingly rule over creation for The High King is to take the form of transforming (*avar*) the garden for the king. Though King Solomon exercised dominion over his kingdom for himself rather than for The High King, we can still see in him an example of kingly rule in working the ground. “I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees (Eccl 2:4-6).

In Genesis 2:15, Adam is assigned a second task, besides working the ground. He is to keep it. The Hebrew word, *shamar*, is translated *guard*, *protect*, and *watch* (Phillips 2010:14). The noun form is used of guards, soldiers, and priests. Richard Phillips explains the implication of this calling for Christian men:

This calling to *keep* rounds out the Masculine Mandate of the Bible. A man is not only to wield the plow, but also to bear the sword. Being God's deputy lord in the garden, Adam was not only to make it fruitful but to make it safe. Likewise, our basic mandate as Christian men is to cultivate, build, and grow (both things and people), but also to stand guard so that people and things are kept safe—so that the fruit of past cultivating and nurturing is preserved (2010:15).

Men love to watch war movies and read war novels. Boys spend endless hours battling each other in the virtual world. Males dream of being great warriors and realize that in the real world they are the protectors of their families. The women and children get the life boats; they go down with the ship. Perhaps because of common grace, the vast majority of men would take a bullet for their families. This orientation is part of our masculine calling. It is summed up in the Hebrew word, *shamar*.

Shamar also is a term that describes what kings do. Just as men protect their homes and families from attack, kings protect and defend their kingdoms against unwanted intruders. King Adam was to defend the garden not only against his and Eve's enemies, but against the adversaries of The High King. Though we don't know how much King Adam understood about God's adversary, Satan, we do know that his task of keeping the garden required him to preserve the sanctity of the garden. "The man is created to be both a gardener and a guardian. As a priest he is to maintain the sanctity of the garden as part of a temple complex" (ESV Study Bible 2008:53).

Genesis 2:18-25 provides further clues about King Adam's calling as a man.

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the

heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Fundamental to King Adam's masculine calling is his relationship to Eve. Verses fifteen and sixteen help us understand something about that relationship even before Eve was created. It is noteworthy that God's command not to eat from the Tree of Good and Evil was given to Adam before Eve was created. "The fact that the command was given to Adam implies that God gave 'the man' a leadership role, including the responsibility to guard and care for ('keep') all of creation (Gen 2:15)—a role that is also related to the leadership responsibility of Adam for Eve as his wife" (ESV Study Bible 2008:53).

The creation of Eve (verses 18-25) provides numerous insights about the nature of Adam and Eve's relationship. But for the purposes of this study, we will examine just three. To begin, Eve is special—different from every other part of creation, and King Adam's highest priority. This fact becomes apparent to Adam in the process God follows to create her. First, God makes the statement that Adam, by himself, is incomplete; he needs someone to complete him. Then, every creature was paraded before him for him to examine. Adam exercised dominion over them by choosing their name. They were the

inhabitants of the garden Adam was to care for, but none could complete him. God needed to create woman. Furthermore, she alone was made from Adam's own body. Paul would later seize on this point to argue that husbands are to love their wives as they love their own bodies (Eph 5:28). In addition, the bond created in marriage between husband and wife creates obligations that override even duty to one's parents: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife" (Gen 2:24). Though King Adam is to care for and develop the potential of every part of creation, no part of the created order is nearly as important as his queen.

Second, since King Adam's calling to cultivate the inhabitants of the garden requires him to provide what they need, the creation of Eve provides important clues about what she needs as his partner. What does she need to nurture her soul? The answer comes in understanding her identity. Eve is created to be a partner to Adam; so her focus is naturally on their relationship. She was made from Adam's rib and a wife instinctively yearns for closeness to her husband. Marriage is described as a man leaving his prior life and sharing a whole new life with his wife. This sharing of life between them is what she yearns for. The oneness of marriage is described in the text as being naked, vulnerable, and yet unashamed. The joining of bodies is an outward physical expression of the joining of two souls. A wife yearns to know her husband and be known by him—body and soul, yet be so loved and accepted that she is not afraid to be fully known. Whereas a man's natural focus is on cultivating the garden, a wife's natural focus is on completing

the man and thus on their relationship. Her greatest need is to feel connected to her husband and to feel valued (cherished) as his partner.

The third observation from Genesis 2:18-25 concerns the nature of that partnership. It is significant that God chose to use the term, *helper*, to describe Eve's purpose. Richard Phillips writes:

A wife is indeed the best possible companion for a man, but God did not call Eve a "companion" to Adam because that would suggest the primary purpose of mankind on the earth is fellowship and relational fulfillment. In the same way, a wife is clearly and uniquely designed to be a mate to a man, but God did not call Eve a "mate" to Adam because that would suggest our primary purpose is procreation and sexual pleasure. God said Adam needed a "helper" because it places the *primary* emphasis on the shared mandate to work and keep God's creation under the man's leadership (2010:58).

The point is not to demean Eve by referring to her as a mere helper. The Hebrew word, *ezer*, means "one who supplies strength in the area that is lacking in the one helped" (ESV Study Bible 2008:54). It is used of God, himself, sixteen of the nineteen times it is used in Scripture (Waltke 2001:88). Nor is the point to minimize Eve's role as King Adam's best friend and lover. Phillips continues:

A wife is called to help her husband in this grand, glorious task [exercising dominion over creation] in a myriad of ways—by enjoying fellowship and relational fulfillment as his companion, by enjoying sexual pleasure and bearing children as his mate, and on and on. But it all comes under the category of 'helping' which is essentially about the working and keeping of God's creation (2010:58).

God's choice of *helper* to describe his design of Eve emphasizes King Adam's calling to exercise royal dominion over every part of the created order. Adam is created to be a

king, who is given a kingdom to rule over for The High King. Eve is created to be at his side, assisting him, as the queen of creation in that exercise of dominion.

In the creation accounts of Genesis 1 and 2 we have seen that Adam is created to be a king who exercises dominion over the earth, with Eve at his side as his queen. Adam's mandate is to develop the full potential of creation, being fruitful in working the ground, in procreating, and in shaping the culture that emerges as humans interact with each other and the creation. His exercise of royal dominion also requires him to protect the sanctity of the garden from invasion by hostile forces. All of these responsibilities are performed for The High King, out of loving obedience, devotion, and allegiance to him.

The Fall: Adam Fails God's Test and Loses His Kingdom

Whether or not King Adam would fulfill his creation mandate is tested by the establishment of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, along with God's prohibition and warning: "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen 2:16-17). Genesis 3:1-6 records the result of this test.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not

surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

Adam fails to fulfill his royal calling in almost every way that he can.

Adam Fails to Protect Eve

First, Adam failed to exercise dominion over the garden by failing to protect Eve from the serpent. A straightforward reading of the text reveals that Eve’s discussion with the serpent took place while Adam was standing right next to her. Verse six says “She also gave the fruit to her husband who was with her.” The team of scholars who composed the ESV Study Bible observe: “The fact that Adam was ‘with her’ and that he knowingly ate what God had forbidden indicates that Adam’s sin was both an act of conscious rebellion against God, and a failure to carry out his divinely ordained responsibility to guard ‘keep’ (Gen 2:15) both the garden and the woman that God has created as a ‘helper fit for him’ (ESV Study Bible 2008:55). Adam must have been the one to explain the prohibition against eating the fruit since it was given to him, before she was created. But when the serpent struck up a conversation with Eve designed to muddle her thinking about God’s goodness, he remained passive. He would have heard Eve misquote the command of God that he, Adam had explained to her. He was watching

when she set her gaze on the appealing fruit of the forbidden tree. He saw her reach for the tree to pluck some of the fruit. But he did not say a word or do a thing to stop her.

Paul tells us that Eve was deceived by the snake but Adam was not (I Tim 2:14).

Larry Crabb points out that Adam should have said something like:

“Now wait just one minute here! Honey, this snake is up to no good. I can see right through his devilish cunning. He’s deceiving you into thinking you have more to gain from disobeying God than by remaining faithful to him. That’s a lie!

Let me tell you exactly what God said to me before he made you. And look around us. This is Paradise. God made it and gave it all to us. We have no reason to doubt his goodness....

Snake, this conversation is over. TAKE OFF” (1995:11)!

But Adam remained passive. He stood right beside his woman, watched the whole thing and said nothing. He and Eve were to rule over every beast of the field, which includes the serpent. Those who were meant to govern the earth on God’s behalf instead rebelled against their divine king and obeyed one of his creatures. Adam failed his woman, failed the rest of his kingdom, and failed his god because he refused to exercise dominion. He refused to take charge. He failed to protect. He chose passivity instead.

Adam Chooses to Exercise Dominion For Himself

Besides choosing passivity over his God-given mandate to exercise dominion, Adam failed in his calling because his kingship was always intended to be rule for The

High King. In their rebellion, the first man and woman chose to rule for themselves. Satan had tempted them to become like God knowing good and evil for themselves rather than having God determine it by his command. God's command not to eat from the Tree of Good and Evil established his authority over the man and woman. As Waltke observes, "This unique prohibition confronts humans with the Creator's rule. The tree is good, but it belongs exclusively to God. Sin consists of an illicit reach of unbelief, an assertion of human autonomy to know morality apart from God" (2005:86). The essence of rebellion is ruling our lives and world for ourselves instead of ruling our lives and world for The High King, in obedience to his precepts.

The rebellious act of eating the forbidden fruit took place because Satan succeeded in eroding Adam and Eve's confidence in God's goodness. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:5). Satan undermined Adam and Eve's loyalty to God by implying that God was selfishly keeping something good from them. This blow to their confidence in God's goodness was fatal. For, from the beginning, the man and woman were to rule for God because of their trust in and allegiance to him. The moment they doubted his goodness, Satan succeeded at planting the seeds of rebellion in their hearts.

Adam Brings God's Curse Upon His Kingdom

Adam further failed in his calling to exercise dominion for God in that his rule over creation was intended to be a blessing for his kingdom, not a curse. But Adam and Eve's decision to rebel against their king is punished in a symmetry of justice by which the kingdom over which they rule, rebels against them. Adam's domain, the ground, rebels against him. It is cursed by God.

And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it, 'cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Gen 3:17-19).

The extent of this curse, which had resulted from their surrender to sin, can be seen in Paul's explanation that it would one day be reversed. "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Rom 8:19-21).

The domain over which Eve is to reign rebels against her as well. "To the woman he said, 'I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you'" (Gen 3:16). As a result of Adam and Eve's rebellion, human relationships are fractured. When Adam is confronted with sin, he turns on Eve. Cain, the first child born to Adam and Eve murders his brother, Abel.

Adam's righteous rule over the created order, where he is to develop the potential of the creation and human culture for the glory of The High King, is thwarted. Such a benevolent rule was to be a great blessing to Adam's posterity and to the entire planet. Adam and Eve's decision to rebel against The High King and rule for themselves brings the curse upon their kingdom instead.

Adam's Kingdom Is Surrendered to Satan, Sin, and Death

Instead of the righteous, benevolent rule of Adam over this earth as his kingdom, that kingdom is taken away from him and given to a triumvirate of destructive rulers: Satan, sin, and death. When Adam and Eve aligned themselves with Satan's revolt against God their kingdom was given over to Satan's rule. In Ephesians 2:2, Paul refers to Satan as "the prince of the power of the air." In Luke 4:5-7, where Satan's temptation of Christ is recorded, Satan says that the kingdoms of this world belong to him. "And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, 'To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.'" Adam, through his rebellion, had lost his kingdom to Satan. But the second Adam would defeat the angelic hosts and take back Adam's kingdom. Paul explains the work of Christ to overcome Satan: "He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them at the cross." (Col 2:15) The cross of Christ

would one day mark the decisive defeat of demonic powers and the recovery of Adam's kingdom from their tyranny.

The second power to rule Adam's kingdom, as a result of his and Eve's rebellion, is sin. Paul argues, "For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks are under sin, as it is written, 'None is righteous, no not one'" (Rom 3:9-10). In Romans 5:12, Paul refers to the reign of sin over mankind because sin and death are inextricably linked together. "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned..."

So powerful is the tyrant, sin, that all of human life is corrupted by the fall. Galatians 5:19-21 gives a sample of four categories of human life that are impacted by the fall. The first category is human sexuality: "Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality" (5:19). The second category is human worship leading to "idolatry and sorcery" (5:20a). The third category impacted by the fall is our relationships where we experience "enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy" (5:20b). The fourth category is the way we socialize: "Drunkenness, orgies, and things like these" (5:21a).

Sin not only corrupts the individual hearts of Adam, Eve, and their posterity, but it corrupts the culture they begin to build. Cornelius Plantinga argues,

We are born into a world in which for centuries, sin has damaged the great interactive network of shalom—snapping or twisting the thousands of bonds that give particular beings integrity and that tie them to others.

Corruption is thus a *dynamic* motif in the Christian understanding of sin: it is not so much a particular sin as the multiplying power of all sin to spoil a good creation and to breach its defense against invaders. We might describe corruption as spiritual AIDS—a systemic and progressive devastation of our spiritual immune system that eventually breaks down and opens the way for hordes of opportunistic sins (2002:57-58).

Mankind still exercises dominion. The cultural mandate still exists. But once humans determine that they will structure reality in opposition to God, sin moves in waves throughout the culture, enslaving mankind. The scope of sin is enormous. It touches every aspect of individual life and every part of creation. Thoughts, physical things, actions, individuals, and institutions are all unable to escape sin's influence. Its infection is total. Its extent is limitless" (Frey, *etal* 1983:9-10). Adam's kingdom has been overrun by the virus, "sin."

The third mighty power in this triumvirate is death. "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned..." (Rom 5:12). God's warning that eating the forbidden fruit would bring death into Adam's kingdom proved to be true. The wages of sin is death. Adam and Eve are cast out of the garden lest they eat of the Tree of Life and be confirmed forever in their sinful condition.

Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever"—therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life (Gen 3:22-24).

Paradise has been lost. Three adversaries of The High King have invaded the temple garden entrusted to Adam's care—Satan, sin, and death. Adam and Eve, the rightful rulers, have been overthrown and sent into exile.

A Second Adam Is Promised

Yet even in the grievous account of our race's fall into sin, there are rays of hope. In pronouncing his curse on the serpent, God says, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen 3:15). This verse has been labeled the *protoevangelium*, the first announcement of the gospel (ESV Study Bible 2008:56). One day a second Adam would come to win back the kingdom lost by the first Adam. He would overthrow Satan, crushing his head, removing Satan and the effects of sin from his creation. In the meantime Adam's descendents would be in for the fight of their lives.

Genesis 3:15 prefigures history as a conflict between the 'father of lies' and the champion of God. The followers of darkness will cling desperately to their power and imagined victory while those who follow the rightful King are busy reclaiming the creation in His name. We are participants in this battle which is fought upon the panorama of history" (Frey, *et al* 1983:15).

Further evidence for hope is provided by God when he makes garments to cover Adam and Eve's nakedness (Gen 3:21). According to the ESV study notes:

While this final action recognizes that the human couple is now ashamed of their nakedness in God's presence, as a gesture it suggests that God still cares for these, his creatures. Because God provides garments to clothe Adam and Eve, thus requiring the death of an animal to cover their

nakedness, many see a parallel here related to (1) the system of animal sacrifices to atone for sin later instituted by God through the leadership of Moses in Israel, and (2) the eventual sacrificial death of Christ as an atonement for sin (2008:57).

The first Adam lost his kingdom to Satan, sin, and death. But one day, a second Adam, the Redeemer-King, would come to earth to defeat Satan, sin, and death and establish his kingdom of righteousness over all the earth. We have examined the centrality of the concept of kingdom in creation, and in the fall. We now turn our attention to the concept of kingdom in God's plan of redemption.

Redemption: Kingdom Discipleship Is Based On Christ's Kingship

A disciple is preeminently a follower of another, so it is fundamental that disciples fully understand their master's identity. Jesus is the promised Messiah-King. Understanding the nature of his kingship is thus imperative for his disciples.

The Messianic Kingdom Is Promised But Misunderstood

From Genesis to Malachi, the pages of the Old Testament promise that one day the Anointed One (Messiah) would come to liberate God's oppressed people. Here is an example from Isaiah:

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;

those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shined.
You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.
For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.
For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.
For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this (Isa 9:2-7).

The king, who would establish this new order, was understood by most Israelites to be an earthly ruler who would overthrow the enemies of Israel who routinely oppressed her.

Geerhardus Vos explains that the consensus in Israel was that the Messiah would establish “a national kingdom intended to bring Israel supremacy and glory” (2010:7).

Indeed, even after Jesus’ resurrection, his own disciples still seemed to expect Jesus to usher in a political/military kingdom. Just before his ascension, they said to him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel” (Acts 1:6)?

The True Tyrants the Messiah Would Overthrow

Despite the widespread notion that the kingship of the Messiah would be in the form of a political/military state, the messianic prophecies had always contained clues that the oppressors of God's people to be overthrown were more deadly than earthly rulers. The real oppressors the Messiah would come to overthrow would be the triumvirate that had usurped Adam's kingdom and enslaved his race—Satan, sin, and death. For example, in the messianic prophecy mentioned above (Isaiah 9) the Messiah sets up a kingdom of peace, righteousness, and justice. It is sin that must be overthrown to establish such a kingdom. Similarly the messianic prophecy in Isaiah 61 ends with:

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD;
my soul shall exult in my God,
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to sprout up before all the nations (Isa 61:10-11).

The only kingdom the Messiah came to inaugurate was a kingdom of righteousness—a kingdom where sin has been overthrown.

Moreover, implicit in the messianic prophecies was the elimination of death. At the birth of Jesus, the angel said to Mary, "You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the

Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end" (Lk 1:31-33). Clearly, he was to be a king in the line of David. This king would reign over a kingdom that had vanquished death—it was to be an eternal kingdom. Another text, which stresses the everlasting kingship of the Messiah, is Psalm 110.

The LORD says to my Lord:
"Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool."
The LORD sends forth from Zion
your mighty scepter.
Rule in the midst of your enemies!
Your people will offer themselves freely
on the day of your power,
in holy garments;
from the womb of the morning,
the dew of your youth will be yours.
The LORD has sworn
and will not change his mind,
"You are a priest forever
after the order of Melchizedek" (Ps 110:1-4).

This psalm is one of the most often cited Old Testament texts in the New Testament with quotations or allusions appearing in the Gospels, Acts, the Pauline epistles, Hebrews, and Peter's epistles. It is especially significant that the opening verses are quoted by Paul in his argument in 1 Corinthians 15:24-26: "Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death."

Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:24-26 also make clear that the Messiah's enemies in Psalm 110 were more than earthly oppressors of Israel. The enemies Christ must vanquish are death and "every rule and every authority and every power," which refer to the evil angelic hosts. Hebrews 2:14 makes clear that Jesus' foe was Satan himself: "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil." The third oppressor to be overthrown always was the Evil One and his minions. The seed of the woman would crush Satan's head.

John the Baptizer Proclaims the Redeemer King's Arrival

John the Baptizer not only envisioned the Messiah as a coming king, but understood his kingdom to go far beyond the borders of Israel. Herman Ridderbos argues, "John's description of the Messiah's importance passes far beyond the nationalistic Messiah-ideal, and is entirely dominated by the thought of the transcendent and universal judgment which will attend the appearance of the coming king" (Ridderbos 1962:29). John urges his listeners to "flee from the wrath to come" and warns them that "the axe is laid to the foot of the trees" (Mt 3:7-10). John thus shows the real enemy of God's people, who needs to be vanquished by the Redeemer-King, to be sin. Ridderbos believes John's concept of the messianic kingdom is further revealed by his mention of Jesus' baptism with the Holy Spirit. "By baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire are we not to understand the same thing, i.e., that the fire would refer to the sanctifying burning away

done by the Spirit in a sinner's heart" (1962:29)? The kingship of Christ begins with the work of God's Spirit in the human heart to vanquish sin.

The Redeemer King Is the Second Adam

The Messiah, then, comes into the world to vanquish the foes of the human race, Satan, sin, and death and to establish the righteous rule of The High King. It is important to keep in mind that The High King has always maintained his sovereign rule, even in the midst of Adam and Eve's rebellion. Theologians make an important distinction between God's sovereign, or decretive will and God's preceptive will, i.e., what is morally pleasing to a holy God. Jesus Christ did not come into this world to establish God's sovereign rule over planet earth. God has always been sovereign. He remained sovereign after Adam and Eve sinned. Rather, Christ came into this world to overthrow the rule of Satan, sin, and death over Adam's kingdom and establish God's preceptive will over planet earth, i.e., transforming Adam's kingdom into a righteous kingdom forever.

It is by taking on human flesh as the second Adam that Christ wins back Adam's kingdom. Genesis 1-3 reports the story of the first Adam coming into the world, being tempted by Satan, surrendering to sin, and losing his kingdom to Satan, sin, and death. The gospel tells the story of the second Adam. He was also made of human flesh. He was also tempted by Satan, but in his case it was not in a lush garden surrounded by delicious fruit but in a barren wilderness. The second Adam did not have the companionship of another human at his side but was alone in his temptation. The second Adam was not

tempted to eat fruit on a full stomach but after forty days of fasting. The second Adam was not silent in the face of Satan's lies but responded by restating God's truth. The second Adam did not yield to Satan's temptation but totally obeyed The High King.

Because the second Adam passed his test, he defeated Satan, sin, and death winning salvation for all who are in him. "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor 15:22). Christ's resurrection proves that victory has been won. "Thus it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being' the last Adam became a life-giving spirit." (1 Cor 15:45). It is hard to see in the text, but Paul's contrast here is between the temporal life passed on to his descendents by the first Adam, (made temporal by Adam's sin), and the everlasting life passed on to his descendents by the last Adam, (made everlasting by Christ's righteous life). In summary, the kingdom won by Christ, the second Adam, is the kingdom lost by the first Adam. Christ does everything that the first Adam should have done and more. He defeats Satan, sin, and death at the cross then inaugurates his kingdom—the reign of righteousness over Adam's original kingdom.

Just as the first Adam was the head of the fallen world, the second Adam is the head of a redeemed world. His perfect life and sacrificial death are the basis for a new orientation for all creation. The scope of the deliverance in Christ is magnificent—redemption is as wide as creation itself (Frey, *et al*, 1983:20).

The disciple of Christ follows a king who is freeing Adam's kingdom from its slavery to sin and now calls his followers to model the new humanity. We are to recover Adam's original calling, exercising dominion over every part of our lives and every corner of the planet for Christ, who himself is The High King. We are to participate in the

recovery of the cultural mandate, creatively developing the earth's potential, and using our influence to build a godly culture. All the while, it is King Jesus' agenda of righteousness that we seek to implement in every sphere of life and culture throughout creation. To know how we do that, we need to look at Jesus' teaching about the kingdom.

Redemption: Kingdom Discipleship Is Rooted In Jesus' Kingdom Teaching

The word, *disciple* means *learner*. The chief subject about which Jesus' disciples learned was the kingdom of God.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD, or the Kingdom of Heaven, is one of the most central concepts in the history of revelation. Prepared in the Old Testament, notably in the so-called enthronement Psalms and in the prophecies, it makes its appearance in the overture of the New Testament as the contents of the great proclamation of salvation, first of the herald, John the Baptist, then of Christ Himself: 'The kingdom of God is at hand' (Mark 1:15). Especially in the Synoptic Gospels it remains in the foreground. It constitutes the nucleus of Christ's parables, indeed of his entire mission and message....So it can be established that the New Testament as a whole is the book of the revelation of the Kingdom of God (Ridderbos 1957:9).

In the life of Jesus' disciples, "the kingdom of God forms the supreme object of pursuit and therefore of necessity the theme about which before all other things they need careful instruction" (Vos 2010:2). It is time to examine what Jesus himself taught about the kingdom of God.

Jesus' Gospel Was the Gospel of the Kingdom

Jesus opened his public ministry with the words, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mk 1:15). The gospel Jesus

proclaimed was not simply the good news that an individual could be delivered from an eternity in hell. It was never just the gospel of personal, private salvation. The gospel has always been the gospel of the kingdom. It takes just a few texts to make this clear:

“And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people” (Mt 4:23). “And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction” (Mt 9:35). “Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God” (Lk 8:1).

Not only do the gospel writers describe Jesus’ ministry as proclaiming the good news of the kingdom; they record Jesus himself describing his preaching ministry the same way: “He said to them, ‘I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose’” (Lk 4:43). Furthermore, until Jesus returns his followers are to proclaim the good news of the kingdom: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Mt 24:14).

Jesus Claimed to Be the Messianic King

It is true that Jesus was reluctant to publically identify himself as the messianic king. It was not until his trial before Pilate that he finally clearly admitted his kingship:

“Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world.’” (Jn 18:37). Despite his reluctance to publically use the word, *king* (*basileus*), to identify himself as the king of the kingdom he was inaugurating, Jesus did clearly identify himself as the king of the coming messianic kingdom by taking to himself the title, *Son Of Man*. The term, *Son of Man*, was taken by Jesus from Daniel 7:13-14.

I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

The Son of Man comes in the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days as he to whom was given dominion, glory, and the kingship over all the nations. Ridderbos explains, “In this prophecy, as indeed in all Daniel’s visions, the universality and transcendent character of the coming king are very prominent” (1962:31). He argues that “the coming of the Son of Man” (Mt 10:23) is synonymous with the “coming of the kingdom of God” (1962:30). Thus, Jesus’ frequent reference to himself as *The Son of Man* is a claim to be the King of kings and Lord of lords, the messianic king who would recover Adam’s lost kingdom and establish The High King’s righteous rule over earth.

The Kingdom of God Defined

In order to proceed further in our study we must now define the term *kingdom of God*. Indeed, the difficulty of formulating a concrete understanding of this term, as well as erroneous eschatological teaching about the kingdom of God, are the major obstacles, in my view, toward forming a kingdom-centered approach to discipleship.

The difficulty of arriving at a clear definition of the term, *kingdom of God*, is apparent when we consider the numerous ways it is used by Jesus. The kingdom is an ordering of society in which there will be superiors and inferiors (Mt 5:19; 11:11; 18:1,4), a community in which the king exercises dominion with his followers on his left and right (Mt 20:21) in which the righteous shine and from which the wicked are cast out (Mt 13:43). In another passage the kingdom seems to be a place where there is a certain perspective (Lk 9:62; Mk 12:34). The kingdom is also a gift from the Heavenly Father (Lk 12:32), granted to some (Mt 5:3, 10; 19:14), and taken away from others (Mt 21:43). It is a blessing that can be inherited, and taken possession of even by force (Mt 25:34; 11:12), which is being prepared by God for his people (Mt 20:23; 25:34). It is a condition of peace and happiness in which kingdom members will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Mt 8:11), and feast (Mt 26:29; Lk 14:15). In addition, the kingdom of God is a moral good to be pursued (Mt 6:33) and prayed for (Mt 6:10).

Despite the multifaceted aspects of the kingdom of God, much clarity about its nature results from an accurate definition of the word, *kingdom (basileia)*. Collin Brown defines this word as *kingly rule* (1975:372). *Kingdom* does not refer so much to a spatial or geographical sphere as to the sphere of the king's rule. In Greek, the term, *basileia*,

may mean both *kingship*, i.e., kingly dominion, or a *geographical entity ruled by a king*. Herman Ridderbos writes, “We should not in the first place think of a spatial or a static entity, which is descending from heaven; but rather of divine, kingly rule actually and effectively starting its operation; therefore, we should think of the Divine action of the king” (1962:25). It is important to remember that this “divine kingly rule” descending from heaven, as King Jesus arrives, is not the sovereign rule of God, but his preceptive rule. God has always ruled sovereignly over the earth.

The kingdom inaugurated by King Jesus is the new heaven and new earth to be established by his overthrow of Satan, sin, and death. That kingdom is the realm where there will be submission to the righteous rule of The High King. Christ’s kingdom is being manifest to whatever degree Christ’s righteous agenda is being followed in each sphere of life on planet earth.

When we understand the term *kingdom of God* to be *kingly rule* we maintain a truth that is central to kingdom theology: the kingdom cannot be separated from the king. “The manifestation of the kingdom of heaven cannot be conceived as an impersonal metaphysical even, but as the coming of God himself as king. This conception is borne out by a whole series of parables about the kingdom of God. A definite person always stands in the center of these parables” (Ridderbos 1962:25). The High King of heaven, himself, comes to redeem Adam’s kingdom from sin’s tyranny. Through an unfathomable process, The High King takes on human flesh and breaks into Adam’s world to recover it from the dominion of Satan, sin, and death. Because it is Christ,

himself, who recovers the kingdom and is establishing his righteous rule, all the efforts of his disciples to exercise dominion and bring about his righteous rule are accomplished in and through our connection with Christ. He is the vine, we are the branches. Kingdom fruit is impossible apart from Christ. Apart from him we can do nothing (Jn 15:4-5).

When we understand that the arrival of the kingdom on planet earth is the arrival of kingly rule we understand why Satan's empire is filled with alarm (Mt 4:3; Mk 1:24; Mt 12:29). The good news of the gospel is that a deliverer has come to overthrow the masters whose control of Adam's kingdom had caused every ounce of human suffering. The glorious beginning of a new order, where there is no longer any mourning or crying or pain, has broken into human history.

Kingdom Arrival Means The Overthrow of Satan, Sin, and Death

This king, who overthrows the corruption of the fallen order caused by Adam's sin, demonstrates the arrival of the new order in all that he does. By his healing power, he shows that the kingdom of God reverses the curse on Adam's race and kingdom brought about by their sin. The deaf hear, the blind see, the lame walk. Human bodies, broken by paralysis or disease, are made whole. Even destructive forces of nature are overpowered as the wind and waves obey the voice of Jesus. The curse upon them, because of Adam's sin, is temporarily overcome by the command of earth's rightful king. He empowers his disciples to heal and commands them to explain that such healing is a demonstration that the kingdom of God is near (Lk 10:11.). The ultimate vanquishing of the destructive

effects of sin's reign over the earth is Jesus' overthrow of death. He raises Jairus' daughter from the dead, the widow's son, and his friend Lazarus. In so doing, Jesus demonstrates more than his divine power. He is showing that he has come to overthrow the brokenness and havoc spread through all of creation by sin. Every part of human culture and the created order are to be redeemed by his power and rule.

The arrival of the new order brought to earth by King Jesus is further manifest by his power over Satan's kingdom. In Matthew 12:26-29 Jesus interprets his own mission to be the invasion of Satan's kingdom. The strong man is being bound so his house may be plundered. Not only does Jesus repeatedly cast out demons, but he empowers his disciples to show that the kingdom is near, by casting out demons. "The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!' And he said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven'" (Lk 10:17-18). Satan's fall from heaven is the beginning of the end for the devil's kingdom. The kingdom of God has come. Jesus' exorcisms are not merely proof that Jesus is God come in the flesh. Jesus himself said their significance was in proving that the kingdom of God had come.

Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." (Lk 11:17-20).

Christ's Kingly Rule Establishes Righteousness

The arrival of the new order into human history also requires the establishment of righteousness. Just as Jesus' healing gives us a glimpse of the ultimate overthrow of disease and death, and his exorcisms foreshadow Satan's eventual destruction; his ethical teaching gives us a picture of righteous living in the kingdom. Matthew 5-7, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, is a portrayal of the righteous life to be lived by the new humanity. It is a picture of Jesus' kingdom of righteousness. Kingdom living begins with a change in heart attitudes. Jesus identifies eight such attitudes that reveal redeemed humanity:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Mt 5:3-12).

God's covenant people are to live out these kingdom attitudes, as a window display of kingdom life, a movie trailer of coming attractions for all the world to see. Not only that, but Jesus' kingdom disciples are to transform the world around them through their influence. Jesus continues his sermon by reminding his followers that they are salt and light for the world. Both salt and light transform whatever is near them. Kingdom people

are to redeem every part of the culture around them, exercising dominion, seeking to bring about Christ's agenda (kingly rule) in every sphere of life.

In the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives us a portrait of righteousness that exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees. True righteousness is not merely keeping outwardly the moral law summarized in the Ten Commandments. It is obeying the implications of the moral law inwardly. Indeed, Jesus commands his followers, "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly father is perfect" (Mt 5:48).

Distinguishing the "Already" and "Not Yet" Aspects Of the Kingdom of God

One of the reasons it has been so difficult for Christians to understand and apply what Jesus taught about the kingdom of God is that Jesus was emphatic that his kingdom has already come but also spoke of it as having not yet fully come. This dual nature of the kingdom can be seen in 1 Corinthians 15: 25-27 where Paul says, "For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For 'God has put all things in subjection under his feet.'" In one sense, God has already put all things under Jesus' feet but in another sense, he has not yet put all things under Jesus' feet. The messianic prophecies have been fulfilled. Jesus, the second Adam, has come. He has defeated Satan, sin, and death. The victory is already accomplished. He has risen from the grave and ascended to the right hand of the Father. However, Jesus has not yet removed Satan, sin, and death from Adam's kingdom. Christians are still tempted by

Satan, they still sin, and they still die. How are we to understand this already-not yet aspect of the kingdom and what difference does it make to kingdom disciples?

Oscar Cullmann, in his significant work, *Christ and Time*, suggests that Christ has accomplished a decisive victory at the cross much as the Allies did on the beaches of Normandy in World War II. Once they succeeded in the D-Day invasion, their victory was sure; it was only a matter of time until VE Day. Cullmann writes:

The decisive battle in a war may already have occurred in a relatively early stage of the war, and yet the war still continues. Although the decisive effect of that battle is perhaps not recognized by all, it nevertheless means victory. But the war must still be carried on for an undefined time until 'Victory Day.' Precisely this is the situation of which the New Testament is conscious...that that event on the cross, together with the resurrection which followed, was the already concluded decisive battle" (1964:84).

D-Day has happened. The decisive battle for Adam's kingdom has already taken place at the cross. Jesus won! But the enemy has not yet been vanquished; the fighting remains fierce. Christ's invasion has assured the ultimate outcome of the battle, though. "Victory Day," which will take place when Christ returns, will fully assert God's righteous rule over Adam's kingdom. In that day, Christ's kingdom will be visible without imperfection. Our expectation of our future life in Christ's kingdom, where there is no more evil or suffering, is rooted in the historic events of the past. A decisive victory over the usurpers of Adam's kingdom has already taken place. Christ was raised from the dead and has ascended; he rules right now over the whole earth, claiming all of it as his own. Yet, a fuller, more complete establishment of the kingdom of God is yet to come. A brief

survey of the biblical evidence will be sufficient to show that both of these truths are taught in Scripture.

The Kingdom of God Has Already Come

There is overwhelming biblical evidence that the kingdom of God has already come. Christ has already triumphed over his enemies. Paul writes, “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:9-11). The apostle Peter explains this victory of King Jesus who “has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him” (1Pet 3:22).

Jesus himself saw his kingship as a present reality. Luke introduces Jesus’ ministry by recording his sermon in Nazareth. Jesus reads Isaiah’s description of the messianic kingdom that was promised to God’s people, then makes the astonishing claim, “Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled.”

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4: 18-21).

George Ladd writes:

Here was an amazing claim. John had announced an imminent visitation of God which would mean the fulfillment of the eschatological hope and the coming of the messianic age. Jesus proclaimed that this promise was actually being fulfilled. This is no apocalyptic Kingdom but a present salvation. Jesus did not promise his hearers a better future or assure that they would soon enter the Kingdom. Rather, he boldly announced that the Kingdom of God had come to them" (1974:111).

There can be no doubt that Jesus saw his reign as having already begun, when we remember the first words of his Great Commission. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." (Mt 28:18).

Throughout church history there have been movements which viewed Christ's kingdom as future, ignoring the present reign of Christ. But such was not the perspective of the early church. Its members placed great emphasis on the present reign of Christ. The earliest confession of the church was that Jesus reigns right now. Cullmann explains, "The simplest expression of the confession of the present Lordship of Christ is that formula '*Kyrios Christos*,' '*Christ rules as Lord*'" (1964:153). He then observes how frequently this confession was used by the early Christians. "It was uttered in times of persecution before the pagan authorities as well as in worship and exorcisms" (1964:153). They understood that Satan, sin, and death had been deposed. Jesus, the second Adam, is now on earth's throne.

The New Testament is not only clear that Jesus has already defeated Satan, sin, and death, we are also told the point in time when this victory took place—when Jesus died on the cross. Paul writes to the church at Colossae,

“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them at the cross” (Col 2:13-15).

In Hebrews we see the same truth: “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb 2:14).

The above two texts specifically show that Christ’s victory over Satan is already accomplished. Paul also tells us that the former sinful self of Christians has been destroyed, breaking sin’s tyranny over us. “We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin.” Christ’s resurrection proves that death has been conquered, causing the apostle Paul to exult: “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting” (1 Cor 15:55)? Satan, sin and death have already been decisively defeated. But they have not yet been destroyed. They have been removed from the throne of Adam’s kingdom, but not yet removed from his kingdom.

The Kingdom of God Has Not Yet Come

The final result of Jesus' victory over Satan, sin, and death has not yet happened. Jesus' victory inaugurated an unstoppable process that will not be consummated until Jesus' second coming. Paul describes the not yet aspect of the kingdom of God. "Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Cor 15:24-26).

The above text makes clear that Satan and death will be destroyed at the close of the age. At that time, sin will be vanquished. Christ's eternal kingdom of righteousness will finally fully prevail.

Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore (Isa 9:7).

When Satan, sin, and death are finally removed from Adam's kingdom, the whole created order will be renewed. "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Rom 8:19-21). Adam's kingdom, the old created order, marred as it is by sin, will give way to the regal splendor of the new heaven and new earth. Here are just a few verses describing the redeemed world in which God's redeemed people will dwell forever.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment" (Rev 21:1-6).

John's vision of the new heaven and the new earth is breathtaking. God's people are adorned as a bride for his son, clothed in righteousness. God, whose presence dwelt in the tabernacle and temple of old, will be present with them to satisfy their hearts with the ecstasy of his immediate presence; they will see him face-to-face. Sorrows will be turned to joy, mourning and pain wiped from memory. Thirst will be quenched without cost. "The Alpha, who created all things, is the Omega who restores all things" (Frey, *et al*, 1983:34). Interestingly, the restoration is not a return to the garden. "The Revelation imagery of perfection and preciousness says that everything that God made in the beginning has been developed and enhanced in the end, despite what had to be overcome" (1983:34). There is a striking difference between the garden paradise pictured in Genesis 1 and 2 and the glorious city of Revelation 21 and 22. "The pristine goodness of Genesis has become the 'city of God' to use Augustine's phrase" (1983:35). The full restoration of Adam's kingdom has finally come. God's people are not merely given new

meaning in their lives or even a new relationship with God. We will experience a new order—a renewed world.

Although the New Testament makes it plain that there are ways in which heavenly matters ought to preoccupy us and not those of this world, we need to remember that the contrast in these texts is not between earth and heaven but between worldliness and godliness. We are encouraged to set our minds “on things above” (Col 3:2), to store up “treasures in heaven” (Mt 6:20) because “our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil 3:20).

But, as Richard Pratt reminds us:

We must never forget that heaven has never been Jesus’ ultimate destiny. The New Testament teaches plainly that the final place of Christ’s eternal presence is the “new heavens and new earth” (Revelation 21:1). At the time appointed by His royal Father, Christ will return to the earth in glory to bring God’s kingdom to its consummation on earth. And our blessed hope is that one day we will reign with Him over that new earth. As Revelation 5:10 puts it, “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth” (2007:1).

Kingdom discipleship never loses sight of the truth that the not yet kingdom comes to consummation not in heaven but on earth.

Kingdom Fruitfulness In the Present Age

The unexpected advent of the messianic kingdom in its present form was still not understood by the closest followers of Jesus after his resurrection. Just before his

ascension they asked, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel” (Acts 1:6)? That God would one day bring the fulfillment of the messianic kingdom was no secret to most any Jew in Jesus’ day. Such a kingdom was to come in power and glory. That was the kingdom they were asking about. That is the kingdom they expected to see. But Jesus had gone to great trouble before his death and resurrection to anticipate this confusion. This is what Jesus’ parables in Matthew 13 explain. These kingdom parables help his followers see that the future kingdom, which is to come in power and glory, has, in point of fact, already entered the world in advance, in a hidden form, to work secretly within and among men.

The basic message of Jesus’ kingdom parables in Matthew 13 is that the kingdom works mysteriously to produce fruit. This can be seen, for example, in the parable of the seeds.

A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear” (13:3-9).

Since the messianic kingdom was so identified with the final, visible, consummation of the kingdom of God, Jesus is at pains to help his followers understand the hidden working of the kingdom that would take place during this age. Ladd observes:

The Kingdom is working quietly, secretly among men. It does not force itself upon them; it must be willingly received. But wherever it is

received, the word of the kingdom, which is practically identical with the Kingdom itself, brings forth much fruit. There is no emphasis on the harvest, either in the parable or in its interpretation. The single emphasis is upon the nature of the sowing—the present action of God’s kingdom (1974:230).

The parable of the tares further illustrates the present, mysterious working of the kingdom of God.

He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ So the servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn’”(13:24-30).

The meaning again has to do with the presence of the kingdom and its secret working in the world. The kingdom has come into history but in such a way that society is not disrupted. The sons of the kingdom have surrendered to God’s rule and entered into his blessings. Yet, they continue to live in this age intermingled with the wicked in a mixed society. Only at the eschatological coming of the kingdom will the separation take place.

The parable of the mustard seed (13:32) illustrates the truth that the kingdom of God, which one day will be a great tree, is already present in the world in a tiny, insignificant form. The parable of the leaven (13:33) expresses a similar truth to that of

the mustard seed: That the kingdom of God, which one day will rule over all the earth, has entered into the world in a form that is barely perceptible.

This sample of parables from Matthew 13 contains the same essential message: Do not doubt the kingdom of God's active presence here because what you see does not match your expectations. The kingdom of God will come in power, might, and glory, but during this age it works mysteriously and invisibly.

Discipleship Imbalance In The Already/Not Yet Age

Kingdom disciples recognize that we live in a special time in redemptive history—the kingdom of God has already been inaugurated but has not yet been consummated. We must hold in balance the two truths that the kingdom of God has already come and not yet come. George Ladd in his book, *The Presence of the Future*, argues that a biblical view of the kingdom affirms that:

The Kingdom of God is the redemptive reign of God dynamically active to establish his rule among men, and that this Kingdom, which will appear as an apocalyptic act at the end of the age, has already come into human history in the person and mission of Jesus to overcome evil, to deliver men from its power, and to bring them into the blessings of God's reign. The Kingdom of God involves two great moments: fulfillment within history, and consummation at the end of history" (1974:218).

We must now examine in some detail the biblical teaching concerning how to live during this in-between age, known as the Age of the Church.

To be faithful disciples of Christ, today's Christians must keep the reality of the present kingship of Christ and the future kingship of Christ in balance. The promises that

belong to the final, eschatological kingdom of Christ can be mistakenly claimed for today. For example, some believers think their power over Satan is absolute, over-emphasizing demonic participation in human sin and their ability to cast Satan out. Other Christian movements mistakenly claim that the moral perfectionism, which is a reality in the future kingdom, is a possibility today. A variation of this teaching is that if we believe hard enough that our sinful nature is dead, we will resist sin.² Still others claim that since the Bible says “By his stripes we are healed” (Isa 53:5), God’s will in this age is to always heal us. We need to claim this healing, believe it to be true, and it will come to pass. These are the errors of what is called “over-realized” eschatology.

Today’s Christians can err in an equally troublesome way, by the failure to recognize Christ’s present rule and claim to lordship over this world. They see his kingdom as almost entirely future. This “under-realized” eschatology leads to two serious problems that need to be examined.

1. Lack of spiritual power. Paul’s prayer for the Ephesian believers was that the eyes of their heart would be enlightened with a bigger vision of what Christ’s power at work in them can do because the Father has already put all things under his feet.

I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in

² In Romans 6:6 what was crucified was our former self, not our sinful nature.

Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all (Eph 1:16-23).

A major part of Paul's approach to sanctification is recognizing the power that we have in Christ. Besides these words to the Ephesians, Paul urges the Colossian believers to know that their spiritual power comes from their union with the ascended Christ who reigns in power. "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:1-3). The exaltation of Christ to the right hand of the Father is the source of our power for sanctification.

2. Separatism. The most severe consequence of under-realized eschatology is the change it brings about in the disciple's attitude towards the world. John Stott traces the twentieth century evangelical retreat from social concern in part to the premillennial teaching of J. N. Darby and the popularization in the Scofield Study Bible.

"This portrays the present evil world as beyond improvement or redemption, and predicts instead that it will deteriorate steadily until the coming of Jesus, who will then set up his millennial reign on earth. If the world is getting worse, and if only Jesus at his coming will put it right, the argument runs, there seems no point in trying to reform it meanwhile" (1984:27).

If the kingdom of God does not come until the future, and this present world is getting more evil, discipleship becomes a matter of trying to be good, staying away from the

fallen world and its evil influence, and throwing out a lifeboat to rescue a few sinners from hell. The call to discipleship is no longer a call to be a part of God's great transformation of this fallen world, but to separate from its corrupting influence. The recovery of Adam's call to exercise dominion over our planet for The High King is completely lost. The gospel is no longer the gospel of the kingdom but the gospel of personal private salvation.

Kingdom Discipleship In the Present Age

Keeping in mind both the already and not yet aspects of the kingdom of God, we can identify three characteristics of kingdom disciples. Kingdom disciples are 1) called to display his kingdom, 2) called to spread his kingdom, and 3) called to draw upon Christ for kingdom power.

First, kingdom disciples are to put the future kingdom of God on display now.

John Stott explains the role of believers to put Christ's kingdom on display.

But the kingdom of God is ...the divine rule in the lives of those who acknowledge Christ. It has to be 'received,' 'entered,' 'inherited,' Jesus said, by humble and penitent faith in him. And without a new birth it is impossible to see it, let alone enter it. Those who receive it like a child, however, find themselves members of the new community of the Messiah, which is called to exhibit the ideals of his rule in the world and so to present the world with an alternative social reality (1984:26).

It is the high calling of today's church to give the world an appetizer of the restored life to come in Christ's eternal kingdom. Today's believers are the firstfruits of God's re-creation of man and his kingdom. The apostle John describes the church: "It is these who

follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb..." (Rev 14:4).

Second, kingdom disciples are called to take Christ's kingdom geographically to the ends of the earth, and spiritually to the very gates of hell. Just as the first Adam was called to be fruitful, multiply, and exercise dominion over earth for The High King, so the followers of the second Adam are called to go into the world exercising dominion for The High King. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt 28:18-20).

Adam's original call to be fruitful and fill the earth was the call to make disciples of every nation. In Christ, Adam's original calling is now fully recovered, not in a way that separates the cultural mandate from the Great Commission but in a way that sees the Great Commission as the restoration of Adam's original mandate. Now, the Adams and Eves who would exercise dominion for The High King are the followers of Jesus. They are the ones who exercise the righteous rule of The High King because they are taught to obey everything King Jesus has commanded. Despite Adam's rebellion, a second Adam has come. He and his followers will now be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth with those who will rule Adams kingdom in righteousness for the High King. George Ladd writes:

This brings us to our central thesis: that before the eschatological appearing of God's Kingdom at the end of the age, God's Kingdom has become dynamically active among men in Jesus' person and mission. The

kingdom in this age is not merely the abstract concept of God's universal rule to which men must submit; it is rather a dynamic power at work among men....Before the apocalyptic coming of God's Kingdom and the final manifestation of his rule to bring in the new age, God has manifested his rule, his Kingdom to bring men in advance of the eschatological era the blessings of his redemptive reign (1974:139).

Jesus taught his disciples to seek first his kingdom (Mt 6:33), i.e., seek to bring about the redemptive reign of Christ in every sphere of life, because there is not one square inch of planet earth over which King Jesus does not say "Mine" (Kuyper 1931:32).

Third, kingdom disciples are called to draw upon Christ for kingdom power. Kingdom disciples are not just those who try harder to be righteous. They are those who draw upon the power of the risen Christ to bring about the kingdom of God. The exaltation of Christ to the right hand of God matters immensely in the spreading of righteousness over Adam's kingdom. The spiritual power to overcome sin all comes from our union to the second Adam. "For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death" (Rom 8:2). "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places..." (Eph 1:3). The foundational principle for all kingdom growth is the recognition of our own spiritual poverty and dependence upon Christ. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:3).

We do not have the moral and spiritual power in ourselves to overcome sin. That is why a second Adam came, to rescue us from the tyranny of Satan, sin, and death. It is only through our union with Christ that we have the spiritual power to overcome sin. It is

living in Christ and Christ living in us by his Spirit that gives us the power to live by the precepts of the kingdom. Jesus explained this principle this way, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:4-5). Marshall and Payne observe that true kingdom growth is bearing fruit that comes from our union with Christ.

Returning to our vine metaphor, the vine is the Spirit-empowered word, spreading and growing throughout the world, drawing people out of the kingdom of darkness into the light-filled kingdom of God’s beloved Son, and then bearing fruit in their lives as they grow in the knowledge and love of God. The vine is Jesus, and as we are grafted into him, we bear fruit (Marshall 2009:37).

Chapter Summary

The single task assigned to the church by her Lord is to make disciples, a task that cannot be accomplished without helping those Christ-followers understand the nature of the kingdom of God, about which Jesus constantly taught.

Understanding the kingdom of God begins by realizing that God created Adam in his own image to be the king of creation. He was to develop the full potential of the created order, bearing fruit and exercising dominion over it for The High King. By his obedience to God, he was to model the moral image of God’s holiness to creation. His unique masculine calling was to “act upon” (*avad*) the garden and the emerging culture to

shape it in a way that was productive and pleasing to The High King. Adam was also to “protect” (*shamar*) the garden and its inhabitants from harm, including evil.

Adam failed in his calling both by his passivity in failing to protect the garden from Satan’s temptation, and by his selfishness in choosing to exercise dominion for himself. Through Adam’s sin, he brought his own kingdom under God’s curse and surrendered his kingdom to the tyrants—Satan, sin, and death.

Jesus, the promised Messiah, came into the world as the second Adam to redeem Adam’s kingdom from its slavery to Satan, sin, and death and establish his righteous rule over the earth. The kingdom of God is best understood as kingly rule. It is not God’s sovereign rule that Jesus came to establish. God has always been sovereign. Rather, Jesus came to overthrow the rebellion on planet earth and establish his preceptive rule, the establishment of his kingdom of righteousness. Jesus was clear that his casting out of demons demonstrated the beginning of the overthrow of Satan and arrival of the kingdom. His miracles demonstrated his power to overcome the curse on the physical world, because the kingdom of God was arriving, beginning the certain process of setting earth free from its bondage to sin.

At the cross, Jesus decisively defeated Satan, sin, and death. He set Adam’s kingdom free from its slavery to this triumvirate, triumphing over them at the cross. However, though these foes have been ultimately defeated and deposed from their tyrannical rule over Adam’s kingdom, they have not been destroyed. They remain present in Adam’s kingdom still resisting Christ’s kingly rule.

Kingdom discipleship understands our calling to follow King Jesus as the calling to join him in the establishment of his righteous rule over every part of the universe. He has ascended to the right hand of the father and claims this world as his own.

Specifically, kingdom disciples are committed to displaying the values of the future kingdom of righteousness in their everyday lives and extending the preceptive rule of Christ by shaping their homes, business policies, government laws, and ethical decisions, etc., according to righteousness. Kingdom discipleship is recovering Adam's original cultural mandate, to be fruitful, developing the potential of this earth and culture, making disciples who observe everything Jesus commands of his disciples, exercising dominion over every sphere of their lives and world for The High King. However, the conquest of Christ's kingdom can only be accomplished in Jesus' name, by employing the spiritual weapons of warfare they've been given, because Jesus is seated at the right hand of God.

To be a kingdom disciple could not be more fulfilling to the masculine heart. The masculine mandate to build, win, succeed, accomplish a mission that matters (*avad*) is fulfilled in the conquest of Christ's kingdom in each part of their world, as men seek to exercise dominion for The High King, to bring honor to him. The fact that they and their loved ones are opposed at every point by Christ's enemies, awakens men's warrior hearts and calls forth their willingness to fight and suffer to protect (*shamar*) their loved ones from harm. There is no better way to disciple the masculine heart than to help a man understand the call to be a kingdom disciple.

CHAPTER 3

THE NEO-CALVINIST AND “TWO-KINGDOM” VIEWS OF THE KINGDOM AS PARADIGMS FOR DISCIPLESHIP

Introduction

A disciple orders his priorities according to the wishes of his master. Jesus gave his top priority to his followers when he said, “Seek first the kingdom of God” (Mt 6:33). If a disciple’s top priority is to seek the kingdom of God that disciple must have a clear idea of what it is that he is to seek. In this chapter we will study Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck, the founders of the Dutch Neo-Calvinist movement, because they provide the church with cogent thinking and stellar examples concerning kingdom discipleship. We will further examine the kingdom theology of Herman Ridderbos who followed in their footsteps. Finally, we will examine the “two-kingdoms” theology of current author, David VanDrunen, which opposes the Neo-Calvinistic understanding of the kingdom of God.

Kingdom Discipleship According to Abraham Kuyper

Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) was one of the most remarkable men in the history of Christianity and a great, though perhaps exhausting, model of discipleship. He was a powerful preacher, prodigious journalist, the head of a political party, a member of the Dutch Parliament, the Prime Minister of Holland, the founder of the Free University in Amsterdam, and professor of dogmatics.

Kuyper's Roots Shape His View of Discipleship

In Kuyper's early adult years we discover two major threads that, woven together, formed his life. The first was his personal conversion and resulting close walk with Christ. The second was his experience at Leiden where he was utterly unprepared to defend the Christianity he had embraced as a child.

Though raised in a Christian home, Kuyper fell away from the childhood teaching of his parents, and at the Theological School at Leiden, became a whole-hearted, unbelieving modernist. Although ordained with a doctorate in theology, Kuyper was still unconverted when he went to pastor his first congregation. In the words of his biographer, Frank Vanderberg, "To Kuyper, Jesus was still not the Savior and Mediator as the Scriptures reveal Him but rather a noble martyr who had died at the hands of his enemies for the courage of His convictions" (1978:29).

In Kuyper's own description of his conversion, he points to three events. The first was God's "miraculous" provision of some out-of-print books he needed for a research project but had found impossible to find. Kuyper writes, "In all honesty you must personally experience such a surprise in your own life-struggle to know what it is to encounter a miracle of God on life's journey" (1978:50). The second event was the reading of a novel called, *The Heir of Redclyffe*, through which he realized his dead heart longed for the piety, devotion, and faith of one of the novel's characters, Sir Guy. The third part of his conversion was his contact with members of his congregation in the village of Beesd. He was drawn to their conviction about the truth of Scripture, and the compelling worldview that shaped their lives. He relates, "I found myself confronted with a painful choice: either sharply resist them or unconditionally join them in the principled

recognition of ‘full sovereign grace’ as they called it” (1978:56). Kuyper chose to surrender his mind and will unequivocally to the God of all grace and his Word.

After longing for the personal piety that Sir Guy had experienced in *The Heir of RedClyffe*, Kuyper began an intimate walk with God that sustained him all his life.

Vandenberg observes that Kuyper entered into “a deep, rich personal life of communion with God in Christ. He spoke from the heart and from inner conviction” (1978:51).

Kuyper’s life-long study of Scripture not only established his world and life views, but enriched his everyday walk with God.

Earnest, concentrated, dedicated study of the Scriptures had given him, and continued to give him an exceptionally clear insight into Bible-revealed truth, together with an unusual grasp and growing comprehension of that truth, with its implications for all of practical living. He possessed, too, a clear, profound insight into the religious needs of his listeners (1978:51).

In 1870, Kuyper became the editor for *The Herald*, a weekly paper that included both religious and political articles. In 1872, at Kuyper’s suggestion, *The Herald* was re-named *The Standard* and became a daily newspaper. The devotional portion of *The Herald* would keep that name and henceforth be included as a Saturday supplement to *The Standard*. Every week for fifty years, including his years as Prime Minister, Kuyper wrote this weekly devotional column. In the English translation of his works, James Bratt describes the content of these devotionals as “replete with the Bible-Christ-Cross triad of true evangelical piety” (Kuyper 1998:3).

Besides Kuyper’s close personal walk with Christ, there is a second major thread that defined Abraham Kuyper. This thread was a fierce commitment to discovering, teaching, and fighting for a biblical worldview to shape all of cultural life. It is not difficult to understand why Kuyper held such passion about the need for a biblically

based worldview when we consider his experience at the liberal university at Leiden: “In Leiden, under the liberal regime of the time, a most pitiful situation prevailed, and the deceit, the hypocrisy, the unspiritual routine that sap the lifeblood of our whole ecclesiastical fellowship were most lamentably prevalent in the old university town” (Kuyper 1998:46). Kuyper not only saw what happens to the church when it jettisons the inerrancy of Scripture, but experienced the painful reality of not being able to compete in the academic world without starting from God’s revelation, a biblical worldview.

It will hardly surprise you that upon entering the academic world, I stood without defense or weapon against the powers of negation, which robbed me of my inherit faith before I knew what was happening. My faith was not deeply rooted in my unconverted, self-centered soul and was bound to wither once exposed to the scorching heat of the spirit of doubt (1998:47).

Another formative influence that strengthened Kuyper’s commitment to developing a Christian world view was his role, beginning early in his career, as the editor of *The Standard*. Kuyper understood the power of the press.

In Kuyper’s view, the daily press was certainly not an invention of Satan but a gift of God to our human race. And when Kuyper saw how men seized that powerful weapon to promote all kinds of principles and to battle against all that the Christian element in Holland held sacred, he said to himself: if that weapon, a gift of God exercises such a power when men turn it against God’s people, why, then, should God’s people hesitate any longer, and why shouldn’t they too seize the weapon to battle for God’s glory (Vandenberg 1978:66).

At the age of thirty-three Kuyper picked up his pen as the editor of *The Herald* and then *The Standard*, to battle for over forty years for God’s truth in the world of ideas in Holland. It was in this role as journalist that he would formulate his thoughts about how to apply a biblical worldview to every area of life. He would later bring his worldview into the arena of politics where he built a Christian political party called The Antirevolutionary Party. As a senator and prime minister he sought to extend suffrage to

all men and to women, to strengthen support for Christian grade schools, to establish a wise and equitable approach for government funded welfare. His influence was felt in calling the church back to its biblical perspective through the Doleantie movement he led. He would eventually fulfill his greatest dream, the establishment of the Free University in Amsterdam where every sphere of life would be studied from the perspective of a biblical world and life view. All of these ventures were opportunities for him to give expression to his world and life view. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of *The Standard*, Kuyper re-enunciated his core conviction about his life and work as a disciple of Christ, i.e., that the Word of God must be applied to all of life.

The Scriptures not only serve to find justification through faith and cast light on the path to eternity, that same Word of God also reveals the foundations of all human life, that is the sacred ordinances which must govern the whole of the life of men in the family and the church, in the state and society at large. The Word of God contains the ordinances for our personal, our family, our ecclesiastical, our educational, our political, our industrial and commercial, our cultural life—indeed, for every sector of human life (1978:173).

Sphere Sovereignty

On October 20, 1880 Abraham Kuyper delivered the inaugural address at the Free University in Amsterdam, which he had founded. In the message, which was entitled, “Sphere Sovereignty,” Kuyper elucidated the core concept that lay beneath the establishment of the Free University. Free had nothing to do with tuition payments; it was chosen to signify that it was free from the control of the state and the control of the church. It had the right to its own sovereignty as an educational system and was accountable directly to God.

Kuyper's thoughts about sphere sovereignty were forged in his historical setting. Twenty-one years before he was born, William I, by royal decree converted the country-wide Protestant Church of Holland into a full-fledged State Church under government control. Though William may have meant well, the State Church had increasingly given way to higher criticism and modernism, as had the universities, which were also under the state's control. Kuyper was also responding to the Roman Catholic worldview, which sought to bring art and science, trade and commerce, the magistrate and family life "under ecclesiastical guardianship" (Kuyper 1931: 9). Sphere sovereignty was the concept that each sphere of life has its own specific responsibilities and authority, which are derived from God the creator. In this address Kuyper observed:

Just as we speak of a "moral world," a "scientific world," a "business world," the "world of art," so we can speak of a "sphere" of morality, of the family, of social life, each with its own *domain*. And because each comprises its own domain, each has its own Sovereign within its bounds (1998:467).

He further elaborates distinct domains of life which have their own laws to govern them and which must remain sovereign.

There is a domain of nature in which the Sovereign exerts power over matter according to fixed laws. There is also a domain of the personal, of the household, of science, of social and ecclesiastical life, each of which obeys its own laws of life, each subject to its own chief. A realm of thought where only the laws of logic may rule. A realm of conscience where none but the Holy One may give sovereign commands. Finally the realm of faith where the person alone is sovereign who through that faith consecrates himself in the depths of his being (1998:467).

No sphere, according to Kuyper, has the right to exert its authority over other spheres.

Kuyper grounded sphere sovereignty in his Christian world and life view. The authority given in each sphere is a delegated authority deriving from the creator, himself (1998:466) Only the Christian worldview is capable of preventing tyranny because

without sphere sovereignty the state will “have unlimited rule, disposing over persons, their lives, their rights, their conscience, even their faith” (1998:466). Kuyper further argues that sphere sovereignty derives from Reformed theology, asking rhetorically,

As to Reformed life, don’t you know about Calvin’s “lesser magistrates?” Isn’t sphere sovereignty the basis for the entire Presbyterian church order? Did not almost all Reformed nations incline toward a confederative form of government? Are not civil liberties most luxuriantly developed in Reformed lands? Can it be denied that domestic peace, decentralization, and municipal autonomy are best guaranteed even today among the heirs of Calvin (1998:481)?

At the core of his worldview was also a high view of creation and the cultural mandate to explore and develop each sphere of it. This calling was indeed the very reason for establishing the Free University.

The honor of God demands that the human mind penetrate the entire system of creation to discover His greatness and wisdom there and to translate these into human thought through human words. Since the knowledge of the unbelieving world cannot help but obscure God’s greatness and wisdom, it is the Christian thinker’s calling to buckle down to this enormous task which they alone can accomplish (1998:474).

The Free University would explore every sphere of life, but do it through the lens of a biblical worldview. A person’s presuppositions matter. Concerning the study of law, for example, Kuyper asks rhetorically, “Do you see a human being as a self-developing product of nature or as a condemned sinner? Is the law a functionally developing organ of nature or a jewel coming down to us from God himself bound to His word” (1998:487)? Concerning the liberal arts college, he asks, “Will history come to the same conclusion irrespective of identifying the Cross with Socrates’ cup of poison or viewing it as the center point of history” (1998:488)?

But sphere sovereignty means more than discovering God’s created order through a biblical lens; it requires battling the sin that exhibits itself in each sphere. Kuyper saw

sin as being displayed in both the tyranny of the state and in the corruption of the life in each sphere. “*Sin* threatens freedom within each sphere just as strongly as *State-power* does at the boundary” (1998:473). However, Christ, the Redeemer-King, came into the world to free each sphere from its bondage to sin.

Neither Pharisee nor disciple understood that His cry “It is finished!” entailed, beyond salvation of the elect, also a *soteria tou kosmou* (salvation of the cosmos), a liberation of the world, a world of freedom. But Jesus discerned it. Hence the sign *Basileus* (King) upon His cross. He appeared as Sovereign. As its Sovereign He contended with the usurping “Prince of this World” for authority over the world (1998:469).

This spiritual battle requires taking every thought captive to Christ. “No single piece of our mental world is to be hermetically sealed off from the rest” (1998:488). As Kuyper reaches the climax of his address he makes the statement for which he has become most famous. “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over *all*, does not cry: ‘Mine’ (1998:488).

The Stone Lectures

In 1898 Kuyper was invited to deliver the prestigious Stone Lectures at Princeton University, which he entitled, “Lectures on Calvinism.” In these six lectures he presented Calvinism as a world and life view, or in his words, “a life system.”

Kuyper begins by observing that the all-embracing life system of modernism was assaulting the church and required that Christians take their stand “in a life-system of equally comprehensive and far-reaching power” (1931:11). That system, argued Kuyper, was Calvinism, which he defines broadly:

Calvinism is rooted in a form of religion which was peculiarly its own, and from this specific religious consciousness there was developed first a peculiar theology, then a special church order and then a given form for

political and social life, for the interpretation of the moral world order, for the relation between nature and grace, between Christianity and the world, between church and state, and finally for art and science (1931:17).

Throughout the lecture Kuyper meticulously traces the historical benefits that have accrued to the countries in which Calvinism took strongest root.

Kuyper argues that a life system (worldview) must explain three realms of human existence: our relation to God, our relation to man, and our relation to the world. He then describes the superiority of Calvinism over other systems. “It does not seek God in the creature, as Paganism; it does not isolate God from the creature, as Islam” (1931:21), and posits no human mediator between God and creature as does Romanism. Instead the essence of Calvinism is “a direct and immediate communion with the Living God” (1931:21). The Calvinistic interpretation of our relation to God is that Christ provides immediate fellowship with God—calling him to live every part of his life *Coram Deo*, “in the presence of God.” “The human heart had attained unto eternal peace with its God: strengthened by this Divine fellowship, it discovered its high and holy calling to consecrate every department of life, and every energy at its disposal to the glory of God” (1931:9).

The second requirement of a life system is a definition of how man relates to man. Kuyper critiques the horizontal relationships in worldviews like Islam, where women are abused, Romanism, where relationships are hierarchical, and modernism “which denies and abolishes every difference, cannot rest until it has made woman man and man woman, and, putting every distinction on a common level, kills life by putting it under the band of uniformity” (1931:27). In contrast, Calvinism celebrates God’s glorious diversity but recognizes that we “as lost sinners, have no claim whatsoever to lord it over one

another, and that we stand as equals before God, and consequently equal as man to man” (1931:27).

Concerning our relationship to the world, Kuyper argues that paganism places too high a value on the world, and Islam too little. Romanism sets the church in opposition to the world, “the one as being sanctified, the other as still being under the curse.” In contrast, Kuyper emphasizes common grace. “There is a particular grace which works Salvation, and also a common grace by which God, maintaining the life of the world, relaxes the curse which rests upon it, arrests its process of corruption, and thus allows the untrammelled development of our life in which to glorify Himself as Creator” (1931:30). Kuyper then devotes three of the remaining lectures to the further development of the biblical worldview as it impacts culture: “Calvinism and Politics,” “Calvinism and Science,” and “Calvinism and Art.” Kuyper summarizes the Calvinistic attitude towards the world with words that he embodied throughout his life as a disciple of Christ:

Calvinism has a sharply-defined starting point of its own...for our relation to the world: the recognition that in the whole world the curse is restrained by grace, that the life of the world is to be honored in its independence, and that we must, in every domain, discover the treasures and develop the potencies hidden by God in nature and human life (1931:31).

Kingdom Discipleship According to Herman Bavinck

One of the biggest challenges to all disciples of Christ is to live in the world but not be of the world. The Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) has much to teach us about this challenge. On the one hand, he was the son of an influential pastor in the Dutch Christian Reformed Church (CRC), which had seceded from the National Reformed Church in the Netherlands. On the other hand, when it came time for his

theological education, he shunned the conservative CRC seminary, Kampen, to attend the liberal University of Leiden, a hotbed of modernist theology. Upon graduation from Leiden, he returned to his separatist roots to teach on the faculty of Kampen, but spent the second half of his career at the Free University in Amsterdam where the focus was on engaging the culture. He was “a man between two worlds” (Bavinck 2008:13).

The Core of Bavinck’s Life and World View

As a consistent Calvinist, Herman Bavinck rejected the idea that theoretical thought can be religiously neutral. All thinking and practice is shaped by one’s presuppositions about the world. Bavinck gives us the lens through which he viewed all of life: “The essence of the Christian religion consists in the reality that the creation of the Father, ruined by sin, is restored in the death of the Son of God and recreated by the grace of the Holy Spirit into a kingdom of God” (2008:112). The emphasis here is on the word, *restored*. John Bolt, the editor of the English Translation of Bavinck’s *Reformed Dogmatics*, writes, “The fundamental theme that shapes Bavinck’s entire theology is the Trinitarian idea that grace restores nature” (2008:19).

Bavinck articulates this *restoration* perspective numerous places in his writing. Jan Veenhoff sites three examples, which he translates from Dutch.

This grace does not abolish nature but affirms and restores it.

So Christianity did not come into the world to condemn and put under the ban everything that existed beforehand and elsewhere, but quite the opposite, to purify from sin everything that was; and thus to cause it to answer again to its own nature and purpose.

It does not mean annihilation, but a restoration of God’s disrupted work of creation. Revelation is an act of reformation; in re-creation the creation,

with all its forms and norms, is restored; in the gospel, the law; in grace, justice; in Christ, the cosmos is restored (2006:17).

In *Reformed Dogmatics*, Bavinck argues that the new creation is not a “creation from nothing,” but a renewal of all that existed. “Underlying Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10 therefore is the idea that humankind was originally created in God’s image and in the re-creation is renewed on that model” (2004:532).

Bavinck’s View of Creation

It should not surprise us that the origin of Bavinck’s *restoration* view of redemption is his understanding of creation.

The fundamental theme that grace does not undo nature but restores and heals means that Bavinck’s doctrine of creation must be a key to understanding his theology more broadly. It is thus no surprise that Bavinck begins (his *Dogmatics*) by telling us that the doctrine of creation is the starting point and distinguishing characteristic of true religion. Creation is the formulation of human dependence on a God who is distinct from the creature but who nonetheless in a loving, fatherly way preserves it (1999:17).

In Bavinck’s mind, creation is a distinct emphasis of Reformed theology, which affirms the twin truths that God’s will is creation’s origin and God’s glory is creation’s purpose (1999:17). It is the foundation of a Reformed life and worldview. In the *Creation* section of his *Dogmatics*, Bavinck writes;

A doctrine of creation is one of the foundational building blocks of a biblical and Christian worldview. Creation is neither to be deified nor despoiled but as a “theater of God’s glory” to be delighted in and used in a stewardly manner. It is God’s **good** creation (2004:406).

Creation is good because it reveals God and his glory. Bavinck quotes Calvin, “There is no spot in the universe wherein you cannot discern at least some sparks of his glory”

(2008:437). Bavinck sees in the grand diversity of the created order nothing less than God's very nature being revealed.

Nothing in the whole world is more excellent, more noble, more beautiful, more useful, and more divine than the diversity of its many elements....Hence comes the adornment, beauty, and excellence of the whole world. Thence arise its many uses, usefulness, and benefits for us. Hence the very goodness, glory, wisdom, and power of God shines forth and is revealed more brilliantly. And for all of them the world is a theater, a "splendidly clear mirror of his divine glory" (2004:437).

Bavinck's strong emphasis on this world as the theater of God's glory lays the foundation for his call to Christian cultural engagement. But before looking at this call, we must examine his understanding of the fall.

Bavinck's View of The Fall

An important component of Bavinck's thinking is that grace can restore the natural order because sin, no matter how much it has permeated every sphere of created life, is not a substance that adheres to the created order but an ethical antithesis of the good. "In as much as sin is not a physical or metaphysical but an ethical antithesis of the good, it has no self-existent, independent being of its own" (2006:138). Certainly the punishments and consequences of sin extend also to the physical domain, but sin is ethical in its character. Bavinck will have nothing to do with a dualism that wants to locate sin in the created order.

Nor will Bavinck affirm a pietism that seeks to avoid the world because of its sinfulness. In his lecture on Catholicity, he argues:

Faith appears to be great, indeed, when a person renounces all and shuts himself up in isolation. But even greater, it seems to me, is the faith of the person who, while keeping the kingdom of heaven as a treasure, at the same time brings it out into the world as leaven (Veenhoff 2006:16).

The world is not the enemy; sin is. Bavinck pointedly observes, “The Kingdom of God is hostile to nothing but sin alone” (2006:18) He points to both the incarnation and the bodily resurrection of Christ as proof that “Christianity doesn’t adopt a hostile attitude towards anything that is human or natural but intends only to deliver creation from all that is sinful, and to sanctify it completely” (2006:21). In analyzing God’s solution to the fall, Bavinck admits that destroying the whole world and starting over might have been easier. “It would have been much simpler if God had destroyed the whole fallen world and replaced it with an entirely new one. But it was his good pleasure to re-establish the fallen world, and to liberate from sin the same mankind that had sinned” (2006:18).

Before leaving the topic of the fall we must observe what Bavinck teaches in his dogmatics concerning the punishment of sin. First, he notes that Adam and Eve lost their dominion. “Thanks to the entry of sin into the world, humanity lost dominion and glory” (2006:159). Then he acknowledges that their kingdom was taken over by Satan, sin and death. (2006:159).

Bavinck’s View of Redemption

Jesus is Lord over all of creation. His lordship extends through every area of life on planet earth; it is not restricted to the sphere of the church or personal piety. The victory of Christ at the cross has a redemptive impact on the totality of human life.

Sin it condemns, always and everywhere, but marriage and family, society and state, nature and history, art and scholarship it holds dear. Despite the many failings of those who confess the gospel, it has been through the centuries a rich blessing for all these institutions and activities. The Christian peoples still continue to be the bearers of culture (Bavinck 1908:266).

Bavinck willingly subscribes to the view of Calvin, who saw in Christianity “not merely a principle of new spiritual life, but also an element, the most important element of culture; to him the Gospel was good news for all creatures, including family, society, scholarship and art” (Veenhof 2006:28).

The redemption, which Christ came to earth to accomplish, is centered in his kingship. Bavinck observes that Christ began his ministry by declaring that the kingdom of God was at hand then explains the nature of the kingdom he was bringing.

The kingdom of God, which was foretold and expected by the prophets, in which God would be king and his will the delight of everyone, which in origin and character is a heavenly kingdom and already present in heaven now (Matt. 6:10)—that kingdom is now coming on earth and is near (2006:246).

Bavinck rightly recognizes that the kingdom promised in the Old Testament always was the kingdom of righteousness, where sin had been overcome—the kingdom that exists in heaven right now because heaven contains no sin. In fact, in his dogmatics, Bavinck continues to explain that although Jesus tied in to the messianic expectations of his day, “Jesus immediately introduced a big change. From the Jewish tradition he went back to Scripture and interpreted that kingdom, not first of all as a political but as a religious-ethical dominion” (2006:246). Bavinck recognized that the kingdom is at the same time, something that must be sought, is far greater than the righteousness taught by the Pharisees, and is a reward stored in heaven—and yet also a gift that far exceeds all human work and merit. The content of the kingdom is forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and eternal life (2006:246-247). Though not using these terms he recognizes that there is an already and a not yet component to the kingdom: “the kingdom of God is at one time a

description of a presently existing realm and then again a name for God's government in the future" (2006:247).

Bavinck's view of the kingdom of God as something that is planted in the heart through rebirth, faith, and repentance (2006:247) enabled him to avoid emphasizing cultural engagement to the neglect of personal piety.

The religious life...remains the center, the heart, the hearth, out of which all his (i.e. the Christian's) thought and action proceeds and from which it receives inspiration and warmth. There in fellowship with God, he is strengthened for his labor and girds himself for the battle. But the hidden life of fellowship with God is not the whole of life. The prayer room is the inner chamber, but not the whole dwelling in which he lives and moves (quoted in Veenhof 2006:30).

The Christian is called to be engaged in the process of redeeming all of life. "The spiritual life does not exclude domestic and civic, social and political life, the life of art and scholarship" (2006:30). Whereas liberal theologians in Bavinck's day wanted to restrict Christ's power and word to the inner chamber of the heart, using the argument that his kingdom was not of this world, Bavinck's response was, "though it is not *of* this world, it is *in* this world and meant for it" (2006:16). Though non-believers want Christians to withdraw from the world, we cannot comply with their wishes. "To be sure, the kingdom of God is not of this world, but it does require that everything be subservient to it. It is exclusive, and does not countenance any independence or neutral realm of the world alongside" (2006:16).

Bavinck appears to fully agree with Abraham Kuyper's sphere sovereignty perspective. The independence of the spheres of family, society, and state is derived from creation so that each has a God-given authority of its own. This authority does not imply that the spheres in question have nothing to do with the gospel. To the contrary, they have

been corrupted by sin and therefore need the word of God as rule and guide. Bavinck writes:

But here again grace does not annul nature. Family, society, and state do not experience regeneration by the Spirit of Christ, but they exist and live by virtue of the order of God in nature and retain their full independence alongside the church. Christ did not come to destroy the world and the various spheres of life within it but to restore and save them (quoted in Veenhoff 2006:27).

He continues to argue that art and scholarship, like man, himself are conceived and born in sin but are not sinful in themselves. They need to be sanctified by the word and Spirit of Christ. The gospel of Christ serves to liberate art and scholarship from sin and falsehood and to make them answer to their true purpose (2006:27).

Bavinck's view of the call of Christian disciples to cultural engagement changes the way we look at vocation. Our understanding of the scope of the redemption King Jesus brings into the world becomes "the driving force for the unfolding of created reality in meaningful cultural work" (2006:28). Man must first become a son of God again, before he can become a true "cultural creature" in the true sense of the word. But once he is a child of God he is called to dedicate himself to the culture again. There is a sense in which "man must be converted twice, first from the natural to the spiritual life, and thereafter from the spiritual to the natural life" (2006:29).

Bavinck's View of Renewal

Despite Bavinck's heavy emphasis on the goodness of the created order and the call to Christ's followers to be engaged in his process of redeeming all of this present life, Bavinck does not devalue the future life that is the inheritance of the saints. In the words of Veenhof, "Bavinck displays no fear of 'dualism' but insists that the original creation

perfection was only a preparation for the final glorious consummation where God will be all in all and impart his glory to his creatures” (2006:18).

Under “The Renewal of Creation” section in his *Reformed Dogmatics*, Bavinck continues to stress the theme of *restoration*. “According to Scripture the present world will neither continue forever nor will it be destroyed and replaced by a totally new one. Instead it will be cleansed of sin and re-created, reborn, renewed, made whole” (2008:715). Bavinck sees the renewal of creation as the fulfillment of the kingdom of God.

While the kingdom of God is first planted spiritually in human hearts, the future blessedness is not to be spiritualized. Biblical hope, rooted in incarnation and resurrection is creational, this worldly, visible, physical, bodily hope. The rebirth of human beings is completed in the glorious rebirth of all creation, the new Jerusalem, whose architect and builder is God himself. The salvation of the kingdom of God, including communion with God as well as the communion of the saints, is both a present blessing and a future, consummated, rich glory. The kingdom of God has come and is coming (2008:715).

Since the advent of Christ consists of two parts, the kingdom of God is first planted into the human hearts spiritually “and the benefits of that kingdom are internal and invisible: forgiveness, peace, righteousness, and eternal life” (2008:715). This invisible, spiritual blessing in the first advent is not, however confined to heaven in the second. The world

consists of heaven and earth; humans consist of soul and body; and the kingdom of God, accordingly, has a hidden, spiritual dimension and an external, visible side. Whereas Jesus came the first time to establish the kingdom in a spiritual sense, he returns at the end of history to give visible shape to it. Reformation proceeds from the inside to the outside. The rebirth of humans is completed in the rebirth of creation. The kingdom of God is fully realized only when it is visibly extended over the earth as well (2008:718).

Bavinck brings together his view of the original creation and the new heaven and earth:

“All that is true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, and commendable in the whole of

creation, in heaven and earth, is gathered up in the future city of God—renewed, re-created, boosted to its highest glory” (2008:720). God’s ultimate and final goal will then be realized. “All creatures will then live and move and have their being in God, who is all in all, who reflects all of his attributes in the mirror of his works and glorifies himself in them” (2008:720).

Bavinck’s Life As a Disciple

Herman Bavinck superbly balanced personal piety with engagement in the culture. The root of his piety was his home. “He received a Christian upbringing from a godly resolute mother and from a father who exemplified the very best in Calvinistic piety” (Gleason 2010:28). Throughout his life, Bavinck was known for his caring heart. During his short ministry as a pastor, though appreciated as an excellent expositor, it was his visitation of the people that caused them to love him deeply (2010:82). While a professor at Kampen, he was extraordinarily popular with the students. When he was first invited by Kuyper to leave Kampen and come to the Free University in Amsterdam, Bavinck “received a plea in the form of a petition from the students for him to stay signed by the *entire* student body” (2010:136). His godly character was seen in the patience with which he dealt with his friend, the impetuous Abraham Kuyper. His devotion to the unity of the body was apparent in the way he persevered in bringing together the CRC and the Doleantie.³ Bavinck taught at the CRC seminary, in Kampen, whose faculty was separatistic. Yet as a graduate of Lieden, and having a passion to engage culture, Bavinck was asked numerous times to join Kuyper on the faculty at the Free University in

³ The CRC (Christian Reformed Church) had begun in 1834 with secession from the state church. The Doleantie (from the Latin word “to feel sorrow”) was a similar secession led in 1886 by Abraham Kuyper.

Amsterdam. For years, Bavinck refused to do so at significant personal cost, because he believed it would destroy the union of the CRC and the Doleantie,⁴ and might spell the end of Kampen (2010:292).

Few disciples of Christ have more consistently modeled the principle of engaging culture than Herman Bavinck. As we have seen, at an early age, Bavinck wanted to better understand the arguments of modernism and science shocking his CRC church family by enrolling at the liberal Leiden to study theology. There he learned the importance of maintaining a distinctively Christian worldview in his argument with the secularists and modernists. While teaching at Kampen, Bavinck began his magnum opus, the four volume *Reformed Dogmatics*. At each point, as he articulated the Christian worldview, Bavinck interacted with the current ideas competing with biblical truth in his culture. For example, in *Reformed Dogmatics*, he begins the section on Creation:

The doctrine of creation, affirming the distinction between the Creator and his creature, is the starting point of true religion. There is no existence apart from God, and the creator can only be known truly through revelation. Biblical religion rejects both pantheistic emanationism as well as Manichaen dualism...Along with materialist explanations of the universe, these are not scientific in character but rather are religious worldviews masquerading as science. The sophisticated philosophical systems of Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer and others...(2006:406).

Few men have better embodied Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God."

Bavinck not only engaged the culture by fighting the battle over ideas, he also served briefly as the head of the Anti-Revolutionary political party. He vehemently

⁴ This union was accomplished in 1892 but there remained deep divisions over the relationship between the Doleantie theological school, The Free University, and the CRC's Kampen. Bavinck did not leave Kampen for the Free University until 1902 when he accepted the chair of dogmatics in Amsterdam.

opposed the idea that the state should take a neutral posture concerning Christianity. Rather, the state should be thankful for Christianity and its positive influence on the citizens of the government and on the government itself (Gleason 2010:383). Bavinck characterized politics not as something dirty to be avoided but “as a glorious and holy art” (2010:384). In 1911 he was elected to the First Chamber of the Dutch Parliament. He worked to see that all men and women were given the right to vote. He sought to bring a biblical perspective to every subject, opposing for example “all social welfare programs that excluded the church from helping as it should” (2010:395).

In his later years at the Free University, Bavinck turned his attention to applying biblical principles in every aspect of cultural life. His interest turned to psychology and he penned *Biblical and Religious Psychology* to give a biblical understanding of the word, *heart*. He wrote a 250- page book in the field of pedagogy, *The Education of the Mature Youth*, critiquing the evolutionist, socialist worldviews that were the starting point for much of the newer methods of education. Bavinck grappled with the changes taking place regarding the role of women in the world releasing his book, *The Woman In Contemporary Society*, in 1918. Herman Bavinck was a disciple of Christ who lived the truth Christ taught—that all of life should be redeemed for his honor and glory.

Kingdom Discipleship According to Herman Ridderbos

Herman Ridderbos received his doctorate at the Free University of Amsterdam in 1936 and became professor of New Testament in the Theological Seminary at Kampen, the Netherlands in 1943. Though he lived and wrote after Kuyper and Bavinck, he articulates the kingdom views of Neo-Calvinist thinkers in his seminal work, *The Coming*

of the Kingdom. As one might expect of a European New Testament professor writing in the twentieth century, Ridderbos goes to great lengths to distinguish his view of the kingdom from the views of his contemporaries. He rejects the writings of Albrecht Ritschl and his followers who saw the kingdom as predominantly the ethical-religious community founded by Jesus on the law of love. He also rejected the arguments of the Eschatological School thinkers, like Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer, who believed that Jesus mistakenly saw the kingdom as “the commencement of the new world expected in the apocalyptical literature,” and which would “reveal itself in the catastrophic upheaval of the present era” (Ridderbos 1965: xii). In addition, Ridderbos rejected the dualistic views of thinkers like Dibelius, Harnack, and Bultman who were of the opinion that we should distinguish in the gospel of the kingdom, “between the revelational content proper and the ‘contemporary mythology’ expressing this essential content” (1969:xxi). Against this backdrop of sub-biblical views of the kingdom, Ridderbos elaborates his view in his lengthy work, *The Coming of the Kingdom*.

The Nature of the Kingdom

Ridderbos begins his description of the kingdom of God by observing that the Old Testament speaks of both a *general* and a *particular* kingship of Christ. God’s general kingship “concerns the universal power and dominion of God over the whole world and all nations, and is founded in the creation of heaven and earth” (1965:4). This general kingship is God’s sovereign rule. But the Old Testament refers to God’s *particular kingship* as well. This denotes the special relation between the Lord and Israel and is manifested by Israel’s covenantal obligation of obedience to Yahweh’s rule.

In addition, the Old Testament both celebrates the present rule of God as King and anticipates a coming age when Yahweh will reveal and maintain himself as king in full glory. While constantly celebrating the present kingship of Yahweh in worship, the future advent of Israel's Redeemer-King is increasingly stressed as Israel's national role declines and its enemies seemed ready to crush her. The advent of Yahweh himself as king is merged in prophecy with the arrival of the Messiah. Even though Israel's Messiah would in some way deliver Israel, his kingship also bears a universal character. The threads prophesying the coming of God himself as the Redeemer-King are woven throughout the Old Testament but are especially apparent in Daniel's prophecy of the coming of the Son of Man (1965:7). Ridderbos summarizes the Old Testament view of the kingdom:

The thought of the coming kingdom of God, consisting in the universal divine kingship over the whole world, for the good of his people and the overthrow of any power that opposes his rule has from olden times been one of the most central motives of Israel's expectation of salvation. Founded on the confession that God is king (present kingship), the expectation arises that he will become king in an intensified and an eschatological sense (future kingship) (1965:8).

Next, Ridderbos tackles the question of what the expression *kingdom of God* meant during the inter-testamental period. Generally speaking, in later Jewish literature it was understood that the days of life in this world would be followed by the days of the Messiah, which would culminate in the establishment of the *malkuth shamaim* (kingship of heaven) on this earth. He explains that this expression had two meanings in the Jewish eschatological literature of that day. "In the first place it denotes the moral dominion of God over all men, implied in the creation of man by God, a dominion which man renounced, until however in Abraham's race it was again acknowledged and maintained

over Israel, especially in the Torah” (1965:9). Second, “the *malkuth shamaim* is understood to be the coming universal revelation of the kingship of God with which the appearance of the Messiah is intimately connected” (1965:13).

Ridderbos also understands the kingdom of God to be theocentric in nature. He believes that the term *kingdom of God* (*basileia tou theou*) is best understood as *kingly rule* and better translated *divine kingship*. The kingdom of God is the “self assertion of God” (1965:19). He argues that it is imperative to not confuse the concept of the kingdom of God with the sovereign, general rule of God.

It is not a question of a general timeless statement concerning God’s power and reign, but especially of its redemptive-historical effectuation which will one day be witnessed. This is why the idea of the coming of the kingdom is pre-eminently the idea of the kingly self-assertion of God, of his coming to the world in order to reveal his royal majesty, power and right (1965:19).

The purpose of God’s self-assertion is to deal with sin, its author, Satan, and the devastation it has brought, i.e., death. The arrival of the kingdom results in both God’s redemptive action and his judgment upon sin. John the Baptizer and Jesus proclaimed both the day of salvation and the day of judgment. Ridderbos further sees the theocentric aspect of the kingdom of God in the first three petitions of the Lord’s Prayer:

The petition for the coming of the kingdom is placed between the other two, i.e. between the one for the hallowing of God’s name and the one for the obedience to his will. In the first petition, the meaning of the coming of the kingdom is described as the effectual inducement of man to do homage to God’s virtues (“hallowing his name”). And in accordance with this is the carrying out of his revealed will on earth as it is now done in heaven. The coming of the kingdom is first of all, the display of divine glory, the re-assertion and maintenance of God’s rights on earth in their full sense (1965:21-22).

In the coming of the kingdom, God in Christ first and foremost reveals himself as the creator and redeemer who does not abandon his creation to the devastation of sin. He will

deal decisively with sin, judging it and redeeming his creation from its power, its presence, and its devastation.

The Kingdom Has Come

In response to the Eschatological School of his day, Ridderbos marshals overwhelming biblical evidence that Jesus did not see the kingdom of God as only future. To the contrary, a great change has taken place in history. The kingdom of God has come. I will summarize four arguments he presents to support his view that some aspects of the coming of the kingdom have already been fulfilled.

First, Ridderbos points to Jesus' dominion over Satan and his kingdom as evidence that the kingdom has come. He points to Matthew 12:29 where Jesus explains the exorcism of demons as evidence that the strong man has been bound. He then argues:

This passage is not an isolated one. The whole struggle of Jesus against the devils is determined by the antithesis between the kingdom of heaven and the rule of Satan, and time and again Jesus' superior power over Satan and Satan's dominion proves the break-through on the part of the kingdom of God (1965:62).

This same truth is taught by Jesus in Luke 10:18-19. Jesus has sent out the seventy who come back and joyfully tell him that even the demons are subject to them in Jesus' name. Jesus answers, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." Although there are different opinions about what Jesus saw, the point is clear: "The great moment of the breaking down of Satan's rule has come and at the same time that of the coming of the kingdom of heaven. The redemption is no longer only future, but has become present. In this struggle it is Jesus himself who has broken Satan's power, and who continues to do so" (1965:64).

Next, Ridderbos argues that the whole of Jesus' power to work miracles demonstrates the reality of the presence of the kingdom of God. Jesus' preaching of the kingdom of God and his miracles are repeatedly mentioned by the gospel writers in the same breath. They make visible the fulfillment of the promises that the prophets longed to see. The good news that sin and its curse upon the earth are being overcome is proclaimed by Jesus in word and deed. "Jesus' miracles occupy a place that is in every respect organic and 'natural' in the idea of the coming of the kingdom, insofar as it renders visible the restoration of the creation, and so the all-embracing and redemptive significance of the kingdom" (1965:65).

The third piece of evidence that the kingdom of God has already come is the biblical teaching that it is to be received right now as a gift.

A closer study of the gospel teaches us that in Jesus' coming the kingdom of heaven not only reveals itself as a *power* that brings the rule of the evil one to ruin, and restores life which up to now has been liable to disease and death, or as a *message* of salvation and bliss preached to the poor in spirit. It is also a *gift* in which those who receive it from God may delight as in an already present possession of a future salvation one day fully to be given to them (1965:76).

Finally, and most importantly, we know that the promise of the coming kingdom has already been fulfilled because Jesus, the Messiah, to whom all the Old Testament Scripture points, has now come. History has been broken into by the first advent of King Jesus who inaugurates his kingdom. The coming of King Jesus is to accomplish his messianic mission. Ridderbos responds to Harnack's argument that you could detach the gospel of the kingdom from the person of Jesus and Bultmann's argument that whether or not Jesus considered himself the Messiah is of secondary importance:

The secret of the presence of the kingdom of heaven lies in Jesus' victory over Satan, in his unlimited miraculous power, his unrestricted authority to

preach the gospel, in his pronouncements of blessedness and the bestowal of salvation on his people. There can be no doubt that we are confronted here with the *messianic, Christological* character of the kingdom of heaven and that *the entire fulfillment which Jesus proclaims as a present reality is based on the fact that he himself, Jesus, is the Christ* (1965:82).

The kingdom has come, because the Messiah has come. He has fulfilled his mission of inaugurating his kingdom. To Jesus, the arrival of the kingdom was a present reality, not just a future hope.

Despite emphasizing the truth that the kingdom has already come, Ridderbos nevertheless admits, “The coming of the kingdom of God as proclaimed by Jesus has an incomplete and provisional nature” (1965:105) Ridderbos wrestles with holding in tension both the present and future aspects of the kingdom when it comes, for example, to Satan’s power. On the one hand, Satan has been bound (Mt 12:28). Yet, kingdom disciples are urged to pray, “Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one” (1965:107). Ridderbos observes in Matthew 12 that the exorcised demon is not banished from the earth but put outside the habitation of man only for a time with the capacity to possess him again. Similarly in Gadara, when Jesus cures the demoniacs, the legion of demons acknowledges Jesus’ authority over their destiny. They beg Jesus not to torment them “before the time” (Mt 8:29). Christ’s power over Satan shows that the kingdom of heaven has come. But, Satan will not be judged and destroyed until the second coming of King Jesus.

Though Jesus’ miracles do prove that the kingdom of God has come, Ridderbos acknowledges that this restoration of the natural order is also provisional and symbolic.

The cure of diseased persons, the raising of the dead, etc. are to be considered as the renewal and re-creation of all things, manifesting the coming of the kingdom of heaven. These miracles, however, are only incidental and are therefore not to be looked upon as a beginning from

which the whole will gradually develop, but as signs of the coming kingdom of God (1965:115).

Jesus' healing had only temporary significance; those healed might get sick again and would eventually die. Jesus' miracles at his first advent were always intended to be a sign of the arrival of the kingdom of God.

Ridderbos brings his argument for the present reality of the kingdom to a close by addressing the common misunderstanding held by Jesus' followers. They asked, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel" (Acts 1:6)? Jesus' short answer was that it was not for the disciples to know the Father's times and seasons. But he had been giving them his longer answer through his numerous parables about the kingdom of God.

Ridderbos comments on three parables that reveal a connection between the present era and the future kingdom, all of which are about the growth of a seed. The Parable of the Sower (Mt 13:1-9) "makes plain the specific character of Jesus' preaching of the kingdom. It consists in the revelation that the eschatological, all-conquering coming of God into the world goes the way of the seed" (1965:132). Despite Satan's power, the hardness of hearts, the cares of the world, and the delusion of riches, an abundant harvest will come. The Parable of the Weeds (Mt 13:24-30) makes clear that kingdom members are called to live side by side with members of the kingdom of darkness. It makes clear that the presence of the kingdom means "the continuation of the mingling of the evil and the good even after the kingdom has come" (1965:136).

Concerning the Parable of the Mustard Seed (Mt 13:31-32) Ridderbos writes:

The purport of the parable is clearly the contrast between the small, insignificant beginning and the glorious fulfillment. This must be applied to the kingdom and its coming. It again deals with the confusing character of the present manifestation of the kingdom... Its beginning may seem small and insignificant, we must not be mistaken about it, but remember

the mustard seed. One day the kingdom of heaven will surpass the kingdoms of the earth (1965:145).

The kingdom of God has come. The good news of the kingdom is being sown. It will bear an enormous crop in God's time.

The Gospel of the Kingdom

When it comes to understanding the good news of the kingdom Ridderbos argues that we can distinguish two sides of the gospel coin. "The kingdom of heaven consists in two parts which together form an unbreakable unity. The first part is related to the *gift*, the salvation given in the gospel; the other part is related to the *demand*, the *command* in which it is expressed" (1965:186). The gift consists of the indicatives—what God has done. The demands consist of the imperatives, what Christ-followers are commanded to do. We will examine five facets of the gospel of the kingdom identified by Ridderbos, three indicatives and two imperatives. Because kingdom disciples believe the indicatives, they are empowered to obey the imperatives.

The good news of the arrival of the kingdom of God is first and foremost that a savior has come into the world to overthrow sin and its consequences. Says Ridderbos, "The central and most profound meaning implied in this work of the savior is the fact that Jesus delivers his people from their sins" (1965:212). At the heart of Jesus' preaching is the remission of sins.

For the whole of the salvation that began with Jesus' coming is concisely characterized as "the acceptable year of the Lord." These words originally denoted "the year of jubilee"....in which, e.g., the debts of the Israelite's who had become poor and a slave were to be remitted and he himself was to be delivered from his bondage and to have his property restored to him (cf. Lev. 25:39ff; Ezek. 46:17). All of this is an image of the messianic

time of salvation announced by the prophets and beginning with the coming of Christ (1965:213).

The Redeemer-King is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The second fact about the gospel of the kingdom, which Ridderbos wants to emphasize, is that Jesus' gospel message was antithetical to the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees. He describes the Jewish schema of redemption at the time of Jesus:

Its basic motif is the idea of reward—and correlated with it—that of the meritoriousness of the fulfillment of the law. It is true that the Torah as a means of deliverance has been given by God as a special favor to Israel. But the purpose of this gift is for Israel to earn a *reward* from God by fulfilling the torah. That is why it was assumed that in himself man has the moral strength to fulfill the torah (1965:217-218).

Unlike the Jewish doctrine of redemption, Jesus' teaching is dominated by the requirement of universal repentance because of the depth, extent, and serious nature of sin. Man must repent of the self-righteousness by which he thinks he can commend himself to God. Ridderbos does acknowledge that "in the gospel Jesus often speaks without restraint of the *reward* that may be looked forward to by those who behave according to God's will" and that the concept of rewards "would be destructive to the whole plan of Jesus' preaching if it were thought to be incompatible with the remission of sins" (1965:225). However, he points to Matthew 20:1-16 (the laborers in the vineyard) and argues "God is under no obligation whatever to man who is his creature. All good that is given by God to man is evidence of God's kindness, and is undeserved by man" (1965:227). At the core of the gospel of the kingdom is the fact of man's spiritual poverty and desperate need of God's grace.

The good news of the kingdom proclaims a third fact: those who enter the kingdom of God are adopted into his family and given the right to call him father.

Ridderbos points out that in the Old Testament the nation of Israel is repeatedly called “God’s son,” but nowhere do we find an example of an individual believer approaching God and calling him, “Father.” In later Judaism, however, the individualization of sonship to God is quite evident. This cultural background leads Ridderbos to write:

The specific and new trait in this Father-child relationship preached by Jesus is not to be sought in its formal indication or its individualization, and only partly in the deepening of this relationship. It is above all to be sought in the redemptive-historical situation in which he proclaims it as an actual reality. In the Old Testament this relationship had only provisional significance...but with the coming of the kingdom it has been fulfilled (1965:236).

The good news proclaimed by King Jesus is not only that he has come to vanquish sin and its consequences, and that entering into the blessings of his kingdom can only happen by grace, the gospel is that all who come to the King are adopted into God’s very family.

Based upon these indicatives of the gospel, kingdom disciples are challenged by King Jesus with kingdom imperatives. The first, most foundational imperative is to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Mt 6:33). Ridderbos comments:

In Matthew 6:33, the kingdom of God and righteousness are spoken of in the form of a hendiadys, and the phrase “for the sake of righteousness” in 5:10 is elsewhere replaced by that of “for the sake of the kingdom” (Luke 18:29); or by “for my sake and the gospels” (Mark 10:29), or by “for my name’s sake” (Matt. 19:29). It may rightly be said therefore, that the kingdom and righteousness are synonymous concepts in Jesus’ teaching (1965:286).

Righteousness refers to God’s preceptive will imposed upon all who would enter the kingdom. Christ-followers are called to exercise dominion over every sphere of their lives, implementing the righteous agenda of Christ. That agenda is especially articulated in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7, Jesus’ summary of the moral law.

A second imperative for kingdom disciples is to show the reality of Christ's kingdom at work in their individual lives to the world. Kingdom disciples are the new humanity, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who is transforming their inner heart attitudes. Spiritual fruit is evidence of true conversion. As the adopted sons of God, we are to be holy, like our heavenly father. Ridderbos writes:

Very emphatically good works are spoken of as *the manifestation of the sonship of believers*. This is done especially in Matthew 5:45, 48 (cf. Luke 6:35, 36). There the disciples are exhorted to love their enemies with the motivation being "that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven." It is clear, especially in the verses that follow in which the disciples are exhorted to do as their Father does (to be perfect as he is perfect) that sonship is not to be considered here as a future goal but as a present state. So loving the enemy is *evidence* of the communion in which the disciples live with their heavenly father (1965:250).

Christ followers not only have treasure in heaven, but speak and act out of the good treasure of their hearts (Lk 6:45). The gospel imperative—to demonstrate the reality of the kingdom through spiritual fruit, is based upon the gospel indicative—The King has invaded the kingdom of the human heart to overthrow sin.

The Coming of the Kingdom and the Church

In the eighth chapter of *The Coming of The Kingdom*, Ridderbos sets out to define accurately the place of the *ekklesia* in the context of Jesus' preaching about the kingdom (*basileia*) of God. How are we to understand Jesus' well known pronouncements about the church in Matthew 16:18ff and Matthew 18:15ff within the scope of Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God? Ridderbos begins to answer this question by defining the term, *ekklesia*: "The *ekklesia* is the name of those who have been united into one community by the preaching of the gospel" (1965:343). He then points out, "The concept

basileia nowhere occurs in the sense of this idea of the *ekklesia*. Nor is it used in the sense that the kingdom of God in its provisional manifestation on earth would be embodied in the form and organization of the church” (1965:343). He acknowledges that the concepts are sometimes parallel but not at all identical.

Ridderbos observes that the meaning of the kingdom of God goes way beyond participating in a particular community of believers:

We have already observed that by the term kingdom of God we can denote not only the fulfilling and completing action of God in relation to the entire cosmos, but also various facets of this all embracing process. Thus, e.g., the territory within which this divine action occurs and in which the blessings of the kingdom are enjoyed is called the *basileia* of God (1965:343).

Not only is there no evidence in Scripture that *basileia* ever refers to the church, but several linguistic uses of *basileia* don’t fit the concept of *ekklesia*.

For when *the being in* the kingdom or *the entry into it* are mentioned and have to be taken in the sense of a reality that has been fulfilled, they are certainly not intended in the sense of a participation in or admittance to a particular community of men. The same thing holds for “being greater or less in the kingdom” (1965:344).

Basileia cannot be taken to mean the structured assembly of the people.

However, Ridderbos argues with equal passion that the concept of *ekklesia* is closely connected in Jesus’ preaching with the coming of the *basileia*. “Although the gospel does not contain any passage in which the word *basileia* is used in the sense of “church,” the *idea* of the *ekklesia* is a very essential element in the scope of Jesus’ preaching and self-revelation” (1965:347). Moreover, the concept of a messiah without a people is unthinkable. He describes the connection between the two this way:

The *ekklesia* can be viewed in all kinds of ways from the standpoint of the *basileia*. It is a community of those who await the salvation of the *basileia*. Insofar as the *basileia* is already a present reality, the *ekklesia* is

also the place where the gifts and the powers of the *basileia* are granted and received....In every respect the church is surrounded and impelled by the revelation, the progress, the future of the kingdom of God without, however, itself, being the *basileia*, and without ever being identified with it (1965:356).

The concepts of *ekklesia* and *basileia* must be distinguished but not separated.

Ridderbos summarizes the relationship between *ekklesia* and *basileia* this way:

There can be no uncertainty about either the connection or the difference between these two fundamental notions. *The basileia is the great divine work of salvation in its fulfillment and consummation in Christ; the ekklesia is the people elected and called by God and sharing in the bliss of the basileia.* Logically the *basileia* ranks first and not the *ekklesia* (1965:354).

The kingdom of God is more comprehensive than the church. “It represents the all-embracing perspective, it denotes the consummation of all history, brings both grace and judgment, has cosmic dimensions, fills time and eternity” (1965:354).

The Kingdom Yet to Come

To understand the aspects of the kingdom of God that remain in the future,

Ridderbos relies heavily on Jesus’ identification with the Son of Man given in Daniel 7.

The correlation between the concepts “kingdom of heaven” and “Son of Man” is especially important for the definition of the general character of the kingdom of heaven. It proves that to a great extent Jesus’ preaching is oriented to the prophecy in Daniel 7:13ff. In this prophecy there appears the figure of the “Son of Man” as coming in the clouds of heaven to the “Ancient of Days,” and as he to whom was given dominion, and glory, and the kingship that was to comprise all the nations and was to have an eternal and imperishable significance (1965:31-32).

Jesus’ preaching about the kingdom was dominated by his view of himself as the Messiah and the Son of Man. His identification of himself with this great eschatological figure in Daniel’s prophecy gives us unmistakable clues about the future kingdom of God.

The figure of the great future in whom God's kingdom will be realized appears to have an importance far transcending that of a national Israelite king or of a human offshoot of the house of David. He has been invested with a supernatural and divine dignity. It is this dignity and authority of which Jesus speaks before the Sanhedrin when he warns them of the coming of the Son of Man. This dignity, described in similar words in Daniel 7 is that of which Jesus speaks after his resurrection: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt.28:18) (1965:32).

The Son of David is the Messiah who is also the Son of Man. To the Son of Man is given "dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed (Dan 7:14).

The future kingdom proclaimed by Jesus bears the character of consummation, argues Ridderbos. "Jesus speaks about this future reality as 'the end of the world' (Matt.13:49), 'regeneration' (Matt. 19:28), 'eternal life' (Matt. 19:29)" (1965:38). Jesus views the kingdom as a glorious future eschatological reality:

Jesus refers to this glorious future in places like Matthew 7:21, when speaking of the entry into the kingdom of heaven; of sitting down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 8:11, cf. Luke 13:28-29); of the righteous as shining forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt.13:43)...of the drinking of new wine by Christ in his Father's kingdom (Matt. 26:29) (1965:38).

Ridderbos also stresses that the future kingdom is not merely the redemption of the sinful souls of the elect; it is the redemption of all the earth. "The idea of the kingdom of heaven implies the participation of all created life in the coming of the kingdom, to which especially resurrection and re-creation also belong in the most essential sense of the word" (1965:46). Scripture rejects a dualism that elevates the soul as more important than the body, the spiritual as of higher importance than the physical. The earth is the Lords and the fullness thereof.

The Bible knows nothing of any original dualism....between spirit and matter but it does mention the fall and the world's abandonment to a power hostile to God. That is why the coming of the kingdom, as the re-assertion of God's right and glory also consists in the redemption and restoration of life, in a material as well as a spiritual sense" (1965:46).

Because God is the God of creation, the "proportions" of the kingdom are universal.

The great future consummation of the kingdom, which is the inheritance of the saints, ought to be in Ridderbos' words an "orientation-point" for Christ's followers. But Ridderbos is careful to identify two wrong conclusions we may mistakenly draw from understanding the future coming of the kingdom. First, in contrast to liberal theologians, we must not think that our efforts to seek to bring about the kingdom cause the consummation of the kingdom to take place. Although we do experience enormous spiritual power in this age, through the Holy Spirit with whom John the Baptizer said we would be baptized, Ridderbos argues:

The kingdom even now yet comes in the same way as the gospel which can only be accepted through faith (Mark 16:16). And the consummation to be brought by the kingdom does not bear the character of a historical development from a lower to a higher stage, or from less to more, but only that of the yet awaited powerful action of the Son of Man in his strength (1965:469).

The second wrong conclusion to be drawn from the certainty of the future consummation of the kingdom is that the kingdom of God will triumph over the kingdom of darkness in this age. As Ridderbos points out, "Nowhere are the disciples or the coming church given the role of conquerors or rulers of the world" (1965:470). Certainly as kingdom disciples seek to implement his righteous agenda in every sphere of life, there will be a temporal blessing upon the world. "But they are not given any promises of Christianizing the whole world nor are there any theocratic perspectives disclosed" (1965:470). To the

contrary, Jesus' followers are promised opposition, conflict, and suffering in a world that remains a battleground in the conflict between two kingdoms (Mt 10:16-25).

David VanDrunen and the Two-Kingdom View

In 2009, *Time* magazine reported the resurgence of the kingdom views of the Dutch Neo-Calvinists Abraham Kuiper, Herman Bavinck, and Herman Ridderbos in the popular teaching of John Piper, Mark Driscoll, Albert Mohler, and others. The next year, David VanDrunen published his book, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*. VanDrunen sharply disagrees with the Neo-Calvinist view of the kingdom of God and argues that its poisonous roots are to be seen in the heretical views of NT Wright (*New Perspectives on Paul*) and the emerging church as represented by Brian McLaren (2010:20-23).

Explanation of the Two-Kingdom View

VanDrunen traces the origin of his two kingdoms to two, separate and distinct covenants that God established. The first is the covenant with Noah.

In his covenant with Noah God entered covenantal relationship with the entire human race (and with the entire creation), promising to preserve its cultural activities such as procreating and securing justice. This was the formal establishment of the "common kingdom" (2010:29).

The second kingdom is formally established by God's covenant with Abraham.

In his covenant with Abraham, in contrast, God entered covenantal relationship with a chosen people, upon whom he bestows eternal salvation by faith, thereby distinguishing them from the rest of the human race. This was the formal establishment of the "redemptive kingdom." God's people are thus called to live under both covenants—that is in two kingdoms (2010:29).

On the one hand, Christ's followers respect the terms of the Noaic covenant as they pursue cultural activities in common with unbelievers. On the other hand, they are committed to their responsibilities under the Abrahamic covenant of grace as they cling to the promises of salvation and the promise of life in eternity. God is "not redeeming the cultural activities and institutions of this world, but preserving them through the covenant he made with Noah" (2010:15). God himself rules this common kingdom and "makes its institutions and activities honorable, though only for temporary and provisional purposes" (2010:15). At the same time, God is redeeming a people for himself, based upon his covenant of grace with Abraham and his seed, accomplished through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. God's rule over these two kingdoms means that:

Christians live under two kingdoms, governed respectively by the Noaic covenant and the Abrahamic covenant. Civil governments, families, economic associations, and many other cultural institutions continue to exist under the covenant with Noah, and Christians and non-Christians alike participate in them....Yet Christians belong especially to the church, the New Testament community created in Abraham. Through the church they are citizens of heaven even now. This church—God's redemptive kingdom in the present age—has a distinct membership, faith, worship, and ethic (2010:30).

VanDrunen begins the defense of his two-kingdom view by asserting that the cultural mandate given to Adam to be fruitful, multiply, and exercise dominion over the earth has been abrogated in Christ. VanDrunen does affirm the original cultural mandate given by God to Adam:

God brought the first human being to life, but commissioned Adam and Eve to populate the world with a multitude of descendents (1:28). God made Adam with a host of latent abilities that he was to develop and put to use in benevolent rule over all other living beings (1:26, 28). Hence we see already in the first chapter of Scripture that human beings were made for cultural activity (2010:39-40).

However, argues VanDrunen, the cultural mandate was not a task of infinite duration.

“The human race was to complete its task in this world and then enter triumphantly into the world to come” (2010:40). But Adam failed. “The fallen human race cannot undertake its cultural endeavors with a righteousness acceptable to God, it finds the natural world largely uncooperative and beyond its control, and it faces everlasting death as the only outcome of its work in this world” (2010:47). However, God sent the last Adam to accomplish what the first Adam could not. Since Christ did accomplish Adam’s mission the cultural mandate is no longer our calling:

Because Jesus had fulfilled the first Adam’s commission, those who belong to Christ by faith are no longer given that commission. Christians already possess eternal life and claim an everlasting inheritance. God does not call them to engage in cultural labors so as to earn their place in the world to come. We are not little Adams. Instead God gives us a share in the world-to-come as a gift of free grace in Christ and then calls us to live obediently as a grateful response. Our cultural activities do not in any sense usher in the new creation (2010:28).

VanDrunen next seeks to support his two-kingdom perspective by arguing for a nearly total discontinuity between this world and the world to come:

Thus Christians’ cultural endeavors should *not* be understood as getting back to Adam’s original task. This claim should become increasingly clear as we consider the final topic in this chapter. The story of the last Adam finally comes to its climax at his second coming, when he returns to this world from his glorious reign in the world to come. On that day, the world to come will be revealed to our eyes and the cultural activities and products of this world will come to a sudden and drastic end (2010:62).

VanDrunen points to 2 Peter 3:7, “But by the same word, the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.” He explains the fate of this present, natural order. “It will be burned up, melt, and dissolve” (2010:64). He interprets the longing for redemption of the created order in Romans 8:19-21 not to be “seeking an improvement of its present existence but the

attainment of its original destiny. It longs to give way to the new heaven and the new earth” (2010:65). There is only one point of continuity between this created order and the new heaven and new earth: the human body. “Our earthly bodies are the only part of the present world that Scripture says will be transformed and taken up into the world to come.” Efforts on the part of Christians to engage the culture are meaningful and honorable but ultimately futile because, “The New Testament teaches that the entirety of present cultural activities and products will be brought to a radical end, along with the natural order at the second coming of Christ” (2010:67).

At the heart of VanDrunen’s two-kingdom theology is his understanding of the Noaic covenant (Gen 8:20-9:17). With this covenant the identity of one of the two kingdoms comes into focus—the common kingdom. By this covenant God ordains that all living creatures will live within a stable social order, “and the entire human race will engage in a variety of cultural activities” (2010:79). VanDrunen highlights four characteristics of this common kingdom, based on the Noaic Covenant:

It concerns *ordinary cultural activities* (rather than special acts of worship or religious devotion, it embraces the human race *in common* (rather than a holy people that are distinguished from the rest of the human race), it ensures the *preservation* of the natural and social order (rather than the redemption of this order), and it is established *temporarily* (rather than permanently) (2010:79).

The Noaic covenant constitutes the formal establishment of the common kingdom. This means that God himself established and rules the common kingdom. It exists under the Lordship of the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (2010:79).

Existing alongside of the common kingdom, according to VanDrunen, is the redemptive kingdom. God formally established the redemptive kingdom when he made a

covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15 and 17. The redemptive kingdom has parallel but opposite characteristics from the common kingdom:

It concerns *religious faith and worship* (rather than ordinary cultural activities, it embraces a *holy people* that is *distinguished* from the rest of the human race (rather than the human race in common), it *bestows the benefits of salvation* upon his holy people (rather than preserving the natural and social order), and it is established *forever and ever* (rather than about ordinary cultural activities) (2010:82).

According to VanDrunen, “Scripture portrays Abraham as living a two-kingdoms way of life” (2010:85). He insists that in those encounters between Abraham and the larger society Abraham is

...religiously separate from the world but culturally engaged with the world. When it came to life in society, the civil kingdom, Abraham lived according to the idea of commonality established in the Noachic covenant of common grace. When it came to his religious life and eternal hope in the spiritual kingdom, Abraham lived according to the idea of particularity established in the covenant of grace (2010:29-30).

A final characteristic of VanDrunen’s two-kingdom theology is elaborated in his *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*. He argues that the moral guidance required for the common kingdom comes through natural law and that “in a certain sense, Scripture is not the appropriate moral standard for the civil kingdom” (2010:38). He writes,

Biblical morality is characterized by an indicative-imperative structure. That is, all of its imperatives (moral commands) are proceeded by and grounded in indicatives (statements of fact), either explicitly or implicitly. The most important indicative that grounds the imperatives in Scripture is that the recipients of Scripture are the covenant people, that is, members of the community of the covenant of grace (2010:39).

Since membership in the civil kingdom is not limited to believers, the imperatives of Scripture do not bind members of that kingdom. These imperatives are not “directly applicable to non-Christians” (2010:40). The redemptive kingdom is subject to the imperatives of Scripture, but the common kingdom to the imperatives of natural law.

Critique of Two-Kingdom View

The two-kingdom views of David VanDrunen are to be rejected for numerous reasons. First, there is no biblical warrant to discard what Scripture clearly teaches is the fundamental calling of man to exercise dominion over the earth.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen 1:26-28).

The coming of Christ, the second Adam, does not alter Adam and Eve's identity as the image bearers of God who are created to rule the kingdom of earth. It does not change God's purpose for the earth—to be subdued, cultivated, developed. Clearly this text shows us that the cultural mandate is a command of God to all of mankind. VanDrunen says we should set aside the command to exercise dominion because Christ already fulfilled this mandate and "God gives us a share in the world-to-come as a gift of free grace" (2010:28). But sound biblical exegesis forbids us from abrogating a biblical command because Jesus fulfilled it. Using that logic dare we set aside the command to be holy (1 Pet 1:6) because Christ already lived a sinless life and that righteousness is imputed to us as a gift of free grace? Furthermore, if the elect of God are no longer commanded to obey the cultural mandate, then Adam, who was elect, was not required to obey the cultural mandate. In this case God would be giving Adam a command that is not

a command. The truth is that we are to follow the model of Jesus the second Adam and obey all of God's commands as he did.

Not only does VanDrunen attempt to deny the validity of the cultural mandate; the way he seeks to invalidate it is instructive. He writes, "God does not call them to engage in cultural labors *so as to earn their place in the world to come* (italics mine) (2010:28). VanDrunen attributes a salvation by works position to his opponents (presumably Neo-Calvinists). He continues, "Our cultural activities do not in any sense usher in the new creation" (2010:28). Here VanDrunen attributes to Neo-Calvinists the belief that by seeking to be redemptive agents in culture, they believe their efforts build the future, eternal kingdom of God. With regards to the Neo-Calvinists whose works I have read, this is not true.

However, VanDrunen's words are a warning. We who hold a Neo-Calvinist view of kingdom discipleship, which calls believers to engage culture, must be careful not to imply that such efforts either earn salvation or build the future kingdom of righteousness. That kingdom will arrive only when King Jesus returns. While we acknowledge that our Redeemer-King is honored by our efforts to bring every part of life into submission to his preceptive rule, and these efforts matter eternally, it is not true that our efforts cause the future kingdom of righteousness to be built.

The two-kingdom views of VanDrunen are to be rejected for a second reason. Any biblical view of the kingdom of God must maintain a proper balance between the fact that this material order will be both a restoration of what already exists and the creation of something new. The new heaven and new earth are new. But they are also the heaven and the earth. VanDrunen fails to maintain this balance and has correctly been

accused of being dualistic. He writes, “The created order as it now exists will come to a complete end” (2010:64). His denial of the continuity that this earth has with the earth to come is betrayed in the way he describes the future eternal kingdom. “Our earthly bodies are the only part of the present world that Scripture says will be transformed and *taken up into the world-to-come* (italics mine) (2010:66). Why taken up into the world to come? Wouldn’t we remain on the earth as it is renewed?

What is most troubling in VanDrunen’s writing is his treatment of Romans 8:20-21. “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” He imports his own assumption, “*this present world was never meant to exist forever*” (2010:65) into his interpretation of the Rom 8:21 nullifying what it actually teaches. “Creation is not seeking an improvement of its present existence but the attainment of its original destiny. It longs to give way to the new heaven and the new earth” (2010:65). In fact, what Paul teaches is that the creation does hope for an improvement of its present existence—“its bondage to corruption.” Present creation, itself, will be “set free from its bondage to corruption.”

Certainly there is mystery in understanding both the continuity and discontinuity of the new heaven and earth. But, a biblical view must maintain both. Jesus’ resurrected body was a material body. His tomb was empty. Jesus invited Thomas to see the physical scars on his hands and side on his resurrected body. Paul explains that “this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality (1 Cor 15:53). The Revelation 21 picture of the new heaven and the new earth has points of

continuity and discontinuity with the earth as we presently know it. Paradise, which began in a wilderness, ends in a city. That cannot be denied. Whether or not the cultural achievements of mankind will adorn the New Jerusalem may be debated. But what is not open to debate is the fact that the eternal reign of Christ with his people will take place on this earth. "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth" (Rev 5:9-10). VanDrunen's denial of the fundamental truth of the final redemption of this present created order is disturbing. It cannot be called anything less than dualistic.

There is a third reason to reject VanDrunen's two-kingdoms view. His effort to divide human life into the sacred and secular by arguing that through the Noaic and Abrahamic covenants "two kingdoms were formally established" (2010:29) is profoundly flawed. In the words of John Frame, "The distinction VanDrunen tries to make between "religious" and "civil" (let's just say "secular") is problematic on many levels" (2010:5). It is impossible to define a realm that is exclusively religious or non-religious. The very Noaic Covenant that VanDrunen bases his common kingdom upon is religious through and through. First of all it is preceded by Noah building an altar to the Lord and offering him a sacrifice. Secondly, although God's covenant here is with all human beings, at the time, all human beings consisted of one family, Noah's. They were not only believers who had embraced God's promise of deliverance through the ark but are singled out in the New Testament as type for the baptism of believers (1 Pet 3:21). There is no specific

reference in the passage to unbelievers, or to secular government, or to “temporal affairs,” or to some system of social organization in the culture.

VanDrunen’s flawed secular/sacred division fails at another point. He argues, “Several events in Abraham’s life show that the redemptive kingdom is about *religious faith and worship* rather than about ordinary cultural activities” (210:83). What is the definition of an ordinary cultural activity that is to be separated from our faith? For the Christian, there is no part of life that he is not called to put on the altar for Christ “as an act of worship” (Rom 12:1-2). VanDrunen’s two-kingdom theology divides a Christian disciple’s world into a false, unbiblical dichotomy. Disciples are required to obey the first half of the moral law to love God (an appropriate religious activity in the *redemptive kingdom*), but the second half, to love their neighbors as themselves requires engaging the culture (a non-religious activity of the *common kingdom*) VanDrunen’s wall of separation is a hindrance to faithful discipleship.

Not only that, but VanDrunen’s dichotomy does not fit the biblical teaching concerning those outside the church either. Here is VanDrunen’s attempt to define a secular realm:

Fundamental to this doctrine is that fact that while God, in the progress of redemptive history, would choose out of the world a people of his very own, he has also preserved a common, cultural realm in which those who love him and those who do not must live and work together. It is this common realm, consisting of both believers and unbelievers, that constitutes the civil kingdom (2010:26).

It is true that God intends for believers and unbelievers to live and work together on the earth until the final judgment. There is a realm of life in which both live and work together. But nowhere does Scripture suggest or even imply that this realm is a kingdom. Moreover this area of “common grace” exists because part of the human race after the

fall refused God's offer of forgiveness in Christ. Cain killed his brother, Abel, and we read that he "went away from the presence of the Lord" (Gen 4:16) and created a civilization of his own. John Frame observes

The existence of a Canaanite society, separate from the people of God (4:26) was an evil. VanDrunen, by calling this society a "realm," intends to confer some sort of legitimacy on it. But the development of societies in opposition to God is, according to Scripture, profoundly illegitimate... Clearly it is wrong to say that God authorizes or approves the development of culture antagonistic to him, or even culture that claims neutrality. There is no neutrality, as Cornelius Van Til constantly emphasized. Everything we do is either for the glory of God or it is not (1 Cor. 10:31) (2010:8).

Theologians have long recognized the reality of God's common grace in this fallen world. But this orthodox view does not call this realm of existence a kingdom nor confer on it some measure of legitimacy as VanDrunen does. Frame continues

Unbelieving culture exists, and it exists by God's decree and permission, but not by his precept. He does not approve it. Van Drunen never considers this sort of argument, and this omission greatly weakens his case for the two kingdoms view. He seems to think that natural law is sufficient to generate societies of sweet reasonableness and peace. Scripture's view is very different (2010:8).

VanDrunen's attempt to find in the Noaic covenant the formal establishment of the *common kingdom* fails for another reason. The provisions of the Noaic covenant are totally inadequate to regulate life in this *common kingdom* that is alleged to have God's approval. VanDrunen points to Abraham as model for those who are members of both the *common kingdom* and the *redemptive kingdom*. Abraham and his descendents

...joined in cultural activities with their pagan neighbors in the common kingdom. As participants in the Abrahamic covenant, they were simultaneously citizens of the redemptive kingdom, remaining radically separated from their neighbors in their religious commitment (2010:88).

VanDrunen describes the Noaic Covenant as secular and civil. But he does not indicate anything in the Noahic covenant that requires a particular way of life. And in fact, there is

nothing of that sort in the Noahic covenant. Genesis 9 authorizes Noah to eat meat, and commands him to punish violence including murder, and to be fruitful and multiply. These three covenant ordinances are not anywhere near sufficient to establish and regulate a secular lifestyle that is based upon the idea of commonality. VanDrunen's two-kingdom framework has no biblical support, is rooted in a regrettable dualism, and seriously undermines a Christian disciple's calling to be salt and light in the culture.

Chapter Summary

Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck, as disciples of Christ, model both a fervent, personal devotion to Christ and a passionate commitment to engage the culture with their biblical world and life view. Rooted in a high view of the glory of God's creation, as well as the cultural mandate to explore, develop and redeem every part of the created order, they sought to think biblically and then fight fiercely for their views in the world of ideas where they lived. Believing that such spheres of life as education, business, art, public welfare, the family, etc., should be independent from government or church control, but accountable to their creator, they did not hesitate to argue for biblical norms to be followed in those spheres. Kuyper established the Free University in Amsterdam to achieve this end; Bavinck spent the second half of his career there as a professor. As theologians, they believed that Jesus' lordship extended over every part of creation.

Less than twenty years after the deaths of Kuyper and Bavinck, Herman Ridderbos graduated from the Free University in Amsterdam, the university they had worked so hard to establish. Building on the thinking of Abraham Kuyper and the more

developed views of Herman Bavinck, Ridderbos provides an even richer understanding of the gospel of the kingdom, the good news that the Redeemer-King has come, overthrown Satan, sin, and death, and is establishing his righteous rule over every part of the world he claims as his own.

Sadly, even as the twenty-first century church seems to be recovering the truth that the gospel of Jesus is not just the gospel of personal, private salvation but the gospel of the kingdom, there has arisen a movement that in the author's view denies the cultural mandate and responsibility of believers to shape their culture for the High King. At a time when the evangelical church seems to have shed some of the separatist thinking that kept it disengaged from culture, this movement is proclaiming a new dualism that recreates a false sacred/secular division and denies that Christ is making this physical world new. At a time when the church has recovered its commitment to ministries of mercy as a way of demonstrating to the culture the reality of kingdom life, this movement is teaching that church life is what really matters since the Christian's focus is to be on "religious faith and worship rather than ordinary cultural activities" (VanDrunen 2010:82). Though it may have arisen in response to an imbalanced de-emphasis on the church in contemporary Neo-Calvinism, the two-kingdom argument of David VanDrunen is to be rejected.

CHAPTER 4

A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF KINGDOM THEOLOGY AS A PARADIGM FOR DISCIPLESHIP

Introduction

In the analysis of the biblical teaching concerning kingdom theology as a paradigm for discipleship (Chapter 2) and the Neo-Calvinist view of kingdom theology as a basis for discipleship (Chapter 3), certain parallel themes emerged. In this chapter these primary motifs are delineated and expounded as the foundation required for a kingdom approach to discipleship.

The seven parallel motifs in this chapter are not exhaustive. My biblical analysis identified some key themes for kingdom discipleship, which were not emphasized by the Neo-Calvinists. Similarly, my study of the Neo-Calvinist approach to discipleship also revealed some key biblical foundations for discipleship, which were not covered in Chapter 2. Nevertheless, the overlap of themes does provide the core concepts for answering the question, “How can kingdom theology be used to disciple men’s hearts?” These seven overlapping motifs identify the change in perspective that is required if we are to call men to kingdom discipleship.

Motif 1: Kingdom Disciples See God's Workings In History Through the Lens of Creation-Fall-Redemption

The Greek word for disciple, *mathetes*, means “learner” (Brown 1975: 483). Christian disciples are transformed by the renewing of their minds (Rom 12:2). The first Neo-Calvinists believed that the all-embracing system of modernism was assaulting the church and required Christians to take their stand “in a life-system of equally comprehensive and far-reaching power” (Kuyper 1931:11). The world and life view that every Christian disciple must have provides a lens through which we view God’s plan of salvation for the universe. We have seen from Scripture that this plan is composed of three major divisions: creation, fall, and redemption. The kingdom of Christ, the second Adam, can only be understood by examining the creation of Adam to be king of creation, the loss of his kingdom to the tyrants—Satan, sin, and death—and the recovery of that kingdom by Christ our Redeemer-King, who inaugurates the process of restoration throughout the cosmos.

Herman Bavinck, the chief theologian of Neo-Calvinism, demonstrates these three components in his summation of the Christian faith “The essence of the Christian religion consists in the reality that the creation of the Father, ruined by sin, is restored in the death of the Son of God and recreated by the grace of the Holy Spirit into a kingdom of God” (2008:112). Albert Wolters sees in these words, the broad scope of the Neo-Calvinist world view. He writes,

The reformational world view takes all the key terms in this ecumenical Trinitarian confession in a universal, all-encompassing sense. The terms, “reconciled,” “created,” “fallen,” “world,” “renews,” and “Kingdom of God” are held to be cosmic in scope. In principle, nothing apart from God himself falls outside the range of these foundational realities of biblical religion (1985:10).

The biblical and Neo-Calvinist world view refuses to make a distinction between the secular and sacred realms of life. All of life must be redeemed.

The distinctive approach to kingdom living exercised by Kuyper and the Neo-Calvinists was rooted in the creation-fall-redemption paradigm. These three component parts are so significant for Neo-Calvinism (and kingdom discipleship) that they must each be examined in some detail.

**Motif 2: Kingdom Disciples Understand the Glorious Nature of Creation As Well
As Their Responsibility to Discover and Develop It**

Neo-Calvinists place great emphasis on the magnificence of God's creation. They exult with the Psalmist:

The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.
There is no speech, nor are there words,
whose voice is not heard.
Their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world (Ps 19:1-4).

In Bavinck's words, creation is "a theater, a splendidly clear mirror of his divine glory" (2008:438). To explore the universe is to the Neo-Calvinist to discover the very nature of God himself. "For God is the supreme being: supremely true, supremely good, supremely beautiful. For that reason he created many creatures who in varying degrees partake of his being, truth, goodness, and beauty" (2008:237). The creation, in the view of the Neo-Calvinist, provides "general revelation."

We have defined creation law as the totality of God's sovereign activity toward the created cosmos. Included in that sovereign activity is God's revelation in creation, what has traditionally been called "general

revelation.” The law of creation is revelatory; it imparts knowledge. The Scriptures are quite clear about this (Wolters 1985:24).

Not only is such revelation available to the Christian disciple, but we are compelled to explore the created world to discover it. Abraham Kuyper makes this point in his inaugural address given at the founding of the Free University in Amsterdam.

The honor of God demands that the human mind penetrate the entire system of creation to discover His greatness and wisdom there and to translate these into human thought through human words. Since the knowledge of the unbelieving world cannot help but obscure God’s greatness and wisdom, it is the Christian thinker’s calling to buckle down to this enormous task which they alone can accomplish (1998:474).

Another distinctive of the Neo-Calvinist’s view of creation is the recognition that Adam and Eve are called to continue God’s creative work by developing the potential of the earth. They base this view on Genesis 1:28, which says, “And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”

The earth had been completely unformed and empty; in the six-day process of development God had formed it and developed it—but not completely. People must now carry on the work of development: by being fruitful they must fill it even more; by subduing it they must form it even more. Mankind, as God’s representatives on earth, carry on where God left off (Wolters 1985:36).

The continued development of earth was to be a human development. The human race was to fill the earth with its own kind and subdue the earth for its own kind. From this point forward the development of the created earth would be “*societal* and *cultural* in nature. In a single word, the task ahead is *civilization*” (1985:36).

As Adam and Eve populate and subdue the earth, they are to shape the emerging culture, exercising dominion for The High King. This creation task assigned to

humankind has been called the cultural mandate. Neo-Calvinist Richard Mouw defines the cultural mandate as, “God’s charge to our first parents to ‘transform untamed nature into a social environment’ by cultural formation that fits God’s design” (1983:16).

Cornelius Plantinga, another writer from the Neo-Calvinist school, explains how we image God by developing a godly culture:

To image God, then, human beings are charged not only with care for earth and animals (“subduing” what is already there) but also with developing certain cultural possibilities (“filling” out what is only potentially there). To unfold such possibilities—for example to....build tools and dies, enter contracts, organize dance troops—is to act in character for human beings designed by God. That is, to act in this way is to exhibit some of God’s own creativity and dominion in a characteristically human way (2002:33).

Not only that, but we image God when we live in loving community with each other.

“Because God is triune, the image of God is social as well as personal” (2002:33). The web of the interpersonal relationships that result from being fruitful and multiplying is part of the creation that we must subdue and order according to God’s design.

It is difficult to overstate how significant Genesis 1 and 2 are to developing a biblical understanding of discipleship. To discover and unleash the potential of the created order, along with shaping the emerging culture according to God’s precepts is the starting point for responding to Christ’s call upon our lives.

Motif 3: Kingdom Disciples Recognize that Despite the Catastrophic Effect of Sin

On The Created Order, Creation Itself Remains Good

Genesis 3 records the disastrous result of Adam and Eve’s sin upon their kingdom:

To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ “Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Gen 3:16-19).

Neo-Calvinists believe the effects of sin touch all of creation. No created thing is in principle untouched by the corrosive impact of the fall. In Wolter’s words, “Whether we look at societal structures such as the state or family, or cultural pursuits such as art or technology, or bodily functions such as sexuality or eating, or anything at all within the wide scope of creation, we discover that the wide handiwork of God has been drawn into the sphere of human mutiny against God” (1985:44). “The whole creation,” writes the Apostle Paul, “has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now” (Rom 8:22).

Yet Neo-Calvinists are careful to keep creation and sin distinct, however closely they may be intertwined in our experience.

Prostitution does not eliminate the goodness of sexuality; political tyranny cannot wipe out the divinely ordained character of the state; the anarchy and subjectivism of much modern art cannot obliterate the creational legitimacy of art itself. In short, evil does not have the power of bringing to naught God’s steadfast faithfulness to the works of his hands (1985:47).

Neo-Calvinists will have nothing to do with a dualism that locates sin in the created order. The world is not the enemy; sin is. “The Kingdom of God is hostile to nothing but sin alone” (Bavinck 2006:18). Both the incarnation and the bodily resurrection of Christ show that “Christianity doesn’t adopt a hostile attitude towards anything that is human or natural but intends only to deliver creation from all that is sinful, and to sanctify it

completely” (2006:21). Neo-Calvinists point out that the biblical command, “Do not love the world” is not directed at the creation but at the world system that opposes God. When used negatively, *world* denotes the totality of sin-infected creation. According to Herman Ridderbos, in Paul’s usage, it refers to “the totality of unredeemed life dominated by sin outside of Christ” (1975:91). *World* here is the antithesis of creation goodness. Confusion over this term has led to an unbiblical dichotomy between “secular” parts of life and “sacred” aspects of life. For instance, when Jesus says that his kingdom is not “of this world” a faulty understanding of the term *world* may lead us to interpret this statement as an argument against involvement in politics. It is not. His statement is a prohibition against humanism—trying to build the kingdom of man.

As we saw in Chapter 2, when Adam and Eve rebelled against God, their kingdom was taken from them and given to the triumvirate, Satan, sin, and death. In Luke 4:5-7 we see Satan affirming this truth. “The devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, ‘To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.’” In Romans 5:12 Paul refers to the reign of sin and death over mankind because of Adam’s rebellion “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned...” Herman Bavinck, the chief theologian of Neo-Calvinism, affirms this loss of dominion and subsequent slavery to Satan, sin and death as a consequence of sin in his *Reformed Dogmatics*:

Sin’s punishment is...found in pollution, in the corruption of thought, desire, and inclination that is contrary to God’s holiness...our whole lives are disturbed and devoted to the service of sin...

Thanks to the entry of sin into the world, humanity lost dominion and glory and suffering is the result...

Suffering culminates in sin's other penalty, death...

The full penalty of sin discussed in this chapter is the dominion of Satan in this world (2006:159).

Despite the reign of Satan, sin, and death over the kingdom of Adam, their reign never has been absolute. God sovereignly rules over them and he restrains evil through what is called common grace. Neo-Calvinist Cornelius Plantinga defines common grace as "The goodness of God shown to all, regardless of faith, consisting in natural blessings, restraint of corruption, seeds of religion and political order, and a host of civilizing and humanizing impulses, patterns, and traditions. God has allowed his image in man to be marred by sin, but not destroyed" (2002:59).

A biblical understanding of the believer's relationship to the fallen world is foundational for discipleship. All of creation is good, though infected by sin. We are to excise the cancer but celebrate and restore the created order where sin lives.

Motif 4: Kingdom Disciples Understand Redemption to Be the Restoration of the Whole of Creational Life

It is significant that virtually all the basic words describing salvation in the Bible imply returning to an originally good state. Consider redemption. Paul writes to the Ephesians, "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph 1:7). To redeem is to buy free, literally to buy back (Brown 1975:177). The image is of a once-free person who has been kidnapped or has sold himself into slavery. Someone else pays a ransom on behalf of the

captive to buy back his or her original freedom—to give back the freedom he or she once enjoyed. Scripture is clear that redemption means restoration.

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul uses another word for salvation that means returning to an originally good state: reconciliation. “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” 2 Cor 5:18). Here is the image of friends who have had a falling out or former allies who have become enemies. Their relationship is restored.

In addressing the Colossians, Paul uses a third word that implies returning to an originally good condition. He writes, “You have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (Eph 4:23). Literally, this word means making new again. The old self is returned to an originally good state.

To Titus, Paul describes the salvation Christ has accomplished with a fourth word that means returning to an originally beneficial state. “He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of *regeneration* and renewal of the Holy Spirit” (Tit 3:5; emphasis mine). The key biblical concept of regeneration means a return to life after the experience of death. Scripture is clear; salvation is a return to an originally good state.

Neo-Calvinism insists that redemption means restoration, i.e., the return to the original good, unscathed creation and not merely the addition of something supra-creational. In discussing God’s solution to the fall, Bavinck comments, “It would have been much simpler if God had destroyed the whole fallen world and replaced it with an entirely new one. But it was his good pleasure to re-establish the fallen world, and to

liberate from sin the same mankind that had sinned” (2006:18). He devotes a whole section of his *Reformed Dogmatics* to the topic “The Renewal of Creation,” writing, “According to Scripture the present world will neither continue forever nor will it be destroyed and replaced by a totally new one. Instead, it will be cleansed of sin and re-created, reborn, renewed, made whole” (2008:715). For the Neo-Calvinist, “Redemption is not a matter of an addition of a spiritual or supernatural dimension to creaturely life that was lacking before; rather, it is a matter of bringing new life and vitality to what was there all along” (Wolters 1985:58).

Neo-Calvinists also emphasize that this restoration is cosmic in its scope, affecting the whole of creational life. Through Christ, God determined to “reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven” (Col 1:20). The scope of redemption is as great as the fall. “Wherever there is disruption of the good creation—and that disruption, as we saw, is unrestricted in its scope—there Christ provides the possibility of restoration” (Wolters 1985:59). The victory of Christ at the cross has a redemptive impact on the totality of human life. To the Neo-Calvinist, recovering the cultural mandate and restoring culture according to God’s design is at the core of discipleship. Concerning a Christian worldview, Bavinck writes

Sin it condemns, always and everywhere, but marriage and family, society and state, nature and history, art and scholarship it holds dear. Despite the many failings of those who confess the gospel, it has been through the centuries a rich blessing for all these institutions and activities. The Christian peoples still continue to be the bearers of culture (1908:266).

To kingdom disciples redemption is restoration.

Motif 5: Kingdom Disciples Understand Christ's Mission to be the Establishment of
His Kingdom over Planet Earth

Why did Jesus come to earth? Professors Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert of Covenant College have posed that question to thousands of evangelical Christians. “The vast majority answer, ‘Jesus came to die on the cross to save us from our sin so that we can go to heaven’” (Corbett 2009:33). Though this statement is true, Neo-Calvinists are passionate about the fact such a response is not the complete answer Jesus himself would give to that question. Luke recounts the story of the manner in which Jesus inaugurated his mission.

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Lk 4:16-21).

Centuries earlier Isaiah had prophesied that a king was coming who would usher in a kingdom unlike any kingdom they had ever seen. This kingdom would “bring healing to the parched soil, the feeble hands, the shaking knees, the fearful hearts, the blind, the deaf, the lame, the mute, the brokenhearted, the captives, and the sinful souls and would proclaim the year of jubilation for the poor” (Corbett 2009:32).

As we saw in the biblical studies of Chapter 2, Jesus' gospel was not merely the gospel of personal, private salvation; it was the gospel of the kingdom. Jesus came into the world to overthrow Satan, sin, and death and reverse the curse brought upon the

cosmos because of sin. In the same way, the curse is cosmic in its scope, bringing decay, brokenness, and death into Adam's kingdom, so Jesus, the second Adam, is bringing healing and restoration to the entire cosmos through the arrival of his kingdom of righteousness. This truth is a central tenant of Neo-Calvinism:

“Just as the first Adam was the head of the fallen world, the second Adam is the head of a redeemed world. His perfect life and sacrificial death are the basis for a new orientation for all creation. The scope of the deliverance in Christ is magnificent—redemption is as wide as creation itself” (Frey, *et al*, 1983:20).

King Jesus has come “to reconcile to himself all things” (Col 1:20). He is putting into right relationship everything he has created. He is using his power to fix everything that is broken in the universe.

The scope of Jesus' mission is far greater than the church. Christians err when they make the kingdom synonymous with the church. Ridderbos observes that the meaning of the kingdom of God goes way beyond the meaning of *ekklesia*.

We have already observed that by the term kingdom of God we can denote not only the fulfilling and completing action of God in relation to the entire cosmos, but also various facets of this all embracing process. Thus, e.g., the territory within which this divine action occurs and in which the blessings of the kingdom are enjoyed is called the *basileia* of God (1965:343).

Basileia cannot be taken to mean the structured assembly of the people. Jesus' mission is as broad as the devastation of sin. As Isaac Watts reminds us,

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make
His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found (*Trinity Hymnal* 1990:195)

Motif 6: Kingdom Disciples Understand The Kingdom of God to be
the Sphere in which His Righteous Rule is Established

Tim Keller represents the Neo-Calvinist school in the way he defines the kingdom of God. “The kingdom of God is the renewal of the whole world through the entrance of supernatural forces. As things are brought back under Christ’s rule and authority, they are restored to health, beauty, and freedom” (1997:52-53). For things to be “brought back under Christ’s rule and authority” is another way of saying that Christ’s righteous rule is established in those spheres.

As we observed in our biblical study of the kingdom of God, Collin Brown defines the word, *kingdom*, as *kingly rule* (1975:372). It is important to remember that this divine kingly rule, descending from heaven as King Jesus arrives, is not the sovereign rule of God, but his preceptive rule. The Son has always ruled sovereignly. He invaded earth to overthrow the forces of sin and destruction to establish his kingdom of righteousness and wholeness. Indeed, it is not incorrect to say that the kingdom of God and righteousness are used interchangeably in Scripture.

In Matthew 6:33, the kingdom of God and righteousness are spoken of in the form of a hendiadys, and the phrase “for the sake of righteousness” in 5:10 is elsewhere replaced by that of “for the sake of the kingdom” (Luke 18:29); or by “for my sake and the gospels” (Mark 10:29), or by “for my name’s sake” (Matt. 19:29). It may rightly be said therefore, that the kingdom and righteousness are synonymous concepts in Jesus’ teaching (Ridderbos 1965:286).

Christ’s mission is to establish his kingdom, i.e., his agenda of righteousness over Adam’s kingdom. That is why his followers are commanded to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Mt 6:33).

Christ's kingdom is being manifest to whatever degree Christ's righteous agenda is being followed in each sphere of life throughout the earth. Abraham Kuyper, in his inaugural address at the founding of the Free University in Amsterdam argues that Christ, the Redeemer-King, came into the world to free every sphere of human life from its bondage to sin.

Neither Pharisee nor disciple understood that His cry "It is finished!" entailed, beyond salvation of the elect, also a *soteria tou kosmou* (salvation of the cosmos), a liberation of the world, a world of freedom. But Jesus discerned it. Hence the sign *Basileus* (King) upon His cross. He appeared as Sovereign. As its Sovereign He contended with the usurping "Prince of this World" for authority over the world (1998:469).

Christ's kingdom brings the salvation of the cosmos. Therefore the goal of Christ's kingdom disciples is for all of life to be redeemed.

Since Christ is lord over all and claims every sphere of human life as his own, Neo-Calvinists are committed to developing a biblical world view that empowers them to relentlessly battle for truth in every part of the culture. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the newspaper for which he wrote, Kuyper re-enunciated his core conviction about his life and work as a disciple of Christ, that the Word of God must be applied to all of life.

The Scriptures not only serve to find justification through faith and cast light on the path to eternity, that same Word of God also reveals the foundations of all human life, that is the sacred ordinances which must govern the whole of the life of men in the family and the church, in the state and society at large. The Word of God contains the ordinances for our personal, our family, our ecclesiastical, our educational, our political, our industrial and commercial, our cultural life—indeed, for every sector of human life (1978:173).

God, through Christ, is redeeming all of Adam's kingdom from the slavery and consequences of sin. Kingdom disciples are those who contend for wholeness in every

part of the culture by presenting the biblical perspective and ordinances that relate to that sphere. Christ claims every sphere of life as his own, so his followers seek to establish Christ's agenda of righteousness in each of those spheres.

Motif 7: Kingdom Disciples Recognize the Already/Not Yet Aspects of the Kingdom

The biblical data make it clear that in one sense the kingdom of God has already come and yet in another sense, it has not yet come. This dual nature of the kingdom can be seen in 1 Corinthians 15: 25-27 where Paul says, "For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For 'God has put all things in subjection under his feet.'" In one sense, Christ's enemies have already been subjugated. In another sense they have not.

Deeply rooted in Neo-Calvinist theology is the truth that though invisible, the kingdom of God has already come. As we have seen, Herman Ridderbos marshals overwhelming evidence to make this point. One summary quote is sufficient reminder of his argument:

The secret of the presence of the kingdom of heaven lies in Jesus' victory over Satan, in his unlimited miraculous power, his unrestricted authority to preach the gospel, in his pronouncements of blessedness and the bestowal of salvation on his people. There can be no doubt that we are confronted here with the *messianic, Christological* character of the kingdom of heaven and that *the entire fulfillment of which Jesus proclaims as a present reality is based on the fact that he himself, Jesus, is the Christ* (1965:82).

The kingdom has come because the Messiah has come. He has fulfilled his mission of inaugurating his kingdom. To Jesus, the arrival of the kingdom was a present reality, not just a future hope. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to the exalted Christ.

This present age, during which the kingdom of God is invisible, will one day give way to the return of Christ and consummation of the kingdom. Jesus' victory over Satan, sin, and death inaugurated an unstoppable process that will finally be fulfilled in the new heaven and new earth. Though insisting that the kingdom of God is already present, it is the breath-taking vision of the full, final restoration of the universe that fuels the passion of kingdom disciples.

Imagine the excitement! The regal splendor! God's kingdom is established in all of its completeness, after years of anticipation and struggle. The old created order is changed into the new, and God's people are adorned as the bride of the King's Son. Sorrows are soothed; mourning, crying, and pain are wiped from memory. Thirst is quenched without cost and the longing of God's people is satisfied forever by the immediate presence of God and the Lamb, from whom they draw their meaning and light, their sustenance and healing.

The Alpha, who created all things, is also the Omega, who restores all things. The future is not a return to the garden of Genesis 1. The Revelation imagery of perfection and preciousness says that everything God made in the beginning has been developed and enhanced in the end, despite what had to be overcome (Frey, *et al*, 1983:34).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have delineated and expounded seven parallel motifs drawn from an analysis of the biblical teaching concerning kingdom theology as a paradigm for discipleship and the Neo-Calvinist view of kingdom theology as a basis for discipleship. In this chapter the following parallel motifs were identified and expounded as a foundation for discipling the heart of a man: 1) viewing God's workings in history through the lens of creation-fall-redemption, 2) understanding the greatness of creation as well as our calling to discover and develop it, 3) recognizing that our enemy is sin, not the world, 4) understanding Christ's work of redemption to be the restoration of the whole of creational life, 5) understanding Christ's mission for his followers to be the

revealing and establishing of his kingdom over all the earth, 6) understanding the kingdom of God to be the sphere in which Christ's righteous agenda is accomplished, 7) keeping in balance the already/not yet aspects of the kingdom. The selection of these seven parallel motifs reflects my subjective analysis of the most needed components of kingdom theology to effectively change the perspective of men, thus more fully engaging their hearts in the discipleship process.

CHAPTER 5

SYNTHESIS: A PRACTICAL MODEL

Introduction

This chapter presents a conceptual, transferable model of a kingdom discipleship paradigm that will engage the hearts of men, based on my own understanding of the biblical and Neo-Calvinist teaching concerning the kingdom of God. Although these concepts have been contextualized to the men of the contemporary evangelical church in the United States of America, they are designed for practical use by Christian leaders in a multitude of cultural contexts. With a view towards transferability, I have designed this chapter in a less academic and more hortatory style.

Growth Into Kingdom Disciples

A close look at the overall structure of the book of Romans reveals great insight about the nature of spiritual growth. In the first half of Romans (chapters 1-11) Paul presents the glorious story of the gospel—what God has done in Christ for our salvation. In the second half (chapters 12-16), Paul explains how believers are to live. The eight verses between these two divisions (Romans 12:1-8) are the hinge verses that open the doorway from what God has done to the pathway of what we are to do. In these eight verses Paul reveals three foundational principles for growth in Christ. These are: gratefulness for God’s mercy, a transformed mind, and connection in the body of Christ.

The first principle of spiritual growth, then, is that the primary motivation for the Christian life is gratefulness for God's mercy. "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship" (Rom 12:1). The gospel is not merely the entrance way to the Christian life but the pathway to spiritual growth. We need to preach the gospel to ourselves every day. It is the poor in spirit, those who recognize their utter dependence upon God's grace, to whom belong the riches of the kingdom (Mt 5:3). In the words of Tim Keller, "We can only change permanently as we take the gospel more deeply into our understanding and hearts" (2008:115). If we are to reach the hearts of men, it must be first with the gospel of grace. While this paper acknowledges this fact, its focus is the second step towards spiritual growth that Paul mentions, i.e., transformation by the renewing of our mind. Before elaborating this second principle in greater detail, a brief comment about the third step of heart transformation is in order.

The third step of the heart-transforming discipleship process laid out in the hinge verses of Romans 12 is connection in the body of Christ. "Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (Rom 12:4-5). Verses 6-8 urge believers to use their gifts to build each other up. These verses make it clear that helping men connect to other men in the body of Christ is a strategic part of engaging their hearts in discipleship. Suggestions will be made in Appendix B for how to accomplish this goal.

Returning to the second step, Romans 12:2 says, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will

be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” The second step in reaching the heart of a disciple is the transformation of his mental perspective, what Paul calls “the renewing of your mind.” Heart attitudes derive from mental perspective. I may be angry that the flight I was scheduled to be on was canceled until I recover perspective and realize that I really do not want to fly on a plane with mechanical problems. Then, I am glad to be on the ground. A changed perspective changes our heart. The thesis of this paper is that we are failing to give men the kingdom discipleship perspective they need to impact their hearts. It is written to correct the modern church's failure to follow step two in Romans 12:2.

Today's Men Need to Better Hear the Call to Discipleship

Gordon MacDonald, in his book, *Ordering Your Private World*, has identified a tendency that my experiences of talking with men around the country confirm. That tendency is to live a driven life rather than a called one. In his approach to discipleship, MacDonald makes this distinction. “I have chosen to begin where Christ appears to have begun—with the distinction between the *called* and the *driven*” (2003:27). One of the chief hindrances to effective discipleship is men's tendency to live driven lives. Over the years, I have compiled and presented the following *Portrait of the Driven Man* to hundreds of men, who have said, “That's me!”

1. His life is hectic and very fast-paced, yet doesn't seem to have a very clear direction.
2. Often his life seems out of control. He “bounces off” whatever happens to be in front of him.

3. He spends 98 percent of his time and energy focused on the outer world, giving his inner, private world the leftovers.
4. He is haunted by vague doubts about whether he is really following God's priorities for his life.
5. He is very busy, exhausted by the pace of life, yet inwardly not that fulfilled. Tired, bored, unmotivated—he feels like his heart got left behind.
6. He is driven, carried along by internal drives and outward circumstances without a functioning internal compass to evaluate or give direction to what he does.
7. He has little sense of clear mission for his life. At *work*, he has goals, strategy, priorities, a plan. In his personal and spiritual life he reacts his way through life.
8. Truth be told, he is not leading his home very well. He has, at best, vague goals, little sense of direction, and no game plan as the spiritual leader of his family.

MacDonald argues that men are driven because our public, visible worlds shout so loudly. “Our *public* worlds are filled with a seeming infinity of demands upon our time, our loyalties, our money, and our energies. And because these *public worlds* of ours are so visible, so real, we have to struggle to ignore all their seductions and demands. They scream for our attention and action” (2003:3). Our outer world screams so loudly because that is where our idols live. False Gods promise men the desires of their hearts—success, prestige, adventure, significance, affirmation, financial security, control, pleasure, etc.

In today's world, since men's hearts feel the intense tug of the world's idols, they need to feel the stronger tug of Christ's call to kingdom discipleship. But that pull on their heartstrings is barely felt because today's church has such a deficient understanding of Christ's mission for his disciples. Although buried in our men's hearts is a willingness to make great sacrifices for a mission that is worthy of their full devotion, we are not engaging that capacity. Christian men need someone to connect the dots between their willingness to fully devote themselves to a great cause and the great cause for which Jesus came to planet earth—the overthrow of Satan, sin, and death—and the establishment of his righteous kingdom over the planet. Through a biblical understanding of the gospel of the kingdom, Christian leaders are empowered to call men to discipleship in a way which captures men's hearts. Such leaders need to help their men make six paradigm shifts in the way they hear Christ's call to discipleship.

Kingdom Discipleship Calls Men to a Big Enough Mission to

Engage Their Hearts

No man wants to waste his life. He doesn't want his life to be like a shooting star that burns brightly for a second and then is gone. Success is not enough. Men want their success to matter. Os Guinness writes, "Deep in our hearts we all want to find and fulfill a bigger purpose than ourselves. Only such a larger purpose can inspire us to heights we know we could never reach on our own" (1998:3). Men created in God's image aspire to greatness just as God does. It is true that Jesus does not endorse the world's definition of greatness. In the upside down world of his kingdom true greatness is the humility of serving others (Lk 22:26-27). But Jesus does not condemn this desire to be great. Dave

Murrow points out, “Every man wants to be a hero, to become a great man. Boys do not dream of sitting in a cubicle; they dream of slaying the dragon, rescuing the princess, and absconding with the treasure. (2005:99). They want to be engaged in a mission that is worthy of the best they have to give.

The gospel of the kingdom presents men with a cause great enough to capture their masculine heart. Jesus began his ministry by calling attention to the cataclysmic intrusion of the kingdom of God into time. “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk 1:15). Jesus came into the world to recover Adam’s kingdom from the usurpers of Adam’s throne—Satan, sin, and death—and reverse the curse brought upon the cosmos because of sin. In the same way that the curse spread decay, brokenness, and death throughout Adam’s entire kingdom, so Jesus’ mission to bring healing and restoration is cosmic in its scope. The ultimate goal of the gospel has never been merely the reconciliation of man to God through Christ, but the reconciliation of all things. “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross (Col 1:19-20).

To become a follower of Jesus, therefore, is to recover Adam’s original call to exercise dominion over every sphere of life for the High King. The spread of Christ’s righteous rule over planet earth does not happen by men who are passive. It is a reality that is created by those strong enough to exert control over their environment. We are to exercise dominion for The High King over our island—our sphere of the earth and culture. God has decided to use us to shape his world.

To become the follower of King Jesus is to enlist in his cause—the overthrow of Satan, sin, and death and establishment of his righteous rule over every nook and cranny of the universe. It is to participate in the greatest enterprise in the history of the world—the overthrow of the tyrants whose work has brought every ounce of human pain and suffering our race has endured. Jesus, through his kingdom, is making all things new.

Jesus told his disciples that their highest priority was to seek his kingdom. “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you” (Mt 6:33). As we have seen, the term, *kingdom of God*, refers to Christ’s agenda of righteousness and wholeness for the earth. To seek the kingdom is to seek both to show that kingdom to the world as the firstfruit of the coming kingdom, and to seek to bring about submission to Christ’s agenda of righteousness in every sphere of our own lives, the culture, and world. We are called to spread his kingdom spiritually to the very gates of hell and geographically to the uttermost ends of the earth. That is a mission a little bigger than being a nice guy. It is a mission great enough to capture the heart of a man.

Kingdom Discipleship Provides Men With A Clear Enough Vision

To Engage Their Hearts

George Barna’s, *The Power of Vision*, provides an excellent definition of vision:

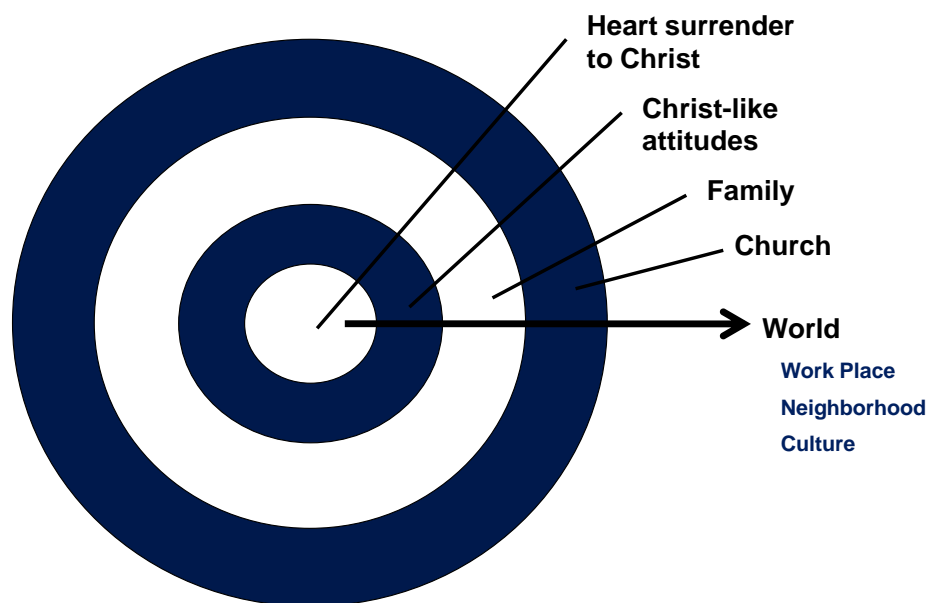
Vision is a picture held in your mind’s eye of the way things could or should be in the days ahead. Vision connotes a visual reality, a portrait of conditions that do not exist currently. This picture is internalized and personal. It is not somebody else’s view of the future, but one that uniquely belongs to you (1992:29).

Vision provides a clear target on the wall for which to aim. Merely identifying and articulating a clear, beneficial, future goal that a man can own for himself has enormous

ability to motivate. Effective leaders grab hold of the latent desire to make a difference that dwells in the masculine heart, stir that desire, and attach it to a specific objective.

A biblical view of kingdom discipleship provides men with a concrete set of specific objectives to be achieved. Our mission is to establish Christ's agenda of righteousness in every sphere of our lives. Below is a diagram to help visualize kingdom discipleship.

Kingdom= Surrender to Christ's Agenda



Kingdom discipleship begins at the core of our being with heart surrender to The High King. Christ's agenda for this sphere of life is to grow to know him, delight in him, love him, worship him, and walk with him.

Christ's kingdom agenda moves outward from a core devotion to The High King to redeeming our sinful heart attitudes. A clear picture of those redeemed attitudes is given for example in Matthew 5-7, Jesus' great portrait of kingdom living. Kingdom

living begins with cultivating the beatitudes—being poor in spirit, mourning over sin, yielding my rights to God, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, being merciful, cultivating a purity of heart, working for reconciliation in broken relationships, taking a stand for righteousness. (These kingdom attitudes are also portrayed in passages like Galatians 5:22-23 where they are described as the fruit of the Spirit and in 2 Peter 1 where they are known as the golden chain of virtues.) Jesus continues to focus on character in his Sermon on the Mount by explaining that the moral law, summarized by the Ten Commandments, applies not merely to outward behavior, but to the inner heart attitudes beneath the actions. Murder is prohibited but so is hostile anger. Adultery is prohibited, but so is sexual lust. God’s righteous agenda for kingdom disciples begins with the transformation of their heart attitudes. They are becoming what they were created to be, the new, redeemed humanity.

As the married kingdom disciple seeks to implement Christ’s righteous agenda for his life, he moves out from his heart attitudes to his closest relationship, his marriage. Christ has given us his agenda for this sphere of living in texts like Proverbs 5:18-19, Ephesians 5:22-33 and 1 Peter 3:1-8. Moving further out in the diagram, God’s agenda for family life is spelled out in texts like Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Ephesians 6:4.

As the rule of Christ moves further outward to impact our world, the kingdom disciple seeks to implement Christ’s agenda for his connection in the local church. It is in the covenant community that there is the strongest concentration of kingdom values being lived out; our relationships are to demonstrate to the world what kingdom living looks like. A good summary of Christ’s agenda for us in this sphere is given to us in Hebrews 10:24-25. “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not

neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” Not only are we to meet regularly together for worship, but we are to be so connected to a few in the body of Christ that we take time to think about how to spur one another on and encourage each other. It is especially important to emphasize this aspect of Christ’s agenda for today’s Christian men since research reveals that nineteen out of twenty of them are not connected to the body (Yagel 2009:6).

Traveling outward in our diagram, we come next to our work place. Genesis 2:15 provides our foundational calling to the workplace. “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.” Our vocational calling is the place where we continue God’s creative work of developing the earth’s potential and shaping human culture for the High King, according to his righteousness. God has given us further revelation about his agenda for our work in verses like Proverbs 27:23-24: “Know well the condition of your flocks, and give attention to your herds, for riches do not last forever” and Colossians 3:23-24, “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.” Kingdom disciples notice any verse of Scripture that addresses the work place or our relationships in the world and focus on implementing it.

Moving outward to working for righteousness in the kingdom disciple’s neighborhood brings to mind the second table of the moral law, and the second greatest commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 22:39). Being intentional about building relationships in the neighborhood is a necessary prerequisite to obeying this command. Through our relationships we become aware of needs we can meet and

can begin to discuss life at the spiritual level. Bill Hybels, in his excellent book, *Becoming A Contagious Christian*, suggests a formula for successfully impacting our neighborhood with the gospel: “HP/high Potency + CP/close proximity + CC/clear communication = MI maximum impact” (1994:47). Kingdom disciples are intentional about reaching their neighborhood to work for kingdom values, to look for ways to show kingdom mercy, and to build the relationships required to faithfully share the gospel.

Christ’s agenda for our impact on the culture that surrounds us is to be salt and light (Mt 5:13-16). In God’s great plan to redeem the world, he has appointed us to the role of retarding cultural decay that has resulted from sin. But for salt to work, it must be rubbed all through the meat it is preserving. As kingdom disciples live out kingdom values in their own lives and work for kingdom righteousness throughout every part of the culture which their life touches, they function as millions of grains of salt spread out over all of the earth, retarding the decay of sin. Kingdom disciples also let their light shine throughout the culture. Light dispels darkness so that truth is seen. Kingdom disciples take a stand for biblical truth. Our agenda is to battle the lies of the Evil One that are enveloping our culture in darkness. Our understanding of kingdom theology teaches us that Christ claims all of the good world he created as his own, and wants us to help restore it and redeem it from the devastation of sin.

Kingdom theology provides a clear target on the wall for which men can aim: Christ’s agenda of righteousness in each sphere of life. Identifying these clear objectives generates enormous motivation for the kingdom disciple, enabling him to focus on his mission. But, it is only the starting point. He must have a plan to reach his objectives.

Most men have a business plan (at least in their heads), which they periodically review. But very few men have a life plan. We need to challenge men with the question, “What’s more important—your business or your life?” Although a kingdom understanding of discipleship supplies concrete goals that are required to keep men’s lives focused on Christ’s agenda for them, it will do little good if they do not have a plan for implementing those goals. Appendices A-C provide information about the tool, planning process, and discipline required to help men stay focused on their kingdom mission.

In summary, a kingdom view of discipleship supplies the concrete targets to be reached. This vision enables a man to “assert control over his environment, based on God’s empowerment and direction, and make a better future” (Barna 1992:29). It provides great motivational power to men because it unites their desire to be faithful disciples with clear objectives on how to do so. “Vision becomes a bold reason for living. It is a badge of purpose that the bearer wears proudly and courageously” (1992:97). It captures a man’s heart and shows him which hill needs to be taken.

Kingdom Discipleship Engages Men’s Hearts By Helping Them Understand Their Unique Purpose

Deep in the heart of most men looms the question, “What was I created to do?” Os Guinness writes, “In more than thirty years of public speaking and in countless conversations around the world, I have heard that issue come up more than any other. At some point every one of us confronts the question: How do I find and fulfill the central purpose of my life (1998:1)? Christian men want to know the specific purpose for which they have been created. Rick Warren writes,

“Knowing your purpose gives meaning to your life....the greatest tragedy is not death, but life without purpose” (2002:30). He points out that no human being is an accident.

Your birth was no mistake or mishap, and your life is no fluke of nature. Your parents may not have planned you but God did.... God prescribed every single detail of your body. He deliberately chose your race, the color of your skin, your hair, and every other feature. He custom made your body just the way he wanted it (2002:22-23).

Warren uses the acrostic SHAPE to describe each unique person, who has a distinct spiritual gift mix, set of heart passions, array of abilities, personality, and series of experiences. Every aspect of the Christ-follower’s shape perfectly prepares him to impact the world that surrounds him. But, if the job of the disciple is primarily to withdraw from that world, occasionally throwing out a lifeline to the lost, the unique way he has been designed to impact his world is lost. In contrast, kingdom disciples understand redemption to be the restoration of the whole of creational life. Only kingdom discipleship provides the link between a man’s unique design and how that design fits perfectly into God’s purpose to redeem the portion of creation/culture that he touches.

Since Christ followers are called to join Christ in the redemption of all of life, we see how fully every aspect of our uniqueness is fulfilled. Having the spiritual gift of mercy, combined with a kingdom view of discipleship might result in showing the kingdom of God through volunteering to provide hospice care. Having a heart for unwed moms might lead another to put the kingdom of God on display by using her Kinder Music training to help teen moms bond with their pre-school children. A kingdom disciple with exceptional ability to play football might be called to show the kingdom to the world of men on the gridiron, seeking to point to the King who can change their lives.

Having an ability to argue winsomely will be an asset to a kingdom disciple who knows he is called to argue for the biblical world and life view in the lunchroom. An experience of walking in on an abortion as a young nurse might lead another kingdom disciple to start a pregnancy center.

Kingdom disciples realize that just as Adam was to exercise dominion, we are to cover the globe with the righteous rule of its true king. One corner of the kingdom is a man's home where he is to raise the flag of Christ, shaping his home life according to God's design. Another island of the kingdom may be the department of his company, which he manages. There, he applies Christ's agenda—treating others with dignity because they are image bearers of God, refraining from grumbling so that he might shine as light in the midst of the dark world (Phil 2:14), etc. Another part of the kingdom is his own neighborhood, where he may serve in his neighborhood association seeking to uphold fair policies, finding out who may be hurting in his community, and building relationships through which he can share the mercy of Christ and the gospel.

A kingdom understanding of discipleship unleashes the godly ambition that lies dormant in many men's hearts: understanding our calling to be a part of God's great plan to redeem all of life provides the link between our unique lives and God's glory. It awakens the power of godly ambition. Dave Harvey writes, "I believe that ambition—godly ambition, that is—is a noble force for the glory of God" (2010:14). Harvey elaborates how ambition is unleashed. "The seeds of ambition are sown when we perceive value. Something seems worthy of our attention. It attracts us." When we help a man see how his unique design is perfectly linked to God's calling to demonstrate and

spread the kingdom in his unique spheres of life, we plant the seeds for ambition to grow.

But, we must go further.

“Perceiving worth is an important start, but it rarely converts into ambition unless we personally prize what we perceive. We not only perceive worth in something, but we set our desires to possess it. Our affections follow our perception.... Ambition is prizing something so much that we go after it; we’re willing to sacrifice to get it. The value I personally assign to it creates motivation and moves me to take action to obtain it” (2010:29).

Ambitions rise to what we prize. To awaken the ambition of a man to demonstrate and build Christ’s kingdom, we need to help him see that no one else can accomplish the mission that Christ has assigned to him. No one else can be the husband his wife needs. No one else can be the father his children need. No one else has the same set of relationships he has, through which he is called to show Christ and his kingdom to his corner of the world. Christ wants all of life over the whole world redeemed for his glory and each man has a strategic, irreplaceable part in this great mission. We must help men prize their unique calling in this magnificent mission. Os Guinness asks: “Do you want the best and most wonderful gifts God has given you to decay, spent on your own self? Or do you want them to be set free to come into their own as you link your profoundest abilities with your neighbor’s need and the glory of God” (1998:54)?

Kingdom Discipleship Adds Meaning to Men’s Vocational Calling Engaging their

Hearts In Their Everyday Work

Most Christian men today see work merely as a means to an end, a way to provide for their family’s material needs. Hugh Welchel writes, “Christians today have bought into the pagan notion that leisure is good and work is bad. They have also been misled by

the sacred/secular distinction, which teaches that only working in the church is ‘real’ fulltime Christian service” (2009:1). Welchel rightly ascribes this sub-biblical view of work to a sub-biblical sacred/secular division. Such a view is rooted in the dualism that misunderstands the Apostle John’s admonition, “Love not the world” (1 Jn 2:15). The truth is that our holy God loves the world. In fact, he loved it so much that he sent his son into the world to redeem it (Jn 3:16). John prohibits loving the *world* not to devalue creation but to call believers to resist the world system that opposes God. Fuzzy thinking about the meaning of *world* has led many Christian men to undervalue the very thing they spend most of their waking hours doing, going to work.

Os Guinness observes that even though the Reformers had a wholesome view of vocation as a God-given calling, even among the Puritans that high view eventually changed.

Slowly such words as *work*, *trade*, *employment*, and *occupation* came to be used interchangeably with *calling* and *vocation*. As this happened, the guidelines for callings shifted; instead of being directed by the commands of God, they were seen as directed by duties and roles in society. Eventually the day came when faith and calling were separated completely. The original demand that each Christian should have a calling was boiled down to the demand that each citizen should have a job (1998:40).

It is hard to overemphasize the impact that such a sub-biblical view of vocation has in deadening the heart of a man and separating him from his call to discipleship. Over thirty-five years ago, Dorothy Sayers identified the need for the church to recover its theology of work.

Christians must revive a centuries-old view of humankind as made in the image of God, the eternal Craftsman, and of work as a source of fulfillment and blessing not as a necessary drudgery to be undergone for the purpose of making money, but as a way of life in which the nature of man should find its proper exercise and delight and so fulfill itself to the

glory of God. That it should, in fact, be thought of as a creative activity undertaken for the love of the work itself; and that man, made in God's image, should make things, as God makes them, for the sake of doing well a thing that is well worth doing (1974:89).

It is kingdom discipleship that recovers the significance of vocation for Christians.

Kingdom discipleship understands a man's original calling from Genesis 2:15 to continue the work of creation begun by God. Kingdom disciples highly value the discovery of creation itself because it is "a theater, a splendidly clear mirror of his divine glory" (Bavinck 2008:438). Kingdom disciples understand that at the core of the great commission is the restoration of the cultural mandate. We are to produce more and more humans (disciples) who are also called to develop the earth's potential and shape every part of human life for The High King.

Kingdom Discipleship Engages the Hearts of Men By Confronting Them With The Need to Be A Warrior

Every movie has a thermostat that is set for the audience its producers are seeking to attract. Dave Murrow points out, "If a film-maker is trying to attract a male audience, he will pack his movie with things like: buildings exploding, cars crashing, guns blazing, and bodies flying. There will be tension, intrigue, and a hero who saves the world against impossible odds" (2005:15). Few approaches to discipleship emphasize men's values: risk, reward, adventure, accomplishment, action, heroic sacrifice. Men are hard-wired by God to be protectors. They are created to be warriors, to stand between their families and those in the world who might harm them.

In Genesis 2:15, Adam is assigned a second task besides working the ground. He is to keep it. This Hebrew word, *shamar*, means to *protect*. "A man is not only to wield

the plow, but also to bear the sword. Being God's deputy lord in the garden, Adam was not only to make it fruitful but to make it safe" (Phillips 2010:15).

Kingdom discipleship calls men to engage in the most deadly, fiercely-fought battle there has ever been: the overthrow of Satan, sin, and death and re-establishment of Christ's kingdom of righteousness on earth. "The kingdom of God is the renewal of the whole world through the entrance of supernatural forces. As things are brought back under Christ's rule and authority, they are restored to health, beauty, and freedom" (Keller 1997:52-53). For things to be "brought back under Christ's rule and authority" requires a titanic battle with the forces of evil in this world. Christ's death, resurrection, and exaltation have defeated Satan, sin, and death. Adam's throne has been taken back, but in the present era his enemies remain to continue to bring destruction to God's creation and to powerfully resist Christ's rule and agenda of righteousness.

Since Satan was a liar from the beginning and is the father of lies, defeating him must be done by battling for truth. Since Christ claims every sphere of human life as his own, kingdom disciples are committed to developing a biblical world view that empowers them to relentlessly battle for truth in every part of the culture. As my research has shown, few Christians have been better examples for the church to follow than Abraham Kuyper. His words bear repeating.

The Scriptures not only serve to find justification through faith and cast light on the path to eternity, that same Word of God also reveals the foundations of all human life, that is the sacred ordinances which must govern the whole of the life of men in the family and the church, in the state and society at large. The Word of God contains the ordinances for our personal, our family, our ecclesiastical, our educational, our political, our industrial and commercial, our cultural life—indeed, for every sector of human life (1978:173).

Kingdom disciples are those who contend for wholeness in every part of the culture by presenting the biblical perspective and ordinances that relate to that sphere. They are the salt that retards decay in the culture, and the light that causes the world to see the right path. Paul explains how Christ-followers battle for the truth:

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ (2 Cor 10:3-5).

In a culture that is blessed with physical order where our families are protected, we need to capture the hearts of our men with a vision to fight the unseen spiritual enemy who would envelop this world in darkness. We must equip our men to contend for truth in every sphere of their lives—“to destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God.” We must awaken their warrior hearts to the urgency of the battle. In a sermon entitled, “A Good Soldier of Christ Jesus,” Charles Spurgeon says,

The true soldier is an ambitious being. He pants for honor, seeks for glory. On the field of strife he gathers his laurels, amidst a thousand dangers he reaps his renown. The Christian is fired by higher ambitions than any earthly warrior ever knew. He sees a crown that can never fade. He loves a king who best of all is worthy to be served. He has a motive within him which moves him to the noblest of deeds—a Divine spirit impelling him to the most self-sacrificing actions (1870:928).

To become a Christ-follower is to enlist in a titanic battle between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light. Satan must be met head on by kingdom disciples committed to countering his lies in the culture with a biblical world and life view that is centered in God’s Word.

Kingdom Discipleship Engages Men's Hearts by Calling Men to Kingdom Pursuit out of Loyalty to The High King

Kingdom disciples recognize that though a full understanding of the gospel of the kingdom gives men a big, clear, significant, challenging vision for their lives, ultimately it is the call to our King, himself, that provides our motivation to pursue his kingdom. Os Guinness reminds us, “Let me say simply that *calling is the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion and dynamism lived out as a response to his summons and service*” (1998:4). Our mission is based upon another being calling us, or taking the initiative to communicate with us as individuals. It is personal. Our engagement in the discipleship process is a response to his call., and that call is first and foremost a call to himself.

The gospel of the kingdom assures us that the God who calls us has done everything necessary to destroy the guilt over our sin that would keep us out of his holy presence. The judge himself has declared us free from sin (Rom 8:33). So complete is the redemption from sin that he has accomplished for us that he adopts us into his very family. “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us,” writes John, “that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are” (1 Jn 3:1). J.I. Packer explains the significance of our adoption:

Justification is a *forensic* idea, conceived in terms of *law*, and viewing God as *judge*... But contrast this, now, with adoption. Adoption is a *family* idea, conceived in terms of *love*, and viewing God as *father*. In adoption, God takes us into his family and fellowship, and establishes us as his children and heirs. Closeness, affection, and generosity are at the heart of the relationship. To be right with God the *judge* is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the *father* is a greater” (1973:187-188).

When we finally realize that God has declared us righteous and adopted us into his own family, we are free *to please him instead of appease* him. In fact, our deep-rooted desire to please our earthly father, wanting to know that he is proud of us, is transferred to our heavenly father. Such is the motivation of a kingdom disciple.

Not only that, but like any father, our God calls us to himself because he enjoys us. Ultimately our passion for the mission he has assigned to us is rooted in a response to his love for us. Scotty Smith challenges us to think through how our life of obedience would change if we only could remember how much God delights in us. “What would it feel like in your heart to know that God not only *accepts* you, but that he richly *enjoys* you? To know that your company is his pleasure, your fellowship his joy, your face his delight? What effect would that have on how you think about God, yourself, others” (2001:27)?

In response to his love for us we are called to love God with all our heart (Mt 22:37). To love someone with all your heart sounds to many men like a phrase from a Valentine’s Day card. We associate the English word, love, with romance. But, there is another Greek word for romantic love, *eros*. Of course, we see love on Mother’s Day and Father’s Day cards, as well. Again, there is a specific Greek word for love of family; it is *stergo*. The Greek word for love that is used in this text is *agape*, which means *a love that costs what is dear to you*.⁵ The agape love envisioned in this text would be better translated, allegiance. The greatest commandment is not about mushy, sentimental feelings; it is about supreme allegiance to The High King.

⁵ This definition is from John 3:16, “God so agaped the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

And so we return to Adam's original calling, to exercise dominion for The High King, out of allegiance to him. It is his rule we further, his earth we subdue, his cultural ground that we conquer, his creation that we help restore, his name we exalt, his honor we seek to magnify, his glory we seek to display. Our calling is personal. It is about giving supreme loyalty to our God and King. In the words of John Piper, "God created me—and you—to live with a single, all-embracing, all-transforming passion—namely a passion to glorify God by enjoying and displaying his supreme excellence in all the spheres of life" (2003:31).

Chapter Summary

In the world of the twenty-first century, advertising specialists are being paid six figure salaries to reach into the hearts of men and awaken a desire for their product through their commercials. Today's visual images have unprecedented power to capture the desires of men's hearts, subtly, or not so subtly, driving them towards the idols that claim to satisfy their longings. If Christian leaders are to compete on the battlefield of men's hearts, we simply must recapture and cast a vision for the greatness of our calling to be Christ's followers.

Through the study of the kingdom of God in Scripture and in the writings of the Dutch Neo-Calvinists, it became apparent that there is no greater mission than Christ's invasion of planet earth, overthrow of its tyrants, Satan, sin, and death, and establishment of his kingdom of righteousness. To capture men's hearts with the greatness of our mission as Christ followers, six paradigm shifts were presented that Christian leaders must help men make, as they re-think what it means to follow Christ. The six

perspectives that we need to cement in men's minds are that kingdom discipleship calls men: 1) to a big enough mission to capture their hearts, 2) to a clear enough vision to inspire commitment to specific objectives, 3) to a profound understanding of how perfectly God has designed them and their circumstances to maximize kingdom impact, 4) to vocation as continuing the very work of God in developing the potential of his creation, 5) to be the warrior/protectors of each sphere of the creation where they dwell, 6) to supreme allegiance to the High King, their creator and redeemer.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This chapter presents a summary of the research conducted for this project, the conclusions, and the relevant findings for the church today. Recommendations are made for those considering future research in this area.

Research

The research for this paper began with an analysis of the biblical teaching concerning kingdom theology as a paradigm for discipleship. Special attention was given to the first two chapters of Genesis as foundational for understanding the first Adam's original call to rule over earth for The High King so that we could better understand our calling as kingdom disciples to extend the rule of the second Adam, Jesus Christ, over the earth. In the third chapter, we examined the Neo-Calvinist view of kingdom theology as a basis for discipleship. As I compared the Neo-Calvinist view of kingdom discipleship to my biblical studies, certain parallel themes emerged. In the fourth chapter, I delineated seven motifs that are foundational for discipling the heart of a man.

The seven parallel motifs in the fourth chapter were not exhaustive. However, the overlap of themes supplied the core concepts for answering the question, "How can kingdom theology be used to disciple men's hearts?"

As I considered how best to build on this research and equip church leaders to engage men's hearts in discipleship, George Barna's wisdom about the power of vision

was formative. He observed that vision enables a man to “assert control over his environment, based on God’s empowerment and direction, and make a better future” (1992:29). “Vision becomes a bold reason for living. It is a badge of purpose that the bearer wears proudly and courageously” (1992:97). What is lacking in most attempts to disciple men today is a compelling vision that engages men’s hearts, awakening a wholehearted commitment to establishing Christ’s agenda of righteousness in each part of their world. This vision is a biblical understanding of kingdom discipleship. My research revealed six paradigm shifts, rooted in a biblical understanding of the kingdom of God, that Christian leaders must help men make in their understanding of Christ’s call to discipleship.

Conclusions

As I compared my research on the subject of reaching men’s hearts through kingdom theology with the approach to discipleship that is often taken today, I have come to several conclusions. Three obstacles to building kingdom disciples emerged.

Today’s Christians Have Only a Vague Concept of the Kingdom of God

As I have observed, the evangelical church of today was largely shaped by the separatism and premillennial eschatological views of dispensationalism. The kingdom of God is minimized as a present reality. So, Christ’s command to seek first his kingdom has no practical meaning for their everyday lives, since the kingdom doesn’t come until Christ’s return to earth. Furthermore, the dispensationalist approach to discipleship is not to transform the world but to separate from it.

However, it is not just those whose theological roots go back to dispensationalism who do not understand what seeking first the kingdom of God means. Those of my own theological persuasion, adherents to the Reformed faith, though usually affirming the present rule of Christ, have an equally vague understanding of what Jesus is commanding. I believe that at the root of such fuzzy thinking about the kingdom is the failure to distinguish between Christ's sovereign rule as the second person of the Trinity and his preceptive, righteous rule. Most of those in my theological circles default to thinking of Christ's kingship as his sovereign rule. But as we have seen repeatedly, Christ was sovereign before he came into this world to establish his kingdom. The arrival of his kingdom brings the overthrow of Satan, sin, and death and the inauguration of the kingdom of righteousness.

A further difficulty with understanding the gospel of the kingdom is that we do not really view Adam in his biblical calling to be a king. He was made in the image of The High King and given a kingdom to rule just as The High King rules. His most basic calling is to exercise dominion over his kingdom—to rule (Gen 1:26-28). Losing sight of Adam's calling to rule his kingdom for The High King obscures the fact that Jesus comes into the world as the second Adam. So, we do not clearly see that Christ's mission in this world is the recovery of Adam's kingdom from its slavery to Satan, sin, and death. We do not see following King Jesus as the recovery of man's original calling to rule over the planet for The High King, in accordance with his holiness. We do not see following King Jesus as joining in his conquest to establish his agenda of righteousness over every sphere of life.

Today's Discipleship Approaches Do Not Have A High Enough View of Creation

Most Bible-believing churches in America today have some tie to the dispensationalism that shaped American Christianity in the twentieth century. At the core of this theological movement was not only an eschatological view that minimized Christ's present rule as earth's king, but its core attitude towards the world was to separate from it. One of its favorite verses has been 1 John 2:15, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." A complete misunderstanding of this teaching led millions of Bible-believing American Christians to withdraw from culture in the twenty-first century instead of obeying Christ's command to be its salt and light.

One of the most striking discoveries in my study of the Neo-Calvinists was their extremely high view of creation. They believed that when they discovered more of the creation, they were seeing more of the very nature of God. "For God is the supreme being: supremely true, supremely good, supremely beautiful. For that reason he created many creatures who in varying degrees partake of his being, truth, goodness, and beauty" (Bavinck 2008: 237). Redemption is not about escaping from this physical world. It is about creation being "cleansed of sin and re-created, reborn, renewed, made whole" (2008:715).

Today's Discipleship Approaches Fail to Equip Men to Battle for Truth in our Culture

The separation from culture instead of engagement of culture with a Christian world and life view was the hallmark of a true discipleship in the twentieth century. As a

result, most men today are ill prepared to engage in the battle for truth in our culture. Discipleship approaches are just beginning to equip men to think Christianly about every aspect of life.

Recommendations

Here are some recommendations for further study in both Scripture and the writings of the Neo-Calvinists.

Since the agenda of kingdom disciples is Christ's agenda of righteousness, further study of the biblical understanding of "righteousness" in society would be helpful along with the biblical view of the *shalom* of God. What should righteousness in society look like? What are the implications for mercy ministry? What is a biblical understanding of economic justice?

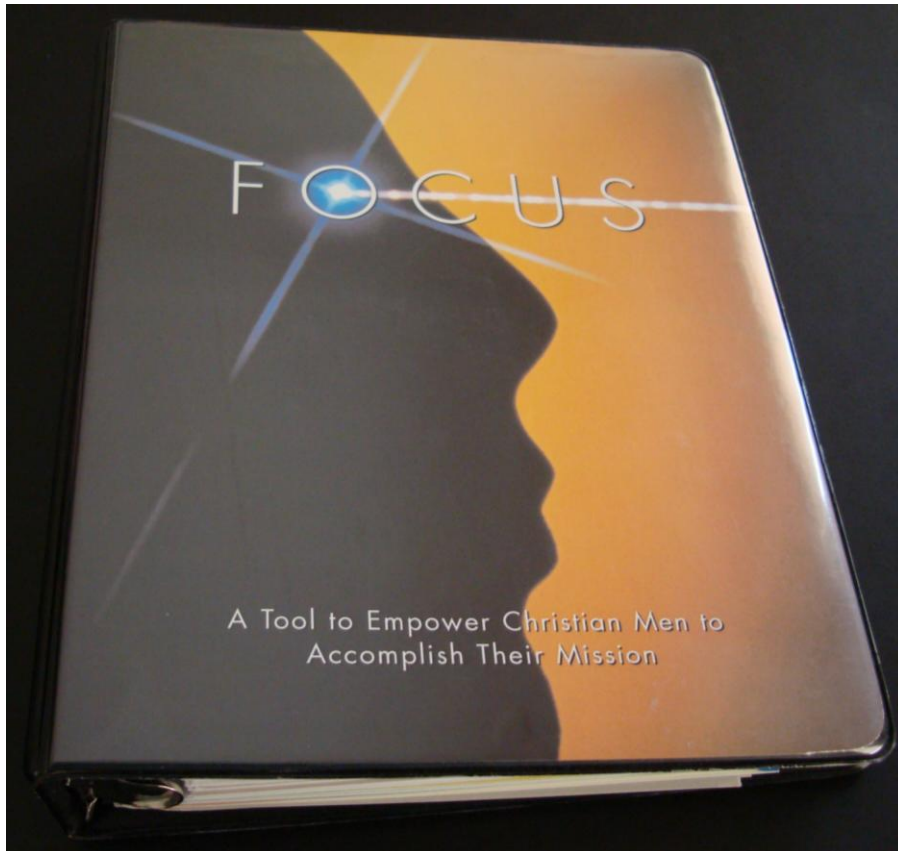
A second suggestion for further research is to create a thorough description of Christ's righteous agenda for the work place. This should include both a thoroughly biblical view of the call to the work place as the fulfillment of the cultural mandate, and a thorough list of biblical principles a Christian worker should seek to apply. This kind of study is especially needed for men, since their vocation is central to their calling.

Finally, much work needs to be done to put together the resources to equip men to articulate a biblical world and life view in the marketplace of ideas in their culture. Thought needs to be given to identifying what ideologies are current, how to analyze those sub-biblical views, and how to winsomely engage friends, work associates, and neighbors in conversations about ideas. There certainly are great Christian thinkers

engaging the false ideas of the culture. The challenge would be determining how to equip the average man in the congregation to be a warrior for truth in his world.

APPENDIX A

THE FOCUS NOTEBOOK TOOL



The Focus Notebook functions like the playbook on a football team. Based on a kingdom approach to discipleship, the tabs correspond to each sphere of a man's life. Behind each tab is a planning sheet to enable each man to construct his current game plan for accomplishing Christ's agenda in that sphere of his life.

The contents of this notebook were developed by the author, during his days as a busy church planter and father of five, to use in his own life to help him stay focused on Christ's mission for him. That mission begins with enjoying God, moves outward to developing the inner attitudes of a Christ-like heart, then outward again to discover how to give ourselves to meet the needs of our wives. It moves outward again to helping our kids become fully devoted followers of Christ, then outward to our neighborhoods, churches, work places, etc.

Focus Notebook Content: Christ's Agenda For Each Sphere of Life

(There is far more biblical content than given below but this is a good summary)

MISSION

No matter what lens we look through, Scripture reveals the same 3 parts to our mission.

Through the lens of our calling, we are called:

To Christ (to a love relationship with him)

To be like Christ (to holy, Christ-like character)

To exercise dominion for Christ (to bring about Christ's agenda in each sphere of life)

Through the lens of historic orthodox Christianity, our mission is:

To enjoy God (existential)

To imitate God (normative)

To serve God (situational)

Through viewing Christ's ministry to us as the anointed one:

As PRIEST to unite us to God

As PROPHET to make us holy

As KING to establish the righteous rule of God on earth

ENJOYING GOD

Our Mission: To Enjoy God *"Rejoice in the Lord always."* (Phil 4:4)

A. It addresses the core issue of the heart.

- We're to set our affections on the things above (Col 3:1).
- We are to have no other gods, allowing no idols to usurp the rightful place of God as first in our affections (Exodus 20).
- We were made for God and he is the answer to our deepest longing (I Cor. 6:13).

B. The strategy to achieve this mission objective is to cultivate our love relationship with God.

C. There are many ways to grow in our relationship with God. Here are some:

1. Knowing God: *"So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD..."* (Hos 6:3). *"Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent"* (Jn 17:3).

2. Delighting in God: *“Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart”* (Ps 37:4). *“I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips”* (Ps 34:1).
3. Loving God: *“Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength”* (Deut 6:5). *“If anyone does not love the Lord--a curse be on him”* (I Cor 16:22).
4. Trusting God: *“These (trials) have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed”* (I Pet 1:7). *“Though he slay me, yet will I trust him”* (Job 13:15).
5. Offering Ourselves to God: *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—which is your spiritual worship”* (Rom 12:1).
6. Abiding in God’s love: *“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Now abide in my love”* (Jn 15:9). *“As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you”* (Isa 62:5).

D. This relationship, like all relationships, can only grow through regular time spent together.

1. This regular, daily time with God has often been called a “Quiet Time” (QT).
2. Insights for establishing a regular QT with God:
 - Remember you are meeting a person, not completing a task. The goal is to connect with the Lord, not get a certain number of verses read.
 - The key to having a morning quiet time is getting to bed early. The key to having an evening quiet time is heading to bed early.
 - Don’t be discouraged when your schedule is thrown off track. That’s the way life is. The key to self-discipline is NOT avoiding interruptions in the routine. It is getting back to the routine quickly after the interruption.
 - Don’t become legalistic, but recognize your need of spiritual nutrition. After missing 2 or 3 **physical** meals we experience a certain “urgency” to get the nutrition we need. It should be the same if we miss 2 or 3 **spiritual** meals.

E. Quiet Time Plan

- When and where will I have my quiet time?
- What help will I use or passage will I study?
- Whom will I ask to hold me accountable?

CHRIST-LIKE CHARACTER

Our Mission: To Imitate God “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness...so that through them (his great promises) **you may participate in the divine nature** and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires” (2 Pet 1:4).

- A. It addresses the issue of our inner attitudes.
- God wants us to imitate his moral attributes, not his power or position. Satan got it exactly backwards.
 - Imitation is the highest form of compliment. It greatly honors Christ when we want to be like him.
 - As Christ’s ambassadors, we represent Christ to the world in our attitudes and character.
 - A consistent attitude is called, “character.” If Joe is consistently honest, we say that honesty is *characteristic* of Joe, i.e., honesty is part of Joe’s *character*.
 - Attitudes are determined by *perspective*. I have a forgiving attitude because I myself am in need of forgiveness. We love others because we have been loved by Christ. We give generously because our treasure is in heaven. An attitude of submission to Christ grows out of our perspective--an understanding of his mercy to us.
- B. Jesus taught that his kingdom lifestyle begins with inner attitudes, called the beatitudes (Mt 5:1-12).
- Blessed are the poor in spirit.
 - Blessed are those who mourn.
 - Blessed are the meek.
 - Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.
 - Blessed are the merciful.
 - Blessed are the pure in heart.
 - Blessed are the peacemakers.
 - Blessed are those who suffer persecution for righteousness’s sake.
- C. Galatians 5:22-23 tells us that the work of God’s Spirit in us is to produce godly attitudes. “*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control.*”
- D. One of the best ways to determine which godly attitudes God is seeking to build in you is to look at your trials, i.e., your tests.
- “*All things work together for good for those who love God, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his son...*” (Rom 8:28-29).
 - If your trial is a person who continually irritates you, perhaps God wants to teach you to love unconditionally.
 - If you’ve lost a job, God may be testing your faith.

- If your trial is the loss of material things, perhaps the Lord is teaching you to find contentment in him.
- If you continue to be hurt by another and can't avoid it, perhaps God is teaching you deeper lessons in forgiveness.

E. A Plan to Cultivate Christ-like Character

1. Recognize that the goal of God's Spirit in your life is to produce godly attitudes. Offering God our accomplishments when our attitudes are sinful isn't pleasing to God.
2. Form a clear picture of what each biblical character quality looks like.
 - Study texts such as Matthew 5:1-8, Galatians 5:22-23, 2 Peter 1:5-8.
 - Define each quality and its opposite.
 - Look for ways it is illustrated in Scripture.
3. Since attitudes are always determined by *perspective*, list various biblical truths that are the key foundational perspectives required for each godly attitude.
4. Let that clear definition be a plumb-line to expose your character deficiencies.
5. During your Lord's day reflection and during your daily quiet time, focus on what character quality the Lord is teaching you.
6. Ask God to empower you to produce that godly attitude. *Let failures motivate you to acknowledge your dependence upon God alone who sanctifies us, transforming our sinful attitudes into holy ones.*

GOD'S AGENDA FOR MY MARRIAGE

Needs of a Wife "Husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her...*Eph 5:25. To love with "agape" love means to give sacrificially, and unconditionally, to meet our wife's needs. Here is a list of 8 foundational needs of wives, along with some practical suggestions for meeting those needs.*

Emotional Intimacy With You

Amplification: The need to feel emotionally close and connected to you. Feeling one with you--like there are no barriers between you. Being soul mates and best friends. Accepting, cherishing, and respecting your wife so much that she feels safe enough to be herself and to share her heart.

Meeting this need: Make a commitment to proactively seek emotional intimacy with her. This is what your vow to love her means to her.

- Most of the emotional connection she craves happens just by us listening attentively to her, throughout the day. So:
 - we need to concentrate on what she is saying.
 - we need to listen to the feelings behind her words.
 - we need to listen with the goal of understanding, not with the goal of fixing the problem (her need is not to solve the problem; it is to feel understood).

- The pace of your life may be such that you need to be intentional about carving out daily “couch time” to hear how your wife’s day went.

Partnership With You On the Home Front

Amplification: The need to feel like she is not facing her responsibilities alone, but has a companion beside her sharing her cares and load.

Meeting this Need: Sit down with your wife and ask her these questions (You might want to record her answers so you remember them):

- What regular tasks in caring for the family do you dislike the most or find most difficult?
- In what household tasks do you feel most alone?
- What household projects would you most like me to complete?
- In what other ways can I help you shoulder your load?
- What family problems do you feel need to be addressed?

Spiritual Intimacy With You, Her Spiritual Leader

Amplification: A wife not only yearns to connect spiritually with her husband, she needs her husband to carry the weight of spiritual leadership so that she can flourish in her calling to be a suitable helper to him.

Meeting this Need:

- Be an example to her in your commitment to Christ.
- Encourage, and pray for her spiritual growth.
- Be sure she is spiritually connected to other women for fellowship.
- Encourage and assist her to utilize her spiritual gifts.
- Pray often with her.

Words of Affirmation From You

Amplification: The need to know and hear repeatedly that she is highly valued by you, her husband—that her combination of beauty and feminine virtues is the perfect blend you need.

Meeting This Need:

- Read through Proverbs 31: 10-31—the list of feminine virtues identify those for which you are most grateful in your wife. List them here.
- Pick a quality and tell your wife how much you appreciate that virtue in her (you might want to write a little note that she will find).
- Devote yourself to noticing these qualities in your mate and communicating to her your delight in her.
- Remember Proverbs 31:28-29. Her husband praises her: *"Many women do noble things, BUT YOU SURPASS THEM ALL."*

Romance

Amplification: In her God-given feminine nature, a woman yearns to be swept off her feet, treated like a princess, and drawn into adventure. Romance to her is feeling, cherished, valued, special, pampered. Romance keeps her feelings for you at a constant warm level (which makes love-making easy and natural for her, since going from warm to hot is much easier than going from cold to hot).

Meeting This Need:

- Never stop dating your wife. Take her out, get her away from the kids, treat her like a princess. You might consider having weekly date night, especially if you have kids.
- Pamper her. The essence of romance to her is making her feel special. Fix a hot bath for her, with candles and soft music. You do the dishes and put the kids to bed.
- Surprise her. Buy cards, flowers (one rose 6 times a year counts much more than a dozen roses on Valentine's Day.) Little, creative, fun things let her know that you think she's special and keep her romantic fires burning.
- Be constantly affectionate in non-sexual ways. Hug her, touch her arm when you are talking, play with her hair.
- Make her feel special when you are arriving or leaving. When arriving home from work, track her down and kiss her. Give her the honored first place of your first few minutes. Kiss her goodbye and goodnight.
- Honor her in public. Praise her in front of friends. If a beautiful woman walks into the room, whisper into your wife's ear, "I'm so glad I'm here with YOU."
- Get her away from the kids and the routine. Plan a couple of weekends away from the kids each year. You take care of all the arrangements, child care, etc. Remember, romance to her is being treated like a princess.

Female Friends

Amplification: Wives, especially with small children at home, need regularly to be free from the kids to have adult conversations with other women. Women are relational creatures; they need meaningful connections with other women.

Meeting This Need:

- Plan to take care of the kids so she can go on various women's retreats.
- Be patient with the amount of time she spends on the phone talking to other women.
- Pray for God to provide a real soul sister for her.
- Encourage her to be in some kind of fellowship group with other Christian women.

Protection and Rest

Amplification: Your role as her husband is to protect her from spiritual, emotional, and physical harm.

Meeting This Need:

- Find out what her spiritual needs and battles are and PRAY faithfully for her
- Know your woman—especially her vulnerabilities
- Talk with her enough to know what emotional burdens are wearing her down.

- Ask her how you can help with her load
- Be quick to help her with heavy loads or tough physical jobs
- Make sure you encourage her to get enough rest
- Help her see if she has too much on her plate and help her find a solution to offload things if necessary.

A Secure Home and Secure Finances

Amplification: A wife very closely identifies herself with her home. The attention we give to our wife's honey-do-list is to her a reflection of the importance she has in our lives. Also, her security is closely tied to our faithfulness in managing the financial part of our lives.

Meeting This Need:

- Make household repairs a very high priority
- Keep her car running smoothly and safely
- If money is tight, pay the bills yourself, so she is not overwhelmed by it
- Follow biblical principles of money management

GOD'S AGENDA FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP AT HOME

Model Being a Fully Devoted Disciple of Christ Yourself

1. Define God's goal of Discipleship
 - A. To serve God—issue of action.
 - B. To glorify God--issue of character
 - C. To enjoy God—issue of affections
2. Form your plan to reach these goals
 - A. Nehemiah begins with prayer (Neh 1:4ff).
 - B. Nehemiah forms a plan (Neh 2:11-16).
3. Stay FOCUSED on your plan
 - A. Nehemiah perseveres (Neh 4:1-9).
 - B. Jesus stays focused (Mk 1:35-39).
4. Lead by MODELING this commitment
 - A. Jesus (John 13).
 - B. Paul (2 Tim 3:10-14).

Build Your Relationship With Your Followers

1. Eliminate the following relationship busters

- A. A proud refusal to seek forgiveness when you have wronged another (Mt 5:23-26).
- B. A proud refusal to admit it when you are wrong (Prov 29:23).
- C. A critical spirit (Eph 4:29).

2. Provide the following

- A. Understanding (Jn 1:14).
- B. Affirmation (Mt 3:17).
- C. Companionship (Mk 3:14).
- D. Compassion (Mk 1:40-42).
- E. Affection (Lk 18:15-16).
- F. Practical Care (Lk 9:16).
- G. Spiritual Leadership (Eph 6:4).

Help Them To Become Christ's Disciples

- 1. Teach them the Word (Deut 6:5-9).
- 2. Help them to have Christian friends (Acts 2:42).
- 3. Help them discover and get excited about their unique design and gifts (Eph 2:10).
- 4. Encourage and motivate them (I Thess 2:8-12).
- 5. Help equip them for life (Prov 1:8-9).
- 6. Pray for them (Phil 1:8-11).

GOD'S KINGDOM AGENDA FOR THE WORKPLACE

Scripture To Consider:

"Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve" (Col 3:23-24).

"Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed" (Prov 16:3).

"One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys" (Prov 18:9).

"It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way" (Prov 19:2).

“Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails” (Prov 19:21).

“The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty” (Prov 21:5).

“A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold” (Prov 22:1).

“Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings” (Prov 22:29).

“Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds; for riches do not endure forever, and a crown is not secure for all generations” (Prov 27:23-24).

Additional Scripture to look up:

Ex 18:18

Psalms 90:12

Prov 10:4

15:1

15:22

18:9

20:10

24:16

25:19

27:18

28:26

29:11

Eccles 9:10

Mt 6:24

7:12

Lk 14:28

16:10

7 Keys to Professional Excellence

1. View your *job* as God’s *unique calling* for you.

Gen 1:27-28

Eph 2:10

Col 3:23

2. Reject *mediocrity*!

I Cor 10:31

3. Pay attention to the *details*.

Prov 27:23

Prov 22:29

4. Always *give* others *more* than they are *expecting*.

Lk 6:38

5. Realize that professional excellence rests on the foundation of *consistent character*, which is called *integrity*.
II Pet 1:3-8
6. Get *connected* to a *band of brothers* who will help you sustain excellence.
Eccl 4:9-12
7. See your job as *worship*.
Rom 12:1-2

GOD’S AGENDA FOR CONNECTION IN THE CHURCH

Scripture Verses and Insights:

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Eph 2:10

“We have different gifts....If his gift is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of the saints, let him give generously.” Rom 12:3-8.

Evaluate What SHAPE God Has Given You:

Spiritual gifts:

Heart passions:

Abilities:

Personality:

Experiences:

Plan For Forging Brotherhood Bond

All Christian men fight inner battles with their sinful nature. Lust, anger, selfishness, resentment, impatience, discontent, idolatry, are just some of the forces that seek to overpower us as men. Many times we lose these battles for a simple reason—**we are trying to fight them by ourselves.**

Whether fighting in the street or fighting in Afghanistan, men know they are likely to become a casualty if they fight alone. The same principle holds true with the battles of our inner lives. But how do you find a few close friends to help you in your spiritual battles? You may not be able to **find** them; you may need to **forge** them. See Appendix 3 for the resource designed to help men forge brotherhood bonds.

GOD'S AGENDA FOR OUTREACH

Outreach Insights

Formula for Effective Evangelism

High potency + Close proximity + Clear communication = MAXIMUM IMPACT

Various Approaches to Outreach

Confrontational approach: Peter

Intellectual approach: Paul

Testimonial approach: Blind man

Interpersonal approach: Matthew

Invitational approach: Samaritan Woman

Service approach: Dorcas

APPENDIX B

PLANNING PROCESS

“Memo to the disorganized: If my private world is in order, it will be because I am convinced that the inner world of the spiritual must govern the outer world of activity, and because I recognize my proneness to operate according to schemes and patterns not made of God but fashioned by a disordered past” Gordon McDonald, Ordering Your Private World.

Kingdom discipleship’s goal is to implement Christ’s agenda in every sphere of our lives. **It is useless to identify from Scripture what Christ’s agenda in each sphere of life is, if we don’t have a regular time to plan how we will implement those goals.** The old adage is true, “If you fail to plan, plan to fail.”

Fundamental to the kingdom approach to discipleship presented in this paper is setting aside regular time for the Christ-follower to meet weekly with his Commander In Chief to prayerfully think through his mission. In God’s economy, there is a special day set apart, which is ideal for doing this—the Lord’s Day. *“Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God”* (Ex 20:9-10).

The author of this paper is not a strict Sabbatarian. Yet the principle of going hard for six days but taking the seventh to rest is a creation ordinance. There is great profit for today’s busy Christian man to observe this principle of resting and reflecting one day per week. It is the ideal time to get away with our CO, let him look over our shoulder at our FOCUS notebook goals (playbook), and prompt us, through his Spirit, about what our game plan should be in the coming week. I challenge men to give The High King one of their 168 hours each week to pray through their kingdom mission. The best time for most men to do this is Sunday afternoon or evening.

APENDIX C

THE KEY TO ENDURANCE AS KINGDOM DISCIPLES

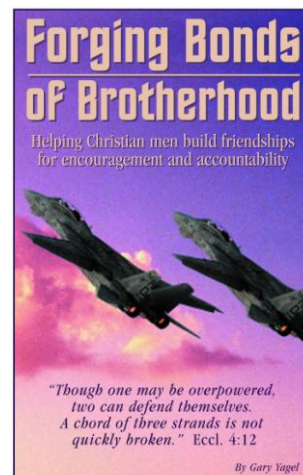
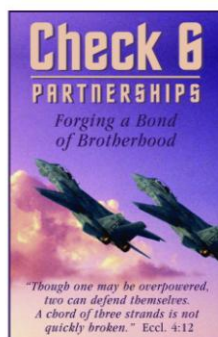
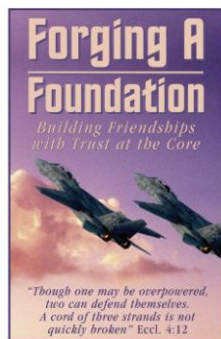
The stakes are too high, the battle too fierce, the enemy too wily, the attacks too frequent, the cost of defeat too severe for any Christian man to fight his spiritual battles alone.

God never intended Christians to fight their spiritual battle alone. Yet, research shows that nineteen out of twenty Christian men today have no best friend. They have no brother beside them helping them fight their battles. In fact, they have no brother who even knows what their spiritual battles are.

Men who answer the call to kingdom discipleship enlist in a titanic battle to implement Christ's agenda of righteousness in every sphere of their lives. They face Satan who seeks to destroy their potential, the world that seeks to entice them with its idols. But even more deadly is the enemy within—their own sinful nature, which seeks to overpower them. A central part of kingdom discipleship is recognizing that kingdom righteousness can only be established through the power of Christ. We must “be strong in the Lord in the strength of his might” (Eph 6:10). **God's plan to supply strength to his people is through connection in his body.**

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken (Eccl 4:9-12).

Over three thousand men in hundreds of churches have used the following resources to form the friendships they need as kingdom disciples.



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