



Seeing the Kingdom Through the Cross

or

Missing the King & His Kingdom



TITLE & AUTHOR

Seeing the Kingdom Through the Cross
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Preface

"Seeing the Kingdom Through the Cross" – After teaching this message for decades, I decided to commit it into print format. At the time of this writing (2016), I am once again observing a phenomenon which I have been aware of for more than three decades. But, in fact, it is something which has been going on decades before I was even born. I think what Gregory Boyd wrote in the introduction of his book, "The Myth of a Christian Nation" (2005), most effectively describes what I am referring to:

"I believe a significant segment of American evangelicalism is guilty of nationalistic and political idolatry. To a frightful degree, I think, evangelicals fuse the kingdom of God with a preferred version of the kingdom of the world (whether it's our national interests, a particular form of government, a particular political program, or so on). Rather than focusing our understanding of God's kingdom on the person of Jesus – who, incidentally, never allowed himself to get pulled into the political disputes of his day – I believe many of us American evangelicals have allowed our understanding of the kingdom of God to be polluted with political ideals, agendas, and issues... I will argue that this perspective is misguided, that fusing together the kingdom of God with this or any other version of the kingdom of the world is idolatrous and that this fusion is having serious negative consequences for Christ's church and for the advancement of

God's kingdom.... I do not argue that those political positions are either wrong or right.... Nor do I argue that Christians shouldn't be involved in politics.... The issue is far more fundamental than how we should vote or participate in government. Rather, I hope to challenge the assumption that finding the right political path has anything to do with advancing the kingdom of God."

Boyd then goes on to address the myth of a "Christian nation", and contrasts "The Kingdom of the Sword" and "The Kingdom of the Cross". I highly recommend his book; and I am very grateful to be able to utilize this quote.¹ I would now like to proceed with my own personal approach to addressing this spiritual situation.

There is something of much more significance than what is happening with governments and politicians – and that is, what is happening with believers and the Church (the Ekklesia)². Government deified is antichrist

¹ However, I must add here that Greg Boyd holds particular views which he has published in other books which I definitely do not agree with and do not recommend.

² Some thoughts on using the word "Ekklesia": **Not everyone identifying with the word "church" is part of the Ecclesia of God. There is only one true Church made up of those who have received the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9-10) - those who "possess the Son".** (1 John 5:11-12) However, contrary to what is in vogue today for some, I make no distinction between the Greek word, ekklesia, and its English translation, "church". I use the two words interchangeably. If I use the word "church", I mean the full and accurate biblical meaning of "ekklesia". Simply using the Greek word, ekklesia, in and of itself, helps no one understand the biblical meaning. **The biblical meaning will always require explanation for the unlearned.** Therefore, I think the English words, "church", or "assembly", or "community" are adequate translations. When writing, I sometimes find myself leaning towards

– specifically, emperor worship, be it ancient or contemporary – and antichrist is doomed to failure. The political failures of governments may seem disconcerting but are actually a historical “given” – that is, governments always have failed, and they always will fail. What is more grievous are the spiritual failures of the Church – that is in effect a “contradiction”, which the Holy Spirit refers to in various ways – for example: “lying against the truth”³ and “having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.”⁴ Scripture tells us to “avoid such people”, which is exactly what non-believers instinctively and rationally do, while incredibly undiscerning believers elect “such people” into political office! How can such lack of spiritual discernment be explained? As Gregory Boyd infers, the explanation is a misunderstanding of the Kingdom of God, an

using terms like “the people of God”, or “the disciples of the kingdom”, or “the followers of Christ” - depending on the context.

Furthermore, not identifying as “Church” does not “automatically” make us the “Ekklesia”. If we are going to identify as the “Ekklesia”, there must be the reality of being and living as “called out” AND “GATHERED TOGETHER” AND ENGAGED IN THE MATTERS OF THE KINGDOM (it’s the latter that is demonstratively lacking today.) Donning the Greek word is duplicitous and inconsistent. If that were the thing to do, why aren’t we using Greek words to communicate 100s of other New Covenant truths? Moreover, don’t the words “congregation” and “assembly” ALSO conjure up images of people sitting in a BUILDING? Doesn’t the term “ekklesia” conjure up the connotation “ecclesiastical” (man-made church systems)? We also have to reckon with Paul’s injunction: “Solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers.” (2 Timothy 2:14) What do we do with that? I think we are still “missing the mark” and “falling short” with all of this.

³ James 3:14b

⁴ 2 Timothy 3:5

embracing of the myth of a “Christian nation”, and the pursuit of a Constantinian civil religion. Civil religion is not a manifestation of or even a witness to the Kingdom of God. Civil religion has no more power than secular government because it exists and operates in the same sphere – that is, it is “of this world”⁵. Since the Church is to preach “the gospel of the kingdom” and be a representative witness to the Kingdom⁶, it is imperative that we “see” and “enter” the Kingdom⁷, “proving the will of God” through “a spiritual service of worship” which is the antithesis of the ways of the World.⁸ What is needed for the Church to “see”, “enter”, and live out an authentic witness to the Kingdom of God?

⁵ Cf. John 15:19; 17:14 & 16

⁶ Matthew 24:14

⁷ John 3:3-5

⁸ Romans 12:4:23-24

Introduction

The Need for Christ-Centeredness

“For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him” - “a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”⁹

Christ is “God’s mystery”. The mystery of Christ is not something which cannot be understood - it is something that must be revealed. In order to properly understand the mind of God concerning the Kingdom of God, we must see things from God’s perspective, that is, from God’s point of view. This is “the mind of Christ”. We must see everything “through” Christ.

Christ is God’s sole perspective. Christ is God’s point of view. To understand the Kingdom of God, we must understand the mystery of Christ, who is the King of that Kingdom. If we seek the Kingdom of God and do not enter into the mystery of Christ, we have not entered into the Kingdom and will misrepresent the Kingdom of Heaven in the world. By and large, the Church in the Western nations has failed to see and

⁹ Colossians 2:2b-3

enter the Kingdom of God and therefore is misrepresenting the King and His Kingdom in the world.

So, it is essential to understand the mystery of Christ who is the King of the Kingdom. **The quintessential aspect of the Christ of God is His Cross.** He is, in fact, a Crucified King. To understand the Christ of God, we must understand the Cross of Christ. To see the Christ of God, we must see a “Crucified Christ”.¹⁰ **To truly see the Kingdom of God, we must see it through the Cross of Christ.** It is, in fact, the Kingdom of the Cross. What is needed to see the Crucified Christ and His Kingdom of the Cross? To offer an answer to that question is the goal of this message.¹¹

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 2:2

¹¹ In other messages which I have published, I have dealt in more detail with the Cross – “His Cross”, and the calling of the Church – “Our Cross”. Suggested Reading: [*“The Cross & The Eternal Purpose of God”*](#), [*“The Cross & The Powers of Darkness”*](#), [*“The God-Centered Life”*](#), and [*“Transformation of Self”*](#).

Repentance

John the Baptist came preaching "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."¹² Jesus also came preaching "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."¹³ They presented "*Repentance*" as a pre-requisite to seeing and entering the Kingdom of God.¹⁴ In order to preach the gospel of the Kingdom, the Church needs to preach repentance. But the Church cannot preach or present the Kingdom without first embracing repentance herself.

"Repentance" - What is it?

The word in the New Testament which is translated "repent" is *metanoeo*, being made up of two words: *meta* (change) + *noeo* (to perceive). **Repentance is a change in one's perception**, which leads to a change in thinking, which, in turn, leads to a change in behavior.

¹² Matthew 3:2

¹³ Matthew 4:17

¹⁴ Unlike Dispensationalists, I make no distinction between the phrases "kingdom of god" and "Kingdom of Heaven". God's kingdom is, in every sense of the word, "heavenly". Everything in His kingdom is "born of heaven" (John 3:3 & 5). What is born of flesh and blood cannot inherit or enter the kingdom. (John 3:6; 1 Corinthians 15:50).

“Repentance” - Why is it necessary?

Jesus, His apostles, and Scripture all indicate that **one needs a change of perception in order to see the kingdom of God. And the Cross is God's instrument for changing our perception of things.** To “take up your cross and deny yourself”¹⁵ changes the center from self to God, giving God’s perspective on things rather than a self-centered and / or a Man-centered perspective.

To perceive the Kingdom properly, one must properly perceive Christ, the King of the Kingdom, because the Kingdom is of the same nature as its King.

Unfortunately, there are “different” perspectives of Christ which lead to “different” gospels, and “different” kingdoms.

The “gospel of God” is the message which reveals Christ; that is, “...the gospel of God...concerning His Son...”¹⁶ The apostle Paul warns the Church that there is the “gospel of Christ” but there is also a “different gospel”.¹⁷ And, Paul warns the Church that there is a “different spirit” which preaches a “different Jesus”.¹⁸ A “different gospel” will reveal a “different christ”, and consequently, a “different kingdom”. So, there exists a “different gospel”

¹⁵ Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23

¹⁶ Romans 1:1-3

¹⁷ Galatians 1:6-9

¹⁸ 2 Corinthians 11:3-4

which is not "the gospel of God", a "different christ"
which is not the Christ of God, and a "different
kingdom" which is not the Kingdom of God.

Seeing & Entering the Kingdom

If we do not enter the Kingdom God's way, that is, **through the cross**, it is not God's Kingdom that we enter.

"Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist. Yet one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. **From the days of John, the Baptist until now**, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence (*or is forcibly entered*), and violent men take it by force (*or seize it for themselves*)."¹⁹
Matthew 11:11-12

"From the days of John the Baptist until now...."

John the Baptist was under the Old Covenant. Jesus brought a New Covenant. What we call the Old and the New Covenants are a progressive revelation of one covenant. But there are different ways – “old” and “new” - for keeping the covenant. In the Old Covenant, it is by works. In the New Covenant it is by faith in Christ. But the nature of the covenant is the same.

¹⁹ The phrases in italics are mine.

Likewise, there is only one Kingdom of God being progressively revealed. Under the Old Covenant, it was revealed as an earthly kingdom established through violent overthrow of the enemies in the Promised Land. In the New Covenant, it is revealed as a heavenly kingdom established by spiritual means. **It is important to understand this principle with God: He has chosen to reveal first the natural, and then, the spiritual.**²⁰

²⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:46

The Nature of the King & His Kingdom

In Colossians 2:15, Paul explains that Jesus "disarmed the rulers and authorities, and made a public display of them, having triumphed over them **through the cross.**" And in Romans 14:17 Paul tells us that "...the Kingdom of God ... is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

This heavenly kingdom is not a kingdom of violence. There is no place in it for violent men. The fact is some of the "violent men" at that time were the Zealots - the activist political party which Judas Iscariot belonged to. Their goal of the violent overthrow of Rome was totally contrary to Jesus' agenda. Jesus was referring to them as **a prime example of those who could not see the true kingdom through the Cross.**

Then how are we to understand what Jesus said in Luke 16:16? "The Law and the prophets were proclaimed until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it."

Firstly, this can not be some sort of universal "gate crashing", because in both Matthew 7:13-14 and Luke 13:24, Jesus said "the gate is small, and the way is narrow... and there are few who find it". Concerning the phrase "and everyone is forcing his way into it": In the Berkley Translation it reads: "and everyone would force his own

way, rather than God's way, into it." **God's way into the kingdom is through the Cross.** In Acts 14:22 Paul said that "Through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God." We progress through **tribulations** – not through physical violence. **These tribulations are the fellowship of the sufferings in the Cross of Christ.**

The Cross is truly the "power and glory" of the Kingdom, as is stated at the end of the Lord's Prayer.²¹ “²⁰ Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; ²¹ these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, ‘Sir, we wish to see Jesus.’ ²² Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus. ²³ And Jesus answered them, saying, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be **glorified**. ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵ He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. ²⁶ If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him. ²⁷ Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose, I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, **glorify** Your name.’ Then a voice came out of heaven: ‘I have both **glorified** it and **will glorify** it again.’”
John 12:20-28

“³² And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to

²¹ Matthew 6:13

Myself.”³³ But He was saying this **to indicate the kind of death** by which He was to die.” John 12:32-33

Jesus spoke of His crucifixion on the Cross as "glorifying" both Himself and the Father.

“³⁷ But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him. ³⁸ This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: ‘Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’ ³⁹ For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, ⁴⁰ ‘He has blinded their eyes and He hardened their heart, so that they would not see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and be converted and I heal them.’ ⁴¹ These things Isaiah said because **he saw His glory**, and he spoke of Him.”

John 12:37-41

Concerning this quotation from Isaiah 53, John says: "These things Isaiah said, because **he saw His glory** and spoke of Him". He saw that the Messiah was a "Suffering Servant". This is exactly what so many people in Jesus' time were not able to see or accept – a "**Christ crucified**".

In 1 Corinthians 1:18, this is what Paul had to say about the true "power" of the Kingdom: “For **the word of the**

cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it **is the power of God.**”

Missing the King & His Kingdom

In Matthew 2: 4-6, we see Herod asking “the chief priests and scribes” where the Messiah was to be born. They didn't need to run a search on their Bible study software programs, they knew the answer! They knew Scripture, but they had no revelation of Christ. They did not recognize Him when He was standing right in front of them. This was not only true of “the chief priests and scribes” but this was also true of the majority of “the people of God” in Jesus’ time. This phenomenon of a very large group of people who cannot see the reality of the King and His Kingdom not only existed in Jesus’ time, but it has also existed throughout all Church history and still exists today. In the 5th chapter of John’s gospel, we find Jesus giving a description and an explanation of this phenomenon:

³⁷ And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form. ³⁸ You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. ³⁹ You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; ⁴⁰ and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. ⁴¹ I do not receive glory from men; ⁴² but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. ⁴³ I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. ⁴⁴ How can you believe,

when you receive glory from one another, and you do not seek the glory that is from the *one and only* God?”

John 5:37-44

In this passage, Jesus explains why so many people miss the King and His Kingdom. Jesus said that the Father sent Him and testified of Him; but people do not receive the testimony of the Father or the testimony of Scripture; and consequently, miss the King and His Kingdom. “Missing” the King and His Kingdom is nothing short of not believing in the Christ of God; not coming to Him for life; and not receiving Him as King. Jesus said that this is so because these people haven’t “seen” the Father, haven’t “heard the Father’s voice”, and “don’t have His word abiding in them”.²² This is the case because they essentially “do not have the love of God in themselves”. Simply put: **they love something else more than God**. This “something else” determines the kind of king and kingdom they will seek and pledge their allegiance to. This “something else” is what Jesus identified as the “glory” of Man – “the glory from men” (v. 41), “receiving one who comes in his own name” (v. 43), “receiving glory from one another” (v. 44). This “something else” is a king and kingdom of the people’s preference. Their preference is a king and a kingdom

²² In Matthew 16:13-17, Jesus told Peter that it is the Father Who reveals Christ. So, people cannot see the King and His kingdom unless they have first “seen” the Father, “heard His voice”, and have “His word abiding in themselves”.

“of this world”.²³ This is not unlike Israel asking Samuel to “appoint a king to lead us such as all the other nations have”. God said that in so doing, “they have rejected Me as their King.”²⁴

This is a demonstration of a particular kind of “faith”²⁵ – that is, looking to, trusting in, depending upon, and leaning upon a king and kingdom that is sourced, not in God, but in “humanity” and in the “elemental principles of the world”.²⁶ This is a demonstration of “faith” in a preferred substitute, which replaces faith in the Father God and the King of His Kingdom. This substitute is antichrist. Because **we inevitably serve**²⁷ **our source**, this pledging of allegiance to an earthly king and kingdom results in nothing short of a deification of the State, which is essentially the same as the emperor worship of first century Rome and the prophesied worship of the beast.²⁸

To put it simply, this is a people who do not want the type of Christ God has given – that is, a Crucified Christ – a Crucified King and a Kingdom of the Cross – which was foretold by Isaiah: “Who has believed our

²³ Revelation 11:15

²⁴ 1 Samuel 8:4-7

²⁵ Greek: *pistis*

²⁶ Colossians 2:8 & 20

²⁷ “Worship” is consists of an inward “bowing down” (Greek: *proskuneo*, Strong’s # 4352) and an outward “serving” (Greek: *latreuo*, Strong’s # 3000).

²⁸ Revelation 13:4, 12, 15; 14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4

message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.”²⁹

A Crucified Christ

The Cross of the Crucified Christ is truly the "power and glory" of the Kingdom of God. But there was in Jesus' day, there is today, and in the future there will be those who look for a different kind of a king and a different kind of a kingdom. Paul identifies two types of people: “²² For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” 1 Corinthians 1:22-23

People like the Jews

From the Jew's perspective, the main characteristic of the king of the kingdom would be one who did powerful, miraculous "signs". Although Jesus' miracles attracted people, **the Crucified Christ** was "a stumbling

²⁹ Isaiah 53:1-3

block" for the Jews. A Muslim once challenged me: "*The Christian gospel doesn't make sense - How could they crucify God?*" Peter quoted Isaiah in 1 Peter 2:7-8: "The Stone which the builders rejected, this became the very Cornerstone, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." In the same way, **people like the Jews miss the King and His Kingdom.**

People like the Greeks (or the Gentiles)

From the Greek's perspective, the main characteristic of the king of the kingdom would be a man of wisdom - a philosopher. The gospel of the Christ being crucified, buried and resurrected in order to bring redemption was foolishness to the Greeks. In Acts 19, verses 19 and 32, we see that Paul encountered this perspective when he preached the gospel to the Athenians at Areopagus. Their opinion was that this "idle babbler" was proclaiming strange deities because he was proclaiming Jesus and the resurrection. So, because the divine logic of a "Crucified Christ" who is resurrected exceeds their limited human logic, **people like the Greeks miss the King and His kingdom.**

The Coming of the King and His Kingdom

Some historical background may reflect parallels between the first and second coming of Christ, and in

turn, may give us some insight into the times in which we live:

When Jesus came the first time, a great majority of those who identified as “the people of God” had a perspective which was more political than spiritual. I believe that when Jesus comes again, it will be to a people whose majority has a perspective which again has become more political than spiritual.

There were religious groups in Jesus' day which I believe correspond to religious groups in the Christendom today. **These are people who seek a kingdom without the Cross of Christ.**

It is interesting to note that there was a 400-year period in between the Old and the New Testaments. It is known as the “Inter-Testamental Period”. It is also known as the “400 Silent Years”. There was so little true spirituality that God had nothing to say to His people. I believe these 400 years of spiritual darkness for “the people of God” under the rule of various worldly powers corresponds to the 400 years of physical bondage of “the people of God” in Egypt. I also personally believe that it corresponds to what Jesus called "the times of the gentiles",³⁰ as I believe the Greek

³⁰ Luke 21:24

word, *ethnos*³¹, is better translated here as "nations", as it is most often translated throughout the New Testament. In other words - "the times of the nations", that is, the times in which "the people of God" live in this world under the rule of the nations' governments. In any case, it was during these spiritually dark times that various religious groups emerged. In the first century, there were Jewish sects which all were waiting and looking for a Messiah, but each rejected Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, because He was a Crucified Christ. In this history, I believe there are lessons to be learned for Christians today.

The Herodians

The sons of Herod ruled Palestine under the license of Rome. Because they wanted to maintain their position of rule, they would politically align themselves with the Roman government. But they also looked for the day when the national kingdom of Israel would be restored free of Roman domination and would be ruled by one of the sons of Herod. This can be compared to any religiously based movement with a political agenda, of which there have been many. But "Christian Nationalism" serves as a good example. The Herodian perspective seemed to be focused on a messiah who would be one of the sons of Herod. Far from accepting

³¹ Strong's # G1484

a Crucified Christ, we know from the second chapter of Matthew's gospel that Herod himself tried to crucify Christ when He came. Why? Herod reveled in his position of power and would eliminate any possible competition threatening to win the hearts of the people. This served to belie the reality that his faith took a second place to his politic.

The Sadducees

Since the Sadducees were the high priests and temple leaders, they aligned themselves politically with the secular government and culture because it allowed them to carry on their occupations in the temple. Their interests being more political than spiritual, the Sadducees did not believe in the spirit world or an afterlife, and therefore, their religion was very much oriented to this life in the world. Today we would identify this perspective with those religious movements which are “humanistic”, “progressive”, and “social justice” oriented.

The Zealots

The Zealot perspective evolved from a zeal for the Law of God to a zeal in the form of a radical, political activism. Essentially, they were a "national resistance" movement plotting the violent overthrow of the Roman

government in order to establish a Jewish state. It is interesting that radical “Far Right” fringe groups, as well as movements identifying with "Liberation Theology" are both examples in modern history of this perspective.

The Pharisees

I took the Pharisees out of alphabetical order and saved them for last, because they most represent many “Evangelical Christians” today. The name “*Pharisee*” means “those who are separated”. They considered themselves to be “separated”, and therefore holy, because of their observance of legalistic rituals. They believed that their style of holiness would quicken the coming of a messiah, who would overthrow the Gentiles, re-gather and restore Israel, and rebuild the temple and then re-institute the sacrifices in Jerusalem where the messiah would set up the throne of his kingdom. The nations would bring their taxes to Jerusalem and would be converted to temple worship. It was an earthly kingdom the Pharisees expected, not the Kingdom of Heaven. Today we call this “Zionism”.

As I said, each of these first century Jewish sects were waiting and looking for the Messiah, but each rejected

Jesus as the Christ, because He was a Crucified Christ.
We must see the Kingdom through the Cross.³²

³² Suggested Reading: ["Who is this King of Glory?", "The Way of the Cross", "The Cross & The Powers of Darkness", "The Weakness of God"](#).

A Crucified King and a Kingdom of the Cross

Even Christ's disciples - people like ourselves – found it very difficult to understand this concept of a **Crucified Christ** and to see **this Kingdom of the Cross**.

When Jesus appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, they asked Him: "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"³³ Their kingdom expectation was still Old Covenant. They were still expecting the establishment of an earthly kingdom. Like ourselves, Jesus' disciples needed a change of perception through the Cross of Christ.

Let's take a look at Jesus speaking to His disciples about the Cross. As He speaks about "His Cross", we will see that He also introduces the phrase - "your cross". And at the same time, He defines exactly what "the Cross" is. By Jesus' own definition, **the Cross is denying oneself for the glory of God**.³⁴ As we look at some

³³ Acts 1:6

³⁴ The Cross is "self denial": Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23 "for the glory of God": John 12:27-28; 17:1. I have dealt in more detail with the definition, meaning and work of the cross in other messages which I've published, particularly [*"The Cross & The Eternal Purpose of God"*](#), [*"The God-Centered Life"*](#), [*"Transformation of Self"*](#), and [*"The Cross & The Powers of Darkness"*](#).

passages in the gospels, I hope to point out how very difficult it was for Jesus' disciples to grasp His Message of the Cross and the Kingdom of the Cross. The reason **the Message of the Cross** is hard to grasp is because it is very un-natural. Denying self goes against our fallen human nature. Let's begin with the example of Peter:

Matthew 16

¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

So, Peter's answer was: *"You are the King of the Kingdom which God has promised His people."*

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. ²² Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'God forbid *it*, Lord! This shall never happen to You.' ²³ But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.'"

Peter could recognize Jesus as the King of the Kingdom, but at this point, he could not see a Crucified Christ and the Kingdom of the Cross.

“²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. ²⁵ For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.’”

Again, **the meaning of the Cross is self-denial for the glory of God.** But the other disciples also could not see a Crucified Christ and the Kingdom of the Cross.

Matthew 20:17-22

“¹⁷ As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and on the way He said to them, ¹⁸ ‘Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, ¹⁹ and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify *Him*, and on the third day He will be raised up.’ ²⁰ Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. ²¹ And He said to her, ‘What do you wish?’ She said to Him, ‘Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left.’ ²² But Jesus answered, ‘You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?’ They said to Him, ‘We are able.’”

The sons of Zebedee, James and John, were two of the twelve disciples. Maybe this preferential placement in the kingdom was this typical Jewish mother's idea. But

when Jesus asked, "Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?", it was the two brothers that answered "Yes." Both they and their mother recognized Jesus as the prophesied Christ of the Kingdom. But Jesus had said to them: "You don't know what you are asking." They did not see the Kingdom of the Cross. They still had an Old Covenant kingdom expectation. They were still expecting the establishment of an earthly kingdom. The "cup", of course, was **the Cross**, where Jesus **denied Himself for the glory of God**.

Luke 9

“²⁰ And He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ And Peter answered and said, ‘The Christ of God.’”

Again, Peter's answer is, *"You are the prophesied Christ of the kingdom."*

“²¹ But He warned them and instructed *them* not to tell this to anyone, ²² saying, ‘The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day.’

²³ And He was saying to them all, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. ²⁴ For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.’”

Once again: The meaning of **the Cross is self denial for the glory of God.**

In verses 28-31 of Luke 9 we have what is usually referred to as "The Transfiguration": Jesus went up on a mountain with three disciples, Peter, John, and James. There, He was transfigured in glory, as He prayed. Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke with Him about His death on **the cross** in Jerusalem. This transfiguration in glory was not only a preview of the glory of the resurrected Christ, but also a preview of the glory that was soon to come – that is, **His death on the cross**. As indicated in John 12:20-28, Jesus spoke to His disciples of His crucifixion on **the cross as "glorifying"** both Himself and the Father. And in verses 37-41 it says: "These things Isaiah said, because **he saw His glory** and spoke of Him". In other words, Isaiah saw that the Messiah was a "**Suffering Servant**". Again, this is exactly what so many people in Jesus' time were not able to see or accept - "**Christ crucified**".

³⁷ On the next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met Him. ³⁸ And a man from the crowd shouted, saying, 'Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he is my only boy, ³⁹ and a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams, and it throws him into a convulsion with foaming at the mouth; and only with difficulty does it leave him, mauling him as it leaves. ⁴⁰ I begged Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not.' ⁴¹ And Jesus answered and

said, 'You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.' ⁴² While he was still approaching, the demon slammed him to the ground and threw him into a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy and gave him back to his father."

Here we see Jesus cast out a demon. He had said to the people earlier in Matthew 12:28, "If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you." Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:14, the Holy Spirit has been given as a "down payment" of the heavenly Kingdom to come; and in Hebrews 6:5 – this is just "a foretaste of the powers of the age to come." But the people interpreted what they saw as the ultimate fulfillment of an earthly kingdom for Israel.

⁴³ And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. But while everyone was marveling at all that He was doing, He said to His disciples, ⁴⁴ 'Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.' ⁴⁵ But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they would not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement."

Even to His own disciples Jesus had to say: *"Don't misinterpret what you are seeing. I have already told you this many times before, so **let these words sink into your ears:** Your Messiah is actually going to suffer and die on the*

cross.” But, they just could not understand a “**Crucified Christ**” or a throne which was actually a **Cross**.

Luke 24

We are all familiar with the event of Jesus appearing to two disciples on the road to Emmaus:

“¹³ And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and *began* traveling with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. ¹⁷ And He said to them, ‘What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?’ And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, ‘Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?’ ¹⁹ And He said to them, ‘What things?’ And they said to Him, ‘The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, ²⁰ and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death and crucified Him. ²¹ But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened.’”

This is how Jesus responded to them:

“²⁵ And He said to them, ‘O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?’”

It definitely takes a revelation of Christ – a revelation of **“Christ Crucified”** – It takes a revelation of the glory of **The Cross of Christ**, in order to truly understand, see and enter into the Kingdom.³⁵

“²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. ²⁸ And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther. ²⁹ But they urged Him, saying, ‘Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over.’ So, He went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed *it*, and breaking *it*, He began giving *it* to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. ³² They said to one another, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?’”

This revelation is an unveiling of the mystery of Christ contained in the doctrines of Christ³⁶. This revelation

³⁵ Matthew 16:16-19

³⁶ Hebrews 6:1-2; Cf. 5:12.

comes by “eating and drinking” of Christ in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. It is a revelation of Christ which comes through the “opening up” of Scripture to our hearts and minds. This is what we need to truly embrace the King and His Kingdom.

To this I must add that all we see and experience in this spiritual kingdom is in stark contrast to what we see and experience with human governments, politicians, parties, policies, programs and legislation!³⁷

Consider this revelation of Christ which was given to the apostle John on the Isle of Patmos:

“⁵ And one of the elders said to me, ‘Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.’

⁶ And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain.”

Revelation 5:5-6

One of the elders said, behold “the Lion”, behold “Judah”, behold “the Root of David”. All these refer to Jesus as the King of the Kingdom. But when he turned to look, what John beheld was: “**A Lamb ... as if slain**”. In the Kingdom of the Cross the Lion is a **Lamb**. The **Lamb** is a Lion.

³⁷ I have written extensively on this topic in other books – particularly in [“The Cross & The Eternal Purpose of God”](#).

In Colossians 2:15, Paul explains that Jesus “disarmed the rulers, and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them **through the cross.**” Christ’s overcoming victory – His ruling and reigning – is all through **the cross. The Cross** – the throne of the universe - is truly “the power and glory” of His Kingdom.

A Closing Thought

In summary, to truly see the King and His Kingdom – a Crucified Christ and the Kingdom of the Cross - a change of perception is required. The cross is God's instrument for changing fallen man's perception of things.³⁸ The Cross is the true power and glory of Christ and his Kingdom.³⁹

Since Jesus, the King of the Kingdom, overcame through **the Cross**, and rules and reigns through **the Cross**, **this is also the pattern for us to overcome and reign with Him in the Kingdom of God**. The only way we can overcome the powers of darkness is the way Jesus did – **through the Cross**. This is the apostolic message – “the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints”⁴⁰: “You have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps.”⁴¹ “If indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”⁴² “If we endure, we will also reign with Him.”⁴³

³⁸ Cf. My book, [“The Way of the Cross”](#).

³⁹ Again, I have dealt in more detail with the definition, meaning, and work of the cross in other messages which I’ve published, particularly [“The Cross & The Eternal Purpose of God”](#), [“The God-Centered Life”](#), [“Transformation of Self”](#), and [“The Cross & The Powers of Darkness”](#).

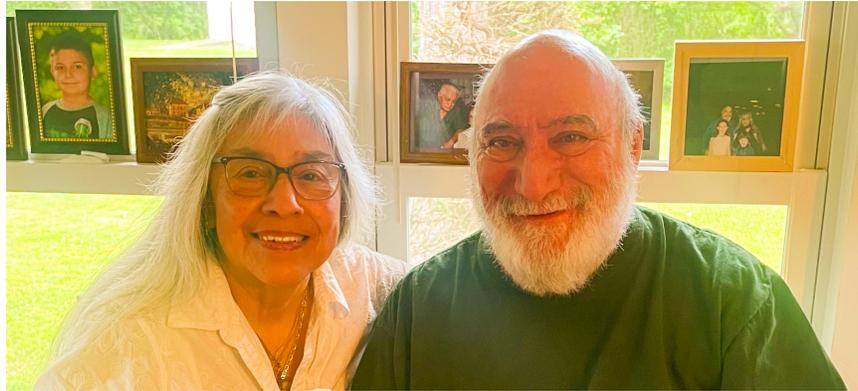
⁴⁰ Jude 3b

⁴¹ 1 Peter 2:21

⁴² Romans 8:17

⁴³ 2 Timothy 2:12

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Bill Furioso and his wife, Frances, have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

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