

RCF
Covenant Classes
Session 1
The Kingdom

I. Introduction

In this study “The Kingdom” means the “Kingdom of God,” the “Kingdom of Heaven,” and the “Kingdom of Light.” These are all names given to the same reality.

The reason it is important for the believer to study the Kingdom is because it is our eternal reality. Not only is it eternal, it is meant to be an increasing reality for every believer while we walk this earth. Jesus proclaimed, described, and demonstrated the Kingdom with his disciples and with those who were lost. There is no way to please God or to walk faithfully in His ways and carry out His plan without the reality of the Kingdom of God in our lives.

The Kingdom is a reality that is of a different make-up and a different dimension of reality than our natural world. For that reason, it is sometimes difficult for people to understand Kingdom reality and how it relates to the life of the believer on earth. Because the Kingdom is primarily unseen, it is easy to forget that it is meant to be part of every believer’s daily life. In order to understand this reality better, we need to understand the four realms of reality that are available to us and how we are to relate to those realities.

I. The Four Realms of Reality

In order to understand the reality of the Kingdom of God it is important to consider the other realities in which people function. Most people go through their lives not thinking about these realities. Life is just what we live out as we get by or get ahead in this world; however, Christians are called to live a life above those who are formed and directed by circumstances and the drives of human nature. There are actually four realms of reality in which people might possibly function.

The natural realm of reality is the reality of what can be observed and experienced in the physical world. It is the natural world that God created for our benefit but has now fallen and is dying. The natural realm has boundaries and rules that have been established by God in His natural laws. In the U.S. Declaration of Independence, these natural laws are called the “laws of nature and of nature’s God.” Some people who talk about the natural realm give it a persona such as “mother nature,” but there is really only one God over nature, and He has set the boundaries and laws. Laws such as gravity, thermodynamics, mathematics, and time are some of the categories of the boundaries of the natural realm. In the natural world, we are confined by the laws of that reality (Psalm 74:17).

The natural realm is our physical existence and all that governs that existence. Everyone must live and function in the natural realm of reality. For some people, the natural realm is all that they acknowledge in life. These people believe that when there is no longer a physical “me,” then “I” cease to exist. The Bible reveals that there is much more to a person than simply the person’s physical existence. People are created with an immaterial soul and spirit that are not made of the elements of this physical world and will transcend the physical world and continue to exist after the physical existence of man ceases (Isaiah 14:9-10; Hebrew 4:12; Revelation 6:9).

Everyone must function in the natural realm, but the Christian is called to not have strong attachments to this realm. The Christian is still bound by the laws of the natural realm, but he recognizes there is something more real for him. The Christian lives in this natural realm but is not of this realm in an ultimate sense. The Christian does not put confidence in this realm, and therefore does not have his hope in the circumstances of the natural realm (1 John 2:15-17).

The artificial realm of reality is the creative world that is produced by the imagination of the mind of man. The artificial realm is what has allowed man to create beautiful music, art, fiction, drama, the ability to imagine beyond this natural world, entertainment and fantasy. This realm has also allowed for the creation of the reality of fools, which is when people construct a reality in their own mind that does not line up with other realities. Proverbs 14:12 tells us that, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.” Psalm 53:1 says, “The fool says in his heart that there is no God...” God speaks much about the artificial realm. Often he refers to the dangers of it, but there are also many verses that tell us of the joy available through the creativity that God has granted to man.

The artificial realm has sets of boundaries which govern it. First, this realm must conform to natural laws. In other words, if I imagined that I could step off a 50-story skyscraper because I no longer believed in gravity, and I would not be hurt, the law of gravity would not allow my artificial realm reality to set these new boundaries. All natural laws force their governance on the artificial realm. If a person creates a reality in which people never grow old, he will still grow old because the forces of the natural world overrule his artificial reality.

Second, artificial reality must conform to spiritual laws. During the lifetime of a person he can believe there is no God, but the spiritual reality of God’s existence will confront him on judgment day. This illustrates one of the great dangers of the artificial realm of reality. Sometimes the consequences of people’s artificial realities are not realized until after they have exited the physical world. At that time, it is too late for them to reconcile their artificial reality with spiritual laws. This is especially true with the moral relativism that has been embraced by so many people today. People have come to think that if they believe something is true for them, then it is so. However, what they have actually done is to create an artificial reality that will one day be overruled by God’s spiritual reality.

Third, artificial reality is governed by the imagination of the creator of the reality. There was a man who was certain that God had spoken to him about events that would be happening in the near future. When those events did not happen, he simply created new scenarios of what “God had told him” and went on in his artificial reality. When people try to live out their artificial realities, their lives become fantasies. Some people regularly re-create artificial realities in order to cope with the demands of life. People have an amazing ability to create an artificial reality in order to get by in life. Some people turn to drugs or alcohol in order to assist in bringing them into their artificial reality. Other people participate in religious fantasy or ideologies that have little substance in the natural world. In these cases, people are living false lives that have been created in their own minds but do not exist in the concrete realms of reality.

Sometimes Christianity has looked at the artificial realm of reality and condemned it because it does not come from the acceptable expressions of Christian thinking. Certain expressions of art, music, and entertainment are excluded from being “Christian” because they do not fit into the artificial realm of traditional Christian expression. It is appropriate for Christians to participate in the artificial realm as long as it glorifies God and does not conflict with natural and spiritual laws. However, the danger of the artificial realm is that people may come to view it as a greater reality than the concrete realms. They may begin to believe what they created is the force that governs rather than an expression of their creativity being governed by forces of concrete realms of reality. In this case, people live out their own fantasies and become more and more detached from God’s reality. This can and does happen to Christians.

The dark realm of reality is the unseen supernatural world of evil. This reality has supernatural power, and the devil and his demons function in this realm. This realm of reality is the antithesis of the Kingdom of God. It is full of lies and deception as well as practices that are opposed to the nature and character of God. This realm of reality includes the occult, paganism, witchcraft in all its forms, and all false religions and belief systems that lead people to believe in ways that are contrary to God’s truth (Ephesians 6:12).

The dark realm is governed by laws that God has established. Evil spirits cannot take control of the natural world or of the souls of men without the willing cooperation on the part of men. This is why the serpent had to deceive Adam and Eve in the garden so that they would break the laws of God and allow the dark realm to have access into the world of men. The dark realm cannot violate the laws of God on its own. It must have permission from men by their breaking of God’s laws or God must allow the beings of the dark realm to exercise their power in a limited sense, as happened when God permitted the devil to test Job with the loss of his family, his wealth, and his health.

For Christians, the dark realm is the forbidden realm. It is a dangerous place for any person. It has infiltrated into the natural realm and often joins together with the artificial realm in order to exercise its influence to steal, kill, and destroy people (John 10:10). When Christians participate in the dark realm, they open themselves up to the supernatural wickedness and harm of that realm. They also remove themselves from the protective grace of God and act against God through the practices of the dark realm (Romans 13:12; Ephesians 5:11).

The dark realm of reality is the realm the Christian is to avoid with one exception. This is the realm that the Christian is meant to penetrate into and rescue those who are held captive. Only the power of Christ can enable Christians to be stronger than this realm and to plunder it of its most valuable possessions—people. Plundering the dark realm is not participating in it, it is defeating it. Jesus went where there were all types of sinners and proclaimed the Good News of the Kingdom of Heaven. He plundered the dark realm and brought people out of it into the realm of the Kingdom of God (Jude 1:23).

The Kingdom of God realm is the reality of the supernatural dwelling place of the Most High God. It is full of love and power. It has life but not death. It is filled with hope, and there is no despair. The character and glory of God exist in the Kingdom of God realm. This realm is reserved as the dwelling place of God, His angels, and those who have been regenerated by putting their faith in Jesus for salvation. It is beyond the mind of natural man to comprehend the magnificence of this realm of reality. There are brief descriptions of this realm in the Scripture, but those descriptions are given in natural world terminology so that we are able to understand. Believers will never fully grasp this realm until arriving there, but God wants us to have greater understanding of it as we grow in Him.

The Kingdom realm is governed by the character and nature of God. God is holy and so is the Kingdom realm. Nothing unclean or unholy can exist in the Kingdom realm. There is no devil or demons, sin or sin nature in the Kingdom realm. Death or the possibility of death does not exist in the Kingdom realm. The holiness of God cannot be in the presence of the unholy and unclean. Think of how foreign this realm is to those who have been raised up in a fallen world of sin and death. God wants us to be in the process of increasing participation and preparation for our ultimate dwelling place in the Kingdom realm.

While the Kingdom realm is reserved as the eternal dwelling place for the followers of Jesus, it is also accessible to us, in part, today, while we live in the natural world. Jesus told us to pray, “*Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven* (Matthew 6:10).” Jesus also proclaimed the Kingdom and then demonstrated the power of the Kingdom by taking authority over demons, healing the sick, raising the dead, walking on water, commanding storms to be calm and turning water into wine. Jesus was showing us that the reality of the Kingdom of God can enter into this physical world.

He was also revealing the superiority of the Kingdom of God over this natural world. We may not be able to have the Kingdom in its fullness but we are able to live a life that is increasingly participating in the realm of the Kingdom of God. Jesus wants to release His love and power to us so that the Kingdom of God will increase on the earth as more and more people are snatched from the dark realm and brought under the rule of Christ (Ephesians 3:14-19).

The problem is that most Christians do not function in the Kingdom realm of reality to any significant degree. They are waiting around until they die so they can go be with Jesus. Christians are often not living a transformed and supernatural Kingdom life. The Lord wants us to express His Kingdom here on earth. He told us that the Kingdom of God is within us (Luke 17:20-21), which gives us some insight that there needs to be a transformation in us in order to embrace the Kingdom of God in our lives. When the Kingdom of God is in us, it can then be expressed through us. We must lay hold of this Kingdom reality so that we have an expectation that God will intervene in the affairs of men. This is the normal condition for the follower of Christ.

II. The Characteristics of the Kingdom

The Kingdom is a very different reality. Fortunately, that reality is described often in the Scripture. Reviewing what the Scripture has to say about the Kingdom will help the believer understand what the Kingdom is like and how we are to function in it as citizens.

1. The Kingdom has a King

The Kingdom is not a democracy; it is a Theocracy. That is to say that Jesus is the ruler of the Kingdom. Individual believers and the church in general do not have the right to define or change the Kingdom reality in any way. We cannot vote in the will of God or vote it out. It is the joy of the saints to discover the secrets of the Kingdom and to live them out. Jesus is the supreme ruler of the Kingdom. The subjects of the Kingdom will do their best as they listen to the King and follow his commands completely. The Bible is laden with many Kingdom principles that are meant to instruct the Kingdom subjects in regard to how the Kingdom operates and how the subjects function within it (Isaiah 9:7; John 18:37; 1 Corinthians 18:25).

2. The Kingdom has two manifestations

The Kingdom is eternal and heavenly in that it is the dwelling place of God, the angels, and the saints for all eternity. But it is also manifesting itself on the earth as people come into the Kingdom and live by its principles. Jesus wants us to pray for the Kingdom reality to come to the earth now. We will not see the fullness of the Kingdom reality while we walk on this earth, but we can see many of its realities intervene in this world and in people's lives.

We need to understand that both the heavenly and eternal manifestation and the earthly and temporal manifestation of the Kingdom are meant for us.

This is why those who belong to the Kingdom can have eternal life as a certain promise, but we are also promised many times more than what we have in this world for what we have given up to follow Jesus and participate in his Kingdom (Matthew 6:10; Luke 18:29-30; John 18:36).

3. Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom

Everywhere Jesus went He talked about the Kingdom of God. He told people that the Kingdom was near; He told them many parables that revealed the reality of the Kingdom. Jesus made clear that the Kingdom is the greater reality than the existence on this earth. Jesus said we could participate in the Kingdom of God with Him after He rose from the dead (Mark 14:25). Jesus declared that the Kingdom comes within people as they yield themselves to the King (Luke 17:20-21). Jesus was stirring an interest in people for the Kingdom, but He was also expressing Kingdom realities in natural world terms (Luke 8:1; 16:16; Acts 1:3). The fact that Jesus spoke of the Kingdom more than any other topic reveals its importance.

4. The Kingdom is powerful

Jesus demonstrated the power of the Kingdom by healing the sick, driving out demons, raising the dead, and walking on water. His followers did many of these same things and were promised that they would do even greater things (John 14:12). Whenever the power of the Kingdom intervenes in the earth, or against the power of darkness, the Kingdom power is always shown to be greater. Storms were calmed by the power of the Kingdom; demons were subject to the power of the Kingdom; the physical condition of man was altered by the power of the Kingdom. While the Kingdom itself is invisible, the power and effects of the Kingdom can be seen as it impacts people's lives and the natural world. See Matthew 12:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:20; Hebrews 6:5.

5. The Kingdom is a mystery to those who do not know Jesus

Jesus told people that the Kingdom is a mystery that is not easily understood. He said that we must be like little children in our approach to God in order to understand it. Jesus said the Kingdom is a hard place to enter - it is not entered by being good, and it is especially hard for rich people to enter. Even today, many people do not understand the Kingdom and how to get into it. The unbeliever does not understand the way the Kingdom functions, so he makes wrong assumptions. Unbelievers think Christians are making up this Kingdom and that they believe in magic because the power of the Kingdom does not conform to natural laws. It requires the work of the Holy Spirit to open people's eyes and ears so they can understand the things of the Kingdom. The Kingdom is spiritually discerned (Matthew 13:11; 19:24; 21:31; Mark 4:11; 10:14-15, 23; Luke 19:11; 24:45).

6. The Ways of the Kingdom are very different than the ways of man

Even though the Kingdom is our eternal destiny, Jesus revealed that while we are on this earth it will be difficult to live according to Kingdom ways. He said we would have to suffer many hardships on earth in order to operate in the Kingdom. He said we would have to consider our family less important than He and His kingdom. He said we would have to be servants of all—that we would have to be the least, that the first shall be last. Jesus revealed that the servant is the greatest in the Kingdom (Matthew 12:50; 18:1-4; Mark 9:35; Luke 9:45). It is very important for believers to understand that there is a great difference between the ways of man and the ways of God. Only then can we begin to understand how radically the Kingdom will impact our lives (Isaiah 55:8).

7. The Kingdom is a glorious place

The Kingdom is full of the glory of God. The Kingdom's subjects have righteousness, peace and joy. There will be a great feast in the Kingdom of God. It should be the longing of every believer to live in this wonderful existence that is far beyond whatever we can have on this earth. The Kingdom is full of life and hope and purpose (Matthew 8:11; Luke 14:15; 18:29; Romans 14:17; 1 John 2:17; Revelation 21:1-5).

5. The Kingdom expression on earth is administered by the individual believer and by the church

The Kingdom presence on earth operates within each person who has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. The reality of the Kingdom is available to believers so that their lives can be changed to become more like Christ. Jesus also works through individual believers to proclaim the Kingdom to nonbelievers and demonstrate the reality of the Kingdom. However, the Kingdom is manifested in a greater way as believers join together under the delegated authority and purpose of the corporate church. It is the church corporately that has been given the keys to the Kingdom. It is the church corporately that has been vested with the administration of the wisdom and power of the Kingdom. The Kingdom manifests to the greatest degree as believers seek the Lord individually and join together corporately in the church (Matthew 16:19; Ephesians 3:10).

6. The Kingdom is inhabited by regenerate saints

The Scripture declares that there is no wickedness in the Kingdom (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Ephesians 5:5). In order to enter the Kingdom, people need to have a righteousness that is greater than John the Baptist (Luke 7:28) and greater than the Pharisees (Matthew 5:20). Good people that have not been regenerated by Christ cannot enter the Kingdom of heaven. Only the saints will inherit the Kingdom of God (Luke 13:28). Those who are in the Kingdom are commanded to bear fruit that is worthy of being in the Kingdom (Matthew 21:31; 2 Thessalonians 1:5). It is also clear that flesh and blood cannot enter the Kingdom (1 Corinthians 15:50).

Even though people who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit are eternally destined for the Kingdom and are carrying out the mandate of the Kingdom on earth, believer's bodies do not have the ability to survive in the eternal Kingdom. Jesus will give us new bodies that will be suitable for Kingdom glory (1 Corinthians 15:35-49).

7. **The entrance into the Kingdom is by faith in Jesus**

In order to enter the Kingdom, faith in Jesus is required. No amount of good works or being a good person will allow someone to enter the Kingdom. True faith means: Repentance (Matthew 3:2); believing in Jesus completely (John 3:16); not believing in our good works to get us in (Ephesians 2:8-9), and being born again (regenerated by the Holy Spirit) (John 3:3, 5; Romans 8:16).

III. The conflicting kingdoms

8. There is often a conflict of time and attention as to which reality we choose to spend our time and life efforts. Christians are tempted to focus on the natural realm reality and so spend themselves on meaningless things of this world (1 Corinthians 3:12). It is only when we focus our efforts on building the Kingdom of God on earth that the fruit of our labors become eternal and valuable to the Lord. This sets up a potential conflict if we choose to function in the natural realm and live carnal lives or to focus on the artificial realm and live in fantasy. However, everyone must function in the natural realm, and most people will exercise their creative abilities by operating in the artificial realm. The energy of the believer should be to operate in the natural and artificial realm while honoring the Kingdom and bringing about its reality in every way possible. This means that we should seek to influence the work place, schools, politics, law, social life, entertainment and other expressions of life, by availing our lives to be an influence for the Kingdom. There need not be a tension in these various realities if we choose to set our sights on the Kingdom and the King in all our efforts and energies. The only real conflict in the realm of the natural world and the artificial world is if we allow those realms to be elevated above the Kingdom reality.
9. The greater conflict on the earth is between the Kingdom of God and the realm of darkness (evil, Satan). The realm of darkness is continually attempting to deceive mankind through temptations, lies and deceit. The ultimate goal of the kingdom of darkness is to keep people from the Lord and destroy their lives. The leader of the realm of darkness is Satan. He has a multitude of demons to assist him in his deceptions (Matthew 12:26).
10. People are made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). It is only people who have put their faith in Jesus and who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit that inherit the Kingdom of God. The beings that belong to the realm of darkness hate God because He is perfect and holy, and they are unclean and destined for destruction.

They also hate humans that are made in the image and likeness of God. The goal of the realm of darkness is to keep people from entering into the Kingdom of God. If people do enter into the Kingdom of God, the goal of the dark realm is to keep people from following and serving the Lord so that they cannot be effective in reaching other people for Christ (John 10:10).

11. The only power humans have to defeat the realm of darkness is the power of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, He completely defeated the powers of evil (Colossians 2:15). When people put their faith in Jesus, they become candidates for Kingdom power that will defeat the realm of darkness. Demons were terrified of Jesus when he confronted them in his ministry on earth. The followers of Jesus have Kingdom power to drive out evil spirits and to defeat evil when it comes to tempt and deceive. In order for that power to be available to believers, they must be empowered by the Holy Spirit and be living the truth of the Word (the Bible). It is in submission to God that the devil cannot defeat the believer (James 4:7-10).
12. The role of the believer on earth is not only personal victory. We are to take the reality of the Kingdom of God and plunder the realm of darkness. This is primarily about being used as instruments of the Lord to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God and then to demonstrate the Kingdom power so that people who are captive to sin and Satan can be set free. This is a great conflict that is going on all over the world every day. The conflict never ceases because billions of lives are hanging in the balance (Matthew 16:18-19).
13. There are many philosophies circulating that undermine the reality of this kingdom conflict. Much is said today about tolerance toward other people's beliefs. We must remember that any belief system that is not in agreement with God and His Word is opposed to Him. People are being led into a false comfort by the deceptions of ideologies that are created by people who do not know the Lord. Some of those ideologies are institutionalized so that they have become mainstays of our social structure. Some examples are: The idea that people are basically good, that good people go to heaven, that the only bad people are those who are not accepting, that there is no absolute truth, that people are able to create their own truth, that believing the Bible literally is narrow minded and intolerant. These views and many more are part of the work of the realm of darkness that is keeping people from seeing and understanding the Truth of God. Therefore, the conflicting of kingdoms is not simply about demons fighting things out in some ethereal realm. The battle is going on in the minds and souls of people (I Timothy 4:1-2).
14. While the conflict between the realm of darkness and the Kingdom of God is an individual battle for every person, it is also a group battle. Christ vests the church with the corporate authority to defeat the realm of darkness. As strong believers join together in the corporate church, there is a multiplying effectiveness against

the realm of darkness. We must remember that the conflict of the kingdoms is not simply an individual battle. It is an ongoing struggle against wickedness in high places that can be defeated as the individual takes his participation in the Kingdom of God seriously, and then the church chooses to yield to the Lord's commands so that it can become a powerful force against the realm of darkness (Matthew 16:18-19).

15. In order to understand the conflicting kingdoms, we need to understand that this conflict is specific to this time in history. There are different ages described in the Scripture. God has set us in this specific age so that we can have an active part in the conflict of the kingdoms (Acts 17:26). In order to do that, we need to consider the various ages that are described in the Bible:
 - a. **The age of human rule** is the time from the beginning of creation until the time Adam and Eve sinned. During this time, Adam and Eve were given the mandate to rule over the earth (Genesis 1:28). The realm of darkness had no access to the earth at that time. There was no death or disease. The Lord Himself could walk with Adam and Eve in the garden (Genesis 3:8). The kingdom of God was integrated and governed in the natural world.
 - b. **The age of sin ruling** was from the time of Adam and Eve sinning until the time that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead. During this time, through sin, man turned over his rule of the earth to the dark realm. All of creation fell under the pale of death. While the Kingdom of God entered the world at various times and in various ways before Christ became a man, the rule of sin prevailed. Creation and all mankind were suffering from the fallen condition while waiting for a Savior to deliver them. Man was without power to defeat the realm of darkness (Ephesians 2:12).
 - c. **The age of conflicting rule** began when Jesus rose from the dead and defeated death. By this action, Jesus offered redemption to man and the ability to overcome the power of the realm of darkness. The age of conflict is sometimes referred to as the church age because this is the time for the church to implement the rule of the Kingdom of God in the church. It is also the time for the church to battle against the realm of darkness. The Bible describes this time as, "the present evil age," (Galatians 1:4) and that, "the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16). The Bible also describes "the power of the age to come" (Hebrews 6:5) as being available now in this age. This sets up the grand conflict of the realm of darkness and the Kingdom of God. The conflict goes on until the time Jesus returns. This is why it is so important for believers to understand that they are in a struggle with evil and how to win the conflict. Some people are under the rule of the devil while others are under the rule of Christ. There is no middle ground. People are under one rule or the other. The role of the believer is to do everything he can to bring people out from under the rule of darkness and into the rule of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16).

- d. **The millennial rule** is the time when Jesus returns to the earth to set up his kingdom on earth for 1,000 years. During this time, there will be no hostility between people and animals. No snake bites or bee stings. People will live much longer than they do now. Death will not yet be vanquished, but the King of the Kingdom will be present on earth. Satan and the demons will be sealed in the abyss during this 1,000-year period. At the end of this 1,000-year rule, for a brief period of time, Satan will be released and will be able to deceive people for a short period of time. Then, he and the demons will be thrown into the lake of fire along with all those who do not have Christ as Lord (Isaiah 65:20-25; Revelation 20:1-10).
- e. **The Divine rule** is future eternity when there will be only the perfection of God. There will be no conflict between good and evil because death and evil will be sealed forever in the lake of fire, which is called the second death. Under God's divine rule, there will be no more death, disease, growing old, or any other harmful or evil thing. During this time, the saints will constantly be in the presence of the glorious Lord (Revelation, chapters 21 & 22).

IV. Functioning in the Kingdom while here on earth

The question should be asked; how can we live our lives on this earth with the reality of the Kingdom being part of every day life? We need to understand how to access the reality of the Kingdom and apply that reality now.

The Bible challenges Christians to live by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). The righteous are told to live by faith (Romans 1:17). The access that Christians have into the supernatural realm of the Kingdom of God is by faith. This is not meant to only be a faith for our salvation; we are to live a life of faith. Only through a life of faith can the Kingdom of God be increasingly present in us and then work through us. This Kingdom reality will give the believer the ability to see, by faith, the desires of the Lord and then participate in those realities of the Kingdom becoming realities on the earth as they are in heaven (Matthew 6:10).

If Kingdom faith is going to become a reality, an understanding of what faith is becomes very important. Part of the reason this definition of faith needs to be examined is because some sectors of Christianity have described faith as a Christian deciding what he wants and then earnestly believing that God will give it to him. It is important to allow the Lord to define the "what" and the "how" of faith. When that is understood, the Christian can live by faith and have access into the supernatural world of the Kingdom of God. That Kingdom realm will become more real to him than the natural realm of reality.

Hebrews 11:1 states, "*Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*" Here, God reveals that faith is not simply a human want; it is a certainty of an unseen world. That unseen world is the Kingdom of God.

Faith is a certain confidence that a reality exists in the Kingdom of God and that God wants that same reality to exist here on the earth. Faith gives the believer spiritual eyes to see the reality of the Kingdom and then confidence that the reality of the Kingdom can be revealed here on earth. Faith, then, has a substance that is conferred by God to the individual believer so that a sure and certain reality exists within us before it exists in the natural world.

The Bible not only gives us the definition of faith; it also reveals how faith comes to us. Romans 10:17 says, “*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.*” This verse reveals that God is the initiator of our faith by releasing his Word to us. The Greek word for “Word” in this passage is *rhema*. *Rhema* means the revealed word or that which is being revealed at that moment in time. As God reveals His will that exists in the Kingdom realm through his *rhema* (Word), we are able to see with spiritual eyes into the Kingdom of God and believe for that reality on the earth.

The believer is able to apprehend this reality and proceed with absolute confidence that the prayers being prayed will come to pass. It is not because the prayers are so good or so strong—it is that the believer has received the *rhema* of God and it has produced faith in him. Followers of Christ can know with certainty that what they pray will come to pass. This is the same way that Jesus prayed. He was not praying prayers of emotion. He engaged in seeing and hearing what the Father in heaven was initiating and then praying those things by faith. Every time He prayed or spoke by faith, the reality of the Kingdom of heaven broke in on the earth and changed lives. If we considered faith as a step by step process, it would look like this:

First, God speaks his *rhema* Word. We know from Psalm 19:1-4 that God is always speaking. We also know that God often speaks to us through the Bible when he makes it come alive to us and become specific *rhema* for us. God may also be speaking through circumstances that are external or impressions that are internal. When the Lord gives someone a sense of internal peace in a situation, or He gives us discomfort in another situation so that we know it is wrong, these are examples of God communicating. The Lord may give dreams, visions, or in rare cases, even His audible voice. What we need to realize is that God is willing to speak to us—He is able to speak to us in ways that we can understand, and He is speaking to us.

The second step toward faith is that we hear. In our busy, modern lives, we have a limited capacity to take in all the things that are coming our way. Sometimes our lives are so filled with busyness, entertainment, family, church, sports, etc., that we just do not have time to listen and hear God. In those instances, Christians have not trained themselves to take the time and learn to listen for God. It can also be difficult to sort out when God is speaking and when it is something else. Our mind has the ability to feed us thoughts that are not in agreement with God. Our sinful nature can drive us to believing God wants to indulge us. Circumstances and people can also influence the process, especially when our emotions are involved.

There was a young woman, Brenda, who believed that God had shown her who was going to be her husband. She was certain it was the Lord speaking and that she and this man would be married in the not-too-distant future. The problem was that the man did not have the same revelation from God. In fact, he was very interested in another young woman. Brenda was hearing her own emotions pretty well, but she was not hearing God's voice. We always tend to hear the things we want to hear. That's why it is so important to train ourselves to hear the voice of God and then test what we hear to be certain it is His voice.

It is important to train ourselves to quiet the many sources of communication coming to us and learn to hear God's voice. Jesus told us in John 10:1-18 that His people would be able to hear His voice and that they would be able to discern His voice from others. In other words, God's voice is distinctive and discernable. We can train ourselves to hear Him.

The method that can be used to sort out if it is God speaking or if it something else, is the three "W's" method. The first "W" is the Word of God, which is the Bible. Something that God speaks to a person's inner being or through circumstances will never disagree with what is stated in the Bible. Even the written principles of the Bible should be applied to what we think we hear. The second "W" is the Wisdom God gives along with the Word. This wisdom may come to us in order to understand that this really is God's leading, or the wisdom may come from consulting other mature Christian people who have gained godly wisdom over time. The third "W" is the Witness of the Holy Spirit. When God speaks, it produces a witness in our inner being. This witness from the Holy Spirit gives us confidence that it really is the Lord. Those who have trained themselves to hear the voice of God understand the Witness of the Holy Spirit. It is the unique way that God lets us know it is Him.

The third step toward faith is agreeing with what God speaks. It is not enough to hear what He is saying; we must agree with it. That does not simply mean that we acknowledge what He said as being right. Agreeing means we make our lives available to participate in the revealed Word that He has spoken to us. This is an intellectual assent, but it is also a deep heart agreement that we are going to put our lives on the line in order to carry out the Lord's desire.

There was a person who said he had been called by God to move to another country to serve the Lord. He did not want to go to the other country so he refused to agree with what God was leading him to do. Faith could not be produced in him because he refused to continue on in the responsive process of God building faith in him. If he would have agreed with the Lord, faith would have been produced and God would have made a way for him in the place to which he was called. The only proper response to the Lord's revelation of His Word to us is, "Yes Lord!"

The fourth step toward faith is believing the Lord. Believing means that even though we have not yet seen the Word of God carried out, we choose to trust in Him completely. It is being certain of what we do not see. In this instance, believing will lead to seeing—but unbelief will not produce faith and will never allow us to see the unseen world of the Kingdom of God become a reality. Believing is seeing in the faith process. This is the opposite of what the natural realm dictates in that “seeing is believing.”

One of the most difficult challenges for the believer is to hang on to the reality of the Kingdom of God when he does not see the fulfillment of what was expected. People sometimes give up because they do not have the same time frame as the Lord. The Kingdom does not operate on the same timetable as the world of men. Often, the Lord is viewing matters in terms of years or generations, while we are looking at the same issue in terms of hours or days. Believing for Kingdom reality is continuing to believe.

The fifth step toward faith is acting. James 2:17 tells us that, “*Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*” When Moses was to part the Red Sea, God told him to raise his staff over the Red Sea and command it to part. Faith is always a call to action for the believer. There is always a leap that will be required in the process of faith. Think about God taking you to the edge of the cliff and saying, “Jump!” In order for faith to be completed, we must take the next step and jump. When we do, the Lord meets us with the Kingdom of God forcing its way into the affairs of man on earth.

It is important to remember the action that faith requires is in perfect line with what the Lord has revealed. Sometimes, people like to add their own ways into the process of faith, and they end up jumping off the wrong cliff. God is not responsible to stop us from our own stupidity. Think about the man who is called to missionary service in Africa but has no money. He knows he needs the money, and he knows some wealthy family members who could afford to support him. He goes to the family members and tells them that God has told him to be a missionary in Africa and that they must support him. He just jumped off the wrong cliff. In this case, God would have moved the wealthy family members to give freely if He wanted them to do so. In agreeing with God’s supernatural plan, this man took matters into his own hands in order to carry out those plans. God may very well use other means entirely to get this young man to Africa. Action was needed, but the action was for this man to be faithful in preparation for what God had shown him to do and to continue to seek the Lord. It was not for him to tell other people what they must do.

As we can see, faith is an interactive process. God is the initiator, and we are the respondents. We do not start the process, but we must enter the process at several steps along the way if faith is to be produced in us.

Without faith, we cannot see the Kingdom of God and cannot please God. Faith is the access to the supernatural reality of the Kingdom of God that we must have if we are to live supernatural and godly lives.

Faith will take us to various levels of participation in the Kingdom of God. There is entry level faith and there is mature faith. The Lord desires that all his people would be involved in increasing levels of faith.

V. Conclusion

The Kingdom of God is the intended reality for the individual believer and for the church. The Kingdom has the power to defeat evil, to overcome the weaknesses of the flesh and to enter the world of men and change it. If people learn all the knowledge of the Kingdom but do not implement it through faith, little has been gained. The Lord wants His Kingdom to come to the earth as it is in heaven and we are the ones He wants to use to do this great work.

The Kingdom is our eternal destiny *if* we are in Christ. We can begin to live in Kingdom reality now, but we also look forward to our eternal destiny with longing. The unknown results of death have been removed for the believer because a great feast is awaiting us in the eternal Kingdom. Hallelujah!