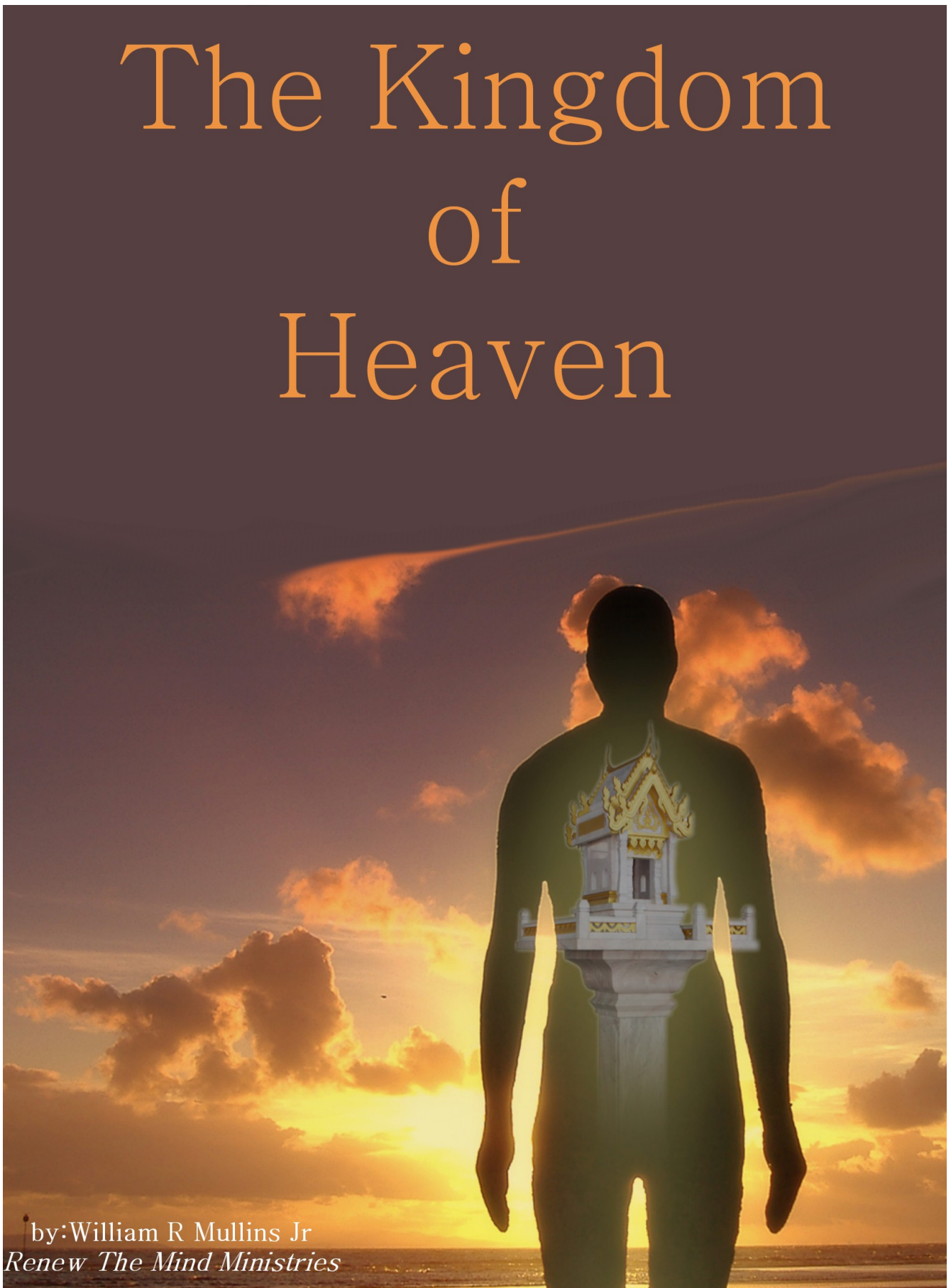


The Kingdom of Heaven

by: William R Mullins Jr
Renew The Mind Ministries



The First Key to The Kingdom

There is much to be said and there has been much written about the Kingdom of Heaven yet this doctrine is often misunderstood by the body of believers.

Throughout the old testament scriptures the prophets of God have heralded the end of the old kingdom and the beginning of a new kingdom.

What does the word “kingdom” mean?

The etymology of the Greek word **basileia** (kingdom):

*properly royalty, that is, (abstractly) rule, or (concretely) a realm (literally or figuratively) comes from the word **basileus** (through the notion of a foundation of power; a sovereign) which comes from the word **basis** (to walk); a pace (base), that is, (by implication) the foot.*

Therefore it might be said that living in the kingdom of heaven is a way of walking with God while being under His rule!

Now the people of the old testament lived under a covenant, a contract, that was established between God and the people of Israel. Many call this the dispensation of the law.

Under this dispensation the grace (graciousness or favor) of God was contingent upon obedience to the laws that He had given unto the Israeli people. This was the “kingdom” which God had established under this dispensation.

The problem at the time was that, as it is with many contracts today, the people of God did not understand the terms and conditions of the covenant which God had established with them. That is to say that they did not understand the intent and purpose of the covenant.

God had given the law to His people primarily to illustrate that which was pleasing to Him (thou shalt) and that which was displeasing to Him (thou shalt not). Nothing more, nothing less!

These laws, The Ten Commandments, often referred to as moral laws or statutes, were, for lack of a better term, the rules of conduct governing the enforcement of the contract or covenant that was established between God and man. When the people had broken covenant with God, by making an golden calf and worshiping it at mount Sinai, the contract was no longer in force. Subsequently God gave them some 306 additional laws, sometimes called the laws of Moses, or ceremonial laws, or judgments and ordinances, as a means to keep the original covenant in force in the event the moral laws were broken by the people. He added a rider if you will.

Now within these judgments and ordinances were atonement offerings (sin offerings) which were to be implemented when sins were committed by the people. It worked much like motor vehicle law. You violate a statute, a judgment is made against you, and a fine is set, by ordinance, which when paid makes the ticket go away.

But the people saw this system as a way to cover up their sins, which is not what God had intended. His intention was to stop the people from breaking the law not to give them an avenue of escape if they did so!

You see these people, albeit claiming to be authorities on the law, insomuch as they knew the letter of the law, did not understand the spirit of the law nor did they have any real knowledge of God. For if they did they would have understood the purpose of the laws God had given them.

(Hos 6:4) O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.

(Hos 6:6) For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

(Hos 6:7) But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.

Things are really not that much different today!

Albeit we live in a new dispensation, under an entirely different covenant, and under a new kind of grace, people are still living under the ministration of the old laws and have no real knowledge of the spirit of the word of God.

You see we are supposed to be living as kingdom dwellers but most of us are living in a kingdom that man created out of his own imagination and came forth out of his own heart.

(Eze 13:1) And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

(Eze 13:2) Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD;

(Eze 13:3) Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!

(Eze 13:4) O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts.

If the Jewish people were living as God had intended would Jesus need come unto them to save them?

And if they were not living as God intended, why would anyone want to walk within that kingdom?

*(Luk 9:62) And Jesus said unto him, **No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.***

Therefore the first key to the kingdom is to come to the understanding that Israel was doing it ALL WRONG. That is why Jesus proclaimed that He came only unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mat 15:24).

The Second Key to The Kingdom

Both John the baptist and our Lord Christ proclaimed repentance because “the kingdom of heaven is at hand”. (*Mat 3:2, 4:17*)

Jesus continues to say:

(Mat 5:20) For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The righteousness of the Pharisees was based on their “blamelessness”!

(Luk 1:5) There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

(Luk 1:6) And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

Zacharias and Elisabeth were the parents of John the Baptist and scriptures tell us that they walked within all of the commandments and ordinances of God blameless. This does not imply sinlessness it means that when they did sin, they made proper atonement as prescribed by the ordinances which God gave to Moses.

In other words, they paid the speeding ticket but God wanted them to stop speeding!

(Jer 7:21) Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh.

(Jer 7:22) For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices:

(Jer 7:23) But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.

*(Jer 7:24) **But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.***

*(Mat 23:12) **And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.***

*(Mat 23:13) **But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.***

The people exalted themselves because they believed that they were living sinless lives, when they were really living “blameless” lives, and the Pharisees, who administered the law unto the people, were “shutting up the kingdom of heaven against men” because they were not administering the law as God had intended.

Now this is not a popular truth but the word “obey” only in the broadest sense of the word means “to do”. In the strictest literal sense the Hebrew word *shâma'* means to listen attentively, to hear, to understand. Subsequently, when God says to “obey” (*shâma'*) my voice, he is saying to listen attentively to His voice. The word *'âsâh* is the word translated into the English word “do” (or to do).

The fact of the matter is that Jesus himself only used the word “obey” on time in all of scripture when He was teaching about commanding a sycamore tree to be uprooted and cast into the sea, that the tree should “obey” if they had faith as a mustard seed (*Luk 17:6*). Apart from this single verse Jesus NEVER spoke the word **hupakouō** (obey- to *hear under* (as a *subordinate*), that is, to *listen attentively*).

Now this is not to say that there are no occasions where scriptures “imply” that we should listen attentively and do that which we hear. What I am saying however that we should not and can not always paint with a broad brush.

For Example:

*(Act 7:37) This is that Moses, which **said** unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye **hear**.*

*(Act 7:38) This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which **spake** to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively **oracles** to give unto us:*

*(Act 7:39) To whom our fathers would not **obey (hear)**, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,*

What does a prophet do?

He Speaks!

What do oracles do?

They Speak!

What was Moses doing?

Speaking!

What was he saying?

That they should “listen to” the prophets!

What did the fathers do?

They did not “listen to” the prophets!

You see the idea of conforming or being obedient in the Greek, when using the word **hupakouō**, is something that is implied and we must use common sense to determine if we are to take the use of the word literally or not. We can clearly see in the example above that the use of the word is intended to be taken in it's strictest literal sense.

Their hearts turned back to Egypt because they refused to hear, because they refused to listen, not because they weren't obedient!

Why is this so important to understand?

Because the use of the word “obey”, when taken out of context regarding the law, can place us back under the yoke of bondage that Jesus came to free us from!

When Jesus desires that we “do” or not “do” something He is crystal clear about it!

*(Mat 5:19) Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever **shall do** and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

*(Mat 12:50) For whosoever **shall do** the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*

*(Mat 13:41) The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them **which do** iniquity;*

*(Mat 23:3) All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe **and do**; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.*

Why do these verses not say:

- 1) *but whosoever **obeys** and teach men,*
- 2) *For whosoever **shall obey** the will of my Father,*
- 3) *and them **which obey** iniquity,*
- 4) *that observe **and obey**.*

Because the word is not applicable in these verses in it's literal sense of listening attentively or hearing!

This is important to understand in the life of the Christian disciple because acts or works of abeyance to the law are not acts or works of faith through grace!

(Act 15:4) And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

(Act 15:5) But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

(Act 15:6) And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

(Act 15:7) And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

*(Act 15:8) And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, **giving them the Holy Ghost**, even as he did unto us;*

(Act 15:9) And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

(Act 15:10) Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

*(Act 15:11) But we believe that **through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ** we shall be saved, even as they.*

Just as it is in the church today there was a sect of believers proclaiming a need to keep the law of Moses (*justification through the working of the law*).

Peter's response however is; why are you tempting God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples that neither the fathers or the apostles themselves could bear?

That is not going to purify their hearts!

What is going to purify their hearts however is the grace which came through faith in Jesus Christ and the receiving of the Holy Spirit!

(Joh 1:16) And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.

(Joh 1:17) For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Now the phrase “grace for grace” is used to express an exchange. It is the same figure of speech used in the phrase “an eye for an eye” or a “tooth for a tooth”. There is a new grace which came by Jesus, through the new covenant, which served as an exchange for the grace of God under the old covenant.

Under the new covenant there are no conditions for blamelessness or for receiving the favor (grace) of God other than receiving the finished work of Christ as payment for our sins.

In addition, this new grace ([charis](#)), along with the graciousness and favor of God, comes with an added feature that was not present within the grace of the old covenant. That is, by definition, in the abstract or concrete; literal, figurative or spiritual sense; “especially” the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; including *gratitude*.

Why did Jesus not tell us to obey?
Because we can't do it in and of ourselves!

Why does Jesus tell us to “attentively listen”?
So that we can hear!

Who or what are we listening for?
The voice of Jesus!

How do we hear Him?
Through the divine influence on our hearts which comes through the Holy Spirit!

(Luk 17:20) And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

(Luk 17:21) Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

The second key to the kingdom is to discipline yourself to attentively listen for the voice of Christ so that you can hear it!

The Third Key to The Kingdom

(Mat 18:3) And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

(Mat 18:4) Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Notice that in Luke 17:21 Jesus said that the kingdom of God **is within** us and in Matthew He proclaims that unless we become converted, and become as little children, we shall not **enter into** the kingdom of heaven!

This is a common theme which runs throughout the new testament scriptures, that of having something or someone within and that of being in something or someone.

Jesus repeatedly claims that He is in the Father and that He has the Father within Him. He also makes a distinction between Him being in us and we being in Him.

(Joh 14:20) At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

Likewise it is possible for one to have the kingdom within us and we not being in the kingdom because albeit we have the Holy Spirit within us we may not be living in the Spirit!

We can ONLY live in the kingdom when we are living in the Spirit!

You see under the new covenant our Father God has given us a full-proof system by which we can do His will in our lives and this began when we repented and received Christ as our Savior and Lord.

He cleansed us with the word of truth spoken by Jesus. He removed our hearts of stone and replaced them with hearts of flesh. He gave us a new spirit and placed His Spirit within us. And He gave us this new grace to influence our new hearts.

Why did He do these things within us?

So that He would cause us to walk in His statutes, keep His judgments and do them! *(Eze 36:26)*

Why is God now doing for man what was once required of man to do?

Because man did not and could not do it!

Why is God doing these things?

To sanctify His name!

(Eze 36:22) Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went.

*(Eze 36:23) And **I will sanctify my great name**, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.*

God himself is doing this to sanctify His great name for His holy name's sake!

In the old testament God chose Israel because they were the smallest and least powerful of the tribes so that He would be glorified through them. But throughout history they profaned His name and dishonored Him by their actions. They constantly murmured against Him and turned their back on His ways.

Even worse they were never truly grateful to Him for all that He had done for them.

So God is using this new grace to draw people to himself and using this new unbreakable covenant, a covenant between God and himself, to keep those who come to Him, in Him.

Here is the proverbial catch; we have to remain as little children!

This does not mean that we are to remain little children within the faith rather that we must remain little children in faith. We must have a childlike faith in our Father to lead us, and guide us, and to provide for us.

I have always thought it ironic that when we were little children we had complete trust in our parents. We basically did anything that they told us to do us based on blind faith and the belief that they would never deliberately tell us to do anything that would harm us.

As we get older however we begin to trust our own judgment more, and the judgment of our parents less, until we get into our teens where we now know more than our parents with regard to what is good for us and what is not.

Then we reach a certain age where we come to acknowledge the fact that our parents were right all along and that in many cases, if we would have attentively listened to them, things would have turned out better in our lives.

The apostle John describes Christian development in three stages:

- 1) Little Children
- 2) Young Men
- 3) Fathers

Are these not the same stages of human development as well?

Unlike the ways of the world however living the Christian life demands total faith in God from the time of our spiritual rebirth until the time that we are called home.

We should NEVER think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, we should NEVER judge anything based on their appearance, and we should NEVER trust in our own understanding.

The third key to the kingdom is to subjugate ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and walk humbly with our God!

(Mat 5:3) Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

(Mat 5:5) Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

When we have learned to do these three things we will be living in the kingdom of heaven!