

A Kingdom Manifesto

If you do not know that there is anything more to Christianity than what the Churches offer, you will not bother to look for anything more, and this paper is not for you..

However there are those of you reading this, who know there is more.

This paper is for you sons and daughters of the Church who may have even spoken with tongues of Angels, but still haven't found what you are looking for within the Church.

There is a Mystery of the Kingdom that was first proclaimed by Jesus hidden in parables, and has been never preached openly in orthodox Christian circles.

The notion that there is a hidden stream within Christianity has generally been categorised as a heresy since the orthodox church declared the gnostic Christians heretical in the second Century AD.

However the vast majority of Christians who believe there is nothing more than they already have, do not understand the the Mystery of the Kingdom.

The nature of the Mystery of the Kingdom and the Keys of the Kingdom will be communicated in this manifesto for those with ears to hear.

A Rock of stumbling and Offence

Luk 14:28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first *and* count the cost, whether he may have *enough* to finish it;

Heb 13:13 Therefore let us go forth to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

I have tried to communicate the Kingdom to Christians as a theologically acceptable 'add on', but despite my best efforts, have found this an impossible task.

Understanding the Kingdom is not a matter of additional knowledge, it requires a paradigm shift. A shift from a Church Paradigm to a Kingdom paradigm.

Clearly a shift from a Church paradigm has its costs. And the costs for modern Christians are exceptionally high, and probably extend to your current understanding of

- Love, God and Eternity
- Church and the Scriptures
- the nature of reality and humanity

We will summarise the issues at stake with each of these in PART 1 after we first address the legitimacy of the existence of a hidden stream within Christianity in HIDDEN STREAMS. We will then go on to look at the nature of the Mystery of the Kingdom and the Keys of the Kingdom in PART 2

Hidden Streams

Anyone formed within an authoritarian orthodox Christian Paradigm will have alarm bells going off in their head the moment they hear of a hidden Christian teaching not freely made available for all.

This realm of 'elitist' knowledge was the domain of the infant authoritarian orthodox church's mortal enemies the Gnostics.

Consequently for those with alarm bells, we will take a bit of time going through early orthodox Christian texts and the accepted Christian canon for references inferring knowledge withheld.

Jesus referred to the "Mysteries of the Kingdom" in a cryptic way:

" Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand."¹

There are a large number of passages in the scriptures referring to knowledge withheld. Some obvious, others less so.

Who, do you think then, is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord has appointed over his household, to give them their measure of wheat in due season? ²

I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal. As it were to babes in Christ, I have given you milk to drink, and not meat ³

And [till] Moses had done speaking with the children of Israel, he put a veil on his face. ... And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him.⁴

If any one should dig a cistern, and not cover it, and an ox or ass should fall into it, he should pay the price ⁵

These 4 scriptures were quotes in support of selective sharing of "hidden mysteries" and "the more subtle teachings concerning heavenly things" by Gregory the Great as late as the 6th Century.

That deep things ought not to be preached at all to weak souls.

But the preacher should know how to avoid drawing the mind of his hearer beyond its strength, test, so to speak, the string of the soul, when stretched more than it can bear, should be broken. For all deep things should be covered up before a multitude of hearers, and scarcely opened to a few. For hence the Truth in person says, Who, do you think then, is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord has appointed over his household, to give them their measure of wheat in due season? (Luke xii. 42), Now by a measure of wheat is expressed a portion of the Word, test, when anything is given to a narrow heart beyond its capacity, it be spill. Hence Paul says, I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal. As it were to babes in Christ, I have given you milk to drink, and not meat (1 Cor. iii. 1, 2). Hence Moses, when he comes on from the sanctuary of God, veils his shining face before

¹ Luke 8:10

² Luke 12:42

³ 1 Cor 3:1,2

⁴ Exo 34:33

⁵ Exo 21:33,34

the people; because in truth He shews not to multitudes the secrets of inmost brightness (Exod. xxxiv. 33, 35). Hence it is enjoined on him by the Divine voice that if any one should dig a cistern, and not cover it, and an ox or ass should fall into it, he should pay the price (Exod. xxi. 33, 34), because when one who has arrived at the deep streams of knowledge covers them not up before the brutish hearts of his hearers, he is adjudged as liable to penalty, if through his words a soul, whether clean or unclean, be caught on a stumbling-stone. Hence it is said to the blessed Job, Who hath given understanding unto the cock? (Job xxxviii. 36), For a holy preacher, crying aloud in time of darkness, is as the cock crowing in the night, when he says, It is even now the hour for us to arise from sleep (Rom. xiii. 11). And again, Awake ye righteous, and sin not (1 Cor. xv. 34). But the cock is wont to utter loud chants in the deeper hours of the night; but, when the time of morning is already at hand, he frames small and slender tones; because, in fact, he who preaches aright cries aloud plainly to hearts that are still in the dark, and shows them nothing of hidden mysteries, that they may then hear the more subtle teachings concerning heavenly things, when they draw nigh to the light of truth.⁶

Gregory the Great was not the first to interpret the passage on the cistern as referring to concealing mysteries from those not ready for them.

In the 2nd Century Clement of Alexandria interpreted it this way in the second century in his Stromatas:

"shut up the living spring in the depth from those who approach irrationally" and "Conceal it, then, from those who are unfit to receive the depth of knowledge, and so cover the pit"

Clement also quotes scriptures he considers as legitimising mysteries.

"Hear, O My people, My law: incline your ear to the words of My mouth. I will open My mouth in parables, I will utter My problems from the beginning." (Psalms 78:2)

"Howbeit we speak wisdom among those that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought. But we speak the wisdom of God hidden in a mystery, which none of the princes of this world knew. For had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (1 Cor 2:6)

"But we preach, as it is written, what eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and has not entered into the heart of man, what God has prepared for them that love Him. For God has revealed it to us by the Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God." (1 Cor 2:9,10)

"But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit, for they are foolishness to him." (1 Cor 2:14)

"Brothers, I could not speak to you as to spiritual, but as to carnal, to babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, not with meat: for you were not able. Neither yet are you now able. For you are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envy and strife, are you not carnal, and walk as men? " (1 Cor 3:1)

and Romans 1

"For I desire to see you, that I may impart unto you a spiritual gift, that you may be established." Clement asserted "It was impossible that gifts of this sort could be written without disguise."⁷

⁶ Gregory the Great - Book of Pastoral Rule Chapter 39

⁷ Stromatas - Chap. IV.—“Divine things wrapped up in figures both in the sacred and in heathen writers”

And even as late as St Augustine - from Book 2 of the Sermon on the Mount

CHAP. XX.--67. But inasmuch as the word "guileless" may mislead some who are desirous of obeying God's precepts, so that they may think it wrong, at times, to conceal the truth, just as it is wrong at times to speak a falsehood, and inasmuch as in this way,--by disclosing things which the parties to whom they are disclosed are unable to bear,--they may do more harm than if they were to conceal them altogether and always, He very rightly adds: "Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." For the Lord Himself, although He never told a lie, yet showed :hat He was concealing certain truths, when He said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." [6] And the Apostle Paul, too, says: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal." [7].... By pearls, again, are meant whatever spiritual things we ought to set a high value upon, both because they lie hid in a secret place, are as it were brought up out of the deep, and are found in wrappings of allegory, as it were in shells that have been opened

Did all early church writers agree that there were mysteries hidden from the unspiritual?

No they didn't, at least not openly, and at times there were quite caustic arguments on the issue.

Jerome, in a passage vehemently disavowing his earlier associations with the writings of Origen (who we will later see gives us some very clear hints as to the nature of the mysteries), referred to those who withheld truths from all as a "secret society of perjury".⁸

Rufinus responded to Jerome's accusations of perjury (i.e. the act of lying to conceal a truth) by quoting what Jerome himself had previously written in his own Commentaries on Paul's passage in 1 Corinthians 2. "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect":

"Hence Paul himself, who was one of the perfect, says in another Epistle "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect."⁹ This then is what is commanded, that those mystic and secret things, which are full of divine truth, should be spoken by each man to his neighbour, so that day unto day may utter speech and night to night show knowledge,¹⁰ that is, that a man should show all those clear and lucid truths which he knows to those to whom the words can be worthily addressed: "You are the light of the world."¹¹ On the other hand, he should exhibit everything involved in darkness and wrapped up in the mist of symbols to others who are themselves nothing but mist and darkness, those of whom it is said "And there was darkness under his feet,"¹² that is, of course, under the feet of God. For on Mount Sinai Moses enters into the whirlwind and the mist where God was; and it is written of God, "He has made darkness his secret place."¹³ Let each man then thus speak truth in a mystery to his neighbour, and not give that which is holy to dogs nor cast his pearls before swine;¹⁴ but those who are anointed with the oil of truth them let him lead into the bridechamber of the spouse, into the inner sanctuary of the King."

⁸ Indeed, St Clement of Alexandria, referring to the **Secret Gospel of Mark**, went as far as counselling those who were aware of its existence to not concede that the secret Gospel was by Mark, "but should even deny it on oath". (**Letter to Theodore**)

⁹ 1 Corinthians 2 v 6

¹⁰ Psalm 19 v 2

¹¹ Matt 5 v 14

¹² Psalm 18 v 9

¹³ Psalm 18 v 11

¹⁴ Matt 7 v 6

So here we have an earlier Jerome offering us a hint as to the nature of the mystery

"but those who are anointed with the oil of truth them let him lead into the bridechamber of the spouse, into the inner sanctuary of the King"

PART 1

Paradigm Shift

A Working Definition of the Kingdom of heaven

The Kingdom of Heaven defies definition from within Church or Worldly Paradigms mainly because it demands its own paradigm.

Consequently outside its own paradigm, definitions are either very general, or very confused.

Either:

- 'the Kingdom is wherever God is King', or
- take your pick of a million different definitions mirroring a million different Christianities.

In general terms the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God, is heaven, eternity and God impacting our temporal realm with a view to subsuming our temporal realm.

Our temporal realm only exists in contradistinction to heaven God and Eternity because it does not share fully in the awareness or knowledge of heaven eternity and God. The Kingdom is about the fully shared knowledge of heaven, eternity and God and how that knowledge or Kingdom Consciousness will eventually prevail.¹⁵

It is experienced through our awareness of the eternal coinherent love of God, through knowing Christ in Us and us in Christ, and the cascade that flows as a consequence, knowing that we are all within each other in Christ.¹⁶

This knowing comes through the action of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit creates a hearing for the awareness through birthing the virtues in us. The virtues are our eyes and ears for experiencing the Kingdom.

PART 1 is about wineskins (fleshing out a kingdom paradigm and getting rid of things that may be in the way) PART 2 is about the wine (the mystery of the kingdom).

If you believe you have a paradigm that is capable of holding the new wine, you may be tempted to skip the first part. However a paradigm is not only a mental wiring, it is also an attitudinal wiring (ie perception through vices or virtues)

The first chapters of Genesis hold many keys. One is that our 'knowing' outside of 'Eden' (outside of the true perception of God), is a knowledge of Good and Evil. We can only have a Kingdom consciousness if through Christ we have Goodness restored as a primary knowing.

Unless you truly know **that God is only Good and is only love** and refuse to let anything else get in the way of that this will all be pretty much an academic exercise.

¹⁵ Hab 2:14 For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁶ John 17

The Nature of Reality – a Kingdom Cosmology

1Co 15:50 And I say this, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit *the* kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

We cannot expect to understand anything Spiritual with a Christian Paradigm based on a Western dualistic or materialistic worldview.

The Kingdom of Heaven needs to be spiritually discerned, and we need to regain a way of seeing, one that understands that what is seen is temporal and what is unseen is eternal¹⁷

Heb 11:3 By faith we understand the ages to have been framed by *the* Word of God, so that the things seen do not come into being out of things that appear.

I am not talking about some paradigm that rejects reality, quite the opposite.

Quantum Physicist Erwin Schroedinger could see the inadequacy of Western models of reality.

Without being aware of it, and without being rigorously systematic about it, we exclude the Subject of Cognizance from the domain of nature that we endeavor to understand. We step up with our own person back into the part of the onlooker who does not belong to the world, which by this very procedure becomes an objective world.

What is Life?

In 'Mind and matter':

The world is a construct of our sensations, perceptions, memories. It is convenient to regard it as existing objectively on its own.....

Mind has erected the objective outside world of the natural philosopher out of its own stuff. Mind could not cope with this gigantic task otherwise than by the simplifying device of excluding itself - withdrawing from its conceptual creation. Hence the latter does not contain its own creator.

And in 'My view of the World':

Consciousness is that by which this world first becomes manifest, by which indeed, we can quite calmly say it first becomes present; that the world consists of the elements of consciousness

(insert – paradigm theory – paradigm shift – expanded to include 'attitude')

'The Beginning' as the Key to reality

In the Canonical Gospels we see Jesus gave preference to 'the beginning' over the Law of Moses

He said to them, Because of your hard-heartedness Moses allowed you to put away your wives; but from *the beginning* it was not so. ¹⁸

In the 18th Saying of the Gospel of Thomas we see another reference to the importance of 'the

¹⁷ 2Cor 4:18

¹⁸ Matthew 19 vs 8

beginning'

(1) The disciples said to Jesus: "Tell us how our end will be."

(2) Jesus said: "Have you already discovered the beginning that you are now asking about the end? For where the beginning is, there the end will be too. (3) Blessed is he who will stand at the beginning. And he will know the end, and he will not taste death."

And of course John 1 the ultimate key to understanding *the beginning*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in *the* beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through Him, and without Him not even one *thing* came into being that has come into being. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. ¹⁹

As we look at 'the beginning' we will find a paradigm for understanding reality that meshes sweetly with an understanding of the Kingdom, and also shines some light on deficiencies in standard orthodox Christian theology and its understanding of reality.

'Before' the Beginning

'Before' the beginning, ie in eternity, there is God, who Christians correctly understand as the coinherent Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Thanks to Valentinus and the later Cappadocian Fathers works on the Trinity)

Creation occurs within the context of this infinitely good God who is coinherent, seeking to share his life with other than Himself. For other to exist, God logically first makes space for other within Himself.

The Jewish Scholar Isaac Luria was the first to highlight this precreation necessity as what he referred to as Zimsum, the Christian scholar Jurgen Moltman also explores this in his book *the Trinity and the Kingdom*.²⁰

¹⁹ John 1 vs 1
²⁰

And if (because of creation out of chaos, and creatio ex nihilo) we have to say that there is a 'within' and a 'without' for God - and that he therefore goes creatively 'out of himself', communicating himself to the one who is other than himself - then we must assume a self-limitation of the infinite, omnipresent God, preceding his creation. In order to create something outside himself, the infinite God must have made room for this finitude beforehand, 'in himself'.....

Must we not say that this 'creation outside God' exists simultaneously in God in the space which God has made for it in his omnipresence ? Has God not therefore created the world 'in himself', giving it time in his eternity, finitude in his infinity, space in his omnipresence and freedom in his selfless love?

The Trinitarian relationship of the Father , the Son, and the Holy Spirit is so wide that the whole creation can find space, time and freedom in it. Creation as God's act in Nothingness and as God's order in chaos is a male, an engendering notion. Creation as God's act in God and out of God must rather be called a feminine concept, a bringing forth: God creates the world by letting his world become and be in himself: Let it be!

Isaac Luria developed this idea in his doctrine of zimsum. Zimsum really means concentration or contraction, a withdrawal into the self. Luria transformed the ancient doctrine about God's concentration at the single point of his Shekinah in the Temple, into the doctrine of God's concentrated inversion for the purpose of creating the world.....

and

Self limitation, self-emptying and the patience of love already begin with the creation of the world...if we understand the creation of the world in Trinitarian terms as a self restricting activity of the Father, through the Son, in the power of the Spirit, then creation is the first stage on the road to freedom.

Jurgen Moltmann - Excerpts from Chapter iv of 'the World of the Trinity'

It is into this otherness that God gives himself fully as the Word of Light and Life. But before the Word is spoken, we read in Genesis that

... darkness *was* on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God brooded on the face of the waters. ²¹

The Spirit of God broods on the deep to create a hearing for the Word within otherness.

Wisdom: she who fully hears the Word of God

Wisdom is sourced in God opening within Himself space for Creation, space for Other within the Trinity.

Wisdom is the one who is other than God, but who perceives and receives the The Word and Spirit of God. Of necessity Other, having free will, can be either open or closed to God. Wisdom provides a place within this Other awareness for the ideas and will of God. Creation.

Wisdom is the hearing of God in creation. Wisdom is able to receive all the ideas of God, but is innocent to ideas from sources other than God. The consistent pattern of the Scriptures paints a picture of Wisdom having attributes of both Personhood, and the feminine.

Given the word is person, why would the hearing of the word be other?

The Lord possessed me from the beginning of His way, before His works of old. 23 I was poured out (as an anointing) from everlasting, from the beginning, before the earth *ever was*. 24 When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when *there were* no springs heavy *with water*. ²²

Had this Holy Spirit Wisdom been received fully by Otherness, the Word would have been fully perceived, and all creation would have existed fully within the coinherent love of the infinitely good God.

However this was not the case.

And God said, Let there be light. And there was light. 4 And God saw the light that *it was good*. And God divided between the light and the darkness. ²³

Here we see what is obvious in such things as the parasitic wasp. The Word of life and light is only partially heard.

This 'non-physical' issue of the Word of light only partially heard is fleshed out in John chapter 1.

This is an important key. This is the genesis of the problem of evil.

Evil does not, as orthodox theology seems to strangely infer, begin with the fall of Adam.

For those who accept the fossil record before Adam, life evolves 'red of tooth and claw'. For

Jurgen Moltmann - Excerpts from Chapter iv of 'the World of the Trinity'

²¹ Genesis 1 vs 2

²² Proverbs 8 vs 22

²³ Genesis 1 vs 3

Creation Science adherents, fallen Adam enters into a knowledge of evil that precedes him. Not forgetting the Serpent – is the snake good before the Adamic fall?

The other important key for understanding the nature of reality based on 'The Beginning' is that creation exists as words within a hearing.

It is here I submit we must with 18th Century Bishop George Berkeley leave philosophical materialism and philosophical dualism for philosophical idealism to make sense of reality.²⁴

We find ourselves outside of an Eden of pure perception.

And the fallen reality we exist within outside of Christ is the imperfect perception of the perfect Word of God.

The Kingdom of God is about redemption. The bringing of perfection of perception to otherness, beginning first by the bringing of individual human words into the perfect perception, and finally in the full restoration and the full redemption of Otherness. Bringing otherness into full coinherent unity with Himself in eternity.

This understanding of reality means that redemption is not only the fate of a small percentage of humans, but as is indeed is logically necessary, redemption is universal - for all humans and for all created reality.

If God were to create knowing that the bulk of his creation would spend eternity in hell or in a 'Christless eternity'. Would he be good? If he was good would he be sovereign? This redemption underpins the fact that God is only Good and is eternally sovereign.

It is God's perfect will that all be saved. God is good.
God achieves His perfect will through Jesus Christ, God is sovereign.

Eternity - the beginning like the end. God is all and in all.

²⁴ Bishop George Berkeley is probably one of the better known proponents of Philosophical Idealism. As Berkeley correctly understands it, reality is idea within perception. A view Schroedinger found far more reasonable than materialism or dualism. He postulated that there was no such thing as an unperceived material reality. His world view was based on the marriage of two truths that he considered were self evident:

that the things which are immediately perceived are real things

and

that the things that are immediately perceived are ideas which exist only in the mind.

His theory was dependent on a perception beyond that of the individual perceiver

It is evident that the things I perceive, are my own ideas, and that no idea can exist unless it be in a mind. Nor is it less plain that these ideas or things by me perceived, either themselves or their archetypes, exist independently of my mind, since I know myself not to be their author, it being out of my power to determine at pleasure, what particular ideas I shall be affected with on opening my eyes or ears. They must therefore exist in some other mind, whose will it is they should be exhibited to me.

I believe this Kingdom Cosmology simplifies and resolves some of the difficulties of Berkeley's model by delving further into the understanding of perception.

1Co 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first-fruit, and afterward they who are Christ's at His coming; 24 then is the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He makes to cease all rule and all authority and power. 25 for it is right for Him to reign until He has put all the enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy made to cease is death. 27 For He put all things under His feet. But when He says that all things have been put under His feet, it is plain that it excepts Him who has put all things under Him. 28 But when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subject to Him who has subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all things in all.

How is this total redemption achieved?

It is achieved through the birth, death and resurrection of Christ.

Christ is the Word made flesh, and John clearly states that He is the same Word spoken at Creation - the Word of God, who is God.

However where God was not fully perceived within otherness at creation, God is fully perceived in Christ.

The gospels record the same Creation motif of the Holy Spirit brooding on Mary at Conception

And the angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit shall come on you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you. Therefore also that Holy One which will be born of you shall be called Son of God. ²⁵

and at Jesus baptism.

And John bore record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and He abode on Him. 33 And I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water, that One said to me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining upon Him, He is the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.²⁶

With the coming of Jesus we move from:

- the Word (God) partially heard at creation
- to the Word (God) fully heard in Jesus Christ, yet Christ Himself is not fully heard during his life
- to the Word (God) fully and totally heard by otherness in his death and resurrection,

How the third point comes to be may not be self evident from within a mainstream Christian paradigm, so lets pursue this more.

In John 1, we are clearly shown that in our realm there is a dualism of light and darkness. When Jesus died he took all the darkness into himself as the perfect one annulling its power, In the free act of dying, he was a seed giving himself fully - meaning infinitely – into the depth of otherness. In

²⁵ Luke 1 vs 35

²⁶ John 1 vs 32

his death he descended into the core of darkness and by the power of an indestructible life there is no place that has not heard Him.

John states that in his departure he went to prepare a place for us²⁷ (a true perception for us) and through his departure the Holy Spirit comes.

The Holy Spirit that first births us (that is provides us with a new beginning) into the perfect perception of the Kingdom and continues to bring true and perfect perception though all created reality until the Kingdom comes in fullness and power.

Who are we?

From within this paradigm we are either:

- introverted Words/God partially and imperfectly heard (carnal) or
- Words/God partially heard but (because we carry within ourselves the dying of Jesus) perfectly heard, who realise our full potential within the coinherent God as individual members of the Body of Christ.

The Kingdom is about the latter.

Joh 16:7 But I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you. But if I depart, I will send Him to you.

Christs death gave the Holy Spirit full access within this realm, the Spirit who enables perfect hearing of the Word.

Through being filled to overflowing with the Spirit of God we as words of God can truly be properly 'heard', where we are currently only imperfectly heard in the flesh.

This is being born of the Spirit, born of incorruptible seed. The precursor for entering the Kingdom of Heaven.

²⁷ John 14:6

Church and Scriptures

But is it Bible? I've been asked.

Most Christians have submitted to either the authority of the Church or the authority of the scriptures or a mixture of both.

The bottom line is, for reasons that I hope become clear at the end of this section, neither the Scriptures nor the Church can take the place of direct knowledge of God, and submission to either or both is obstacle to seeing the Kingdom. They mediate between God and Us.

Where the Church is more than a gathering of Saints meeting in communion with Jesus, and when the Bible becomes infallible, you can kiss reality goodbye.

In the First Century AD, prior to Christianity, Israel was looking for a Messiah to re-establish the Davidic Kingdom and overthrow of the Roman military occupation of Israeli territory.²⁸

As Joseph's 'son', Jesus was acknowledged to be a 'Son of David'²⁹ and therefore a legitimate heir of the throne of David. The people had an expectation that this charismatic leader would be their temporal Messiah.³⁰

Jesus was a disappointment to them. He refused to take up temporal rule³¹, and instead of preaching a restored Kingdom of Israel he was preaching the Kingdom of Heaven, and clearly stating that his Kingdom was not of this world³². His Kingdom was within.³³

In the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus proclaimed the nearness of the Kingdom, performed miracles, and healed the sick, and charged his disciples to do the same³⁴. He offered rebirth in the Holy Spirit to enable people to experience the Kingdom of Heaven³⁵.

He also turned the concept of authority upside down.³⁶

After Jesus physical departure, we see a First Century Christianity begin to emerge with Peter, James, and John continuing for a time following Jesus in the Holy Spirit³⁷.

²⁸ **Act 1:6** Then, indeed, these coming together, they asked Him, saying, Lord, do You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

²⁹ **Luke 2:4** And Joseph also went up from Galilee to be taxed (out of *the* city of Nazareth, into Judea, to *the* city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of *the* house and family line of David).

³⁰ **Joh 12:12** On the next day, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, a great crowd who had come to the Feast **13** took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him. And *they* cried, Hosanna! "Blessed is the King of Israel who comes in *the* name of *the* Lord!"

³¹ **Joh 6:15** Therefore when Jesus perceived that they would come and take Him by force, that they might make Him a king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain alone *by* Himself.

³² **John 18:36** Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would fight so that I might not be delivered to the Jews. But now My kingdom is not from here.

³³ **Luk 17:21** Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

³⁴ **Mat 10:7** And as you go, proclaim, saying, The kingdom of Heaven is at hand. **10:8** Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. You have received freely, freely give.

³⁵ **Joh 3:5** Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

³⁶ **Mat 20:25** But Jesus called them and said, You know that the rulers of the nations exercise dominion over them, and they who are great exercise authority over them. **26** However, it shall not be so among you. But whoever desires to be great among you, let him be your servant.

³⁷ **Act 2:38** Then Peter said to them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ to remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all those afar off, as many as *the* Lord our God shall call.

Then according to Acts, James was killed by Herod³⁸, and Peter and John apparently ceded the leadership of Jesus Church to another James, this James being Jesus brother.

As Jesus was Son of David, so was James, and consequently James was also a legitimate heir to a re-established Davidic dynasty. But James does not see that the work of Jesus means forsaking the performance of the Jewish Law.³⁹

Jesus vision of the Kingdom of God as not of this world is replaced by James vision of the restoration of the Davidic, temporal Messianic Kingdom, a Kingdom where non-Jews can enter, but only by becoming Jews⁴⁰. Becoming a Jew means circumcision and the keeping of the Law.

In this Church, an authority structure is set in place. Apostolic authority. To be an Apostle, one had to meet the criteria of having accompanied Jesus from the baptism of John to Jesus ascension, as a witness of His resurrection.⁴¹ Apostles were the Authorities within the Church and passed on their Authority to others by the laying on of hands.

Paul is not acknowledged as an Apostle by the Jerusalem hierarchy, he does not meet the criteria. He is given no authority by Jerusalem other than permission to preach the Gospel to the non Jews. However James, who according to the Gospel records also fails to meet the criteria, is nevertheless the leader of the Jerusalem 'Church'. Assumedly this could only be because he is the heir to the Messianic 'throne' of David.

Unlike James, Peter understood that Jesus had changed everything. He no longer kept clean by not associating with Non Jews⁴², he ate with them, and preached a simple message to forgiveness of sins for those who believe in Him, without mention of the Law⁴³.

Nevertheless after a visit of a delegation from James, Peter was spooked⁴⁴, and retreated back into Judaism, and to requiring non-Jews to Judaize. He is rebuked by Paul for this⁴⁵.

We will now look at how Paul's own version of events as recorded in his letters is in conflict with

³⁸ **Act 12:1** And at that time Herod the king threw on *his* hands to oppress some of those of the church. **2** And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

³⁹ **Jam 1:25** But whoever looks into the perfect Law of liberty and continues *in it*, he is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of *the* work. This one shall be blessed in his doing.

⁴⁰ **Act 15:16** "After this I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David *which* has fallen down; and I will build again its ruins, and I will set it up, **17** so those men who are left might seek after the Lord, and all the nations on whom My name has been called, says the Lord, who does all these things." (James is quoting **Amos 9 vs 11,12**)

⁴¹ **Act 1:21** Therefore, it is right that one of these men who have companied with us all *the* time that the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us, **22** beginning from the baptism of John to that same day that He was taken up from us, to become a witness with us of His resurrection.

⁴² **Act 10:28** And he said to them, You know that it is an unlawful thing for a man, a Jew to keep company with or to come near to one of another nation. But God has shown me not to call any man common or unclean.

⁴³ **Act 10:43** All the Prophets give witness to Him, *that* through His name whoever believes in Him *shall* receive remission of sins.

⁴⁴ **Gal 2:12** For before some came from James, he ate with the nations. But when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those of the circumcision.

⁴⁵ **Gal 2:14** But when I saw that they did not walk uprightly with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before all, If you, being a Jew, live as a Gentile, and not as the Jews, why do you compel *the* nations to judaize?

the official Church history of Acts, and how Paul's stated theological position is at odds with the Jerusalem Church.

These divergences were syncretised by the Church in the late second Century, and are no longer acknowledged or addressed. They have implications for how one understands Christianity, how one interprets the Bible, and whether one is a citizen of a temporal church or an eternal Kingdom.

Paul and Church Authority

Gal 1:1 Paul, an apostle - not from men, nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead

2Co 3:1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, like some, epistles of commendation to you, or *letters* of commendation from you?

Gal 2:6 But from those who seemed to be something (what kind they were then does not matter to me; God does not accept the face of man), for those seeming *important* conferred nothing to me.

In these passages Paul clearly states that He is an Apostle, but Apostleship has nothing to do with the Church conferring it on him. He received his authority direct from the risen Christ. He needs no letters of Commendation from Jerusalem. The Apostles in Jerusalem are of no consequence to him.

The Jerusalem Conference

Acts 15 gives an account of a Conference in Jerusalem that has created a template for dealing with internal 'issues' for all versions of authoritarian Christianity ever since.

The trouble is Paul's letters indicate that this account is a total fabrication.

According to Acts it goes like this:

- A minority group of converted Pharisees come to Antioch where Paul is, and they preach on the necessity of Jewish circumcision and keeping Law. (Acts 15 vs 1)
- Paul and Barnabas dispute with them. (Acts 15 vs 2)
- The Antioch Church sends Paul and Barnabas to get a ruling from the Apostles and Elders in Jerusalem (Acts 15 vs 2)
- In Jerusalem Peter speaks in defence of Paul's position (Acts 15 vs 7-11)
- Paul and Barnabas also speak in defence of their position (Acts 15 vs 12)
- James hears all submissions and pontificates, clearly states that those preaching circumcision in Antioch had no authority to do so, and hands down a mini law for Gentiles to keep (Acts 15 vs 13-29) that is drafted into a letter
- The Commandments were
 - abstaining from meats offered to idols
 - abstaining from things strangled
 - abstaining from fornication;
- Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch with the letter accompanied by Silas and Judas, 2 senior men from the Jerusalem Church (Acts 15 vs 22)

- Paul wants to revisit the Churches of his previous missionary journey but has a falling out with Barnabas over who should go (Acts 15 vs 39), and takes Silas the Jerusalem delegate instead of Barnabas (Acts 15 vs 40)
- Paul and Silas revisit the churches, strengthening them (Acts 15 vs 41) and then in Acts 16 we see an accommodating Paul not only circumcising Timothy (Acts 16 vs 3) but also delivering the Jerusalem Councils 'decree' to every church they visit (Acts 16 vs 4)

Paul's version of this episode is contained in Galatians Chapter 2, and is very different.

- In Galatians 2 Paul's trip to Jerusalem is prior to the visit of the Circumcision delegation to Antioch (Galatians 2 vs 11)
- Paul does go to Jerusalem with Barnabas (Galatians 2 vs 1), but he is not sent by the Church in Antioch, he goes of his own volition (Galatians 2 vs 2)
- The meeting in Jerusalem is private and not a public conference (Galatians 2 vs 2)
- Paul makes no mention of any Jerusalem decree, other than a request from Jerusalem that they "remember the poor" (Galatians 2 vs 10)
- Paul does not credit the Jerusalem hierarchy with any authority over him (Galatians 2 vs 6)
- There is clearly dissension between Paul and the circumcision group that comes to Antioch
- The group however are not acting as a rogue element, they 'come from James' (Galatians 2 vs 12)
- Peter's position subsequent to the visit of the men 'from James' is to acquiesce to the premise that Gentiles are required to 'Judaize' to become Christians (Galatians 2 vs 14)
- There is dissension between Paul and Barnabas, however this is not over who goes on a trip, this is because Barnabas like Peter submits to the men 'from James' (Galatians 2 vs 13)
- Paul's attitude to the content of the Acts decree is certainly not what portrays. And he certainly doesn't go about preaching it as per Acts 16 vs 4.

Paul's position on the 'Jerusalem Decrees'

On the content of the proclamation, we can clearly see where Paul stood from his letters.

The first issue was abstaining from fornication:

1Thessalonians 4vs3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification, for you to abstain from fornication

Common ground. But what about meats offered to idols?

Paul has no problems with meat offered to idols.⁴⁶ He does suggest abstaining however, not to obey any decree from the Church, but so as not to offend the 'weaker brothers'!

⁴⁶ **1Cor 10:25** Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no question for conscience' sake; **26** "for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness of it."

Romans 14 vs 1 And receive him who is weak in the faith, *but* not to judgements of *your* thoughts. **2** For indeed one believes to eat all things; but being weak, *another* eats vegetables.

Who are these weaker brothers? The Apostles in Jerusalem? The Apostles still keeping the Law, led by James the brother of the Lord?

The expression weak in the faith would clearly be offensive to James, especially when Paul has just aligned the strong with Abraham, the father of the Jews, in the same chapter.

Rom 4 v 19 And not being weak in faith, he (Abraham) did not consider his own body already dead (being about a hundred years old) or the deadening of Sarah's womb.

So what did the Jamesians think of this?

The answer lies in the Book of James.

And this brings us to the interesting fact that there is a 'head to head' between the Book of James, and the Epistles of Paul. Here we see the real state of first century Christianity.

One would imagine that the book of Romans and the Epistle of James were simply written as stand alone documents. But a closer look without a blindfold on, shows that this is not the case.

The following is allegedly two independent authors simply stating their own slant on a topic.

Looks more like an adversarial dialogue!

Faith and Works

Paul	James
Rom 3:30 since <i>it is</i> one God who will justify circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.	Jam 2:19 You believe that there is one God, you do well; even the demons believe and tremble. 20 But will you know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?
Rom 4:1 What then shall we say that our father Abraham has found, according to flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has a boast; but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness."	Jam 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Do you see how faith worked with his works, and from the works faith was made complete? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God." 24 You see then how a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

And there is more of the same between Paul's letters and the book of James.

The first century and second century church texts often contain contain 'heated' dialogue aimed at different factions, but this is not our point.

We are not interested in the bun fight between Paul and the Church in Jerusalem, we are interested in what lies beneath this bun fight.

Two different gospels and two different Kingdoms.

Paul's point in Galatians is that as a consequence of being 'bewitched'⁴⁷ by the a different gospel (i.e. the gospel of James' Judaizers), the believers in Galatia are attempting to complete what was begun in them by hearing through faith and the free gift of Holy Spirit⁴⁸ - 'in the flesh' - in their own power and through their own religious works.⁴⁹

The principle applies today in Authoritarian Churches. Flesh wants to be in control, and wants to do it itself and justify itself. And wants to identify itself by its own good works and knowledge.

Authoritarian Churches distinguish themselves from each other by their 'more Biblically correct' theology; their orthodoxy and their rules. They believe this, they don't believe that – They do this, they don't do that. They don't eat this, and don't wear that etc.⁵⁰

However as both John and Paul clearly point out, Christianity is about the love of God. Our corporate coinherent intimate relationship⁵¹ with the Father⁵², in Christ⁵³, through the Holy Spirit⁵⁴.

God is Love⁵⁵. You can study the scriptures⁵⁶, you can follow any number of rules. But its all meaningless without love⁵⁷. Agape love.

Phil 3:3 For we are the circumcision who worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh; **4** though I might also have confidence in the

⁴⁷ **Gal 3:1** O foolish Galatians, who bewitched you not to obey the truth, to whom before *your* eyes Jesus Christ was written among you crucified?

⁴⁸ **Gal 3:2** This only I would learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by works of *the* law, or by hearing of faith?

⁴⁹ **Gal 3:3** Are you so foolish? Having begun in *the* Spirit, do you now perfect *yourself* in the flesh?

⁵⁰ **Col 2:20** If then you died with Christ from the elements of the world, why, as *though* living in *the* world, are you subject to *its* ordinances: **21** touch not, taste not, handle not; **22** which things are all for corruption in the using, according to the commands and doctrines of men?

⁵¹ **John 17:21** that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. **22** And I have given them the glory which You have given Me, that they may be one, even as We are one, **23** I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them as You have loved Me.

⁵² **Rom 8:15** For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption by which we cry, Abba, Father!

⁵³ **Rom 8:39** nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

⁵⁴ **Rom 5:5** And hope does not make *us* ashamed, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through *the* Holy Spirit given to us.

⁵⁵ **1Jo 4:16** And we have known and believed the love that God has in us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

⁵⁶ **Joh 5:39** You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life. And they are the ones witnessing of Me, **40** and you will not come to Me that you might have life.

⁵⁷ **1Co 13:2** And though I have prophecies, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so as to move mountains, and do not have love, I am nothing.

flesh. If any other thinks that he has reason to trust in the flesh, I more.....

7 But whatever things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. **8** But no, rather, I also count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them *to be* dung, so that I may win Christ **9** and be found in Him; not having my own righteousness, which is of the Law, but through *the* faith of Christ, the righteousness of God by faith.

Love, God and Eternity

A different perspective on Christian Love

AGAPE

John, 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' declared that '**God is Love**' - in both 1 John 4 vs 8 and 1 John 4 vs 16.

Jesus did not preach in Greek, but there seems to be no doubt amongst the early Christians responsible for taking Christianity to the Greek speaking world (including Paul) that '**agape**' was the most appropriate word for the love that was central to Jesus Kingdom message.

Whoever loves knows God.

1Jo 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loves has been born of God, and knows God. 8 The one who does not love has not known God. For God is love.

This love, like God and like the Kingdom of God, is coinherent:

1Jo 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God has in us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

In sharing in the revelation and experience of the true nature of this love, we come to know and experience God. But if we do not know the King (who is love) we have no way of understanding the nature of His Kingdom.

Christians are often led to believe that '**agape love**' :

- was a new word coined by the early Christians, as they did not want to use any of the existing Greek words for love because of their associations
- received its definition from Paul in 1 Corinthians 13.
- is an "I make a choice to love you even if I don't like you" kind of love.

But is this true? Did 1 Corinthians 13 define the word 'agape', or did it merely qualify and redeem a word that was already known?

Agape love had a historical context. Agape love was already defined by the Septuagint - principally in the song of Solomon.

Agape love is Song of Solomon love, and the heart graced to apprehend Gods passionate and eternally "in love" kind of love can know God.

A Kingdom consciousness is a constant state of being in love. The Sky is bluer and the grass is greener, and unlike human love this state of being in love is eternal and consequently cannot fade over time.

The Kingdom is manifested in our corporate experience of the coinherent and interpenetrating love of God. We love in proportion to the extent of our experiential knowledge (gnosis) that we are indeed in Christ (who is love) and Christ (who is love) is in us, and we are in eachother.

We don't have to make ongoing choices -if we experience this Kingdom reality, the love of God constrains us.

Defining Agape love

Can we justify defining agape love as an 'in love' kind of love?

Christian 'agape' is certainly a kind of love distinct from any other love in human experience, but as we have

stated, the noun 'agape' clearly existed prior to its use in the NT texts, and the word and its definition was well known to the Greek New Testament authors.

There are different words for love in the Greek including 'Phileo' - brotherly love, 'Eros' - erotic love, and 'agape'.

This standard Church line is pretty much summed up in the **Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church** and its definitions of both 'Love' and 'agape'.

In Christian Theology, the principle of God's action and man's response. Of the words used in Greek for 'love', neither philia (dutiful or filial affection) nor eros (passionate emotion) is adequate to the Christian conception, which the NT expressed as 'agape', a word hardly used before **except in the LXX**..... (emphasis mine)

Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (Love definition)

The word which probably first occurs in the Septuagint, is believed to have been coined by the sacred authors from the verb agapao to avoid the sensual associations of the ordinary Greek noun eros. It is used only twice in the synoptics (Matt 24 v 12 and Luke 11 v 42), but often in St John and Pauline (esp. 1 Cor 13) and Johannine epistles, and always of the love of God or Christ, or of the Love of Christians for one another.....

Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church ('agape' definition)

However this falls short of giving the full picture.

'agape' and the LXX

The LXX or Septuagint, was the Hellenistic Jews Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. It was the Greek Old Testament around in the time of Jesus and the early Church.

And the LXX is where the noun 'agape' first appears.

The verb agapao certainly was used in classical Greek literature, and is defined in **Liddell & Scott Intermediate Lexicon**:

-agapaô- [!] of persons, to treat with affection, to caress, love, be fond of.

But other than a few very obscure occasions - one alluding to the Egyptian goddess Isis, (agapê theôn, title of Isis, POxy.1380.109) and another an erotic pet-name of a naked woman on a 5th century BC earthenware pot, the noun 'agape' was unknown.

Catherine Osborne, in **Eros Unveiled, Plato and the God of Love** states

Abstract nouns are not used in Greek so much as they are in English, and many ideas that we should express with a noun would normally come out better in Greek if we used a verb or participle instead. Why then, should anyone writing in Greek favour the noun **agape** when he could use the verb?

In stating that the use of Love as a noun was very rare in Classical Greek, Osborne also points out it was also even more rare in Hebrew thought. She also points out that the preference for the noun over the verb is largely associated with Paul in the New Testament, and with the Song of Solomon in the Septuagint.

So then, if we go back to the Septuagint, and have a look at the 'agape' passages, we should be able to get some context for this word.

And when we do, we find that more often than not, the noun 'agape' refers to sexual love or at least a profoundly "in love" kind of love:

Agape Love in the Greek Septuagint

The Septuagint is the Greek Translation of the Old Testament known to the early Christian Church. Given the use of agape in Classical Greek was very rare, and the Septuagint was well known to the early Greek Christians, the Septuagint offers us an important clue in understanding the nature of God (God is agape) and

the Kingdom of God that Jesus came preaching.

2 Samuel 13:15

2Sa 13:15 καὶ ἐμίσησεν αὐτὴν Ἀμνων μῖσος μέγα σφόδρα, ὅτι μέγα τὸ μῖσος, ὃ ἐμίσησεν αὐτὴν, ὑπὲρ τὴν ἀγάπην, ἣν ἠγάπησεν αὐτὴν. καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ Ἀμνων Ἀνάστηθι καὶ πορεύου.

Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, and the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the 'agape' with which he had loved her.....⁵⁸

Ecclesiastes 9:1

Ecc 9:1 Ὅτι σὺν πάν τοῦτο ἔδωκα εἰς καρδίαν μου, καὶ καρδία μου σὺν πάν εἶδεν τοῦτο, ὡς οἱ δίκαιοι καὶ οἱ σοφοὶ καὶ ἔργασίαι αὐτῶν ἐν χειρὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ γε ἀγάπην καὶ γε μῖσος οὐκ ἔστιν εἰδῶς ὁ ἄνθρωπος· τὰ πάντα πρὸ προσώπου αὐτῶν,

For all this I took to heart, even to make all this clear, that the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God. No man knows either 'agape' or hatred by all that is before them.

Song of Solomon 2:4

Son 2:4 Εἰσαγάγετέ με εἰς οἶκον τοῦ οἴνου, τάξατε ἐπ' ἐμὲ ἀγάπην.

he brought me to his banqueting house and his banner over me was 'agape'

Song of Solomon 2:7

Son 2:7 ὦρκισα ὑμᾶς, θυγατέρες Ιερουσαλημ, ἐν ταῖς δυνάμεσιν καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἰσχύσεσιν τοῦ ἀγροῦ, ἐὰν ἐγείρητε καὶ ἐξεγείρητε τὴν ἀγάπην, ἕως οὗ θελήσῃ.

I adjure you, Oh daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or by the Roes of the field do not stir up or awaken 'agape' until it pleases.

Song of Solomon 3:5

Son 3:5 ὦρκισα ὑμᾶς, θυγατέρες Ιερουσαλημ, ἐν ταῖς δυνάμεσιν καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἰσχύσεσιν τοῦ ἀγροῦ, ἐὰν ἐγείρητε καὶ ἐξεγείρητε τὴν ἀγάπην, ἕως ἂν θελήσῃ.

do not awaken 'agape' until it pleases

Song of Solomon 3:10

Son 3:10 στύλους αὐτοῦ ἐποίησεν ἀργύριον καὶ ἀνάκλιτον αὐτοῦ χρύσειον, ἐπίβασις αὐτοῦ πορφυρᾶ, ἐντὸς αὐτοῦ λιθόστρωτον, ἀγάπην ἀπὸ θυγατέρων Ιερουσαλημ.

He made its poles of silver, its back gold, its seat of purple, its middle was paved with 'agape' by the daughters of Jerusalem.

Song of Solomon 8:4

Son 8:4 ὦρκισα ὑμᾶς, θυγατέρες Ιερουσαλημ, ἐν ταῖς δυνάμεσιν καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἰσχύσεσιν τοῦ ἀγροῦ, τί ἐγείρητε καὶ τί ἐξεγείρητε τὴν ἀγάπην, ἕως ἂν θελήσῃ.

⁵⁸ If you are into hermeneutics the **law of first mention** would result in agape being defined in 2 Samuel 15 vs 13!

Many waters cannot quench 'agape', nor will the rivers overflow it. If a man would give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be scorned.

Song of Solomon 8:7

Son 8:7 ὕδωρ πολὺ οὐ δυνήσεται σβέσαι τὴν ἀγάπην, καὶ ποταμοὶ οὐ συγκλύσουσιν αὐτήν· ἐὰν δῶ ἀνὴρ τὸν πάντα βίον αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ, ἐξουθενώσῃ ἐξουθενώσουσιν αὐτόν.

many waters cannot quench 'agape' nor can floods drown it

In **Hastings. J Dictionary of the Bible** under the reference for **Love in the LXX** we read:

All these varieties of love, human and divine, may in the LXX be expressed by the verb agapao and noun 'agape'. In the story of Samson and Delilah agapao describes sexual relationship (Judges 16 v 4, 15) not to mention Solomon's legalised lust (3 K 11 v 2), besides expressing love in its higher reaches.... In the Greek Bible in the form that it must have been known to the NT writers, agapao does duty for every shade and variety of love, for divine pity and preference for Israel right down to erotic passion. It is true that agapao is not the only verb to express erotic love in the LXX, for there are also pro-aireomai and enthumeomai (Heb hshk ethelo hps); but it is very commonly used to render Hebrew hb when the context makes plain that this very type of love or passion is intended. Nor has agapao the monopoly for rendering what may be described as reasoning attachment; thus the more usual verbs for divine pity are eleeo and oikterio. The noun 'agape' is usually connected with sex, or at least with the love of women; or it is a passion comparable in intensity with hatred; it is not at all a higher love than philia. Indeed in the LXX agapao may be said to be a higher type of love than AGAPE (c.f. especially Hosea 11 v 4, Zephaniah 3 v 17, Jeremiah 38 (31) v 3)

The Kiss

The Kiss was foundational to the early Christian sharing of 'agape'. Initially in the Communal life of the believers, and later in the liturgy..

From the early texts it was not an 'I don't like you but I choose to love you' kind of 'charity' kiss!

- In the kiss of peace, the action of the Holy Spirit enabled Christians to meet in one body and one spirit in the divine and boundless love.⁵⁹
- The kiss of peace was freely given between all members of the church, both male and female, it was given on the lips, and was described as mystical, a uniting together and a merging of souls⁶⁰.
- Christian women would creep into prisons to 'kiss a martyrs bonds'⁶¹, and the kiss shared by martyrs before death was seen as a consummation of their martyrdom.⁶² Christians had an expectation of receiving the kiss in fullness on a saints reception in heaven after death.⁶³
- Shared Prayer and the sacraments were considered to be incomplete without the exchange of the kiss. The kiss of peace was the seal of prayer.⁶⁴ There were warnings about repeating a kiss merely to replicate the pleasurable feelings elicited, and warnings that the kiss should be given carefully and without defilement of thought.⁶⁵
- By the kiss the strength of love was impressed. The mystery of the kiss of peace was that it was the

⁵⁹ The Divine Liturgy of Mark

⁶⁰ St Cyril of Jerusalem (315 -386 AD)

⁶¹ Tertullian (160 - 230 AD)

⁶² Martyrdom of St Perpetua 200 AD

⁶³ Cyprian Epistle XV

⁶⁴ Tertullian (160 - 230 AD)

⁶⁵ Athenagoras (2nd Century AD)

kiss of the heart and soul, and it could not be given without faith and love⁶⁶. The kiss of peace had a sweetness through faith, love, and affection⁶⁷. The kiss soothed and levelled.⁶⁸

- The kiss of peace supernaturally gave grace and made peace. The kiss was a fuel for love, kindling a love in relationships implanted by spiritual grace, far stronger than the love associated with relationships implanted by nature.⁶⁹
- The kiss was of a different character to kisses given in public by common friends. The kiss blended souls one with another, and courted forgiveness for them. The kiss spoke of souls mingled together, and the banishing of all remembrance of wrongs.⁷⁰
- In the kiss souls were bound to each other. After an absence Christians would kiss each other, their 'souls hastening to mutual intercourse'. It was in the kiss of peace that the workings of the soul were declared most clearly.⁷¹
- In kissing a brother or sister a Christian was sacramentally sharing in the Church's kiss of Christ. The Church had kisses as a bride. This kiss of peace was described as a pledge of espousals and the prerogative of wedlock.⁷²

So why the noun 'agape' for Christian Love?

The New Testament writers, did not as the modern Christian Church reconstruction has inferred, 'invent' a word for love that had no 'unsavoury' connotations. And if they were simply looking to communicate a simple doctrine brotherly love, there was always 'phileo' .

The simple reason the earliest Church chose agape is that like 'seed and soil', and 'word and hearing', Bride/Bridegroom love is the perfect kingdom metaphor.

Both Old and New Testament God/Human relationships have been described in terms of bride/bridegroom love.

Old Testament

Jeremiah 2 v 32, 3 v 20 , 31 v 32, Ezekiel 13 v 32, 16 v 7-8, Hosea 2 v 2,

New Testament

John 3 v 29, 2 Cor 11 v 2, Eph 5 v 32, Rev 21 v 2

In Jesus and the Kingdom of God the character of bride/bridegroom love is redeemed and is undergoing a massive and positive transformation from the jealous, seemingly hopelessly frustrated relationship of the Old Testament, to actual present tense and mutually experienced coinherent "Kingdom within" love, with the confident hope of total and full consummation when the Kingdom comes in fullness.

⁶⁶ Augustine

⁶⁷ St Ambrose - Letter to his Sister XLI

⁶⁸ Chrysostom Sermon XXX on Romans

⁶⁹ St Augustine (354 - 430 AD)

⁷⁰ St Cyril of Jerusalem (315 -386 AD)

⁷¹ St Augustine (354 - 430 AD)

⁷² St Ambrose - Letter to his Sister XLI

God

As indicated in the section on cosmology, Otherness was not fully open to receive/hear/perceive the Word at Creation.

The Word was God.

Consequently God was imperfectly perceived until the coming of the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ.

John 1:18 Nothing (Greek oudeis) has perceived (Greek horeo) God at any time; the Only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

John 5:37 And He sending Me, the Father Himself, has borne witness of Me. Neither has his voice been heard at any time, nor his form perceived (Greek horeo).

There are two points to be made here:

They have to do with:

- The nature of God as only Good
- The birth of the temporal realm and the logical consequences of eternity

The Nature of God as only Good

There is necessarily a deficiency of ANY witness of the nature of God before the appearance of Jesus Christ, and the subsequent witness of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is correctly understood as fully God, and does not have only a subset of God's Character traits.

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, 23 meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

The fruit of the Spirit are the fruit of God, they are all virtues and they do not include:

Anger, fierce wrath, fury, cursing, scorn, derision, jealousy, revenge, a justice system weighted towards males, returning evil for evil, able to be provoked, non-specific and disproportionate retribution, including on children, genocide, hatred, revulsion, humiliation and shaming, violence, cruelty, dealing in war, terror and death.

In the New Testament we see a paradigm shift in the revelation of God in Christ Jesus, just as we see a paradigm shift in the Bride Bridegroom love.

The key to interpreting the true nature of God is found in the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15 and the woman caught in adultery in John 8.

Eternity

The birth of the temporal realm and the logical consequences of eternity

The birth of the temporal realm. In not fully hearing God, eternity was not also not perceived.

Partial openness created time out of eternity.

Had otherness been completely open, she would have immediately experienced the fullness of God in coinherent flow in eternity.

Partial openness generating a temporal field protecting eternity from the infection of evil.

- Can anyone posit a wholly good and sovereign God who shares eternity with evil?
- What is a Christless eternity?
- Can there be a Christless eternity?

Now there are some other interesting logical consequences of Eternity that you may not have considered but are implicit in Paul's writings, and were later developed by people such as Valentinus.

Paul states

Eph 2:4 – 6 But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love with which He loved us (even when we were dead in sins) has made us alive together with Christ (by grace you are saved), and has raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus,

Paul is using the language of eternity. We sit in heavenly places NOW. He does not say in the future, and this language is necessary if eternity has any meaning.

Heaven as Eternity (like God) by its very nature is immutable, it cannot change.

- What does this mean for the concept of 'dying and going to heaven'?
- If I die on earth on a Tuesday, do I arrive in heaven on a Wednesday?
- Can I be not there one day, and there the next?
- Can anyone in eternity experience someone else not being in eternity one day, and then present the next?

These are all concepts thoroughly confused by our temporal experience. Clearly I cannot arrive in heaven at a certain time. If I am in heaven I am in heaven.

His disciples said to him: "The kingdom – on what day will it come?" "It will not come by watching (and waiting for) it. They will not say: 'Look, here!' or 'Look, there!' Rather, the kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth, and people do not see it." Gospel of Thomas Saying 113

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: 21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. Luke 17:20

The Kingdom of Heaven is within me. Eternity is within me.

Part 2

The Mystery of the Kingdom and the Keys of the Kingdom

The Mystery of the Kingdom 1 – Coinherence

Col 1:26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. **27** For to them God would make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory,

Pauls writings state regularly that **we are in Christ**, and in Colossians 1 we see the revelation of the mystery: **Christ is in us**, meaning Coinherence, mutual indwelling, is the experience of the Kingdom.

The Kingdom of God is coinherent because God is Coinherent, and coinherence is probably best understood by looking at the Trinity.

People often say they dont understand the Trinity – it is too hard. How can God be both one in three and three in one? It is not too hard and once you have a paradigm shift it all becomes beautifully clear.

Coinherence is a term that makes no sense in the natural realm. It is a term that can only be made sense of in the Spirit.

In the natural realm Object A can be fully within Object B. This is called inherence. But it is impossible for us in the natural to comprehend how Object B Can be fully within Object A, whilst Object A remains fully within Object B, and the whole thing becomes utterly incomprehensible if there are three objects involved.

Not so with persons or virtues.

In the Trinity there are three persons - Father Son and Holy Spirit, who are all fully coinherent.

The Father fully gives Himself to the Son and is fully within the Son, The Son fully gives himself to the Father and is fully within the Father, and the same with the Holy Spirit.

The Kingdom of God is simply our participation in this dynamic through being united to Jesus.

This is not theory. This is an experiential realm. But it is impossible for flesh and blood to inherit this kingdom, we experience it in our spiritual bodies, we experience it through the heavenly virtues. We exclude ourselves by wearing vices⁷³.

The truth is I am fully within God and God is fully within me, I am also fully within you and you are also fully within me. We do not experience it because we do not know who we are. We are trapped in a fleshly knowledge.

Die to the flesh, live to the Spirit, be born of the Holy Spirit and you can see, and enter, and experience the awesome reality of the Kingdom of God now.

⁷³ Gal 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are clearly revealed, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lustfulness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, fightings, jealousies, angers, rivalries, divisions, heresies, 21 envyings, murders, drunkennesses, revelings, and things like these; of which I tell you before, as I also said before, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

The Mystery of the Kingdom 1 – The Eternal Now

Keys of the Kingdom 1 – Born of the Spirit

Born Again - The Spiritual Body and the Matrix of Virtue

Indeed rust corrupts – store up treasure in heaven.

How does one experience intimate fervent love and avoid the 'lust of the flesh'?

Paul spoke of 2 different kinds of Christians. Spiritual and Carnal.

1Co 3:1 - 3 And I, brothers, could not speak to you as to spiritual ones, but as to fleshly, as to babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk and not with solid food, for you were not yet able *to bear it*; nor are you able even now. For you are yet carnal.

Rom 7:5 For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sin worked in our members through the law to bring forth fruit to death.

Rom 8:5-6 For they who are according to the flesh mind the things of flesh, but they who are according to the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace

In Romans 7 Paul speaks of “when we were in the flesh” as past tense.

How is this possible?

The answer lies in the crucifixion of the flesh, and being reborn as a spiritual entity in the Holy Spirit.

Being Born again.

But being born again is one of the most misunderstood concepts in Christianity. Being Born of the Spirit is about receiving a Spiritual body, a body that can subsist in a spiritual Kingdom.

1Co 15:50 And I say this, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit *the* kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

In the Song of Solomon, the lovers palimpsest was referred to as being ‘paved with love within by the daughters of Jerusalem’.

The natural world or kingdom that we live in could be defined as a material/biological matrix. This matrix provides our material/biological body with a sustaining environment. The Kingdom of Heaven could be defined as a matrix of virtues. This matrix provides a sustaining environment for the spiritual body.

Like people who are born again of the Holy Spirit, the virtues can be living entities as a consequence of being the pure fruit or birthings of the Holy Spirit. They are more like angelic

beings than subjective emotions or values.

That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit

The fruit (birthing Gr καρπος) of the Spirit is love joy peace,

In the realm of God they are networked into a whole that can support personhood (including human spirits) providing there is no vice or evil maintained by those persons, via spiritual or virtue bodies.

It is only in walking in the Spirit, that we can experience the fullness of the fervent intimate love, that is spoken of in 1 Peter and the other early Christian writings.

Keys of the Kingdom 2 - Our new “In the Beginning”

As we indicated in the Section on cosmology, if you read the first three verses of the first chapter of Genesis you will find hidden there a key to understanding the Kingdom of God. The Key to Heaven on Earth.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 And the earth was without form and empty. And darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters. 3 And God said, Let there be light. And there was light.

The key is this - “The Spirit then the Word”

Unless a Word is heard, that is unless it gives itself fully to a hearing, it abides by itself alone and it is not creative.

John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit.

The Word of God, is like a seed that needs soil, and like a human embryo that needs a womb. The Soil or the Womb is the hearing for the word - Wisdom.

The Spirit creates that womb by creating a hearing for the Word.

Proverbs 3:19 The Lord has founded the earth by wisdom; by understanding He has founded the heavens.

Before the Word of heaven “Let there be Light” could be perceived in the realm of Creation, the Spirit of God brooded on the face of the deep.

To the extent to which that Word was perceived correctly, there is heaven on earth. Hell is the lack of perception of that Word. Our fleshly realm is unfortunately a mixed perception somewhere between heaven and hell.

Jesus came to fix that – Jesus, the Word of God made flesh, came preaching the Kingdom of God. Heaven on Earth.

In the New Testament the Gospels also indicate the role of the Holy Spirit brooding on Mary in the conception of Jesus the Word.

Luke 1:35 The angel answered, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the Highest hover over you; Therefore, the child you bring to birth will be called Holy, Son of God.

Mary could not conceive the Word unless the Holy Spirit first brooded on her to prepare her to receive the Word.

When we are born again, we are born again of the Spirit.

Joh 3:5 Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

The Spirit broods not upon our fleshly bodies, but upon the incorruptible seed of who we are.

1Pe 1:23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the living Word of God, and abiding forever.

The Spirit births virtues.

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, **23** meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

The fruit of the spirit is the substance of our Spiritual Bodies. A body is what allows us to relate to our environment. Our body of flesh allows us to relate to the material realm, but it cannot apprehend heaven.

1Co 15:50 And I say this, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit *the* kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

Our Spiritual body is the birthings or fruit of the Spirit. The Virtues are the substance of heaven. Heaven is a realm of light and love, the virtues are the rainbow hues of that light and love.

Keys of the Kingdom 2 - Clothed with Love

Being clothed with love is a primary key of the Kingdom of Heaven.

To be clothed with Love is to put on the wedding garment, without which it is impossible to enter the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

Mat 22:12 And he said to him, Friend, how did you come in here without having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

It is analogous to being clothed with light, being clothed with our heavenly residence, putting on Christ, and receiving a Spiritual body.

The Kingdom of Heaven is the awareness and experience of the state of coinherence (mutual interpenetration) that we have **in** Christ and Christ **in** us. This is true Gnosis - the experiential knowledge that we are seated in heavenly places **in** Christ Jesus.

Eph 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love *with* which He loved us 5 (even when we were dead in sins) has made us alive together with Christ (by grace you are saved), 6 and has raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

It is where we experience the coinherence of the Trinity, and coinherence with each other.

God is Love, God is Light. Love, like light, is comprised of a rainbow of colours. This rainbow of love is the Virtues. The fruit of the Spirit.

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, 23 meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 But those belonging to Christ have crucified the flesh with *its* passions and lusts. 25 If we live in *the* Spirit, let us also walk in *the* Spirit.

We are the Sons of God, the Sons of Light.

1Jo 1:5 And this is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

We are clothed with love as a seed is clothed with good soil. And in this soil the true incorruptible seed of who we are draws life, and we are born again in the Kingdom of Heaven with a body that comprises the substance of heaven, the virtues.

1Pe 1:22 Purifying your souls in the obedience of the truth through the Spirit to unfeigned love of the brothers, love one another fervently out of a pure heart, 23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the living Word of God, and abiding forever.

The fruiting of the Spirit is analogous with the sonship of God.

Clearly the Spirit is God. The Fruit of the Spirit is the fruit of God.

2Co 3:17 And the Lord is Spirit; and where the Spirit of *the* Lord is, there is liberty. **18** But we all, with *our* face having been unveiled, having beheld the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, are being changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord Spirit.

The word for Fruit in Greek is Karpos. (καρπός) Things bring fruit after their kind.

Mat 7:16 You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?

The bottom line is that we can experience the Kingdom of heaven now.

Luk 17:20 And being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered and said, The kingdom of God does not come with observation. **21** Nor shall they say, Lo here! or, behold, there! For behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

We do not have to wait until our mortal body is placed in the ground. The key lies in a different kind of dying. Dying to the flesh. This has nothing to do with wearing a hairshirt and whipping oneself when we feel like the desires of the flesh are rising up.

It has to do with where our mind or consciousness (our Gnosis) is. If our consciousness is in our mortal life in the flesh or our eternal life in the spirit.

Rom 8:5 For they who are according to the flesh mind the things of flesh, but they who are according to the Spirit the things of the Spirit. **6** For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace **7** because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can it be. **8** So then they who are in the flesh cannot please God. **9** But you are not in the flesh, but in *the* Spirit, if *the* Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone has not *the* Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.

Rom 8:11 But if the Spirit of the *One* who raised up Jesus from *the* dead dwells in you, the *One* who raised up Christ from *the* dead shall also make your mortal bodies alive by His Spirit who dwells in you. **12** Therefore, brothers, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. **13** For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die. But if you through *the* Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live. **14** For as many as are led by *the* Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Keys of the Kingdom 3 – Drinking the Holy Spirit

We must be born again. We must drink of the Spirit until the spirit overwhelms our fleshly consciousness.

Joh 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, [even] to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

We must understand ourself no longer as our human body but as the incorruptible seed of who we are within the heart of the Father. The seed is our most fundamental consciousness or knowing.

We must choose the right soil to die within.

As a seed dies by breaking its outer covering and becoming naked in the soil, it is then able to drink in the nourishment of the soil. It is then in a position to grow and bring forth fruit.

Our flesh consciousness is the outer covering of the eternal seed or word of who we truly are. Die to the flesh consciousness and be reborn to a spirit consciousness. As we drink of the Spirit, we are clothed with love, clothed with the virtues as with a spiritual body and see what the eternal virtues see, experience what the eternal virtues experience.

We are then in a position to experience the intimate coinherence with God and each other that is impossible to experience in the flesh.

This is the inheritance of the sons of God. This is the Kingdom of God.

Thomas 28 Jesus said, "I took my place in the midst of the world, and I appeared to them in flesh. I found all of them intoxicated; I found none of them thirsty. And my soul became afflicted for the sons of men, because they are blind in their hearts and do not have sight; for empty they came into the world, and empty too they seek to leave the world. But for the moment they are intoxicated. When they shake off their wine, then they will repent."

Thomas 108 Jesus says: "Whoever will drink from my mouth will become like me. I myself will become he, and what is hidden will be revealed to him."

Thomas 13 ... Thomas said to him: Teacher, my mouth will not bear at all to say whom you are like." Jesus said: "I am not your teacher. For you have drunk, you have become intoxicated at the bubbling spring that I have measured out."

Rev 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let the *one* hearing say, Come! And let the *one* who is thirsty come. And he willing, let him take of the Water of Life freely.

Keys of the Kingdom 5 – 2 Peter 1

This is an amazing passage of scripture, when understood within the Kingdom Paradigm.

Jesus gifted Peter with the "Keys of the Kingdom" - as in heaven so on earth.

Here, writing in the person of Peter mindful he is about to die, the writer is giving us the clearest possible indication of what those keys were and are for the generations who are to follow.

The writer clearly describes obtaining an entrance to the Kingdom, or in other words a key.

It is a little clearer in the original Greek, as the word for "filling out your" in verse 5 and the word "be ministered to you" in verse 11 are the same.

Grace and peace be multiplied to you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, 3 according as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who has called us to glory and virtue, 4 through which He has given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, so that by these you might be partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in *the* world through lust. 5 But also in this very thing, bringing in all diligence, filling out your faith with virtue, and with virtue, knowledge; 6 and *with* knowledge self-control, and *with* self-control, patience, and *with* patience, godliness, 7 and *with* godliness, brotherly kindness, and *with* brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if these things are in you and abound, they make *you to be* neither idle nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For *he* in whom these things are not present is blind and cannot see afar off and has forgotten that he was purged from his sins in the past. 10 Therefore, brothers, rather be diligent to make your calling and election sure, for *if you* do these things, you shall never fall. 11 For so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Here we see the following key concepts, and these are interrelated:

- Putting on Virtues
- Escaping the corruption of Lust
- Fruitfulness
- An entrance to the Kingdom

For those with ears to hear!

Keys of the Kingdom 6 – The Shepherd of Hermas

Hermas is accounted as one of the Apostolic Fathers. Hermas is largely accepted as the brother of Pius the Bishop of Rome who died c 154 AD. 'The Shepherd of Hermas' was probably written between 140 and 155 AD.

The latter part of the work provides an allegorical insight into the relationship between the virtues, the spiritual body and the entrance into the Kingdom.

Hermas on being clothed with Virtue to enter the Kingdom

"And these virgins, who are they?" "They," said he, "are holy spirits; and no man can otherwise be found in the kingdom of God, unless these shall clothe him with their garment. For if you receive only the name, but do not receive the garment from them, you profit nothing. For these virgins are powers of the Son of God. Consequently if you bear the Name, but do not bear His power, you bear His Name to no effect.

(The Shepherd goes on to say that the stones which bore His Name but did not clothe themselves with the clothing of the virgins were cast away)

"What sort of clothing do they have, Sir?" I asked, "The names themselves," he said, "are their clothing. Whoever bears the Name of the Son of God, should bear the names of these also; for even the Son Himself bears the names of these virgins.

As many stones," he said, "as you saw enter into the building of the tower, being given in by their hands and waiting for the building, they have been clothed in the power of these virgins.

For this cause you see the tower made a single stone with the rock. So also they that have believed in the Lord through His Son and clothe themselves in these spirits, shall become one spirit and one body, and their garments all of one colour. But such persons as bear the names of the virgins have their dwelling in the tower."

Without the garment of the Virtues, we will be removed from the Kingdom by the Vices.

"The stones then, Sir," I asked, "which are cast aside, why were they cast aside? For they passed through the gate and were placed in the building of the tower by the hands of the virgins." "Since all these things interest you," said he, "and you enquire diligently, listen as touching the stones that have been cast aside. "

"These all, received the name of the Son of God, and also received the power of these virgins. When then they received these spirits, they were strengthened, and were with the servants of God, and they had one spirit and one body and one garment; for they had the same mind, and they wrought righteousness. "

"After a certain time then they were persuaded by the women whom you saw clothed in black raiment, and having their shoulders bare and their hair loose, and beautiful in form. When they saw them they desired them, and they clothed themselves with their power, but they stripped the power of the virgins off themselves. "

"They then were cast away from the house of God, and delivered to these women. But those who were not deceived by the beauty of these women remained in the house of God. So you have," he said, "the interpretation of those who were cast aside."

What then, Sir," I asked, "if these men, such as they are, should repent and put away their desire for these women, and return unto the virgins, and walk in their power and in their works? Shall they not enter into the house of God?"

"They shall enter," said he, "if they shall put away the works of these women, and take again the power of the virgins, and walk in their works. For this is the reason why there was also a cessation in the building, that, if these repent, they may go into the building of the tower; but if they do not repent, then others will go, and these shall finally be thrown away."

For all these things I gave thanks unto the Lord, because He had compassion on all that called on His name, and sent forth the angel of repentance to us that had sinned against Him, and refreshed our spirit, and, when we were already ruined and had no hope of life, restored our life.

Mat 22:11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man who did not have a wedding garment: 12 And he said to him, Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

A foundational point for understanding the Spiritual in the New Testament is that the character of the Spiritual is Virtue. A spiritual Christian was a Virtue Clothed Christian, and as such had experiential access to the Kingdom of God now.

Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Luk 17:21

Keys of the Kingdom 7 – Origen of Alexandria