KINGDOM THINKING – Chapter 1

Matthew 6:10 “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

In my travels, reading, praying I have noticed that there is a definite shift taking place in the Evangelical church today. We do not hear so much about ‘church talk,’ but more ‘kingdom talk.’ In other words, we are moving from a church mind-set to a kingdom mind-set.

What used to be within the walls of the church is now breaking out and encompassing the community as well as the systems and structures with the Gospel of the Kingdom. Christ-followers are now getting more involved within their community.

For example, I just got a letter from one of these Christ-followers who had gone for a walk and when she came back to her car she saw a homeless woman sitting on the curb. When she was in her car looking at this woman the Lord was speaking to her about going and talking with her and wanting to be obedient to the Lord and she did just that. End result was that they both wound up praising Jesus together. Also this homeless woman wants to introduce Jesus to others within her framework as well.

A kingdom mind-set interprets Matthew 28:19-20 as referring to discipling all nations. I sense that we are in what might be known as the ‘fourth wave’ and possibly this will be the final wave of missions.

The first wave under William Carey, brought in new structures called “mission agencies” and Christ-followers began to go out to unknown and unreached parts of the world. Most of the work was done along the coastal areas in these different places.

Later, the ‘second’ wave ushered in by Hudson Taylor, started going into the interior and with this new wave new structures were needed and so we read about the China Inland Mission, African Interior Mission, and etc.

At the beginning of the 20th century we moved into what ‘missionologists’ call the ‘third’ wave and that is reaching the different people groups or ethnic groups that are in different countries.

With these three waves the ‘church’ is reaching people with the Gospel and seeing lives changed. But now there is an emphasis on discipleship to see those whose lives have been changed by the Gospel moving into their sphere of influence - to see a change taking place in the culture. In other words, to see world systems and structures of sin torn down and coming under the sway of the King of kings.

Kingdom mind-set sees that Matthew 28:19-20 and Genesis 1:28 go together: “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’”

Matthew 28:19-20 “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Kingdom mind-set takes in the fact that Christ came to destroy the works of the devil. “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.” John 3:8

Romans 14:17 “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

1 Corinthians 4:20 “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.”

Kingdom mind-set works towards seeing justice and righteousness being carried out in the culture and society where we live. It begins with the Gospel because it is the Gospel that can change a man’s heart, but it does not stop there, but to see society around us being affected.

KINGDOM THINKING – Chapter 2

Matthew 6:10 “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Kingdom thinking realizes that the offices mentioned in Ephesians 4:11-12 have been given by the Lord to equip the saints for the work of the ministry and that this ministry involves the community in which they live.

Kingdom mind-set realizes that only a few in the congregation are called to one of these offices in order to equip the saints for the ministry. This ministry includes all aspects of one’s society - government, market place, media, entertainment, etc. There is room for all to be trained for the ministry.

Back in the forties and fifties if a young man came to a pastor and said that he wanted to be in full-time Christian work the pastor would have told him to become a lawyer, judge, politician, business man, pastor, evangelist or missionary. However, recently the advice the young man would get is narrowed down to just a few - pastor, evangelist or missionary.

Praise God that this is beginning to change and kingdom thinking is coming in and seeing that every aspect of man’s society needs the influence of kingdom minded people.

Paul tells us in Romans that: “Although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their **thinking became futile** and their foolish hearts were darkened.” (1:21) The word “futile” in Greek brings out the idea of making something empty. I asked my Marathi translator in India what that word meant in his language and he told me it means ‘nothing,’ or ‘zero.’

Look at our culture today here in the Western world where we have basically abolished God from our schools, public places, etc. and we see decisions made where good is becoming evil and evil becoming good. So many of our laws are senseless; they mean nothing!

Kingdom minded leaders see the need to equip kingdom-minded believers for the work that is needed in the different segments of society. In the reformation that took place in Germany a little over 500 years ago, the **Word of God** was placed in the hands of the common people and it changed the Western world. We now need a second reformation where the **work of God** is placed into the hands of the common people.

Kingdom thinking sees that there is no difference between the spiritual and the secular. It is God who is in control of all creation and there is no ‘upper’ (spiritual) and ‘lower’ (secular) floor (as Francis Schaffer points out) when it comes to God’s creation. It is all of God’s creation and we need to be involved in every aspect of it.

We need to realize that a man who is called of God to work in a secular profession is just as important as the man who is called of God to preach. We need godly men in both. **Our work matters to God.**

There are several things that we must look at. First, we must see that the church (an integral part of the Kingdom of God), the Body of Christ is not an institution, not an organization, but rather an organism. It is not something that is inanimate, but alive. It is a living, breathing organism. This is the first thing that we must begin to realize. This is important for us to see.

By “organism” we mean: “Life-pulsating people who are animated by the indwelling presence of Jesus Christ.” This pulsating life needs to infiltrate every aspect of our culture.

KINGDOM THINKING – Chapter 3

Matthew 6:10 “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

**Kingdom thinking also understands Romans 13 that civic leaders are also called ‘ministers’ and if God is calling them ministers then kingdom thinking understands that they can partner with political and community leaders to reach a common cause for the kingdom sake (cities, states and nations).**

So often we have isolated people from us and kingdom teaching because they did not agree on core issues or values. By isolating ourselves from the world around us we have not been the salt and light that we should have been and today we are reaping the result of this.

In the 21st century we are moving into a very complex world and with it come problems that are unprecedented, the problem of war and peace, the development of nuclear weaponry, micro-technology, the unraveling of the genetic code and in a new field of bioethics the possibilities of genetic engineering etc.

Dr. Hugh Whelchel director of a Christian think tank “Institute of Faith, Work and Economics,” in his book called HOW THEN SHOULD WE WORK states the following: “As Christians fulfill their mission vocationally, we will find ourselves working together with non-Christians for the common political, economical or cultural causes. Joseph worked with the Egyptians to alleviate famine (Genesis 41). Daniel served faithfully in Nebuchadnezzar’s court (Daniel 2). We also see what Jeremiah wrote to the exiles in Babylon (Jeremiah 29:7).”

William Temple who was this past century the Archbishop of Canterbury said: "The church is both entitled and obliged to condemn the society characterized by these evils; but it is not entitled in its corporate capacity to advocate specific remedies."

He went on to say: "The church lays down principles; the Christian citizen applies them; and to do this he utilizes the machinery of the state." Kingdom thinking will inspire the church members (whatever capacity that they are in) to apply principles and not necessarily remedies. One of the reasons for this is that the church often lacks the necessary expertise, though some of her members may have it.

Working out Biblical principles is no easy matter either. Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple went on to say: "The age long problem such as war, economics and divorce, have always divided Christians. They have always been pacifists and non-pacifist, capitalist and socialist, lax and rigid attitudes to divorce. Our modern problems, are more complex, are also more divisive."

When we look at some of these problems facing us it is easy to give up in despair and think there are no solutions, but we must keep in mind Psalms 119:105 “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” The Word of God is capable of bringing light through the complexities of these problems that we are faced with.

Kingdom thinking will result in several things:

1. To pray together. Here in my area several different churches gather together the first Saturday of the month to pray for our country, state, community and the world to see some of these problems resolved.
2. Will result in us wanting to listen to one another’s position (no matter what it is) and to try and understand the deep concern that lies behind them.
3. Help each other to understand the cultural prejudices in our thinking and learn to be open to alternative viewpoints.

This kind of discipline is painful, but kingdom thinking demands it. We need to keep in mind that we dishonor God if we assert that there are no solutions or try and to offer slick solutions.

We need to develop a Christian mind or Kingdom mind-set. This is the type of mind that has grasped the basic ‘presuppositions of Scripture’ and is thoroughly saturated with Biblical Truth. “Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.” (1 Corinthians 14:20)

The proper use of our minds is very beneficial:

1. It glorifies God, because He has made us rational beings in His own image and has given us in Scripture a rational revelation which He intends us to study.
2. It enriches us, because every aspect of our Christian discipleship -- worship, faith and obedience -- depends for its maturing on our reflection, especially, upon God's glory, faithfulness and will.
3. It strengthens our witness in the world, because like the apostles we are called not only to preach the gospel, but also to defend and argue it and so persuade people of its truth. Acts 17:2; 19:8; 2 Corinthians 5:11; Philippians 1:7

Like Paul says in Romans 12, we need the “renewing of our minds.”

KINGDOM THINKING – Chapter 4

Matthew 6:10 “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Kingdom thinking embraces a Biblical worldview that takes in all of life. There is no Agnostic Greek view of Scripture that regards only spiritual things as important.

Scripture clearly brings out that the earth is the Lord’s and not Satan's. Satan might have usurped Adam, but God is the Creator. Psalms 24:1,2 “The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.”

We also read that the Word became flesh and because of that the material world is sacred as well. Genesis 2:15 “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”

In Romans 12 Paul states that we need the renewing of our mind. In this passage in Romans we have an alternative. One way, is to be conformed to this world or age - to its standards its values and its goals. Or, we can be renewed in our mind which will enable us to discern and accept God's will. If we want to live straight, we have to think straight. If we want to think straight, we have to renew our minds with the truth in God's Word. (Romans 12:1,2)

When we come to Christ it means we become a new creature for a total renewal. When Adam fell in sin it was total depravity that came into the world. It does not mean that every human being is as depraved as he could be, but it does mean that our humanness, including our minds, has become distorted by the fall. What Paul is referring to is not only a renewed mind, but the mind of Christ. “Your attitude (mind-set) should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.” Philippians 2:5

This type of mind is not necessarily concentrating only on ‘spiritual’ topics, but is able to think through the most secular topics within a Christian framework. Harry Blamires said: "A mind trained is informed and equipped to handle data of a secular controversy within the framework or reference which is constructed of Christian presuppositions."

Dr. David, head of New College, Berkeley - in his book called, “The Opening of the Christian Mind,” brings out six characteristics of what a Christian mind is like:

1. “Theological -- focused on God and his incarnate Word.
2. Historically informed by the past, responsibly alive in the present and thoughtful about the future.
3. Humanist -- deeply concerned for persons.
4. Ethical -- submissive to God's moral standards.
5. Truthful -- committed to God's self-revelation in nature and in Scripture.
6. Aesthetic -- appreciative of beauty as well as truth and goodness. In other words, the Christian mind is centered around God, history, persons, ethics, truth and beauty.”

This is why it's important to have a full grasp of the Bible. Reading the Bible through every year would be very important.

The Bible divides human history in two different eras, which are marked out not by the rise and fall of empires, dynasties or civilizations, but by four major events -- the creation, the fall, the redemption and the end. It is interesting because these four things, especially the first three, lay down the basis for a worldview; a biblical worldview. If a worldview cannot answer the first three questions that these different eras have mentioned then it is a worldview that does not meet the needs intellectually or in any other way.

What are these questions?

Where did we get our universe, and why is man different from the rest of creation?

Secondly why are we in such a mess?

Thirdly, what is the solution?

KINGDOM THINKING - Chapter 5

Matthew 6:10 “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

In one sense Kingdom thinking is bringing in or working towards a ‘new Christendom.’ What I mean by this is that we desire to interweave Biblical precepts into our culture, society and nation. Not only do we want to see people saved, but being the salt and light in the area where they are located, by bringing Biblical principles into their situation.

We mentioned in our last weekly letter: If we want to live straight, we have to think straight. If we want to think straight, we have to have renewed minds. We can add that if we want to see righteousness and truth being played out in our society then we will need people who are righteous through the sacrifice of Christ presenting truth (through an understanding of the Word of God) in the midst of all the fallacies and falsehoods.

Our society in the West as well as many others throughout the world is characterized by what Isaiah described in Isaiah 59:14,15 “So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey. The Lord looked and was displeased that there was no justice.” Is this what God wants? I do not think so. Kingdom thinking wants to see and bring a change.

God is the One who creates, judges, redeems and perfects, but we are admonished to go, preach and bring the Gospel to every people group in the world and to make disciples that will shine in their community and bring about the change the Lord wants - places where righteousness and truth prevail. It is not enough to just see people changed through the Gospel, but to see them mentored and equipped for the ministry.

Kingdom thinking is to know what the fear of the Lord is. Job 28:28 “And he said to man, 'The fear of the Lord — that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.'"

Kingdom thinking recognizes in human experience two major realities - good and evil. Though not being equal they do dominate life here on earth. To one God brings human fulfillment and the other, evil, human alienation and despair. Kingdom thinking recognizes both and has the right attitude and evidence of loving God and hating evil.

Secularism which has taken over most of the West today not only dethrones God, but it also destroys human beings. Secularism is a closed worldview which denies God and even glories in a spiritual vacuum it creates. TS Eliot was right to call it a wasteland.

The Christian mind is a humble mind. When Nebuchadnezzar was strutting around his palace like a peacock claiming for himself instead of God the kingdom, the power and glory, he went mad. It was only when he acknowledged the rule of God did his sanity come back. Pride and madness go together, so do humility and sanity.

 KINGDOM THINKING - Chapter 6

Matthew 6:10 “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Kingdom thinking will compel us to embrace our secular communities and in so doing will bring the Kingdom of God to bear in those communities.

Two examples of this: A brother that I know is a contractor-building hotels, commercial buildings, etc. The company that he worked for was owned by Muslims from Pakistan. This brother was exhibiting the Kingdom of God in the work place. He would pray over his job and he let it be known to the Muslim owners who his God was and gave Him the credit for the wisdom given to get the job done.

What was this brother doing? He was embracing the secular world around him - his work place and demonstrating the principles of the Kingdom of God. He was not a preacher or a great orator, but he could build and he gave God the credit.

Satan has broken this world into little kingdoms and through the bars of acceptance and rejection he holds people prisoners in these kingdoms. The Kingdom of God must invade these kingdoms and set the prisoners free.

We read that “the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21) When we enter the secular society around us we are bringing into the mix the Kingdom of God.

Another example is when I worked in India with the movement that I am in. When it was time to travel back to the States I went to Calcutta and there found an American commercial ship that was headed to the States. I was able to get a job on the ship and for the next six weeks I was in the midst of another kingdom - a kingdom of sailors.

It was quite an experience to be among these rough men. I decided that I would not preach, but go about my duties. I would get up in the morning and do what I have always been doing: have my quiet time. The only cool place on the ship was the dining room and so I would be there with a cup of coffee and have my time in the Word. These sailors would get up and come in and see me reading the Word. At the time they did not say anything, but later I noticed that there was a change. Some would begin to ridicule me, but others began to seek me out and this gave me a chance to share the Gospel with them that resulted in at least one making a public confession for Christ.

What happened? I was dropped into the midst of a very secular society of merchant seamen and because the Kingdom of God within me - truth and righteousness - was prevalent and invaded that kingdom of the world. However, this is not unique just with me, but is true of every believer. Everyone, young or old, in school or job in the midst of a secular society has the kingdom of God within.

Two things come out here. First, as believers with the kingdom of God within we need to make sure that we are seeking first the kingdom of God in our lives. Secondly, we need to be taught on how to give a response about the hope that is within us when people ask questions. This is where the equipping of the saints comes in.

We need to be training the members of our churches to not only embrace their communities with humility, but how to exhibit the kingdom of God in their midst.

KINGDOM THINKING - Chapter 7

Matthew 6:10 “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Kingdom thinking will turn the world upside down. We read in Acts 17:7 "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here.” It was said that they turned the world upside down, but what it really was, was turning the world right side up. They were testifying to how the world should be and not how it is. They (the Apostles) had right thinking.

What could be said about these men/women? **Matthew Henry said: “The mighty heroes of the world conquered nations for themselves and made them miserable. The apostles conquered them for Christ and made them happy.”** This was true not only of the Apostles, but also those who followed in their footsteps. Part of that army were those who took in the babies that were going to be aborted or were abandoned, fed the poor, and did other acts of mercy. These acts were seen by the others and this led many to accept Christ.

Augustine after he was converted wrote over 5 million pages. Our view of God determines everything. If we had bad theology we will compromise and eventually our liberties will be taken away from us.

The one thing that you find with this army is their *commitment to* and *sacrifice for* the Gospel.

Run towards the roar! That is where the victory will be. Boniface said: **"I know that I will die, and I will die on time. But I want to make the most between here and there."**

It was during this time unknown to most that this new army was beginning to change society and culture one person at a time. We can compare these two armies. First we have the pagan army that for 4000 years had accumulated all the wealth and had ruled with unprecedented power over these years. On the other hand there is a small band of people, who had no influence politically speaking, no wealth, but they went out and began to spread the Kingdom of God one person at a time until their influence permeated society.

They recognized that man is a paradox. Like someone said: “We human beings have both a unique dignity as creatures made in God's image and a unique depravity as sinners under his judgment. We can behave like God in whose image we were made, only to descend to the level of the wicked. We are able to think, choose, create, love and worship, but also to refuse to think, to choose evil, to destroy, to hate, and to worship ourselves. We build churches and drop bombs. We develop intensive care units for the critically ill and use the same technology to torture political enemies who presume to disagree with us. Man a paradox, dust of earth and breadth of God, shame and glory. We are noble and ignoble, rational and irrational, loving and selfish, godlike and bestial.”

Two things come out in this paradox that we must understand - our sexuality and political process. It was the same for the apostles and the early church and it is the same for us today; different context, but same conflicts that we are faced with in order to see the extension of the Kingdom of God.

According to Genesis, God created them male and female in His image and likeness and told them to be fruitful and multiply. According to Scripture human sexuality, marriage, sexual intercourse and family are all part of the creative purpose of God and so we see that marriage is not a human institution which can be changed by culture, but divine and not affected by changing culture.

But then came the fall with sin distorting our sexuality with the result of unnatural deviations where love becomes selfish, cruel and exploitive. Kingdom thinking brings us back to the Scriptural norm.

We have the same battle in the political realm. Do human beings have any absolute value and to be respected for such or are they only valuable in regard to the community over all? When one looks at the abortions taking place, euthanasia and the killing of the aged who seem to have no value for their community, one begins to ask: Are we servants to the institution or is the institution the servant to the people?

Like someone said that at best a “political ideology and its programs are only an approximation to the will and purpose of God.” For example capitalism appeals because it encourages individual initiative, but also seems not to care for the weak that cannot compete with the competition.

Socialism on the other hand seems to care for the weak and powerless, but also stifles individual initiative that gets smothered by big government. One person said this about the two: "The difference between capitalism and socialism is that in capitalism man exploits man, while in Socialism it's the other way around!"

It would seem that democracy is the best because it reflects the paradox of man. Like Reinhold Niebuhr said: "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary."

                          KINGDOM THINKING - Chapter 8

Matthew 6:10 “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Kingdom thinkers will speak out that Christ is head over every culture as well as King over every secular king. It engages the culture around us.

In some ways the future of society depends upon those with a kingdom mindset being involved. Kingdom thinking brings in the fact that God is working towards ‘redemption.’ Since we are His hands and feet and mouth, we too need to be working towards redemption.

However, to understand redemption we need to understand what was lost to begin with. In one sense it was “Paradise” that was lost, but what does that entail? To understand what was lost we must go back to the Word of God.

**First, we see from Scripture that man lost his soul**. Genesis 2:17 “….but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, **for when you eat of it you will surely die."**  Ezekiel 18:4 “For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son — both alike belong to me. **The soul who sins is the one who will die.”**

Paul said: “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.” (Ephesians 2:1) There is that part of man that is dead, an empty place within that nothing can fill. This is why we see people who have fame, money and all of the necessities we think are necessary for happiness committing suicide. Something is missing and only God can fill it.

**Secondly, we see that man lost his body.** Genesis 3:19 “By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

Isaiah goes on to say very eloquently: “A voice says, ‘Cry out.’ And I said, ‘What shall I cry?’ All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field.  The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever." Isaiah 40:6-8

No matter what we do with our bodies in trying to keep them in top condition - through exercise, face lifts etc., we are going to die and our body will go back to the dust from which it came.  It is like what Boniface said: "I know that I will die, and I will die on time. But I want to make the most between here and there."

**Thirdly, man lost the earth. We lost dominion**. God put man in charge, but man fell and another took it over. God’s plan is still that man is to rule and reign, but now it takes a converted man - a new man. “To Adam he said, ‘Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, “You must not eat of it,” Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.’ ” Genesis 3:17-19

If God is working towards redemption then we must work along with Him. Redemption must be our goal as well. There are three events in redemption.

**First, we have conversion - the saving of the soul.**  We are admonished to go into all the world and preach the gospel. We must keep in mind that everything starts from the internal to external. The heart of man must be changed and the Gospel is the only thing that can do that. Paul said the Gospel is the dynamite of God for change. “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.” Romans 1:16

We must equip our congregations to be able to give an answer for the hope that is within us. God has given us the office of an Evangelist just for this purpose.

**Secondly, we have the resurrection - redemption of the body.** Paul lays this out very nicely of how the body is sown perishable, but raised imperishable; it is sown in weakness and dishonor, but raised in power and honor and it is sown a natural body, but raised a spiritual body. (1 Corinthians 15:42-46)

**Thirdly, we have the Second Coming of Christ and redemption of the earth.** It is when Christ comes and chains Satan (puts him out of the way) that we can build unhindered. I do not hold, as some do, that we can build utopia here on earth ushering in Christ. However, this does not mean that we sit back and do nothing. No! We are to occupy; we are to be busy in taking back what Satan stole from us. We are to be the salt and light in every aspect of our culture. We will never reach the ultimate goal until Christ comes and through judgment sets things right, but we will reign with Christ and it starts now with a Kingdom mind-set.

 KINGDOM THINKING – Chapter 9

Matthew 6:10 “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Someone said: “All humankind still prefers peace to war, justice to oppression, harmony to discord, order to chaos. Social change is possible and we see it throughout the world. How can we do equal justice to the truths of the creation, the fall, redemption and the end? Paul perhaps expressed this well in 1 Thessalonians 1:9 and 10. "…to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven.” The culmination of serving and waiting is striking, since the former is actively getting busy for Christ on earth, while the latter is passively looking for him to come from heaven. We must serve, but there are limits to what we can achieve. We must wait, but have no liberty to do so in idleness. Thus working and waiting go together.

We Evangelical Christians seem to have the swing of the pendulum in our theology. Some are social activists who are out to create utopia here on earth while there are others who think there is no hope for our culture and with a dug in mentality wait for the return of the Lord.

What we need is to strive for spiritual balance. Yes, we are waiting for the return of the Lord, but while we are waiting we are not idle, but busy in preaching, teaching, spreading the Word and discipleship. We are embracing our culture and society in order to redeem that which has been lost. Our last weekly letter spoke about redemption.

In the first reformation that took place about 500 years ago under Martin Luther the **Word of God** was put into the hands of God’s people instead of only the priests. The result was electrifying and brought in a reformation that affected Western culture.

We need another reformation that puts the **work of God** back into the hands of God’s people and when this happens we will see a change in our culture.

To get the work of God back into the hands of God’s people will require the working of the offices that have been outlined in Ephesians 4:11-12. “It was he who gave some to be ***apostles***, some to be ***prophets***, some to be ***evangelists***, and some to be ***pastors*** and ***teachers***, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.”

Who are these people called by God to help equip saints for the work of the ministry? It is important to be able to identify them. In reading the New Testament one comes away with the idea that we have function before form and operation before organization. Just because someone is in an authoritative office does not mean that he has authority. The office is the result of the evidence of authority.

David Watson said, “The church should give official recognition to those in whom the Spirit is manifestly at work.” Authority is already seen in man/woman’s life. We see this coming out in Acts 6:1-6 where we have the calling out or picking out of seven men to help wait on tables. They were already recognized for their godly life and leadership ability. The same thing is seen in Acts 13 when Paul and Barnabas were chosen.

David Watson brings out another important truth. “In the early church the leaders were nearly always appointed from the area in which they served. They had the advantage of knowing the local scene intimately, and were therefore naturally placed for fulfilling an effective pastoral and preaching ministry according to the gifts given to them by God.”

Often we send young people off to seminary or Bible School for training. I am working with a church in the state of Nevada that has the right idea to have an intern program where young people come under the leadership of the local church for a period of time. During that time of training one is able to see the gifts that are being manifested and then able to steer that young person on further use in the extension of the Kingdom of God.

When I was the director of our OM ship Doulos we initiated a program called "Intensive Training Program" where young people would come for a period of very intensive training. In the process we would see who had leadership potential, etc., and once seen that individual could be advanced in a leadership role. As a matter of fact, in 2013 one of these young men will become executive director of Operation Mobilization - a mission with over 6,000 missionaries, coming from over 90 different countries and working in over 110 countries in the world.

This type of discipleship, mentoring, training can be carried on in the local level with the result of seeing our communities changed.

KINGDOM THINKING - Chapter 10

Matthew 6:10 “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Kingdom thinking will tend to exorcize the demonic out of social systems that are operating in one’s society and culture. Not only do we want to deal with individual sin, but also the power structure that is behind it. We see that Jesus came to redeem.

Colossians 1:20 "....and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”

When we read Isaiah 61:1-4 and then the New Testament counterpart in Luke 4:18 where Jesus declared that this is why He came, we begin to understand something of what our task is in the Great Commission. We see the model that was set down in the early church as an example to follow.

First, we see in the early church whenever there was an emergency how Christians began to respond in the form of gifts, money, clothing, etc. to help those in need.

Secondly, micro-enterprise development was started where people could be taught how to ‘fish’ (to gain a living without handouts) instead of giving a ‘fish’ (a handout).

Thirdly, social justice was taught to where those who had could help those who did not have and more of equality came in not by political force (government), but through voluntary efforts.

Fourthly, structures of sin were identified: child prostitution, poppy growing (like they have in Afghanistan today), child labor, abortion clinics, etc.

Fifthly, pressure was built on government as well as by worldwide organizations to challenge the so-called power elites that maintain these ‘structures of sin.’

Kingdom thinking recognizes the fallenness of all human institutions and seeks renewal through value change. Value change begins with the church. It is now clear that church planting is an essential part of the transformation.

We also need to recognize that within the church there must be order. So we see from all of this that in the church body there are some who are called to provide oversight, rule, discipline, teaching and care. John Stott wrote: “All God’s people are priests, all are ministers or servants; but He gave some apostles, prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.”

To me a very important principle in all of this is what I call ‘releasing the ministry.’ Once we have trained a person we then hand the ministry over to them. We see this with Jesus. He called twelve men “designating them apostles - **that they might be with him** and that he might send them out to preach.” Mark 3:14

He discipled, trained and gave them the ministry. He relinquished to these twelve Galileans, unlearned men the task of world evangelism. What a risk! One turned out to be a traitor, and the others, at a time of great trial for the Lord, forsook Him. There will be a risk also with relinquishing a ministry. Mistakes will be made; failures will come. This is often one of the reasons why in many cases we do not turn the ministry over. If those who are paid do all of the ministry because they are good at it, it will intimidate others into thinking that they cannot do it. And so they remain quiet in the pews and the church continues to become more irrelevant to them.

So often we have kept the ministry in the hands of the 'professionals.' This is what we pay them for anyway, isn't it? Kingdom thinking will lead to a relinquishing ministry. We will find that in this relinquishing ministry those who have been discipled and mentored will move into places where ‘structures of sin’ are located to deal with those sinful structures.

An example of this is William Carey - missionary to India - who saw what was then practiced and called "sati," become illegal. Sati is where the widow whose husband had just died would be thrown alive onto the fire consuming her dead husband 'so that she could join him.' God used William Carey to see this practice banned throughout India. (Although in some cases this practice is still going on, but sati is against the law.)

 KINGDOM THINKING - Chapter 11

Matthew 6:9-10 "This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, **your kingdom come**, **your will be done** on earth as it is in heaven.'"

Kingdom thinking will lead us to pray for His kingdom to come and His will to be done here on earth as it already is in heaven, and not just praying for revival in the church. Yes, we want to see revival in the church, but that is not the end of the matter. We want the revival to result in seeing His kingdom come and His will being done.

A kingdom mind-set will focus on seeing the kingdom of God manifested here on earth. Yes, we want to see healing and deliverance of individuals. But, even going beyond that to see manifestation of the kingdom in our homes, communities, states and country that affect the quality of life in all areas: socially, politically as well as economically.

With a kingdom mind-set Isaiah 61:3-4 takes on a whole new focus: “...and provide for those who grieve in Zion — to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor. They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.”

Again we look at the gifts the Lord has given to the church to bring about what He wants. The list below is not my own list, but it does seem to bring out what the Lord has given us so that His body might grow and become mature in the things of Christ.

Here is a mixture that we can look at:

Apostles: (GO) The apostolic ministry is a constant reminder to the body that our ministry extends to the ends of the world. Although we do not today have apostles in the sense of those "12" or “THE APOSTLE,” yet there is still the 'spirit' of the apostle; the missionary spirit. Those who embrace this spirit have a passion to "go." It would also seem that along with this spirit is what I would call a 'pioneer' spirit. Paul expressed this when he wanted break new ground in preaching the gospel in the regions beyond.

Prophets: (Hear) Listening to God’s Word for a particular time and place marks the prophet’s ministry. A prophet's ministry can take different forms, such as a Biblical exegete with a passion for the truth, or a person spontaneously inspired by the Spirit having a word for a local body of believers, or a nation's leaders.

Evangelist: (Grow) Evangelist reminds the body that it is healthy to be growing just as it is natural for organisms to grow. Evangelists keep the body alive through a steady influx of new life entering into the church body.

Pastor/Teacher: (Care and Know) These are the ones who provide the care and concern for growth. The pastor/teacher might have the more relevant gift for equipping and strengthening than the others.

Also, along with these we have other support gifts:

Leader: Visionary and administrative. Vision leaders are the ones who recognize and anticipate what can be done. They are the ones who are transforming leaders. They know where they are going and how to take others with them. The administrative leader plots the course and guides the ship. Most usually he is the one who puts shape to the visionary goals of the ones who are the planners, strategists, and delegators in the body.

Exhorter: The exhorter is a motivator used by the Holy Spirit. He comes alongside and helps the person to realize his potential. He is an encourager giving out a challenge to rise above and beyond what we might think is our ability.

Wise: Another ingredient in a leader is wisdom. This is like a doctor who in examining the symptom and is able to make a wise diagnosis of the situation. We have each been amazed when all of a sudden there is a solution to a complex question or some difficult circumstance. People with wisdom seem to be able to penetrate to the heart of a matter and come up with a solution.

                               KINGDOM THINKING – Chapter 12

**Matthew 6:9-10 “This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’”**

I praise the Lord for the tithes and offerings that come in from God’s people to support the work that is being done. Jesus did say that the laborer is worthy of his hire. “And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the **labourer is worthy of his hire**. Go not from house to house.” (Luke 10:7 KJV)

However, with kingdom thinking we go beyond tithes and offerings to see how through the gospel whole communities can be lifted up economically.

Vishal Mangalwati said this about William Carey: “He was an industrialist, an economist, an medical humanitarian, a media pioneer, an educator, a moral reformer, a botanist and a Christian missionary. And he did more for the transformation of the Indian subcontinent in the nineteenth century and twentieth century than any other individual before or since.”

When Carey arrived in India in 1793 as a missionary-reformer he not only accomplished what was said above, but started what is now known as the Modern Missionary Movement. With this movement came new structures called mission societies and the Gospel began to go out all over the world in a more concentrated effort not seen probably since the early apostles. William Carey was a kingdom thinker.

Historian Hugh Tinker, in his classic study on South Asia wrote a short history, summing up the essence of Carey's method and its results: "…and so in Serampore, on the banks of river Hooghly, soon after 1800, the principal elements in modern South Asia – popular linguistic identification, the press, the university, social consciousness – all came to light. The West and South Asia were about to come to grips with each other in terms not merely a power and profit, but also of ideas and principles."

This brings out not only Kingdom thinking, but kingdom action. Vishal Mangalwati went on to say that it was the Gospel, not Gandhi that set India free. Proverbs 19:21 states: “Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.” It would seem from this verse that we can have many plans, but the only plans that will prevail are those that are in tune with God’s purpose.

What is God’s purpose? The Lord’s prayer sums up God’s purpose quite well: “His kingdom come and His will be done here in earth as it is in heaven.” Kingdom thinking takes God’s purpose and sees how it can be achieved in the community and society where we live.

We know from Luke 17:21 that “the kingdom of God is within you." This is why our work matters to God, like Dr. Hugh Whelchel said: “Work is not a curse but a gift from God. By our work we employ useful skills to glorify God and love our neighbors." God has His people in different vocations throughout society and in seeking first His kingdom (Matthew 6:33) we begin to see His kingdom manifested in our different spheres of work.

Tim Keller brings out this definition of work: "Rearranging the raw materials of a particular domain to draw out its potential for the flourishing of everyone." We are made in the image of God, and God created and so will we. The only difference is that God created something out of nothing, but we create something out of something. We can take a piece of wood and make a table or take a tree and build a house.

I am sure that when each member of God’s household begins to earnestly seek first the Kingdom of God, creative ideas will come forth on how we can see a change in our culture and community through the work the Lord has called us to. Like Hugh Welchel said: “Being in the image of God refers not only to who we are but also to what we are created to do. We are called not just to work but to do certain tasks to achieve a definite goal.”

And the goal is: “His kingdom come and His will be done here on earth as it is in heaven.” This will not be fully achieved until the Lord comes, but we work towards this goal.

                           KINGDOM THNKING - Chapter 13

Matthew 6:10 “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

It would seem that one of the differences between church and kingdom thinking (although, I believe, they should be compatible) is that kingdom thinking will lead us more towards the challenges as well as problems in the cities, countries and not just our personal lives and well-being (although that is important).

For example, before the Civil War we see the church heavily involved in drafting some our most important documents, starting schools (including our Ivy League Universities) and placing godly leaders into places of prominence in government, judicial system, media and the market place. In other words, the church took the lead in cultural reform.

However, after the war a sense of hopelessness came into the scene and the focus of the church was not so much on the kingdom, but on the return of Christ and the rapture. After the Civil War there were several Great Awakenings, but then came WW1 and WW2 that again began to focus our attention on the return of Christ and the rapture.

Not that the return of Christ and the rapture are not important, but the result has been that the culture has been lost to the secularists who stepped in when the church withdrew. God’s people began to isolate themselves from the threats of Darwinism, Sigmund Freud and psychology and the different phases our culture was going through like the Industrial Revolution and now the Information Age where knowledge doubles every one or two years. But, according to some estimates, by 2020 knowledge will double every 72 days.

Because of this isolation we see signs of decay all around us, but especially in America and Western civilization. We see the breakdown of the family. In 1960, 72% of adults were married. Today it is about 50%. Today we are discussing and debating what marriage is. Is marriage the union between a man and a woman, or now, between two men or two women?

Our education from our primary schools to our elite universities, have been educating our children on relativistic, immoral and statist ideas. It is said that 75% of youth raised in Christian homes who attend secondary public schools lose their faith (about 25% who go to Christian schools lose their faith). And for Christians going to secular colleges, somewhere between 71 – 88% deny the faith by the time they graduate.

Stephen McDowell cofounder of the Providence Foundation and president of its Biblical Worldview University said: "The family is God's chief instrument of Dominion. It is God's primary tool for extending His kingdom – His government – in the Earth. Children are arrows or weapons that God gives the family to prepare to shoot into the culture for the good of our future. (Psalms 127:4) “Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth.” If the family is faulty, the fulfillment of the mission wanes and the nation will decline.

Kingdom thinking sees this problem and will take action. It sees not just the salvation and repentance of an individual, but also the transformation and restoration in our culture and country. Can this be done? The answer is yes! We have seen it in the past and we can see it today.

Patrick of Ireland was about 58 years old when God sent him back to Ireland to fulfill his destiny and over the next 28 years brought about the great transformation in a nation that anyone has seen in his lifetime. Not only did he see the transformation of the nation but the fruit of his work not only transformed a nation, but a continent.

We look at a man like Wycliffe who translated the Bible into the English language in 1382 that brought a revival that was so great that up to half of the population of England became followers of Wycliffe’s teaching. We see the same thing with Martin Luther of the Reformation, as well as men like John Calvin, etc.

In the United States we can look back at the first great awakening spurred on by men like John Wesley, George Whitfield, Jonathan Edwards and many others.

Looking back at history we see that ‘now’ is the time in our Western Hemisphere to see another Great Awakening.

KINGDOM THINKING – Chapter 14

Romans 14:9 “For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.”

Kingdom thinking will lead us to help equip saints to serve in our cities as the salt and light that Jesus told us to be; to be like Daniel or Joseph who not only prospered, but held significant leadership roles in a very pagan society for the glory of the Lord.

We might not be in a place like Daniel or Joseph; that is in what we might think is a significant role, but the place where the Lord has put us is just as important. It all matters to God. As Hugh Whelchel explains in his book [How Then Should We Work?](http://p.feedblitz.com/t2.asp?/810088/32963931/4593060/feeds.feedblitz.com/~/t/0/0/instituteforfaithworkeconomicsblog/~howthenshouldwework.com/):

**“We understand that it is God, through his providence, who is establishing his Kingdom here on earth. Yet this does not imply that we lack responsibility for the part God has called us to play. Much of what God accomplishes, he does through secondary means, and frequently his people are those secondary means.”**

Except for those that are called to special office mentioned in Ephesians 4, most of God’s people will be in the secular work place. This is important for us to see and is important in kingdom thinking. It is in this work place, as we demonstrate kingdom principles that the kingdom of God will spread.

An editor of Christianity Today, [Carl Henry](http://p.feedblitz.com/t2.asp?/810088/32963931/4580485/feeds.feedblitz.com/~/t/0/0/instituteforfaithworkeconomicsblog/~en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_F._H._Henry), once called on Christians not to restrict the Christian life to evangelism alone, but also to engage the culture in the public square. What we are to do is pursue the ‘common good.’

Dr. Jay Richards, in talking about Jeremiah 29, uses the term “shalom” for pursing the common good.  “This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ‘Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.’” Jeremiah 29:4-7

“Shalom” means more than just peace, as Richards brings out, but **“…the webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight…..Shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness and delight—a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts are fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights. Shalom, in other words, is the way things ought to be.”**

One avenue that God has given us to spread “shalom” is through our vocations. When we come to Christ we are new creatures and when we begin to *seek first the Kingdom of God* we will see an impact being made around us as we seek to glorify the Lord.

One area where I see a need for Christians to be involved for the common good is in the area of economics. When I look at the economics that we have today, especially in the West, it is a mess. I was writing to a friend of mine about the creation of Federal Reserve Bank here in the USA in 1913. One hundred years later (2013) our dollar has lost value until it is now worth two cents on the dollar. We have seen one of the greatest transfers of wealth in the history of mankind. Has this been for the ‘common’ good? I do not think so.

We are to be concerned about the orphans, the poor, the handicapped, the widows, etc. This is not necessarily the government's job, but for those who have been born again and have become new creatures who want to see **shalom** in their society. We might be in the government, or education, or the media, or digging ditches, but where ever we are we are to be pursuing the common good of people: **shalom**.

We are to be the hands and feet of Christ here on earth. Some will be called to the political part of the world, or to the economic part, or to education or medicine, but those that are called will need to see how to apply Biblical principles to all areas of life in the world today.

KINDOM THINKING - Chapter 15

2 Kings 5:1 “Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the Lord had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy.”

Kingdom thinking makes us realize that the same Jesus who died on the cross (John 3:16) is the same Jesus who created the world (John 1:3-4). In other words, Kingdom thinking honors Jesus as Redeemer as well as Creator. There is no separation between the two. But, there is a tendency to separate the two. When we preach the cross for individual sinners and do not apply it to the created order we are separating the Redeemer from the Creator.

A good analysis of the two coming together is from Hugh Welchel when he says: **“Redemption gives us a picture of the way things could be:**

* **The objective of God’s work in redemption is to free people to be what they were created to be.**
* **Redemption is deliverance of the physical world.**
* **Redemption restores the life-giving potential of all aspects of the created order, making a degree of flourishing possible in this age.**

**We must understand the full meaning of redemption. Christ died on the cross not only to save us but also to *restore all things.*Grasping the full implication of the gospel should make Christians interested in evangelism *as well as* serving their neighbor and working for peace and justice in the world.”**

For most of God’s people this will be played out in the work place. This is why our work matters to God and should matter to us as well. Albert Wolters in his book CREATION REGAINED states: ***“What was formed in creation has been historically deformed by sin and must be reformed in Christ.”***

Redemption in Christ is as big as His creative work. Redemption’s final goal is to push sin out of every corner of this creative world. Perhaps this is what the prophet Habakkuk meant when he said:“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” (Habakkuk 2:14) We have been redeemed for a purpose and that purpose is to see the ‘reclamation of all things.’

God is concerned about His works. We read in Genesis 1, in the creation story, that He created all things and called it all “good” and being the Creator - He not only lays claims to all things, but also to destroy the works of the devil. We read this in 1 John 3:8 “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.”

We all will play a part in this process. That is why our work matters to God. We look at the situation today and see what is going on in our government, economy, education, the media, entertainment and business and we can easily be overwhelmed with the challenge.

What we must keep in mind is that God has called us to be faithful and obedient in our ‘work’ or ‘sphere.’ Jesus said that the Kingdom of God is like a yeast that is put into the dough and spreads throughout. Look at the history of the Kingdom of God from the time Jesus started His ministry with the words: “The kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom of God is near.” From that time on the Kingdom of God, like yeast, has spread throughout the world and is still spreading. Kingdoms of this world have come and gone, but the Kingdom of God is still here and spreading.

How did it spread? It spread by normal folks seeking the kingdom of God in their own lives and working it into their various fields or spheres. An Old Testament example of this is with Naaman in 2 Kings chapter 5. Naaman was: “a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded. Naaman had leprosy, but there was a Jewish slave girl in Naaman’s household who told the wife about Elisha the prophet in Israel who could heal Naaman.”

Naaman was healed, and the bottom line in all of this is when Naaman makes this statement: “Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel."  What an impact this made in the king of Aram’s household and officials! What did God use but a little Jewish slave girl, in her workplace (as handmaiden to Naaman’s wife), who mentioned the prophet Elisha that could heal him – and he was healed by obeying the word of the Lord’s prophet. Word of this spread.

                               KINGDOM THINKING - Chapter 16

Matthew 11:12 “And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” (KJV)

One thing that you will find with “kingdom thinkers” is that they are forward looking and are excited about the advancement of the cause of Christ in this world and to see His influence spread throughout cultures in every people group in the world.

They want to see how they can tear down the power of structures that the enemy has built over time. They will want to train leaders to infiltrate and influence every aspect of our culture: science, arts, media, education, economics and politics by training godly men and women.

In Romans 12 we are told that we should “not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind.” One of the main battles is with our mind; that of being able to think through issues, ideologies, etc. with a Biblical mindset for the Biblical worldview.

A Biblical worldview is defined as a firm belief that absolute moral truths exist such as: the sinless life of the Lord Jesus Christ, God being all powerful and all knowing and is running the universe, that Satan is real and that salvation is a gift from God and cannot be earned. We, the church, have an obligation to live in the light of the revealed Word of God. The Word of God needs to be brought in everything we do in life.

This will affect our choices in lifestyle as well as our way of thinking. It will be seen in our views on family, morality, recreation, personal autonomy, personal possessions, etc. It will bring a complete re-working over of who we are and how we live and what we do.

A pastor remarked that the mission of the church is to prepare for Christ’s return in five ways: prayer, Bible study, fellowship, worship and evangelism. These five things are essential, but we can never overlook our responsibility to redeem our culture. God has not called us to let this world go to hell in a hand-basket. Generally speaking, we define our faith strictly in terms of personal salvation, instead we need to keep in mind that we are not only saved from SIN, but saved to the task of cultivating God’s creation.

One brother said in a message that we are faced with seven global challenges: orphans or children of the world, abused women, HIV/AIDs that have decimated whole populations, poverty, lack of water, the environment and protecting the unborn. He is right on. We are not only saved from sin, but we are saved to tear down the structures of sin that have created these seven global challenges.

We read in the first chapter of Genesis that in six days God created everything and with the creation of man He turned over the task of cultivating what He created. This is called the “CULTURAL MANDATE” and it is as binding to us as the Lord’s “GREAT COMMISSION.”

Our faith must encompass every part of life, every sphere of work, every aspect of the world. It must be the lens on how we see reality. If God is sovereign over everything, as we confess He is, then everything finds its identity and meaning in relationship to Him not only in our spiritual life, but in our work, profession, politics, science, education, entertainment, arts and especially the family.

Since God made the world He also put in place God-given norms that govern all that He has created that are both moral and physical. Just as we would not go against the physical laws (like gravity) so also we should not go against His moral laws. Like Chuck Colson said: “Moral laws tell us how to govern our behavior. Laws of logic tell us how to think clearly. Norms of justice tell us how to run a government. Aesthetic norms guide the creation of beauty and the arts. If we don't know the norms God has ordained for every area of life, then we're living blindly and are bound to make wrong choices - hurting ourselves and others. We're like a person who walks into a room blindfolded and bumps his shins against the furniture.”

In looking at truth and fallacy, like A.W. Tozer said: “Truth and error travel the same highway.” In this world of moral ambiguity we need to be able to discern what is true and what is false/fallacy. This will be a real battle in the days ahead.

 KINGDOM THINKING – Chapter 17

Romans 5:3-5 “Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, **character**; and character, hope.”

In my early Christian walk I was taught that Jesus is coming and will take me out of this sinful world and what I need to do is remain spotless and wait for the ‘rapture.’

However, in reading Scripture and being able to travel to many different countries of the world and seeing the corruption, injustice, moral decay, etc. I began to realize that we, the church, are the salt and light of the world. God has put us here to bring forth truth, righteousness and justice in this insane world.

Ephesians 1:9-11 “And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment — to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.”

When reading this passage I began to realize that the Bible is not necessarily concerned about geographical location whether  spiritual or physical, but concerned about the Person of Christ and His rule and dominion in the cosmos.

One of the most important issues in the 21st century will be men and women of character. We are born with a personality, but not with a character. Character is something that is developed by how we daily respond to life situations that come our way.

Dr. Elijah Morgan & Peter Riederer in Schweizer Arbeitgeber commented: “THE WORLD NEEDS MEN AND WOMEN...who can't be bought; who keep their promises; who value character over riches; with an opinion and a will; who value inner greatness over visible career; who readily take steps of faith; who retain their identity in a crowd; who do not compromise themselves with falsehood; whose personal ambitions are not limited to personal gain; who do not say that “we do it because the others do it;” who remain loyal to their friends through success and failure; who believe that tricks, calculation and cunning are not the only keys to success who are not afraid of standing up for the truth, even if it is unpopular; who can decisively say ‘no’ in the face of a world saying ‘yes.’”

Ralph Waldo Emerson said: ''Character is higher than intellect. A great soul will be strong to live as well as think.''

Abraham Lincoln commented about character: ''Character is like a tree and reputation like a shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing.''

Laura Schlessinger said: ''Integrity is its own reward.''

J.C. Watts said: ''Character is doing what's right when nobody's looking.''

Mark Twain said: ''It is better to deserve honors and not have them than to have them and not deserve them.''

General H. Norman Schwartzkopf said this:“Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But if you must be without one, be without the strategy.”

Aesop: ''Outside show is a poor substitute for inner worth.''

 Lord Chesterfield: ''You must look into people, as well as at them.''

Benjamin Disraeli: ''Characters do not change. Opinions alter, but characters are only developed.''

Henry Clay: ''Of all the properties which belong to honorable men, not one is so highly prized as that of character.''

Heraclitus: ''Man's character is his fate.''

Oswald Chambers said: "No man is born with character; we make our own character. When a man is born from above a new disposition is given to him, but not a new character; neither naturally nor supernaturally are we born with character. Character is what a man makes out of his disposition as it comes in contact with external things. A man's character cannot be summed up by what he does in spots, but only by what he is in the main trend of his existence. When we describe a man we fix on the exceptional things, but it is the steady trend of a man's life that tells. Character is that which steadily prevails, not something that occasionally manifests itself."

We see what people down through the ages have to say about character. The person that God uses is a man/woman of character. With all of our getting; get character.

                             KINGDOM THINKING - Chapter 18

Kingdom thinking will focus to a great degree on building character and not necessarily on institutions. Institutions will be built, but to have the right foundation they must be built by men of character.

Oswald Chambers said, "The one thing that God is after is character."

It would seem that in every one of our presidential campaigns, or even when some of our other politicians are running for election or re-election, that very little emphasis is given on character. I was surprised when many responded that character is not what counts. They say, "It is the *issues* that count."

One would hope that it is only a few people that believe that character is not that important, but it seems that this is something that's becoming more rampant in our public offices as well as in our religious establishments. How can we say that character is not important? Everything we do springs out of character. Real leadership comes out of character or from lack of it.

Chuck Colson in his magazine Break Point said this:

"There's an issue that crops up in every major election campaign: Does a candidate's private morality have anything to do with his public life? For years, liberals have said no - people can do anything they like in private and it doesn't affect their ability to govern. And now a conservative leader John O'Sullivan, editor of National Review, has said the same thing, writing that he'd rather be governed by a competent sinner than by an incompetent saint. The assumption here is that governing requires only technical competence. But that's a mistaken assumption. ln reality, governing involves a whole philosophy of life, and that in turn involves our personal choices and behavior.

“Let me give you just one example , and a very important one. Nearly all forms of modern philosophy borrow from the writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau, an 18th century French writer.  Rousseau's political ideas are described in his book The Social Contract, where he says the ideal state is one that demands total allegiance. Rousseau wanted the state to take responsibility for raising children so it could indoctrinate them to devote their whole selves to its service.

“These were the ideas that fueled the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror. They were adopted by Marx and Lenin and became part of communism.  They even influenced Pol Pot and his cadre of Paris educated communists, who slaughtered a quarter of the Cambodian population in their pursuit of the totalitarian state.

“Where did Rousseau get such an awful view of the state?

“If we look at his life, the answer becomes clear. Rousseau was a drifter and a Bohemian. He had several affairs and lived most of his life with a mistress, a young washer woman, named Therese. When Therese gave birth to a baby, Rousseau faced a major challenge: Would he settle down and accept the responsibilities of family and fatherhood? The answer was a flat no. Children, Rousseau said, would cramp his lifestyle, would undercut his celebrity in the high society of the day.

“He persuaded Therese to give up the infant to an orphanage. (Today it would be an abortion). Over the years Rousseau had five children. Each one was deposited on the steps of the orphanage. When his friends criticized him, Rousseau tried to justify his actions. He hit upon the argument that giving up his children was actually the best thing for them - that the state could do a better job of raising and educating them; that the state was a better father.

“These ideas later became a key plank in Rousseau's political philosophy. Having asked the State to be a father to his own children he devised a theory of the state as father to us all. The state should be responsible for forming our minds and our loyalties. In the words of historian Paul Johnson, Rousseau portrayed all citizens as ‘children of the paternal
orphanage.’

“Rousseau might have been appalled if he had known that so much of the barbarism of the 20th century: the Concentration camps, the mock trial, the genocide, all resulted from his efforts to justify his own irresponsibility.”

Everything stems from character.

KINGDOM THINKING - Chapter 19

Matthew 11:12 “From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.”

Kingdom thinking will embrace the entrepreneurs. Basic definition of an entrepreneur: someone who organizes a venture (business or otherwise) and assumes the risk for it. In other words, an entrepreneur for the sake of the Kingdom of God is ready to take risks. So many of us want to play it safe and if we sense that everyone else is with us on it we might dare to step out. Not so with an entrepreneur. He sees what needs to be done whether or not anyone else is stepping out to see it done, or to do it with him.

A survey was taken among 50 octogenarians (those over 80 years of age). They all had one thing in common. They had been saved for 50 years or more. When asked if they could live their lives over again what they would have done differently, most of them said that they would have taken more risks. What a testimony!

The Gospel will advance through (might I say) entrepreneurs who are willing to leave all and go - according to the command given them by God. They are willing to set out for a venture to see the Gospel spread throughout the world into every people group.

They are men/women whose faith is a conviction and not merely a preference. They are men and women of the same caliber as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who did not bend their knee to Nebuchadnezzar’s statue that he had built, and then were willing to go into the burning furnace for their conviction. This was the result with the king: "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way." Daniel 3:28-29

They are men and women like William Carey, father of the Modern Missionary Movement.” When he was told to sit down and be quiet about converting the heathen he spoke even louder not only with words, but actions, and off to India he went. Forty years later he had started institutions of higher learning, translated the Bible into six Indian languages: Bengali, Oriya, Marathi, Hindi, Assamese and Sanskrit as well as portions of the Bible into 29 other languages. He also brought in a printing press and established a newspaper as well as getting the government to outlaw practices like infanticide and suttee (in which Hindu widows would immolate, sacrificing themselves on their husband's funeral pyre).

Was William Carey an apostle, entrepreneur, prophet, etc.? Perhaps he was all, but one thing was for certain; that he was a man with Kingdom thinking. He was a man who saw that "the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.” Matthew 1:12 (KJV)

We all have a purpose from God, and faithfulness is what God’s people are crowned and rewarded for. We need to have “kingdom thinking” to fulfill our purpose.

 KINGDOM THINKING - Chapter 20

Matthew 3:1-3 “In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.’ This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: ‘A voice of one calling in the desert, “Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”’

Kingdom thinking will want to see revival; that of bringing people into the Body of Christ and a transformation that puts God’s people in places of responsibility in order to bring change into the systems of our world.

There are three words that I hear being bandied about today that need some clarification: reformation, revival and transformation. The question in my mind is: How are these words being used and clarified in the New Testament? What comes first; revival, reformation or transformation?

Perhaps we first need the definition of each.

Reformation: Improvement in the existing form or condition of institutions or practices

Revival (one definition is): Bringing into activity and prominence

Transformation (probably the best definition is the word): change

However, when it comes to the Word of God I find that it gives us a better description of each. For example, in our text above (Matthew 3:1-3) we have John the Baptist coming on the scene. What is he doing? It says that he is a voice in the wilderness: “Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.”  In other words, to me Biblically speaking “reformation” is preparing the way for the Lord; telling people what Jesus Christ did for them when He came the first time and that He’s coming back with His Kingdom. How we need to pray for preachers to be raised up to prepare the way for the Lord.

Martin Lloyd Jones for many years was the pastor of the Westminster Chapel in London. He said that the best definition of revival is: **“God passing by**.”

He used the passage in Exodus 33:21-23 “Then the Lord said, ‘There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my **glory passes by**, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have **passed by**. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.’”

Transformation is change. Not only is the person changed, but society changes as well.

When we read the Gospels what do we find? First, we have John the Baptist and what is he doing? He is preparing the way for the Lord. Secondly, we then have Jesus arriving on the scene and what do we find? He passes by and when He passed by what happens? There is transformation in people.

Wherever He passes by there is life, there is newness, and there is change. There was a Zacchaeus paying back fourfold of what he took dishonestly, leprous people being healed, dead people being raised to life, people being encouraged everywhere as the Kingdom of God was preached and spread wherever the Lord passed by.

When we look back over the past 2000 years we see many powerful kingdoms that have come and gone into the dustbin of history, but the Kingdom of God is spreading and to fill the whole earth.

Several years ago I was in Dubai for a conference with some of the workers in that part of the world. Listening to the testimonies I kept hearing the phrase, “back to Jerusalem.” What was interesting to me was that in Acts 2:14 Peter stood up and preached in Jerusalem and the Gospel began to spread. What I was hearing in Dubai after almost 2000 years is that the Gospel has circumnavigated the world and is now coming back to Jerusalem where it started.

Jesus said: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:14) Kingdom thinking will want to hasten that day; the day Jesus returns. So, “look forward to the day of God and **speed its coming.”** 2 Peter 3:12

**KINGDOM THINKING - Chapter 21**

**Acts 1:1 “In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach.”**

**We find that kingdom thinkers are also kingdom doers. Not only will they think of what needs to be done, but will be actively involved in seeing it done. Kingdom thinkers will be men and women of character, men and women of commitment.**

When we think of character we must think about COMMITMENT.

When I look at the evangelical scene today I see a great lack of commitment. When I look at the lack of laborers out on the field especially in the difficult areas of the world like the Muslim, Hindu and Chinese world - I believe it comes back to a lack of commitment.

Where are God's people who will go to these hard areas of the world and stick it out? We find very few who even respond to the call or the challenge. Out of those who do respond we see a great number dropping out after a short time. Often, those who make it to the field do not go back again after the first term. Why? I believe there are a number of reasons, but one big reason is a lack of commitment.

Commitment is so important. Webster’s dictionary defines commitment this way: to bring together; to join; to entrust; to give in trust or charge; to consign for safe keeping; to bind by pledge or assurance.

I commit my life to Christ Jesus. In other words: I join my life to His, I give my life to Him and entrust all things to Him for safe keeping.

The same is true of marriage. Why are marriages falling apart? I know that we often hear of incompatibility, mental cruelty, etc. All of these things are often a camouflage for the real culprit that tears the marriage apart; which is usually a lack of commitment.

When we commit our lives to the Lord we are committed to His will. Jesus said, "If you continue in my word then you are my disciples." The word “continues” brings out the idea of commitment. John 8:31 “To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.’”

However, we also need to think through some of the ‘reasons’ why we break our commitment.

1. It wasn't quite what I felt it would be.

This is one excuse that I hear quite often with people who break a commitment. Perhaps we didn't count the cost.

Luke 9:57-58 "As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' Jesus replied, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.'"

When Jesus laid down the terms of discipleship he did not hear from these would-be-followers again.

2. We don't have a mind to suffer.

1 Peter 4:1 “Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.”

This is part of our armor and is as essential to us as the armor we read about in Ephesians 6. Because we do not have that mind-set or mentality we see that the enemy gets in and hits us just where we do not want to suffer. Consequently, we go about seeing what we can do in order to break our commitment.

A young lady joined Doulos, one of our OM ships, for two years when I was the director. She had been very active in her church and had a responsible job. When she was on the ship she had to wash dishes. Every night when she was in her room she was complaining about her dish-pan hands and that she did not join the ship to be a dish washer, etc. One night while she was complaining to the Lord about her hands, how red they looked, etc. and thinking how she might be able to get out of her commitment, the Lord spoke to her and said: "Look at my hands."

That was a turning point in her life. She realized how the Lord had suffered for her. She armed herself with the right mentality and stuck it out. She became one of the members of our line-up team who have the big responsibility of going ahead of the ship and lining up the ship’s program, a job that carries much responsibility. It is a job for people with commitment.

3. Wrong ideas of what it means to follow Christ.

We seem to think that in following Christ there will be no problems. We do not understand how the Lord builds character in us. It is not that we do not have problems, because we do and always will. As a matter of fact, we probably have more problems in following Christ (because Satan is against us in doing this), but we also have solid solutions to our problems. And this is what makes the difference.

There is a tendency to think that when following Christ, if things are rough and don't seem to be working out then it must not be of God. It is this type of thinking that leads into many erroneous ideas about discipleship.

How do we interpret Hebrews 11:35-38? “Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated - the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.”

What about these people mentioned here? Didn't they have a commitment of faith? Did they believe God for deliverance? Yes, they had faith. As a matter of fact, they probably had more faith than most Christians. Here we see what real Biblical faith is. Biblical faith takes us through the problems for the good results of God’s purpose. This is what commitment is all about.

KINGDOM THINKING - Chapter 22

Deuteronomy 28:13 “The Lord will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the Lord your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom.”

A question that I have on my mind is: How are we (true believers) training our children? Our children are a heritage from the Lord and with that blessing there comes tremendous responsibility.

I often hear how children who have grown up in the church and have gone off to higher education soon lose their faith. This brings another question to my mind and that is: Did they have a faith to begin with to even lose? Or perhaps put another way: Was the faith that they professed a preference (something you prefer over something else) or was it a conviction? There is a difference between the two.

We might ask: What is the difference between a faith that is a conviction and one that is preference? In Daniel chapter 2 we see Daniel interpreting the dream that Nebuchadnezzar had about a statue and what it meant.

In chapter 3 we see a statue being built with the instructions “As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, **you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up**. If one does not bow down and worship the consequences are quite drastic: “Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.” Daniel 3:5-6

Three young men: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who had been taken captive along with Daniel, were not going to deny their faith. They must have been taught this as young boys by their parents, and before being captured by this pagan king who demanded this loyalty. This loyalty only belongs to Jehovah, the great I AM.

These three men were taken and thrown into the fiery furnace that the king had heated up seven times hotter than usual because of the answer the three men gave to the king. "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king.  But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." Daniel 3:16-18

What boldness, courage and conviction that these three men had! In this testimony of these three men we see a faith that was a conviction and not a preference. There are four things that we can learn from this to see whether or not our faith is a conviction or a preference.

1. First, we see that their faith was **unchangeable**. No matter how much pressure Nebuchadnezzar placed upon them they did not recant or change. If we find that under pressure from our authorities, or our peers, etc. that we can change what we believe, then I would have to that – that kind of faith is a preference and not a conviction. (verse 15)
2. Secondly, they were **willing to** **stand alone**. There could have been at least 500 Jews in Babylon at that time. Where were these Jews and what were they doing? They must have been bowing the knee as required by the king. We do not like standing alone, but if we must we must. (verse 12)
3. Thirdly, a faith that is a conviction is **non-negotiable**. When we read verses 16-18 we see that Nebuchadnezzar was trying to negotiate with them but to no gain. If our faith is negotiable then it is a preference and not a conviction.
4. Fourthly, a faith that is a conviction **does not need to be assured of success before taking a stand.** We find that often we can be intimidated by the opposing party (whatever that might be) and so we do not take a stand if it seems that we are the minority. It would be nice to have others stand with us, but if they do not, then the men and women of conviction are willing to stand alone on what they profess to believe.

How do we instill this type of faith in our children? First, we instill it by our example. What do our children see in us? Do they see a faith that is a conviction or one that is preference?

Luke 6:40 tells us:  “A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.”  In other words, where we are spiritually is how we raise our own children.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 tells us:  “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”

If God has called us to rule and reign with Him then we need to be teaching our children the same. What a responsibility we have!

Hugh Welchel said: “Our salvation is not just a [bus ticket to heaven](http://tifwe.us7.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=8c0f874277fff30e30abed624&id=ede0b027ba&e=734e8532c0), but an invitation to participate in God’s redemptive plan to rescue humanity and the physical universe.”

                                KINGDOM THINKING - Chapter 23

Luke 19:13 “So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.’”

Kingdom thinking will lead us to break the poverty mindsets over people and help them to create their own wealth. Yes, we want to feed the poor, but kingdom thinking will take us one step further in how we can create a business or prepare them to work in high-level jobs in order to feed themselves and become prosperous for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

In helping others to feed themselves through creating prospering businesses we can give them the ability to have a longer life-span, have less sickness as well as less suffering that poverty brings. By helping others help themselves we can also bring in the Gospel and see their spiritual lives altered and prospering as well.

Kingdom thinking leaders are able to use their influence to help transform people spiritually, financially and civically for kingdom purposes. We realize God is the One who gives the ability, but He often works through secondary means and, we, the Body of Christ, are the secondary means.

Kingdom thinking will cause people to *seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness* according to Matthew 6:33. “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

What are “these things” that will be added to us? Reading through the list we see that it is talking about our clothing (shelter), food, health as well as things concerning our future prosperity. In all of my travels in 100 different countries of the world I find that these are the basic things people worry about. So what is the answer? Put His Kingdom and His righteousness first, before all other things in life!

Secondly, kingdom thinking will get people who are seeking His kingdom to use what is available. We see this principle coming out in John 6 where Jesus asked Philip: “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” Jesus only did this to test Philip because He already knew what to do.

What was Philip’s response? “Eight months wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!” (vs.7) This is the way Satan works. When God calls us to do something, Satan is always there to show us what we do not have in order to discourage us from doing the Lord’s will.  However, we read that there was another disciple who mentioned a boy with “five small barley loaves and two small fish,” but then he said, “how far will they go among so many?” (vs. 9) We read that in the hands of Jesus it was enough and He fed a multitude of people. Jesus used what was available, thanked His Father and had plenty for everyone.

I was trying to teach this principle to my oldest daughter when she wanted to go on a short term mission program to Morocco. She needed $1500 for the trip. I was asking her what she had available. At first she thought she did not have anything, but I reminded her of her artistic talent. She is a great artist (must be from her mother’s side) and she had drawn a picture of the heads of a number of animals. In that art piece there was a space and I suggested she draw the face of an Australian Aborigine man, which she did.

I told her what we would do is make 100 T-shirts with that art piece and put a text ‘SAVE THE HUMANS’ on the top.  I reminded her that we are constantly talking about saving the animals, but what about saving the humans especially when it comes to the abortion of babies.

I invested $500 and we made a 100 T-shirts and sold them for $20 each. Out of that we made $2000 and my initial investment was paid back and she had $1500 for her mission trip to Morocco. And she learned an important lesson to use what is available.

Kingdom thinking will help people to realize that they have available more than they think they have, and with God’s favor - it can meet the need, even feed a multitude.

 KINGDOM THINKING – Chapter 24

Philippians 2:12-13 “Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed — not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence — continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”

It would seem that in kingdom thinking the working out of our salvation will result in seeing changes in our culture around us. Jesus said that a little leaven in the lump of dough will result in the leaven spreading throughout the dough. "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough." Matthew 13:33

I would take that to mean that wherever we find God’s people doing what Philippians 2:12-13 is talking about that it will make a difference in the surroundings. It would stand to reason that if I am working out what the Lord has worked in me that this will affect the situation around me.

When I look at the deteriorating culture around us, another question comes to my mind on whether or not we as God’s people are really working out the salvation that we have in Christ? If so, then why is there no real change in our culture or society? If Christ has worked in us then why are we not working it out?

I do not believe that there is an easy answer to this, but I would like to put forth several thoughts. First, I think there is a real lack of discipleship within the church. When we look at the Master trainer Himself we see that He chose 12 men that could “be with Him.” This is the key: “to be with Him.” More and more I have come to the conclusion that Christianity is not so much ‘taught’ as it is ‘caught.’

Discipleship is not sitting down in a class room discussion or a teaching session (not that it shouldn’t be done), but it is seeing the principles and doctrines of Christianity being lived out day by day. Mahatma Gandhi told Dr. Stanley Jones that if he could find one Christian living like Jesus lived he would become a Christian. If you went to his room you would find a stack of books and one of them would be the Bible. If you opened it to the Sermon on the Mount you would find almost every verse underlined. Evidently Christianity in India did not make an impact on him.

Where does discipleship begin? In our homes! Jesus said: “Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.” Matthew 5:15

When it comes to discipleship we need to understand that we produce what we are. “A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.” (Luke 6:40) This alone should be a great incentive for each one of us to be continually working out our salvation, first in our homes, then in our jobs, schools, community, etc.

An article in “Urban Renewal” made the following statement: “I've become convinced that one of the primary reasons the evangelical church has become so enfeebled over the last twenty years or so is because sanctification is no longer being taught. Not just that believers need to overcome the power of sin, which is obvious enough, but how to actually do it!

“The data is incontrovertible: without marshaling the many demographic studies proving it, far too many believers today find themselves addicted to the very sins and anxieties plaguing the unsaved - like pornography, adultery, gambling, lying, cheating, chronic depression, bad marriages, divorce - and at levels that are no different. It's no wonder that the church is so ineffectual and her witness so pathetic.”

Catherine Booth said: “When the church and the world can jog comfortably along together, you can be sure something is wrong. The world has not compromised - its spirit is exactly the same as it ever was. If Christians were equally as faithful to the Lord, separated from the world, and living so that their lives were a reproof to all ungodliness, the world would hate them as much as it ever did. It is the church that has compromised, not the world.”

There is much more that could be said about this, but another reason why we are not making an impact in our society is that we are not occupying the gates. The gates are where decisions are being made that affect the society, community, state, country that we live in. When I say this I am not talking about establishing a theocracy, but we will live by someone’s morals and if this is the case then why not the morality that has been laid down to us by God in His Word?

Yes, there will be many who will reject godly morals and go their own way, but this is no reason not to be in the market place living and proclaiming these morals because there will also be some who will see that what we are proclaiming and living is the reality.

 KINGDOM THINKING - Chapter 25

                               POWER VERSUS INFLUENCE

Numbers 16:5-7 “Then he said to Korah and all his followers: "In the morning the Lord will show who belongs to him and who is holy, and he will have that person come near him. The man he chooses he will cause to come near him.  You, Korah, and all your followers are to do this: Take censers and tomorrow put fire and incense in them before the Lord. The man the Lord chooses will be the one who is holy. You Levites have gone too far!"

In this incident we see a rebellion against Moses’ leadership. Korah, a Levite, was angry with Moses and a rebellion was formed that God put down by having the earth open and swallow Korah, his family and all of his followers. In this incident we see power being demonstrated through a miracle that took place. Too often we see this type of rebellion of frustrated ambition and petty jealousy in doing the will of God.

Moses’ reaction was to use power (by invoking a miracle) to put down the opposition and prove his own authenticity.

However, when Joshua came to Moses about some who were prophesying in the camp Moses’ response was different. He praised God by saying, “Might the Lord put His Spirit on all of the Lord’s people.”

In protest against the command of God through Moses, Korah said that all of the Lord’s people are holy, but in the case of Medad, Moses said that his preference would be that all of God’s people be prophets. (Numbers 11:26: “However, two men, whose names were Eldad and Medad, had remained in the camp. They were listed among the elders, but did not go out to the Tent. Yet the Spirit also rested on them, and they prophesied in the camp.”)

What is the difference between the two statements? Jewish sages bring out an important truth that when Moses, by God’s choosing, takes Joshua to be leader in his place he brings him before Aaron and then two things take place. First, he lays his hands on Joshua and secondly he gives him some of his (Moses) splendor. Jewish sage brings out: **“’Lay your hand on him’ – this is like lighting one light from another. ‘Give him some of your splendour’ – this is like pouring from one vessel to another.”**

Jewish sage goes on to say: **“There are two forms or dimensions of leadership. One is power, the other, influence. Often we confuse the two. After all, those who have power often have influence, and those who have influence have a certain kind of power. In fact, however, the two are quite different, even opposites.”**

What is brought out here is that if you have total power and you share it with nine others you have one tenth of the power, but if you have influence and you share with nine others you do not have less, but even more. In other words, your influence has increased and spread.

When we look at Scripture we see men who had power - kings, etc. as well as men who had influence. Joseph had influence but Pharaoh had power. Daniel had influence but Nebuchadnezzar had power.

We also see the difference between kings and prophets. We see all that kings could do with their power, but prophets had no power, rather influence. I have been reading the prophets in the Old Testament who prophesied under the reign of so and so. The kings died and so did their power, but the prophets have a different legacy because their influence lives on.

We see this contrast with Jesus Himself. “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,  but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross!” Philippians 2:5-8

Johnny Cash, in his song called “HERE WAS A MAN” brings out the difference between power and influence. After he describes the earthly history of Christ and going to the cross he sings this:

“I think, I'm well within the mark when I say
That all of the armies that ever marched
All of the navies that ever sailed the seas
All of the legislative bodies that ever sat
And all of the kings that ever reigned
All of them put together have not affected
The life of man on this earth
So powerfully as that one solitary life.”

**Here was a person of influence.**

Keep in mind that when the person of power dies so does his power, but with influence this is different. Kingdom thinking will focus on seeing men/women raised up that will be great influencers wherever they are, be it in their jobs, professions, schools, governments and to the ends of the world.

                              KINGDOM THINKING – Chapter 26

 BECOMING A HOPE ADDICT

Job 13:15 “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face.”

Over these past 26 weekly letters we have been looking at Kingdom Thinking and considering what it means to think this way and how it should affect us in what we say and do.

I was having a conversation with a brother discussing things regarding our culture, society, politics, etc. that are affecting us. In the conversation we wondered what can we do to make an impact in our culture. The thought that seemed to permeate our thinking was: it is so overwhelming that it seems hopeless, judgment is coming and there is nothing we can do.

Upon further reflection several thoughts came to my mind.

First, I believe that judgment is coming. As a matter of fact I think judgment has already started and is beginning to spread. When God begins to chastise it does not come down all at once, but slowly - giving us the chance to repent and turn from our wicked ways. If we do not repent then more judgment comes upon us. I see this judgment coming through our western economic downturn as well as with the lack of good leadership. Today we have leaders who do not know what to do.

When these things begin to happen, we, God's people, need to be prepared and ready to step in the gap with a helping hand. Often I have seen this scenario played out in other parts of the world. God is giving us a chance to see people's hearts changed by the Gospel because through a crisis they are more open than before. Their foundation has been shaken. Often this has been the result of God's judgment or chastisement and we, God's people, need to be ready to take advantage of this for the Gospel’s sake. This is one way we will see a change in culture and society.

In my last weekly I wrote about power and influence. Joseph was ready with his influence when crisis, in the form of a famine, came to Egypt and the known world. Daniel was ready when Nebuchadnezzar sent out the order to kill all the wise men because they could not interpret his dream.

I also believe that God is right now preparing His people to be ready for the coming crisis and through their influence to see a great harvest of souls. We need the Abrahams who **“against all hope….believed** and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Romans 4:18-19

Another aspect in Kingdom Thinking that I have written about that we need to understand is that our work matters to God. Wherever God has placed us, that work matters to God. When we live out His kingdom principles of righteousness and justice in our home and work place this will have an impact. When we put into practice what Jesus told us in Matthew 6:33 to “seek first the kingdom of God” it will have an impact.

We have an illustration of this in 2 Kings chapter 5. The characters are Naaman, a great man in king Aram's kingdom (Syria), and the captain of the army. Naaman had leprosy. Another character is a captured little Jewish slave girl who was a handmaiden to Naaman's wife. Also in this scene there is Elisha, the prophet in Israel.

Here is this little slave girl. Her work was to be a handmaiden to Naaman's wife - whatever that entailed. Did her work matter to God? I think so. She knew what she believed: the God of Israel is God and not the idols that Naaman and his people worship. She told her mistress about the prophet in Israel who could heal Naaman of his leprosy.

Naaman takes it to heart and goes to Israel with the blessing of his king who had written a letter to the king of Israel. The bottom line is that Naaman gets healed of his leprosy and his testimony is: “Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel.” 2 Kings 5:15

Do you think that all this had an impact upon the king of Aram and his kingdom? I think so. What did God use? He used a little Jewish slave girl as she did her daily work. We never know what God might or might not do. We are to be faithful in that which God has given us to do.

We need to recognize that we all have a calling, but there are two phases to this calling. First, we are called 'to be;' that is, to be a believer in Christ and to become Christ-like. Then we are 'to do;' that is, to do what-ever He has given us to do. For this little slave girl it was to be a handmaiden to Naaman's wife. Naaman was a prominent man in Aram and through the testimony of this little slave girl God was honored and lifted up.

The prophet Zechariah said: “**For who has despised the day of small things?”** Zechariah 4:10 NKJV

Yes, our work matters to God, no matter what it is, and it should matter to us as well.

 KINGDOM THINKING – Chapter 27

                                  ARE WE FLOURISHING?

Psalms 92:12-15 “The righteous will **flourish** like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the Lord, they will **flourish** in the courts of our God.  They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, ‘The Lord is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.’”

Simple definition for the word ’flourish’ is: to grow or develop in a healthy or vigorous way, to develop rapidly and successfully. God wants us (His people) to flourish in the midst of a world that is filled with sin and decay. To flourish in this way will be a testimony to the world that what we have and what we believe in is real and that it works. Paul said: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." (2 Corinthians 4:13) He knew that what he believed in was real and so he spoke with confidence and authority.

In a blog by INSTITUTE FOR FAITH, WORK AND ECONOMICS a Christian think tank out of Washington DC – said the following about flourishing: “In the Old Testament, the concept of flourishing is best described by the Jewish word [*shalom*](http://tifwe.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=8c0f874277fff30e30abed624&amp;id=1319be493f&amp;e=734e8532c0%20\t%20_blank). Biblical scholars note that shalom signifies a number of things, including salvation, wholeness, integrity, soundness, community, righteousness, justice, and well-being. Shalom denotes a right relationship with God, with others, and with God’s good creation. It is the way God intended things to be when He created the universe.

Most English Bibles translate shalom as “peace,” but it means much more than just an absence of conflict. The idea of flourishing (shalom) in the widest sense of the word is a significant theme in the Old Testament. When the Lord brings “shalom:”

* There is prosperity ([Psalm 72:1-7](http://tifwe.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=8c0f874277fff30e30abed624&amp;id=11a02348e8&amp;e=734e8532c0%20\t%20_blank)).
* There is health ([Isaiah 57:19](http://tifwe.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=8c0f874277fff30e30abed624&amp;id=98f49ca9ef&amp;e=734e8532c0%20\t%20_blank)).
* There is reconciliation ([Genesis 26:29](http://tifwe.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=8c0f874277fff30e30abed624&amp;id=3b7d4253f3&amp;e=734e8532c0%20\t%20_blank)).
* There is contentment ([Genesis 15:15](http://tifwe.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=8c0f874277fff30e30abed624&amp;id=60a658244e&amp;e=734e8532c0%20\t%20_blank), [Psalm 4:8](http://tifwe.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=8c0f874277fff30e30abed624&amp;id=6f0623dba6&amp;e=734e8532c0%20\t%20_blank)).
* When *the shalom* of the Lord is present, there are good relationships between the nations and peoples. God’s shalom has a social, as well as a personal, dimension ([I Chronicles 12:17-18](http://tifwe.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=8c0f874277fff30e30abed624&amp;id=5e96f213fa&amp;e=734e8532c0%20\t%20_blank)).

Shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight. It is the way things ought to be.

We might not know the fullness of this “shalom” until Christ comes, but to me kingdom thinking means that this is what we are to work towards where ever we might be that God places us: our work place, school, arts, government, media, business, etc. We work towards life’s shalom.

In order to flourish our lives must have meaning and purpose. When Christ gave us one of His last commands to go into all the world and teach all nations before His ascension, He gave us the means to flourish. I would dare say that our lives individually, or corporately with our church, will have no real flourishing unless we are working towards this goal. This does not mean that everyone must go, but all can be involved in giving and praying, but also involved in reaching those around us.

Part of this flourishing is being good stewards in fulfilling the cultural mandate God gave us. How are we doing? Are we maintaining God’s creation? Are we making the best of the talents, gifts, resources that God has given us? The blog that I mentioned above brings out some important truths that flourishing in a society will be seen in areas like life expectancy, infant mortality, at levels of poverty and corruption, with civil liberties and the environment.

Kingdom thinking will ponder or consider these things and will look around in the world to see what can and should be done. I am working with brothers now who want to see how we can create jobs; work is important. This is one of the best ways to alleviate poverty. There are some who are unable to work, but God ordained work and not living off the generosity of others or hand-outs from the government (tax-payers).

When Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was teaching the churches through his letters, he shared how we need to take care of those in our families first. He used the example of widows. Paul said: “Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.” (1 Timothy 5:3-5)

I am not saying that governments are not important in helping with relief, but only after other means (like family) have been exhausted. The problem that we have in Western Europe, and that we are closely following in the States, is in thinking that our government needs to take care of us from the cradle to the grave. But, that can last only so long because like Margaret Thatcher said: “We soon run out of other people’s money.”

Kingdom thinking will also see the importance of ‘giving.’ James and John bring this out in their admonition to us all. “Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food.  If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” James 2:15-17

“If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?” 1 John 3:17

God wants us to “flourish” in every way so that we can help others, both physically and spiritually, as well as enjoy our lives with our families. Are you flourishing?

 KINGDOM THINKING – Chapter 28

                            BUILDING GOD’S HOUSE - Part 1

2 Chronicles 7:14 “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

Kingdom thinking understands the tremendous responsibility that is upon the church when it comes to the welfare of a society, community, state and country. This verse makes it very clear that it is God’s people who are called by His Name that hold in their hands the responsibility in seeing the Lord forgive their sin and heal the land. We do our part and God will do His.

I have been thinking about this and asking the question: What is our part? I know it’s about humbling ourselves, praying and seeking His face and turning from our wicked ways, but what does this mean practically? This is the question that I have been asking myself and searching Scripture to find the answer for.

This is where the prophet Haggai comes in. I believe that his message is for God’s people today and in the next few weekly letters we will deal with this in bringing to a close this series on “Kingdom Thinking.”

King Cyrus of Persia let the Jewish people come back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. Upon returning they undertook the task, but soon opposition and obstacles came and the work slowed down and eventually stopped as complacency and apathy began to set in. With this God was not honored. The people then went to build their own homes, worked their crops and basically forgot about the House of God.

For eighteen years this was the case until Haggai the prophet came on the scene with a word from the Lord. It is this word from the Lord that I think is very apt for us today.

In Ephesians chapter 2 we are told: “Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:19-22)

We see that we too are building a holy temple, according to Paul. We learn from Peter: “You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2:5)

When we look at the scene in heaven we see that there are people from every tribe, tongue and nation worshipping the Lord. “And they sang a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.”’ (Revelation 5:9)

So when I put these verses together what does it tell me? The church, God’s people, like the Jewish people of old in Haggai’s time, are building a temple - a holy habitation for the living God. The stones that we use are not made out of granite, but are living stones made out of flesh and blood and these stones must come from every tribe, nation and people group in the world.

The question in my mind is this: How are we doing in building this temple? To finish the temple there must be stones from all of these different groups I mentioned. It is estimated that in the world there are still between 2,000 - 3,000 people groups where the church needs to be established, where living stones need to be gathered, polished and fitted into the temple.

When we think of the obstacles, the opposition from governments and evil people, this task is very daunting and the work of world evangelism is slowing down and in some places it has even stopped.

We are now beginning to see complacency and apathy settling in on the people of God especially here in the Western world. We find ourselves very busy building our own homes and thinking of ourselves so that God’s house is not being built and God is not being honored. What should we do?

In the next few weekly letters we will deal with this.

KINGDOM THINKING – Part 29

                       BUILDING GOD’S HOUSE

Haggai 1:5-6 “Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.

“‘You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?’ declares the Lord Almighty. ‘Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house. Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the oil and whatever the ground produces, on men and cattle, and on the labor of your hands.’” (vs. 9-11)

Because God’s people forsook the task that the Lord gave them we see the consequences. God says: "Give careful thought to your ways.” We see the consequences in Haggai’s days, but what about ours?

Look at the economic downturn in the Western world. Runaway debt that we are drowning in, inflation (hidden tax) that leaves us with little left (wages in a purse with holes in it), and we never seem to get ahead or keep our heads above water. "Why?" declares the Lord Almighty. "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house."

Because the house of the Lord was being neglected in Haggai’s time we see the result upon nature - no dew or rain for the crops, drought that affects all crops, animals (cows, sheep) and people - their livelihood. What do we have in the West today? Out of control unemployment, government entitlements that will eventually sink the Western countries, and calamities that have come upon us costing billions of dollars.

Haggai gave God’s message to God’s people in his time and I think that is also relevant for us today. "Give careful thought to your ways.” What Haggai was bringing out is that the reason all of these things coming upon the nation of Israel was "because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house."

So what does this mean today in the 21st century? We come back to 2 Chronicles 7:14 “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

Since we are building the temple out of living stones, so that we are each a part of the temple, we need to ask ourselves: Are we ready to be fitted into the temple?

Remember when the Old Testament temple was being built there was no sound of any building tool heard within the building. “In building the temple, only blocks dressed at the quarry were used, and no hammer, chisel or any other iron tool was heard at the temple site while it was being built.” (1 Kings 6:7)

Since we, the church of born again believers, are the living stones are we allowing the dressing (cutting and polishing) to take place? Could this be what Chronicles 7:14 means by humbling ourselves? Are we allowing the Divine tools that the Lord uses to cut us down to size, polish us to get us ready to fit in just like it was with the Old Testament temple? Are we individually moving towards sanctification, working out what the Lord has worked in us? Are we humbling ourselves before Him?

We are told to seek His face, but again what does that mean practically? Could it be what Haggai told the Jewish people 2500 years ago?  This is what the Lord Almighty says: “**‘Give careful thought to your ways**. **Go** up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,’ says the Lord.” (Haggai 1:7-8)

It would seem to me that if I am seeking His face that it means I would be seeking His will, His desire, etc. What is His will? First, His will is to believe in the One that He has sent - the Lord Jesus Christ, and secondly, it means to GO. Where? To go to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the to the ends of the earth. In seeking His face He will show and reveal to us where to go. For me it was to the ends of the earth, but for others it might be their neighbors, fellow workers, or students, etc. But, we are each commanded to GO with the good news of His Gospel, teaching the Word of God and making disciples!

If we fulfill our obligations, the Lord will fulfill His: “I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” May we see this happening in our own lands for His glory and coming Kingdom. May we have Kingdom Thinking!

KINGDOM THINKING – Part 30

                           BUIDLING GOD’S HOUSE

Haggai 2:20-23 “The word of the Lord came to Haggai a second time on the twenty-fourth day of the month: ‘Tell Zerubbabel governor of Judah that I will shake the heavens and the earth. I will overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of the foreign kingdoms. I will overthrow chariots and their drivers; horses and their riders will fall, each by the sword of his brother. On that day,’ declares the Lord Almighty, ‘I will take you, my servant Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel,’ declares the Lord, ‘and I will make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you,’ declares the Lord Almighty.”

One of the things that we need to be aware of when it comes to kingdom thinking is not only what is happening in the world, but also what is the Lord doing?

God says: “I will shake the heavens and the earth. I will overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of the foreign kingdoms. I will overthrow chariots and their drivers; horses and their riders will fall, each by the sword of his brother.”

The writer of the Hebrews mentions this as well in chapter 12:26-27 “Now he has promised, ‘Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.’  The words ‘once more” indicate the removing of what can be shaken — that is, created things — so that what cannot be shaken may remain.”

When we look at the situation in the world today we see that the **“perfect storm”** is taking place. There is no doubt about God shaking the heavens and the earth.  Just a quick look around the world and we see the truth of this. For example:

There is the possibility of a major war in the Middle East. Syria with its civil war, which has claimed over 100,000 lives, is drawing in fighters from all over the world. Along with what is happening in Iran, Lebanon and Israel the situation is like a powder keg ready to explode.

When I look at Southeast Asia again we see war that can break out between China and Japan over who owns a disputed group of islands called the “Diaoyu Islands.” What about North Korea and its threats against Seoul and USA? Washington and South Korea because of the threat have signed a new joint security agreement that lays out plans and responses against North Korea in case war breaks out.

Conflicts in the EU are brewing between the rich countries of Europe and the bankrupt countries on the periphery especially in the south and east. Could there be conflicts that might break out like the genocide that occurred in the Balkans in the 1990’s?

Britain’s Daily Mail Newspaper said: “The world is at a crossroads in history, vast, untamable economic forces are remaking the landscape of international affairs.” From what I can gather the economic austerity imposed by the central EU government is beginning to spark ultra-nationalist as well as potential neo-fascist movements across the continent of Europe. The great depression in the 1930’s led to outright war in Europe. Can this happen again? Does history repeat itself? Riots have already broken out in many of these countries.

Egypt is on the verge of civil war, nuclear-armed Pakistan is moving into chaos. Saudi Arabia wants to buy nuclear bombs from Pakistan because of what is happening in Iran with their enrichment program of nuclear fuel. Ethnic fighting is still taking place in Iraq and now in Nigeria as well.

Then you have the communal riots taking place in Myanmar with Buddhists attacking Muslims. I just got a report from Sri-Lanka of Buddhists that are constantly attacking Christian churches as well as Hindus and Muslims battling one another in India.  We have the Muslims rebelling against the Han Chinese in Western China. Then all over the Middle East you have the Shia Muslims at war with Sunni Muslims.

When these communal riots break out it is not just a few hundred that are killed. I have been in India when riots broke out between Muslims and Hindus where thousands were slaughtered.

In Haggai’s days God told His people to stop and consider and I believe that today the Lord is telling us the same thing. We need to consider. In the New Testament Jesus told us that we are to watch and pray. When we see this shaking taking place we need to realize, like the writer of the Hebrews is saying, those things that cannot be shaken do remain, which is the Kingdom of God.

What are we to do? To have peace we need the Prince of Peace - Jesus Christ, and so we are to go into all the world with His message. I believe that God is preparing the world for a great harvest and we, the church, need to be ready. God said: “Give careful thought to your ways.” Jesus reminds us: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20