

ACTS 1:1-11

REVEALING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The Kingdom Of GOD

The Future Kingdom of the Gospel

There's an urgent demand by Jesus to “repent and believe the Good News of the Kingdom” (Mark 1:14, 15. Why doesn't Gospel preaching begin with this verse?) implies an understanding of the term “Kingdom of God.”

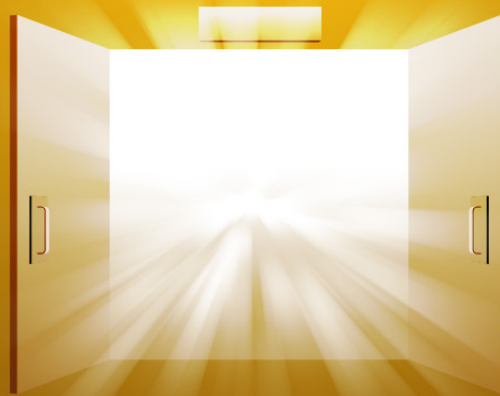


While Jesus' leading phrase remains unclear, the Gospel itself is obscured. Perhaps it is this uncertainty over the meaning of Jesus' proclamation about the Kingdom that has caused evangelicals to drop all reference to the Kingdom of God in their definition of the Gospel, and to rely on what they think is a full account of the saving Message: the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

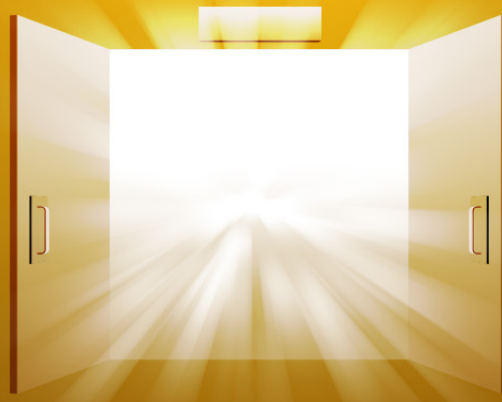


1 Corinthians 15:1-5

15 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.



3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.



An important key to understanding Paul's fine statement about his own Gospel Message is found in the little phrase *en protois*, “amongst things of primary importance” (v. 3).



The point is that it was the resurrection of Jesus which some of the Corinthians were beginning to doubt: “How do some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead?” (1 Cor. 15:12). In response to *this particular crisis of belief*, Paul reminds his audience that the death and resurrection of Jesus are of absolutely fundamental significance in the Christian Gospel.



Without the death of Jesus to gain forgiveness for all of us, and without his return from death to life through resurrection, there can be no hope of salvation in the coming Kingdom.



It is a dangerous mistake, however, to argue from this text that the facts about Jesus' death and resurrection formed the whole Message of the Gospel. Paul is careful to say that these central facts were preached “amongst things of primary importance” (v. 3). This, however, was not the entire Gospel.

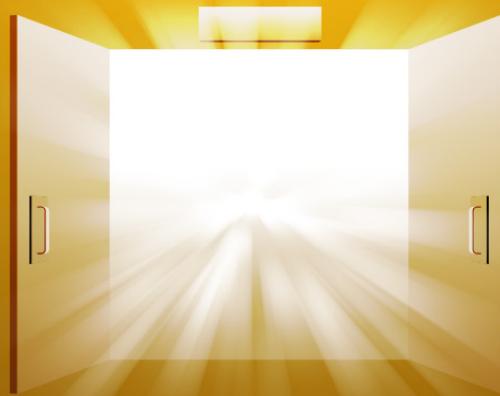


There were other things also, of equal importance in the Gospel, namely the announcement about the Kingdom of God (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31).



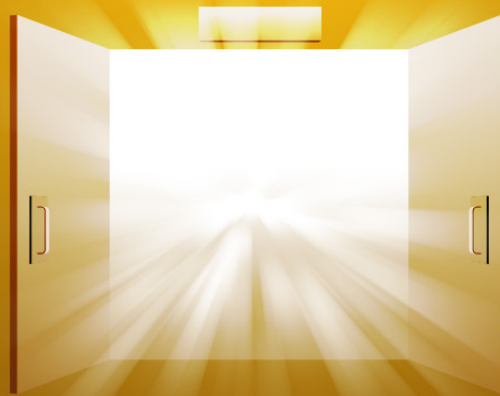
Acts 8:12

12 But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.



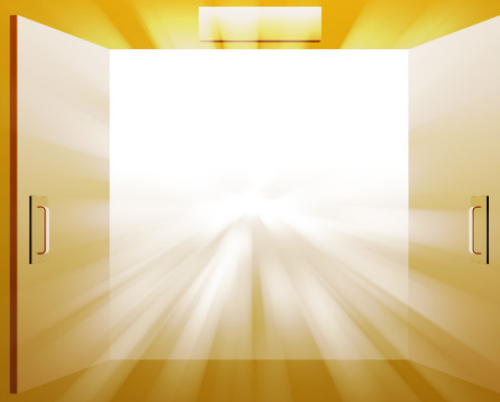
Acts 19:8

8 And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.



Acts 20:25

25 “And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face.



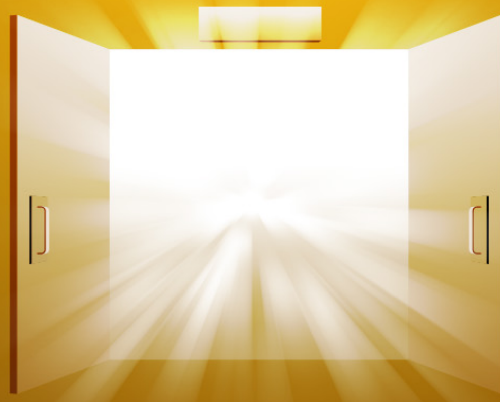
Acts 28:23

23 When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening.



Acts 28:31

31 preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

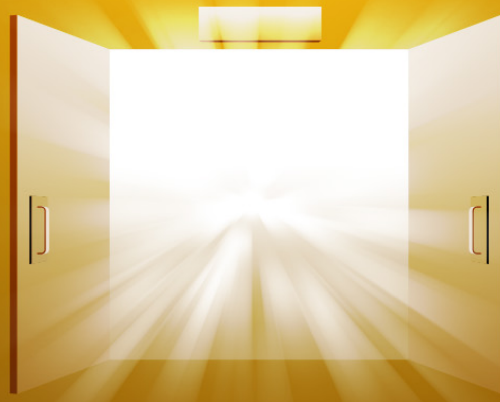


We recall that Jesus had proclaimed the Kingdom long before he spoke of his death and resurrection (Luke 4:43; cp. Luke 18:31-34) — a fact which proves that the Kingdom of God is not a synonym for the death and resurrection of Christ.



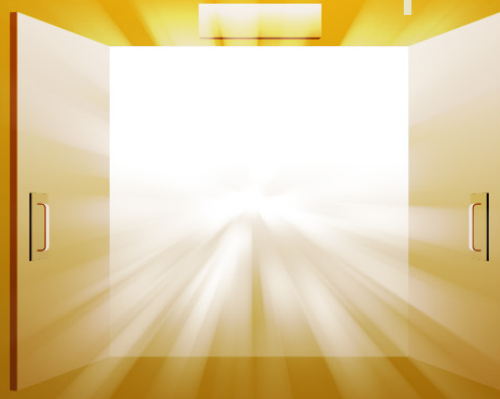
Luke 4:43

43 But He said to them, “I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose.”

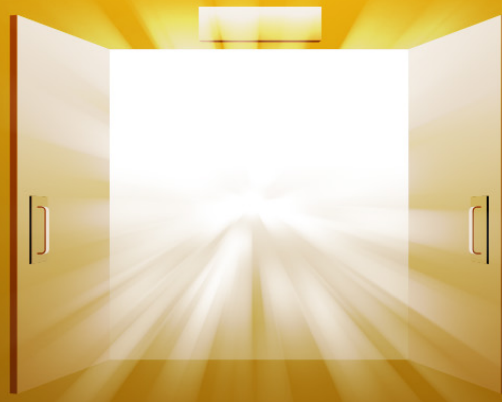


Luke 18:31-34

31 Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. 32 For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon,



33 and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again.” 34 But the disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.

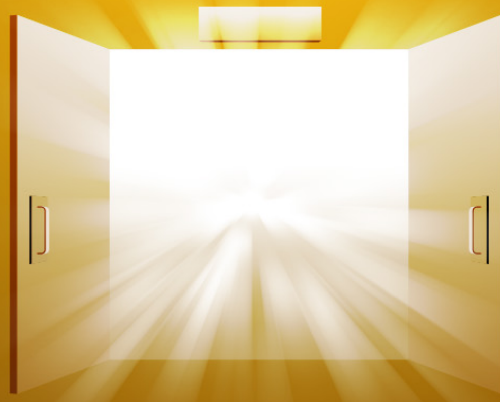


It is evident that Paul was not here directly addressing the subject of the Kingdom of God as a future event coinciding with the return of Jesus. The Corinthians had accepted that belief as part of the Gospel of salvation. Thus Paul is able to elaborate on the doctrine of the Kingdom only a few verses later.

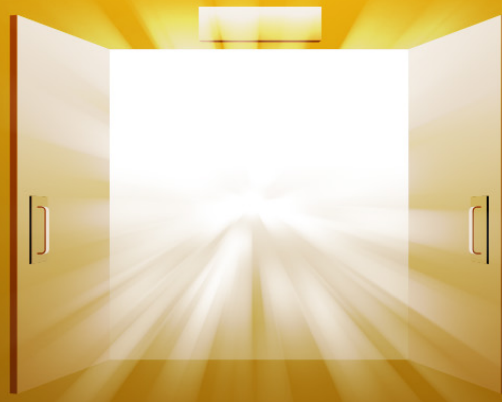


1 Corinthians 15:19-27

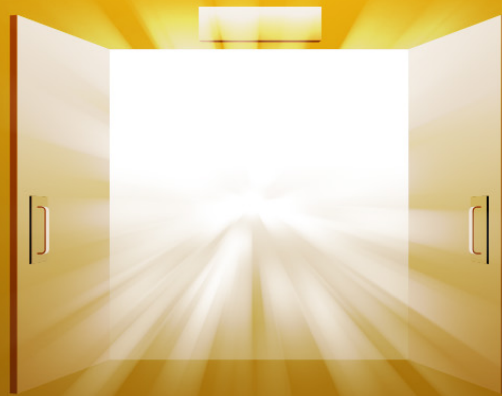
19 If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. 20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. 21 For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.



22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, 24 then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.



25 For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be abolished is death. 27 For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, “All things are put in subjection,” it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him.

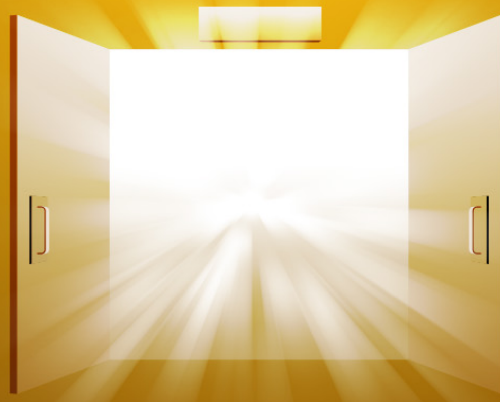


Having just mentioned the future coming of Jesus (v. 23), he speaks of the Kingdom over which Jesus will preside at his coming (vv. 25-27). That Kingdom, it should be carefully noted, is the Kingdom into which “flesh and blood” cannot enter, for “the perishable cannot inherit the imperishable” (v. 50).



1 Corinthians 15:50

50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

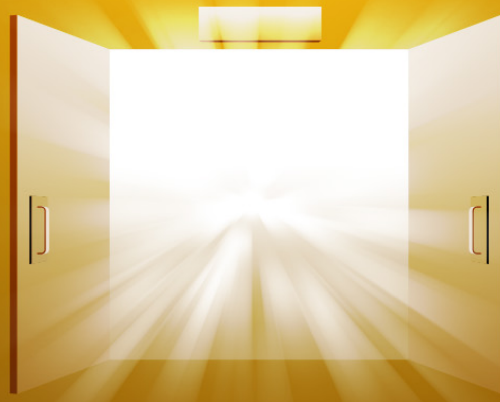


In order to enter the Kingdom of God, Christians must be summoned from death at the last trumpet and be changed, in the twinkling of an eye, into immortal persons (vv. 51, 52). These verses confirm, once again, the fact that the Kingdom of God comes into power at the Second Coming.



1 Corinthians 15:51-52

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.



The Kingdom has a principal place in the New Testament Gospel Message in addition, of course, to the equally essential preaching of the death and resurrection of the Savior. It is a serious mishandling of the Bible to place 1 Corinthians 15:1-5 in conflict with the massive evidence for the central importance of the Kingdom of God in the pre- and post-resurrection proclamation (Luke 4:43; Mark 1:14, 15; Matt. 4:17; Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31, etc.).



The Kingdom Of GOD

Contemporary Statements About the Gospel

The definition of the Gospel that is offered by most in the Church world, speaks of the forgiveness of sins through the death of Jesus, of his resurrection and of his present reign in heaven. It says nothing, however, about the Kingdom of God as the goal of the Christian believer.



The future dimension of salvation, so prominent in the New Testament, is absent. This absence of the Kingdom appears to cut the Gospel Message in half, stripping it of its strong emphasis of God's plan to send His Son back to the earth to reign with his followers in the Messianic government promised by the prophets.



The New Testament Gospel does not deal only with the past and the present, but with the past, present and future. One may, however, search contemporary statements of the gospel message (tracts, books and appeals on radio and television) in vain for any reference to the future activity of Jesus Christ.

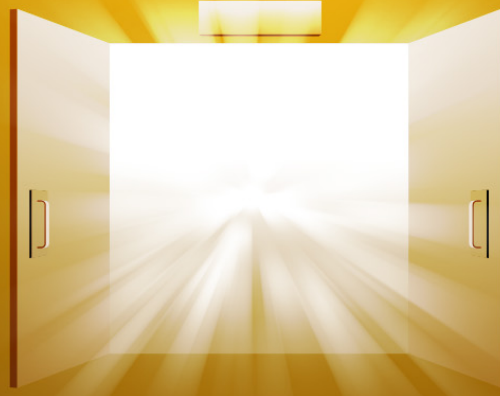


Yet Jesus' focus in the Gospel directs us towards the ultimate goal, the gaining of a place not "in heaven," but in the Kingdom of God on earth (Dan. 7:27). It would be difficult to see how the Christian objective could have been more plainly defined than in the following verses: "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). "You have made them to be a Kingdom and priests to our God, and they will reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:10).



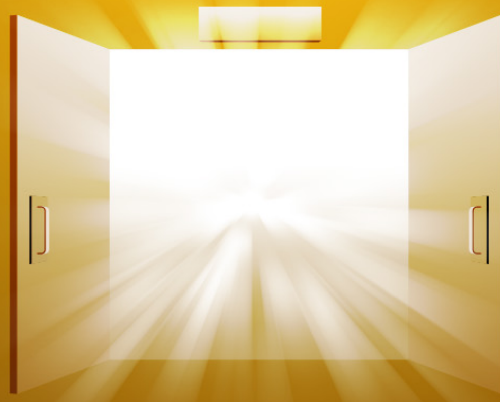
Daniel 7:27

27 Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.'



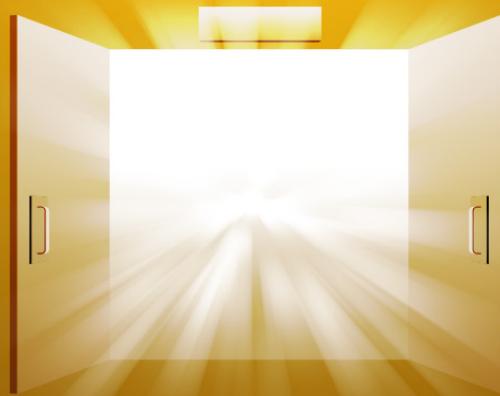
Matthew 5:5

5 “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.



Revelation 5:10

10 “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”



The Kingdom Of GOD

The Gospel Hope

The loss of the Kingdom of God from the Christian Gospel stems from the loss of the biblical view about the future which formed so vital a part of original Christianity. For centuries churchgoers have been persuaded that the ultimate goal of their commitment to Christ is to “go to heaven” when they die. This notion is fundamentally unbiblical.



It undermines the need for the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth at the return of Jesus. In the New Testament, hope (the second of the trio of Christian virtues, faith, hope and love) is directed towards the glorious Messianic future.



“Hope may be defined as desire of future good, accompanied by faith in its realization...Faith has regard equally to past, present and future, while no doubt in Scripture referring mainly to the future. Hope is directed only to the future.”

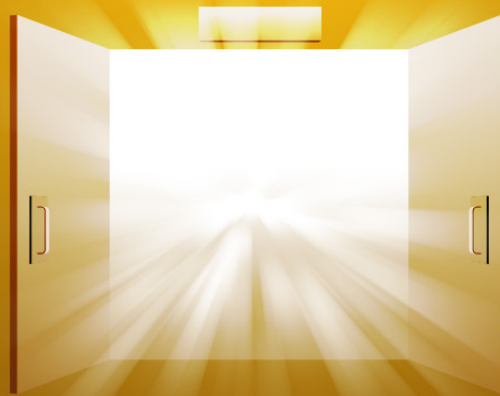


A clear hope was instilled into the mind of the believer when he heard the Gospel message about the Kingdom: (Col. 1:4-7).

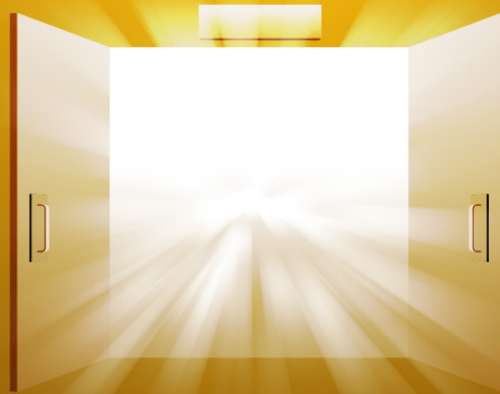


Colossians 1:4-7

4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and
the love which you have for all the saints; 5
because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of
which you previously heard in the word of truth,
the gospel

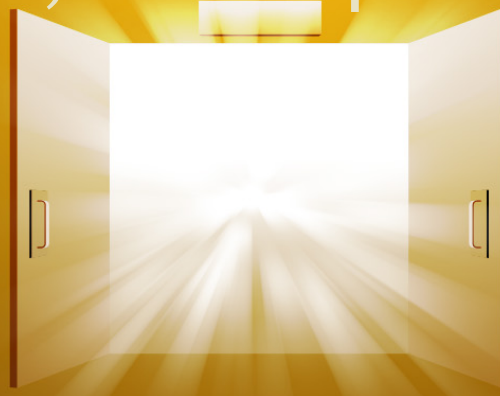


6 which has come to you, just as in all the world
also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing,
even as it has been doing in you also since the day
you heard of it and understood the grace of God in
truth; 7 just as you learned it from Epaphras, our
beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful
servant of Christ on our behalf,



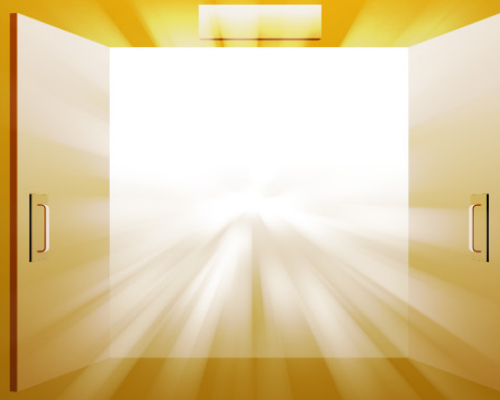
Ephesians 1:13-14

13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

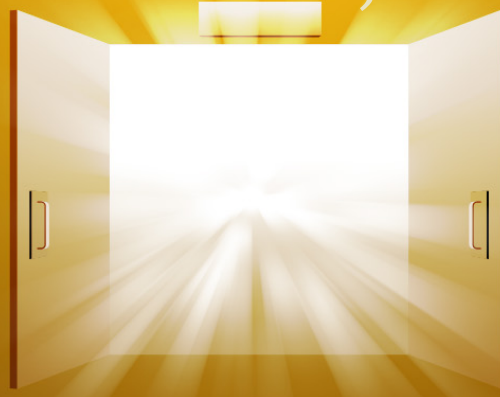


Ephesians 1:15-18

15 For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers;



17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,



It is critically important for believers to know that they are invited to rule with Messiah on earth in the coming New Order.



In these verses it becomes clear that the future hope was part of Paul's Gospel. Apostolic evangelism went beyond the promise of the forgiveness of sins and faith in Jesus' death and resurrection. It put before the convert the promise of inheriting the Kingdom of God at the return of Christ.

