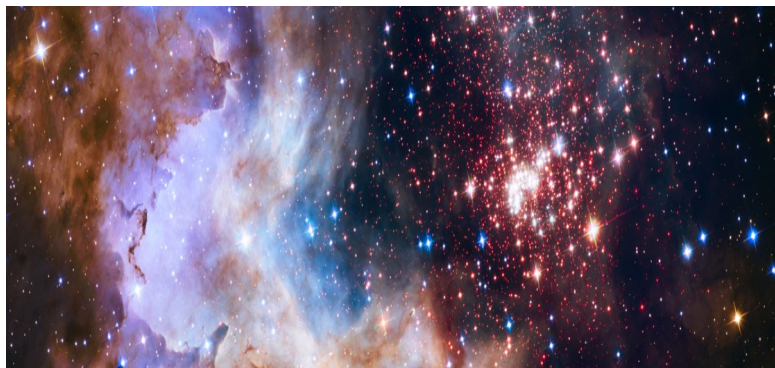


3 – God’s Kingdom

We are given the divine option of choosing to either walk with God, or of trying to invent our own purpose in competition with him.



Those who choose God, seek a culture based upon communion with God and like-minded people. This automatically manifests as a desire to reach out to others as well.

It is helpful for those walking with God, to minimize dependence upon the often hostile culture within which they live. This frees believers to better minister to the world around them.



Pursuing these objectives includes minimizing financial and regulatory entanglements that might otherwise jeopardize access to shelter and other necessities

Local sources and control of food, water and energy can minimize avenues of forced compliance, by those who otherwise manipulate them. These can then be adapted to greatly enhance the comfort and safety of the homeless outcasts among us.



The ongoing refinement of locally sustainable infrastructures can then become a model by which the terminal infrastructures of today can rebuild on a free and sustainable basis

The fallen state

As Adam and Eve began their lives as caretakers of Earth they were endowed with free will, along with an opportunity to exercise it. They began clean and sinless in an unblemished relationship with their Creator. But love is a choice, and cannot truly exist if there is no other option, therefore they were also capable of communication with Satan. This God-given freedom to choose to love or not love and to sin or not sin would not be violated by God, and *could* not be violated by Satan.

When they obeyed a suggestion from Satan that was clearly contrary to the will of God, their original state of perfection died. This death of perfection left no hope of restoration, but would need to be replaced by an entirely new life with its' own clean slate. Thousands of years later this sinless rebirth would be provided by Jesus substituting his own life for our failure, so our relationship with God could be restored.

But God's grace and mercy transcends time, and a ritual was provided whereby individuals of that era could walk in relationships with God. When an individual squarely faced the responsibility for their moral failures, a symbolic sacrifice of a sinless animal would be allowed to reserve access to the prophesied salvation through Jesus. This symbol of repentance would make a love relationship with God possible from within a fallen world.

Nevertheless, the fallen state remains an arena in which seduction and chaos continue to war against our souls – even as our free will remains intact. As in the garden of Eden, both God and Satan are capable of communicating with our souls – albeit on a less perceptible basis.

As mankind chose failure while in the garden, we must now choose to love God and focus upon his interests if we are to live lives of purpose and fulfillment. Jesus alludes to this condition in the fallen world when he refers to Satan as “the god of this world.” This conflict is stated more plainly in James 4:7 **“Submit therefore to God. But resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”** In any case, some form of two way communication with both God and the devil is evident.

In Paul's first letter to Timothy, he explains that Eve was deceived, but that Adam knowingly chose to disobey God. Eve was not innocent, in that the story reveals that she wanted to believe a lie because she preferred it to be so. Genesis 3:4-6 tells the story: **Gen.3:4. “And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: 5. for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil. 6. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.”**

Eve was attracted to the physical and sensual expectations of the fruit, and to the power of the knowledge she was told it held. She chose to believe the words of this strange creature, rather than those of her Creator.

Adam was not fooled, but Eve was his only source of human companionship. Since Eve had violated God's commandment, she could no longer stay in God's presence. So refusing the fruit would have meant losing her. A sad but romantic tale perhaps; but he chose to fail with her rather than to continue his relationship with God.

In addition to the affect upon their relationships with God, there would be changes in their relationships with each other, with Satan, and with the world itself. Eve had submitted to Satan, and Adam had submitted to Eve. God's desires for the earth were thus compromised in favor of Satan's interests.

Beyond this, the control of the earth that had been given to Adam, which he had yielded to Eve when he obeyed her, had now been yielded to Satan through Eve. As mentioned above, a few millenniums later, Jesus himself referred to Satan as "the god of this world." This condition is further referenced in **Rom.8:20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope.**

So here we have the new world order: Satan, then Eve, and then Adam. God was not amused; and he took immediate action:

Gen.3:14 Then the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because thou hast done this, Cursed are you more than all the livestock, And more than any animal of the field; On your belly you shall go, And dust you shall eat All the days of your life; 15 And I will make enemies of you and the woman, And of your offspring and her Descendant; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise Him on the heel."

16 To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you shall deliver children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he shall rule over you."

17 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; With hard labor you shall eat *from* it All the days of your life. 18 "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; Yet you shall eat the plants of the field; 19 By the sweat of your face You shall eat bread, Until you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."

Men would now have to fight with the earth for their very sustenance, and for the survival of their families. Satan would continue to roam the earth, and have a devastating effect upon all who would be willing to obey him – as experienced by Eve.

When there is harmony there is no need for authority, but now mankind would be born into a state of separation from God, in with each individual would desire to rule the world for themselves – even as Eve had separated herself by aspiring to become like God. But now Eve would be dependent upon her husband, and have to submit to him for her provision. Man on the other hand, would now have to fight with the earth for his sustenance, and plead with God for the weather and earthly resources to do so.

Other than this, there is little mention of any form of government before Noah and the flood (although there is a single reference to a city).

There remain many mysteries concerning early mankind, and many legitimate questions that might be asked, but the details are simply not included in the Bible. Instead it continues to focus upon a righteous line of genealogy between Adam and Noah. What we *do* see is mankind becoming corrupted spiritually and genetically as they began to mix with other anthropomorphic races. The resulting tide of violence and corruption eventually set the stage for a reboot of humanity through a strain of mankind that had remained spiritually intact as it descended from Adam.

Evolution of government

The governments God has ordained among mankind have been appropriate to the population densities and behavior of the people. Even as the various later empires themselves have arisen and fallen, the legacy of the order they produced continued on for generations afterwards.

A After the perfect state of the Garden of Eden, when mankind failed, God established the order of family authority as noted in Genesis 3:14-19. Besides the need for men to fight with the earth for their very sustenance, they would have to offer sacrifices to acknowledge their sins and request mercy from God.

B Upon the genetic and spiritual corruption of early mankind among other anthropomorphic races, God provided a near total elimination of the human race. Humanity was rebooted through Noah and his family. After the flood God instructed Noah and his sons to multiply and scatter throughout the earth (Gen.9:1). This post-flood edict of spreading them out would minimize conflicts among humanity.

But an ambitious leader named Nimrod came up with a building project to oppose this scattering. He would consolidate and rule humanity under a single government (Gen.11:4). This project would be different from later global dominions in that at this point, most of the world's population was already in one general area. Future empires would have to go out and conquer to bring the world under their control.

But God stepped in and fragmented this enterprise through communication problems. Interestingly, modern linguists have been able to trace common threads of origin among the "Indo-European" language group. This commonality connects Persian languages with Indian, Germanic, and Latin.

Nonetheless, increasing populations of fallen mankind need some level of guidance to keep them from destroying each other.

C God selected Abram and his household to provide a tribal model for the world to see as a desirable example. God's blessing would be upon households that served Him – beginning with Abraham, his family and descendants, and all who were willing to serve God. Generally speaking, Abraham was well received and respected among the various kingdoms and towns he encountered.

D God then forged a racial identity out of Abraham’s descendants during their generations of slavery in Egypt. There they developed as a culture within a controlling nation.

E Eventually, this race burst forth into freedom when they acknowledged their need for deliverance from the bondage they were under. This was achieved through the blood atonement of the sacrifice of innocent animals.

As they were delivered they were given a national identity that the world would recognize as blessed and protected by God. Internally, God gave them laws to guide their individual and national behavior. There would also be annual feast days upon which this nation of free and independent households would gather and acknowledge the blessings of God and their spiritual identity.

E For awhile, local and international conflicts were resolved by a series of godly leaders whom God anointed and rose up from among them. But as their population increased the need for interacting with other nations on a more formal level became evident; so they began to be ruled by kings who would coordinate nationwide campaigns.

During these last two phases, the blessing or abandonment of God would be evident as a response to their degree of faithfulness to Him – both individually and nationally.

G As the nation of Israel began to drift into debauchery and chaos, God paused the disintegration of mankind by establishing a series of global governments, which still affect the world to this day.

God’s World Order

The presence of God was clearly upon Israel while in Egypt leading up to the first Passover. There it protected them from the plagues that eventually killed every firstborn among the families of Egypt. That very night, they began to evacuate from secular society, and set out under the guidance of God himself.

Soon, their culture would be defined by laws and rituals related to the tabernacle they would build. So powerful would be the presence of God, that blasphemous behavior would result in instant death at the very hand of God. The most holy element of this ritual would be the ark of the covenant. This was shielded from the people by the veil of the temple.

After generations of intermittent apostasy the nation of Israel had proven they were incapable of maintaining a relationship with God on the basis of religious ritual. In Ezekiel chapter ten, we see God withdrawing his presence from the temple, and then from the nation of Israel. With God out of the way, Babylon destroyed Jerusalem, plundered the temple, and hauled all but a small remnant of the people off into exile. It would have been impossible for any nation to eliminate Israel – let alone desecrate the temple – if God had not first withdrawn his presence.

One might ask: What was the point of all this stuff about Abraham and the dysfunctional behavior of his descendants? Why all this elaborate detail about the temple, the clothing of the priests. And what about the lethal wrath of God over things that are routine in our world today?

God has given us an illustrated road map concerning the course of humanity. It includes detours around dangers and directions awaiting those who might stray from the path. It also includes rest stops and refreshment for those who would choose His priorities for their lives.

The Jewish line surfaced with Abraham, who chose to walk with God with a full and extreme level of dedication and love – albeit flawed at times by failures, cowardice, and lust. It tells us how to walk in this same fulfilling purpose in life – in spite of our own stumblings.

Upon the removal of the presence of God from the temple and Jerusalem the presence of God became available to all who were willing to walk with him. In Mt.15:24, Jesus was sent to the house of Israel. Though salvation was available to all, it would not be fulfilled until mankind was freed by the sacrifice of Jesus.

This culture would then continue to grow and maintain course, as the population of the world continued to develop in scale and chaos.

Five kingdoms

Next we see Daniel given supernatural gifts that enabled him to tell Nebuchadnezzar what he had dreamed. This served as a credential to the king that the interpretation of the dream Daniel would give would also be valid.

The dream itself was of a statue topped with the head of gold, and having four additional body sections represented by materials of decreasing value – silver, brass, legs of iron, and then feet that were a mixture of iron and clay. These represented a sequence of five global governments that would rule mankind until it would be given to the saints. With their global level of authority, they would keep mankind from totally destroying itself.

In spite of Satan's involvement in the world's empires, we need to remember that this sequence was ordained by God, as we saw in Daniel 2:37. Hundreds of years after this prophecy, the apostle Paul instructed believers to submit to the authority of Rome (the fourth of the prophesied five kingdoms), and to be grateful for the order and protection it was providing. Historians refer to this period of relative peace in the world as "Pax Romana." Although today Rome has come and gone, its legacy in the form of law and justice systems has continued to provide us with a standard of stability and justice. To some degree, we are still under a system of Roman Law.

This gives us a brief glimpse of both the history and future – from the perspective of over six hundred years before Christ. The empires represented by gold, silver, bronze, and iron, have been clearly identified as Babylon, Medes and Persians, Greece, and Rome. In the New Testament, Revelation six verses one and two speak of a global kingdom that was yet future at the time Revelation was written.

Daniel chapter seven says a little more concerning the four empires remaining after Babylon (kingdoms two through five). During the reign of the fourth and final empire, we see the rise of a the man of sin, who pulls off a coup within this final kingdom. As foreshadowed by Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 3, he will require everyone to worship an idol he will make of himself, and he will brutally persecute the saints. In Revelation six verses three and four, we see this civil war resulting in global bloodshed.

Upon the fall of man, Satan became the CEO of planet Earth. Even Jesus Himself referred to Satan as “the god of this world.” But God has continued to be the owner, and does whatever he pleases, and eventually he will quite literally fire this CEO.

So these kingdoms have been and are, ruled by demonic spirits, whom Daniel referred to as “princes.” Consider the following quotes from the angel Gabriel to Daniel.

Daniel.10:13 “But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was standing in my way for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.

10:20 Then he said, “Do you understand why I came to you? But I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia; so I am leaving, and behold, the prince of Greece is about to come. 21 “However, I will tell you what is recorded in the writing of truth. Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these forces except Michael your prince. (Notice that Israel has an angel for a prince.)

The basic objective of this Satanic control is to keep people from serving God. This is achieved by convincing people that they can become god like, or that they are all part of God. From this we can understand the ungodly bias against believers in the world around us, and why it is so much more intense in cultures that deny God or serve other Gods. Historically and now, it is illegal for people to serve God in nations who claim God status. Nebuchadnezzar briefly tried that, and Christianity was technically illegal in Rome when the emperor claimed to be the only king. Within the worldly cultures of today, Christianity is disdained by those who prefer to compete with God rather than serve him. Beyond this, Persecution is often brutal under regimes with state religions, such as Islam and communism.

The separated kingdom

A parallel component of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was a stone broken off from the mountain without hands. Kingdoms are sometimes referred to as mountain in prophetic scenarios, so this stone represents a kingdom completely disconnected from worldly

governments. Within the text, we find that this stone represented God's kingdom, and that it would continue to grow during the days of those kings. Finally it would subdue and replace these earthbound empires.

The first Scriptural reference to this separate culture was among a group of young exiles, who had been selected for special training to serve the kingdom of Babylon. When Daniel and his friends were advised of this assignment, they immediately protested the diet on the basis of conscience. They were granted a conditional leniency – even though it represented a departure from the local culture. This was the beginning of a separated godly kingdom living within Babylon.

In the third chapter of Daniel this kingdom of God (growing within the kingdom of Babylon) stands in defiance of earthly rulership when Daniel's three friends refused the emperor's order to worship his god. But God protected them, and after that, Nebuchadnezzar gave those who would worship the God of Israel special protection. The law was now written into the hearts of these men, and no longer depended upon the temple rituals.

Finally those who would return to Israel were released and a copy of the temple was built upon the devastated original site. By this time worship of the God of Israel had been publicly endorsed by three global rulers; Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, and Cyrus. For the next few centuries the marvel of Israel's very existence as a God-fearing nation through a period of international chaos would continue as a testimony to the power of God

Although temple rituals would never be complete without the ark of the covenant, the need for animal sacrifices that were begun centuries before Israel existed remained valid among God's people. This kept humanity aware of the severity of sin and of their need for forgiveness.

These blood sacrifices would remain valid until the sacrifice Jesus – God's perfect sacrifice. Any blood sacrifice since the crucifixion would be an abomination, because it would be a claim that the blood of Jesus meant nothing.

The Jews however, repaired the veil of the temple that God had ripped from top to bottom upon the crucifixion, and continued what had now become a satanic ritual of blood sacrifice. This had been declared in Isaiah

66:3 “but the one who slaughters an ox is *like* one who kills a person; The one who sacrifices a lamb is *like* one who breaks a dog's neck; One who offers a grain offering is *like* one who offers pig's blood; One who burns incense is *like* one who blesses an idol. As they have chosen their *own* ways, And their souls delight in their abominations,”

For this reason God scraped the temple off the map, and splattered the Jews across the globe.

Today, there is a faction of the Jews who would love to rebuild the temple and restart animal sacrifices, but they can't, because the mosque of Omar now sits upon the required site. In one of the greatest ironies of history, it is this Islamic shrine that is today protecting the Jews from God's wrath.

With the birth of the Church, the knowledge of salvation through Jesus spread throughout the gentile world. This eternal gospel (mentioned as such in Revelation) had been received in centuries past through the symbology of animal sacrifices, but was then freed by the sacrifice of Jesus Himself. This gospel now became available to anybody who was willing to repent of their sins, and embrace salvation through Jesus.

This repenting clause, results in embracing a different attitude toward past behavior – an alteration in the mores of one's previous culture. This salvation creates a new identity and outlook on life. It puts us on a different track and purpose than those who remain in the cultures of the world around us.

The New Testament refers to this kingdom of God with phrases such as "We are in the world but not of it..." During the mock trial of Jesus, he declared: "My kingdom is not of this world." In 2 Corinthians 5 we are in the world as ambassadors, reconciling the world to God. In Revelation 1, God refers to believers as a "kingdom of priests and kings..."

As for the stone itself, consider: In Matthew 16:16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. In verse 18 he says "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."

When Jesus refers to Simon as "Peter", he uses the term for a loose rock – a structural component. But when he says "upon this rock", the term used means bedrock. From the context we see that this bedrock is a reference to revelation from the Father. Simon, by receiving revelation from the Father, had become building material in the foundation of Christ's church.

Ephesians 2:20 reads: "having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone," This tells us that Peter (and even Jesus) were part of the foundation of the church, but we know that the entire structure rests upon the bedrock of revelation from the Father. Jesus himself said that he only did what he saw the Father doing, and only spoke what he heard the Father saying.

So this stone, representing revelation from the Father that Daniel and his friends obeyed, remains alive and growing as the kingdom of God, to this day.

The separate culture

On the day of Pentecost this kingdom of God – erupted into joy and evangelism. Believers were drawn to each other, and the world was shocked at the culture of loving,

giving, and sharing that bloomed among them. The religious establishment however, was caught off guard.

A level of sobriety arose in response to persecutions from the mainstream, while love, protection, and giving prevailed among believers. Another challenge came when posers and manipulators began seeking status for themselves within the church.

The history given in Acts plus letters from apostles deal with these and other issues. They are filled with encouragement testimonies, and instructions concerning a mountain of issues.

In addition to these letters, I find a reassuring tie-in to the Old Testament in the letters to the seven churches in Revelation two and three. Herein we see overlays of the feasts of Israel, the seven stations of the tabernacle, and challenges in the Christian walk.

Where we are in history

We are now awaiting clarity concerning a fifth and final empire. This empire is described in Daniel seven as extremely brutal, and of simply destroying that which would not yield to it.

It is briefly mentioned in the Bible for the last time in Revelation six. There it appears as the first of seven seals in a scroll being opened by Jesus. There we picture Jesus opening all seven of these seals in a few minutes at a single setting, but these events do in fact take a bit of time – even years – to unfold.

By the time Revelation was written, three of the five empires of Daniel 2 had come and gone. The fourth empire (Rome) was in existence. So this first seal can be non other than the fifth and final empire.

At some point after this final empire is established, civil war will plunge it into chaos and bloodshed. This event terminates the sequence of empires God had ordained to protect humanity from itself through globally connected governments.

It begins with the opening of the second seal. This first wave of final judgments starts by God merely withdrawing his hand of protection, and letting man do what man will do if not restrained. It does not yet touch upon vengeance due for the world's sins against God, but only upon the results of what mankind does to itself.

Historically we have often seen bloody civil wars resulting in starvation and multiple other causes of death (seals 3 and 4). The total body count for the first four seals will encompass a full fourth of the world's population.

In Isaiah 26:20-21 we are given wisdom on how to deal with this period and the additional phases to follow.

Is.26:20 Come, my people, enter your rooms And close your doors behind you; Hide for a little while Until indignation runs its course. 21 For behold, the LORD is about to come out from His place To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their wrongdoing; And the earth will reveal her bloodshed And will no longer cover her slain.

In Revelation 6:9-11, the case against those who have been killing and persecuting God's people in the past is presented with the opening of the fifth seal. The sixth seal describes the justice due this verdict in verses 12-17.

In this phase, the judgments are in the form of physical convulsions of the earth, in that God unleashes natural disasters. Even so, mankind will recognize that the vengeance in these natural phenomenon is in fact the hand of God.

In Revelation 7, tribulations are put on hold as believers alive during the tribulation are identified and protected.

With the opening of the seventh seal in chapter 8, preparations are made for yet a third category of judgments. By now we have seen judgments carried out by humans against each other as a result of their murderous behavior. Secondly we have seen God using natural phenomenon to terrorize and kill those who have participated in terrorizing and killing God's people. Now it is the turn of the saints themselves to see their prayers for protection and for vengeance to be carried out among the rest of humanity.

The next four judgments that wreak physical havoc upon the earth all originate from above the earth. (trumpets 1-4)

The judgments of trumpets 5 and 6 in Rev.9 involved the release of spiritual beings, and they specifically target nonbelievers – much like the plagues of Egypt targeted the Egyptians.

Revelation 10 pauses the narrative to prepare for another series of prophesies. John has faithfully carried out his initial commission to address the seven churches of chapters 2 and 3, and to record those things revealed to him in chapters 4 through 9. Chapters 11-13 describe what happens when the leader of the rebellion referenced in Revelation 6:3-4 has consolidated his power and begins to enslave the world in economic and religious bondage for a final three and one half years.

This period is beyond the scope of this writing, but for those interested, I do have a commentary on revelation available at <http://technosmith.com/contents/13150-revelation.pdf>

Our calling

It is reassuring that the essence of mankind's optimum relationship with God and with each other has not changed since the Garden of Eden. Throughout the Bible, God's power, consistency, and interactions with mankind have remained the same through a wide variety of extreme situations.

In the New Testament we are given further examples and instructions on how to walk with God through a world filled with different cultures and governments. So today we

stand fully equipped and reassured of God's sovereignty and presence, to face whatever the future calamities may hold. This confidence frees us to focus upon representing God under all conditions – current and future.

Although we are called to function with others as a unified organism, God has given us individual gifts and ministries within this body. We are called to encourage and strengthen each other as we walk and minister together.

We didn't choose to be alive at this point in history, but here we are. The legacy of Roman law remains an underlying theory of our legal system, and we have yet to see an indisputable candidate to fit the role of the fifth and final empire. As mentioned, the opening of the second seal in Revelation six will terminate the final empire with catastrophic civil war, followed by chaos, widespread famine, and disease.

Two millenniums since the birth of the church – indeed, since the Garden of Eden – the commission and calling of God's people have not changed. Nor will they change until our work is done. Adam and Eve were called to subdue the Earth. This commission was echoed by Jesus Himself when he instructed his disciples to go into all the world and make disciples.

As for the culture within God's kingdom, Jesus described much of it in the sermon on the mount in Matthew 5. The apostle Paul also provides a compact list of directives in Romans 12.

Growing

The challenges will continue to mount. The extremes we have heard of in other countries are going to continue to develop in our own world, just as has homelessness and partisan politics.

Peter phrased the challenge bluntly when he asks the question: “*Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,*” (2Pe.3:11) .

Much of Christianity is comfortable and productive, but with the forces increasingly against us, we need to paddle; we need to be active in ministry and in personal growth. We need to consciously and constantly put forth effort to grow.

Life is not a state: It is a pathway.

Every living thing is constantly changing, and is either growing or dying. The letters to the seven churches in Revelation two and three illuminate the path for believers who are willing to follow it through to the return of Christ and judgment. We are still called to live as a subculture with different motives and objectives than the world around us. As such, we need to minimize bondages and dependencies that might pressure us to serve the objectives of the world in which we live. We exist as an embassy of God's kingdom, within a rebel culture that will one day be wiped away.