

THE GATHERING- Pastor Gene Wolfenbarger Series—The Kingdom of God- Session 1

Session 1: “Why Study the Kingdom of God?”

I. OVERVIEW

Session 1: Why study the Kingdom of God?

Session 2: The Original Purpose of the Kingdom of God

Session 3: The Priority of the Kingdom of God

Session 4: The Power of the Kingdom of God

Session 5: Understanding Your Place and Position in the Kingdom of God

II. SEVEN PRAYERS

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

1. As **individuals**, we need to understand the importance of *our kingship* and *priesthood* as a believer (Revelation 1:5-6, 5:10, I Peter 2:9). One brings an understanding of *our authority as a believer* and the other *our role as an intercessor* in the Kingdom of God.
2. As **parents**, we want to teach our children and grandchildren the importance of the Kingdom of God.
3. As **leaders**, it is important to recognize that the Lord has called us to spiritually lead and to become aware that HE is raising up an **ARMY** in the last days to advance the Kingdom of God.
4. As a **church family**, we need a *greater understanding* of the Kingdom of God. (Matthew 6:33)
5. As a **church family**, we need to understand our *corporate assignment* in the Kingdom of God.
6. As a **church family**, we need to recognize *kingdom language* so that we can better understand Biblical language.
7. As a **church family**, we should *open our minds* to a new revelation concerning the Kingdom of God and learn to “*rethink*” the church and the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 3:2 (NKJV) (John the Baptist) ...and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”

Matthew 4:17 (NKJV) From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Luke 9:2 (NKJV) ²He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

III. HOW IMPORTANT is “THE KINGDOM of GOD?”

- A. As you read about the early days of the Christian movement in the book of Acts, we read that the Kingdom of God was spreading like a virus, invading every aspect of society. ***There wasn’t a possibility of containing it inside a building; it was unleashed onto the street.*** Either you will participate in some kind of religious activity that is increasingly disconnected from its surrounding culture, ***or you will join the ranks of those who want to experience the life of the Kingdom.*** You don’t need much help in making the first choice. ***However, if you want to participate in the Kingdom here and now, you will need some help in knowing how to prepare for that.***
- B. This study will help you understand the Kingdom of God and how the church exists to help advance the Kingdom of God. ***The Kingdom of God is basically the rule of God. It is God’s reign, the divine sovereignty in action.*** God’s reign, however, is manifested in several realms, and the gospels speak of entering into the Kingdom of God both today and tomorrow. ***God’s reign manifests itself both in the future and in the present and thereby creates both a future realm and a present realm in which men may experience the blessings of His reign.*** The Kingdom of God is, then, the realization of God’s will and the enjoyment of the accompanying blessings. We cannot understand the Kingdom of God without understanding what is central in theology and that is the doctrine of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.
- C. There is a very real and a very vital sense in which God has already manifested His reign, His will, His Kingdom, in the coming of Christ in the flesh, by virtue of which we may experience the life of the Kingdom here and now. As there are two advents of Christ, one in the flesh which we call the Incarnation, the other in glory which we call the Parousia or Second Coming, ***so there are two manifestations of God’s Kingdom: one in power and glory when Christ returns, but one which is present now because God’s Son has already***

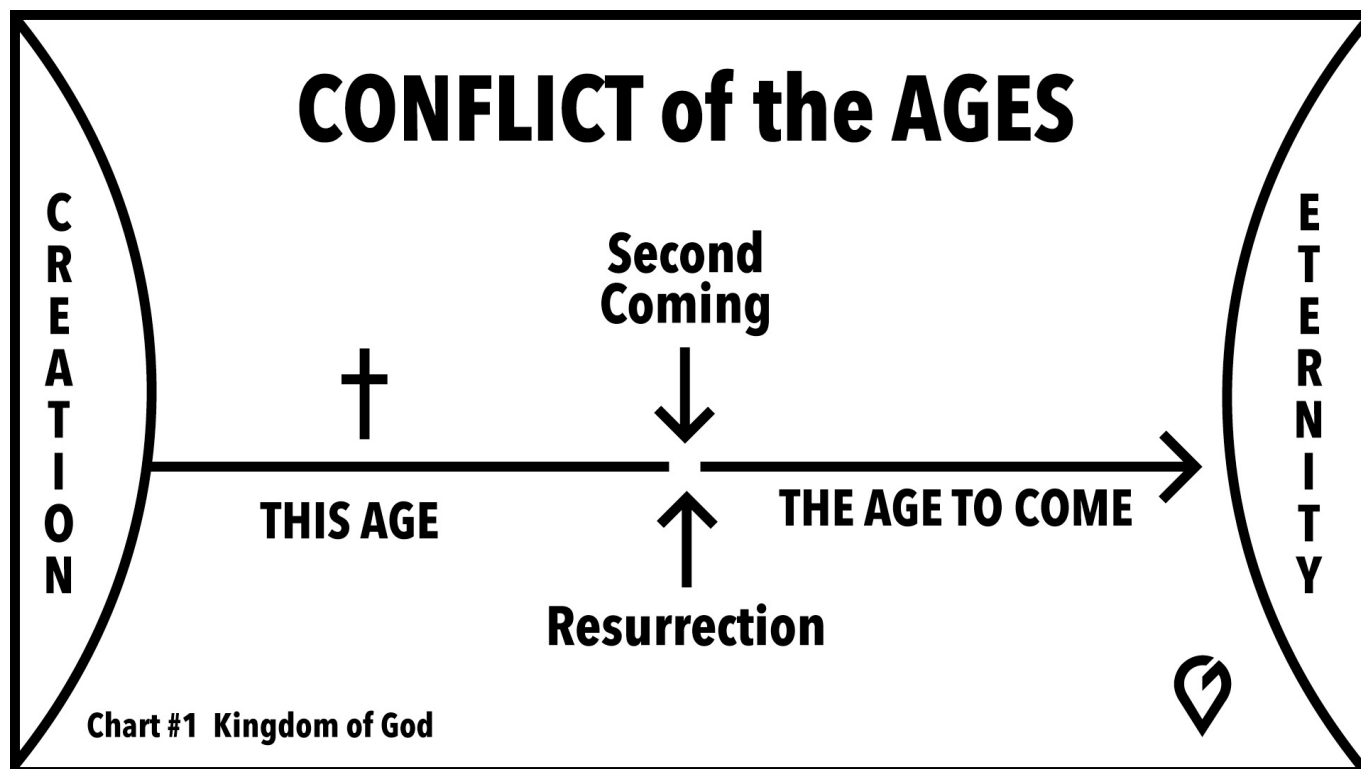
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appeared among men. In this study of the Kingdom of God, we are concerned in what the New Testament tells us about the *future aspect of His reign* and *the present aspect of God's Kingdom* as it has to do with present experience.

Matthew 12:32 (ESV) ³²*And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.*

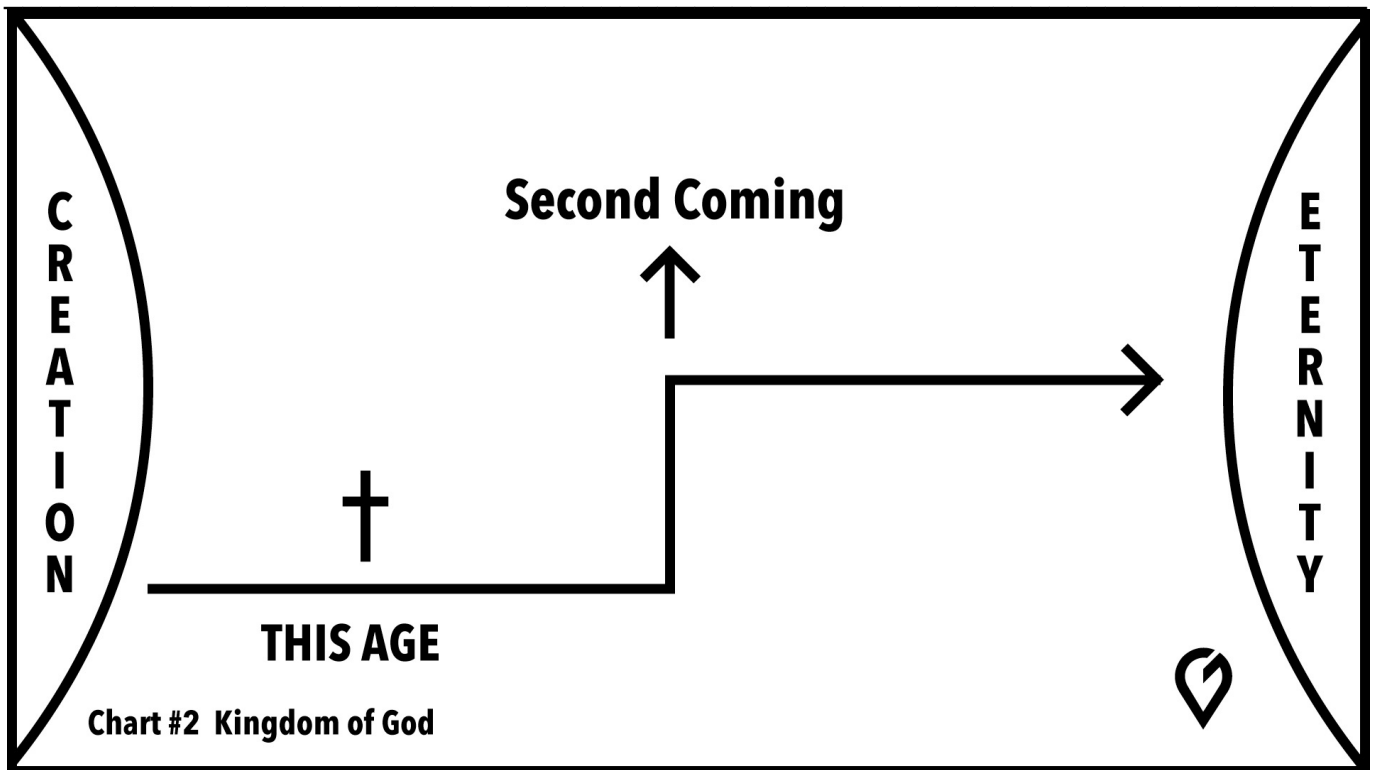
Ephesians 1:21 (ESV) ²¹*far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.*

Matthew 24:3 (ESV) ³*As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"*



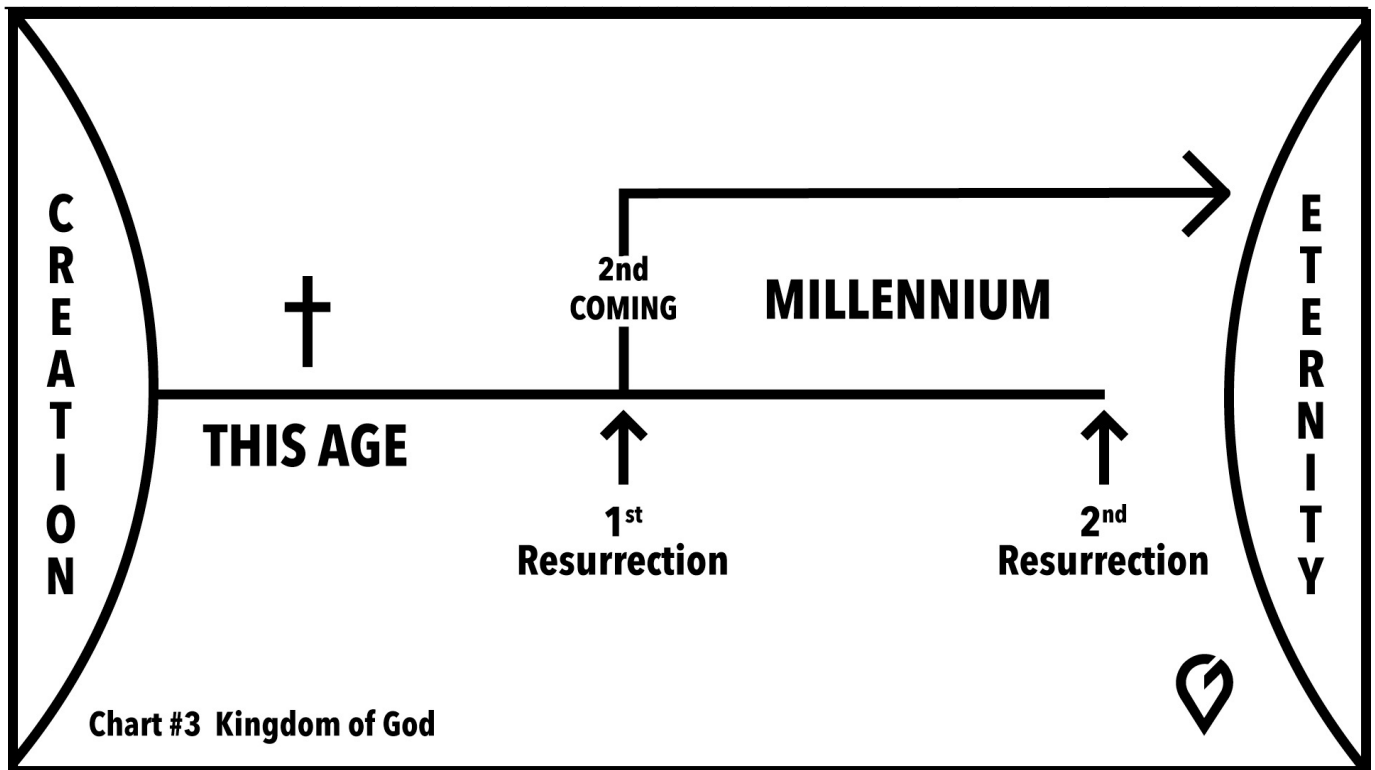
- D. Thus, we find that the Kingdom of God belongs to The Age to Come and is set in sharp contrast to This Age. ***In This Age there is death; in the Kingdom of God, eternal life.*** In This Age, the righteous and the wicked are mixed together; in the Kingdom of God, all wickedness and sin will be destroyed. For the present, Satan is viewed as the “god of this age;” but in The Age to Come, God’s Kingdom, God’s rule will have destroyed Satan, and righteousness will displace all evil. ***We must therefore change our chart of the Ages. This Age and The Age to Come are not on the same level. This Age is evil; The Age to Come will witness the fullness of God’s Kingdom, the perfection of His reign. Therefore, we must place The Age to Come on a higher level than This Age.***

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- E. From the New Testament perspective, the eschatological act of God is usually viewed as a single day which will introduce The Age to Come. When we examine the Book of Revelation and the writings of the Apostle Paul we will see that there are yet to be two eschatological stages in the accomplishment and the establishment of God's Kingdom. We will see the transition from This Age to The Age to Come will not occur in a single great event at the Coming of Christ. We have found that The Age to Come will be introduced by the resurrection of the dead and the destruction of the god of This Age. There is one resurrection at the beginning of the Millennium (Rev. 20: 4-5) and a second resurrection at its end (vv. 12-13).
- F. *Furthermore, we find that there are stages in the conquest over Satan.* At the beginning of the Millennium, Satan is thrown into the abyss and chained for a thousand years (w. 2-3); but at the end of the Millennium he is released to engage in his criminal activities again. **In brief, there are two stages in the defeat of Satan, not just one.** George Ladd states, "It would be extremely difficult to discover this fact from most of the New Testament because it sees the future like a two-dimension canvas in terms of length and breadth without depth." The transition between the ages is viewed as though it were one simple event, even as the Old Testament prophets look forward to a single Day of the Lord. Only when we come to the Revelation do we find Scripture clearly outlining the two stages in the conquest of Satan which are separated by the Millennium. **We must therefore change our chart again.**

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- G. We should note one important fact concerning the Millennial Reign. *The Millennium is not the perfect and final manifestation of God's Kingdom.* Satan is bound during this period; but when he is released, he finds the hearts of men still responsive to sin. *Death and the grave are not destroyed until the final judgment at the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20: 14).* *We might say, therefore, that the Millennium ends in failure so far as the full achievement of God's reign is concerned.*
- H. Only in The Age to Come beyond the Millennium is the prayer finally answered, *"Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."* The earth will then be a renewed earth, to be sure, but it will still be the earth. George Ladd states, *"It is the Biblical teaching that we shall never experience the full blessings of God's Kingdom in This Age. The perfected Kingdom of God belongs to The Age to Come."* We shall never know the fullness of its blessings so long as **this evil age** lasts. There will be no world-wide conversion this side of the Coming of Christ.
- I. Therefore, we ought not to be confused by wars and rumors of wars, by evils and by hostility to the Gospel. *Furthermore, the Kingdom of God will never be fully realized apart from the personal, glorious, victorious Coming of Christ. Men cannot build the Kingdom of God; Christ will bring it. We can advance it but not in complete fullness.*
- J. We have the truth that the Word of God divides the course of God's redemptive purpose into two ages: *This Age and The Age to Come.* These two ages are separated by the Second Coming of Christ and the resurrection from the dead. *The Kingdom of God belongs to The Age to Come and will be realized in its fulness only in that Age. If this is all we had, we would have a redemption which is exclusively one of promise something out in the far distant future. From this point of view, salvation would be only an insurance policy.* Insurance as you know is very important; but it is only a protection for the future against the day of calamity. It has no value to me today except to give me a sense of security.
- K. *This Age and The Age to Come is seen in scripture as overlapping each other.* There is not a single resurrection of the dead, but two resurrections which are separated by the Millennium. There are two stages in

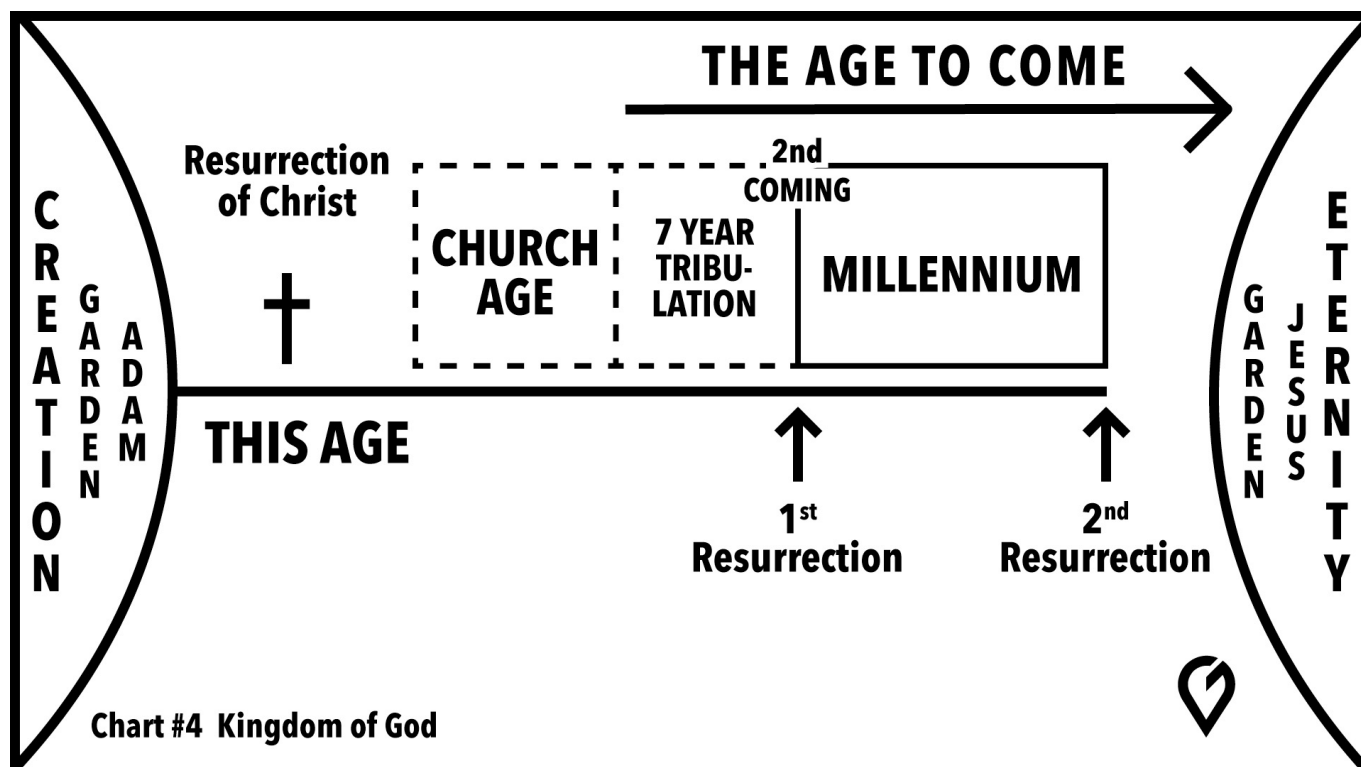
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the defeat of Satan. *There is to be an overlapping of these two ages during the millennial period. The earth will enjoy a new measure of the life and blessings of the Kingdom of God before the final consummation in The Age to Come. God's reign, His rule, will express itself in two great acts, one before and one after the Millennium.*

- L. **The Age to Come** is still future, but we may taste the powers of that Age. The powers of **The Age to Come** have penetrated This Age. While we still live in the present evil Age and while Satan is still the god of This Age, we may taste the powers of The Coming Age. Yet a taste is real. It is more than promise; it is realization; it is experience.

Hebrews 6:5 (ESV)⁵and (We) have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come,

- M. The Kingdom of God belongs to The Age to Come. *Yet the Age to Come has overlapped with This Age.* We may taste its powers and thereby be delivered from This Age and no longer live in conformity to it. This new transforming power is the power of **The Age to Come**; it is indeed the power of the Kingdom of God. *The Kingdom of God is future, but it is not only future. Like the powers of The Age to Come, the Kingdom of God has invaded this evil Age that men may know something of its blessings even while the evil Age continues on. We are in fact caught up in the conflict of the ages.* This may be illustrated by a further modification of our diagram.



- N. Perhaps the most important scripture expounding the fundamental character of the Kingdom of God is:

1 Corinthians 15:22–26 (ESV)²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.²³But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.²⁴Then comes the end.

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when he (Christ) delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

- O.** *This is a very interesting passage as it clearly OUTLINES the various stages by which God will accomplish His redemptive purpose. The ultimate objective is the accomplishment of God’s Kingdom, the realization of God’s perfect reign in all the universe. This is accomplished by the defeat of His enemies. Christ must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. **When these enemies are at last subdued, Christ will hand over the Kingdom to God.***

George Ladd in his book, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*: **“The Kingdom of God therefore is the reign of God through Christ destroying the enemies of God’s reign. The conquest of the Kingdom, according to this passage, finds its highest expression in the defeat of death.”**

- P.** *The Barna Group reveals that one out of every three adults (33 percent) is classified as unchurched—meaning they have not attended a religious service of any type during the past six months. When these statistics are projected across the aggregate adult population, the numbers are staggering. **An estimated 73 million adults are presently unchurched.** When teens and children are added, the total swells to roughly 100 million Americans.*
- Q.** *The Barna Group reveals only 3 out of 10 twentysomethings (31 percent) attend church in a typical week, compared to 4 out of 10 of those in their 30s (42 percent) and nearly half of all adults age 40 and older (49 percent).*
- R.** *The Barna Group reveals that one-third of the adult population (34 percent) has not attended any type of church service or activity, other than a special event such as a funeral or wedding, during the past six months. Citing past research that discovered most unchurched adults were formerly churched, the new study indicates that six out of ten unchurched people (62 percent) consider themselves to be Christian, four percent say they are Jewish, four percent are associated with an Eastern religion, and 24 percent say they are atheist.*
- S.** *The Barna Group also reveals since 1991, the adult population in the United States has grown by 15 percent. During that same period the number of adults who do not attend church has nearly doubled, rising from 39 million to 75 million—a 92 percent increase.” “Roughly half of all churches in America did not add one new person through conversion growth last year.” **“In America, it takes the combined effort of eighty-five Christians working over an entire year to produce one convert.”***
- T.** *Matt Smay in “The Tangible Kingdom” states, “Without blaming church leaders, the church at large, or denominations, we can at least acknowledge that something must change to reverse the trends. We need to start by doing some things we haven’t been doing, and we must stop doing some things that we have been doing. The world around us is growing increasingly disinterested in our Christian story. They respect us less and less every year, and our own people are jumping off the ship just to save their faith. **Worse, our children, for the first time in American history, aren’t following us in faith.**”*

- U.** *He goes on to say, “This type of **new** is about a returning. Returning to something ancient, something tried, something true and trustworthy. Something that has rerouted the legacies of families, nations, kings, and peasants. Something that has caused hundreds of thousands to give up security, reputation, and their lives. What we’re returning to has always been and must still be revolutionary. What we need to dig up, recover, and find again is the life of the Kingdom and Jesus’ community . . . the church. As we do, we’ll find that it’s not American . . . it’s “other world”; it’s not evangelicalism, it’s much more holistic and integrated into real life. It’s not anti-church; it’s pro-church. It’s about the type of church that Jesus would attend, the type he died to give flight to. It’s not about success, size of buildings, budgets or “salvations.” It is about being faithful to live Christ’s alternative ways in the world again.”*

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V. We must begin to ask ourselves the question, “What if this world became a little more like heaven, would we enjoy it more? Answer: YES

IV. Definition and Facts Concerning the Kingdom of God

A. Two Mindsets (Jew and Gentile):

1. As Gentile believers, our most natural paradigm is to think of worshiping Jesus as God in the supernatural conditions of heaven. We emphasize Jesus’ deity as the Son of God.
2. Whereas the Jewish paradigm speaks of reigning with the messianic king as a man in the natural conditions of the earth. They emphasize the Messiah’s humanity as the Son of David. The full truth is only seen when these two paradigms are brought together.

B. Many Old Testament prophecies about God’s kingdom are fulfilled in two ways and two-time frames.

1. **First, a partial, local fulfillment** like that which occurred in the early church and is described in the Book of Acts will take place.
2. **Second, a total, global fulfillment** will occur on a worldwide scale in the generation in which Jesus returns. Jesus spoke of the kingdom not only as if the kingdom had fully come but also as if it was still yet to come.
3. As George E. Ladd puts it, *the kingdom of God is both “already” but “not yet”—it is already here but not yet fully here*. The Bible teaches that the kingdom came to earth in part with the advent of Christ but that the complete manifestation of biblical prophecies concerning the kingdom of God will occur at the end of this age when Jesus Christ returns again.

C. WHAT IS A KINGDOM? By basic definition, then, any kingdom can be defined as follows:

DEFINITION: The Kingdom of God is basically:
The Rule of God. It is God’s Reign and it is God in ACTION!

1. A kingdom is the governing influence of a king over a territory, impacting that territory with his will, his purpose, and his intent, producing a culture and a moral standard for his citizens. A kingdom is definitely a governmental system, *but a kingdom is not a democracy or a republic*.
2. The king’s word is law, and he does not need to share his power with other branches of government. He is the government. He is the sole and final authority. He is the law, the court, the judge, the cabinet, the congress, and the parliament.
3. He is the head of state, the president, and the prime minister. And he does not have to worry about term limits. Nobody votes for or against him, because in a kingdom, nobody votes. Referendums are unheard of in a kingdom.

D. Characteristics of a Kingdom: All kingdoms share specific characteristics. As you read through this list, you will find yourself nodding in agreement, “Yes, I knew that...” It seems so obvious when you see the facts. How could we have missed it for so long? We will be discussing most of these in detail in the teaching sessions to come.

E. Myles Munroe in his book written on the “The Principle and Power of Kingdom Citizenship,” states that all Kingdoms are defined by certain character traits. **Here are the characteristics of a kingdom, any kingdom, whether an earthly one or the heavenly one:**

1. All kingdoms have a king. Kings are born into kingship, not nominated and elected.
2. All kingdoms have a lord, which means an owner. The lord and king are the same. The king’s power is absolute in a true kingdom.
3. All kingdoms have territory. The king must have a domain. The king personally owns everything in his domain. The king is never voted out of power in a kingdom.
4. All kingdoms are a country, and a nation, and they are different from each other.
5. All kingdoms have a constitution, a covenant that the king makes with his own citizens.

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6. All kingdoms consist of a group of people who identify themselves with a sovereign.
7. All kingdoms have laws. Laws are the strict principles by which the citizens must live.
8. All kingdoms have citizens. Citizenship entails certain responsibilities and it bestows specific rights and privileges.
9. All kingdoms have royal privileges to which the citizens can have access through royal favor. All kingdoms have a principle of royal favor.
10. All kingdoms have a code of ethics.
11. All kingdoms have common wealth, which is why they are often called a “commonwealth”; the citizens have access to the same supply of wealth. Along the same lines, all kingdoms discourage private ownership.
12. All kingdoms have a culture. This has to do with their lifestyle, clothing, values and morals, food, and even the way people respond to problems.
13. All kingdoms have an economy.
14. All kingdoms have a taxation system.
15. All kingdoms have a principle of giving to the king. Citizens never come before their king empty-handed.
16. All kingdoms have an army. (The soldiers are not civilians or ordinary citizens. In the Kingdom of God, you cannot see the army because it consists of angels.) The king’s presence is the same as the king’s authority. The king’s name is the essence of his authority.
17. All kingdoms have delegated authority. A king embodies the government of his kingdom. The government is not divided into branches or departments.
18. All kingdoms have an educational system.
19. All kingdoms have administration and organization.
20. All kingdoms have a principle of glory, related to the sovereign king. The citizenry represents its king’s glory. Similarly, all kingdoms have a principle of worship, directed toward the king but beneficial to the worshippers.

21. All kingdoms have principles of reputation and provision. (This means that, for the sake of his reputation, the king must meet the needs of his citizens.)
22. All kingdoms have a principle of decree. (Kings do not need to debate proposed laws, and their decrees cannot be changed.) Kings can choose their own citizens.

Isaiah 9:6–7 (NKJV) ⁶For unto us a Child is born...And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

NOTES:

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