

A Perilous Journey  
to  
A Glorious Kingdom

or...

Obtaining the Pearl of Great Price

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*Penn Jillette is a famous magician, actor, and author. He is also a very, outspoken atheist. He does not believe in heaven, hell, or God. That being said, he has a very poor opinion of Christians who fail to speak out about their faith. He states it this way...*

*"I've always said that I don't respect people who don't proselytize. I don't respect it at all! If you believe that there is a heaven, and that hell is a very real place, and that eternal life is possible... and you think that it's not really worth telling people this because it would make it socially awkward... How much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize? How much do you have to hate somebody to believe everlasting life is possible and not tell them that?"*

*Well, I do care about you and I want to tell you that everlasting life in the Kingdom of Heaven is possible!*

*For those who do not know God, personally... He wants you to. Please, think about that for the next several minutes. Allow me to explain who Jesus is and what "the Gospel of the Kingdom" – the Kingdom He proclaimed - is all about. You may be shocked by the truth. What happens to you after you die is an important thing to consider. I hope you agree.*

*Also, I desire to warn those who "follow Christ by faith," against the growing danger of apostasy that is plaguing God's Church, today! You, too, could turn away from God. Please... do not, easily, dismiss this idea. Let me share with you the seriousness of "falling away" and "failing of the grace of God" in the face of coming persecution.*

## INTRODUCTION

Jesus said, *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel,"* (the good news about this great Kingdom!)

There are false prophets out there who are making an economic killing by presenting Jesus Christ as a Savior who "loves you just the way you are." They teach that He just wants you to be a... "better you." These evangelical false teachers present Jesus as an affirming friend who wants you to be successful and wants your life to run as smoothly as possible. They are wrong and they are deceiving many. For, as you will see, Jesus does not teach this, or anything like it.

Unfortunately, too many good and well-meaning evangelical pastors - who know the Bible and, normally, preach it faithfully - are caught up in this same kind of deception. Not all of them... and not to the extent of the false teachers, mind you... but they are guilty of over-simplifying or soft-pedaling the "Good News" none-the-less. They aren't bad men, but too many of them fear the present day culture. They fear becoming "that preacher"... you know, the one everyone ignores or, worse... hates. Because of this heartfelt concern, they are attempting to find a way to cloak the Gospel of Jesus Christ in love and not speak so strongly against "sin"... hoping to make it less offensive. But, let me be clear... The Gospel of the Kingdom – The Gospel of Jesus Christ - is offensive, as you will see.

I apologize for the wrong message that has been laid out before you all these years by me and by my fellow ministers of the gospel. It will be my attempt to quickly and succinctly present entrance into the "Kingdom of Heaven" as Jesus Christ presented it... and, NOT how we have wrongly shared it in the past. For this reason, I want to warn you. Because of our self-consumed and self-loving society, and because false teachers have, successfully, presented Jesus as a self-affirming Messiah... the truth will be hard to hear and even harder to accept. Most of you will reject it. That may sound harsh, but I didn't say it... Jesus did.

*"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate that leads to destruction is wide and the way is easy and many will enter it. But narrow is the gate and hard is the way that leads to LIFE (Eternal), and those who find it are few."* (Matthew 7:13,14)

Jesus is looking for citizens to fill His Kingdom. He is looking and He is calling out! It will be up to you to "count the cost" of becoming a citizen of God's kingdom. Just a heads up... It will cost you everything. But what you will gain far surpasses anything this world can temporarily offer you. So, it is your choice... Live for this present kingdom or live life for God's Heavenly Kingdom. Do whatever you want, or do the will of God. Either love the world or love Jesus... because you can't do both. I am not trying to be mean or hateful. I just need to share the hard facts right up front... as Jesus presented them over and over again.

Perhaps you are getting the idea that entering the Kingdom of Heaven is no easy walk in the park... and you would be correct. Salvation is simple, but it is costly. For

Jesus to pay the price and to win God's forgiveness for rebellious people like us... it cost Jesus everything on this earth. Again, it is up to you... continue reading this booklet or throw it in the trash. But understand... whether you believe it now or not, the destination of your eternal soul is hanging on your decision. Please, keep reading and consider your life, as well as your death... carefully.

## THE KING

I was just wrestling in my mind with the question... Can I talk about "The Kingdom" without first describing it's ruler – The King? I decided, in this case, that since the King created this kingdom by His own power, and based upon His own wisdom and character, it's best if we start there. For, without the King there would be no kingdom. There would be no subjects to rule, for He made us all.

I know... we were taught differently in school. We can't believe in an unseen, God. Rather, we must accept the theory that everything "evolved" over millions and millions of years... by chance. That is the "truth" presented to us. Now, how do I "take on" all those really smart people in the scientific community who have studied the evolution of man for so many years and who have "proof" backing up their hypotheses?

I should go ahead and admit, right up front, that many of the things I will share from the Bible must be accepted "by faith." You can't see it; you just have to believe it. But doesn't that describe evolution, as well? I mean... none of us were there. Right? In this matter about "matter," and where it came from... there is, truthfully, more proof of a sovereign, Master Designer – a Divine Creator, if you will – than there is for the idea that everything formed by chance. There really is. However, because this is a small booklet, I cannot launch into a detailed, full-scale dissertation on all the proofs of Creation, so allow me to highlight some of the more, indisputable, observations... in my opinion.

Think about your body - your entire, amazing body. Are we to believe that all of your complex, bodily systems, along with your brain, working together so perfectly from your mother's womb... Are we to believe that all those systems evolved on their own? Is that not like believing that a finely tuned Ferrari would, simply, appear in a junkyard, if given enough time? And let me, quickly, mention that your DNA and your thumbprint are uniquely your own! How did that just happen? Was there, really, a lightning bolt that hit a primordial cesspool somewhere? Are we to believe that this, random, cesspool – that existed millions of years ago - was filled with just the right combination of chemicals and minerals that this, supposed, electrical charge, actually, created... LIFE? Where did all those chemicals and minerals come from? Perhaps you would answer... "From the Big Bang, of course!" But the question remains the same. Where did all the chemicals and minerals come from BEFORE all the celestial gases and dust formed the "Giant Ball" that eventually exploded... forming the well-ordered universe with it's vast array of galaxies? The fact is, it takes much more faith to believe that the universe, and every living thing on this

earth - the amazing details and mind-blowing intricacies - just all happened by chance... than it does to believe a Divine Being - far greater, far wiser, and far more powerful than ourselves - designed and created us for a specific purpose.

There is one more, observable, proof I would like to point out. If evolution has any hope of being true... Since organisms are proposed to have evolved over millions of years from the most simplest organisms to the most complex... The earth's layers of strata should easily reflect such a hypothesis. In the deeper, lower layers of the earth we should discover simple forms of plants and animals, and in the higher strata, we should uncover more "matured" and complex animals. The fact is, nowhere on earth has this ever been discovered to be the case. Nowhere. Just the transitional forms alone should dominate the discoveries during a major dig. But they do not. "Evolution" cannot be observed in the fossil record. Instead, paleontologists are forced to develop a transitional form from a tooth here, or a jawbone there. Or, they point to a winged lizard as proof of birds having evolved. And think about this... How were all the many, thousands of different species of plants, animals, and insects given life in the first place? Do you see? It takes a lot of faith to believe "the science" that cannot be proved. But if they say it long enough, and they loudly demand that their theories be accepted as fact... the culture will, inevitably, believe and follow. They must! After all, there is no other explanation... right?

It makes sense... If men and women refuse to believe that there is a great God who created them, and to whom they must give an account... then, they must develop another means by which they came into being. For, it stands to reason... If God created all of humankind, then we must all answer to Him. But that just cannot be! We can't have that! For this reason, a rebellious creation must find a way to explain away even the idea of "GOD." And so, "Evolution" was concocted and ridiculously promulgated, though there was no proof it could ever have happened the way they theorize. But that doesn't stop scientists from going to ridiculous lengths to "prove" what cannot be observed in a lab.

Mankind's "Theory Of Evolution," itself, is proof that the Bible's account of the creation of man, and then his/her, subsequent, rebellion against their Creator God, happened just the way it was written in chapters one through three in the book of Genesis. In simple terms... Man chose to do his will over doing God's will. For this reason we have "the kingdom of this world" set against "The Kingdom of Heaven." For now, there is a stark separation between the two. But, one day, God will bring them together again under the reign of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

*"The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Messiah; and he shall reign for ever and ever." (Revelation 11:15)*

What gives God the right to reign over all the nations of the earth? He created them. He has always had the right.

*"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."*  
(Genesis 1:1)

*"For the LORD Most High is to be feared as a great King over all the earth!"*  
(Psalm 47:2)

*"Say among the nations, 'The LORD reigns!' Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved. He will judge the people with equity."*  
(Psalm 96:10)

*"They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom and talk of Your power; to make known to the sons of men Your mighty acts and the glory of the majesty of Your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations."*  
(Psalm 145:11-13)

"Yahweh" is the eternal and self-existent GOD who created all things. It was the freewill of man that allowed him the foolish choice to reject Him and to rule himself. Even today, men and women shake their collective fists at God and blame Him for all the evil and moral failures that man has brought upon himself. Man disregarded the commands of God and despised being ruled over - and protected by - a benevolent and holy, divine being... bringing upon himself judgment and eternal ruin. Tell me... Why is that God's fault? The hatred and the killing, even natural disasters and all the sickness and disease suffered around the world... they are the result of man's choice to defy their Creator God, to sin against His commands, and to rule over themselves. It was all set into natural motion when man rebelled and chose his own way. And, God is under no obligation to stop it.

If you think about it, it all serves the purpose of reminding us, every day, just how terrible our rebellion against our sovereign King really is. We hold a lot of pride in our heart. Sin causes pain and suffering, division and death. But, this wretched, human condition was not God's original plan. It was, however, the plan of a beautiful and powerful angel named Lucifer. He was the originator of pride and rebellion against God. He wanted to rule over himself, as well. As a result, he became the Enemy Of The Kingdom.

## THE ENEMY

The King did not create an enemy. He did, however, create a perfect angel named, Lucifer, who used his freewill to choose to become the enemy of God. No, God was not shocked by it. A plan was already in place to defeat the great evil that would arise. This perpetrator is better known by the name, Satan. He is our mortal enemy. He is behind all the evil that we see. He is behind all the evil we do not see. And, believe me... he is alive and well.

There are a couple of places in the Bible that give us a glimpse into the fall of Lucifer. One of those portions of scripture is found in the writings of the prophet Isaiah...

*"How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground that weakened the nations. For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit upon the mount of the congregation, in the uttermost sides of the north, I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I WILL BE LIKE THE MOST HIGH!'"*  
(Isaiah 14:12-14)

Lucifer allowed his power to go to his head. He decided that he could be just as powerful as the One who created him. Maybe... more powerful! We are told in the book of the Revelation that there was a battle in heaven. Lucifer was easily defeated and was cast out of heaven. A third of the angelic population, who decided to follow his lead, went with him. It is then, "Satan" appeared in the Garden of Eden to deceive Eve into believing that she, too, could become "LIKE GOD" if she ate of the fruit God had forbidden them to eat. She ate it and gave it to Adam, who foolishly ate the fruit, as well. As a result, the whole human race was plunged into sin and rebellion. God's perfect creation had been marred... corrupted. Deterioration and death were introduced. Women and men, alike, were separated from their Creator... always doomed to fight against God and against His commands.

Dear friend... this is not a fairy tale! Allow me to quickly explain where all this information comes from. How amazing that the collection of books and letters we have come to know as "The Holy Bible," was not written by one man over a period of a few years but, rather, was written by GOD as He inspired 40 different men over a period of 1,500 years! The fact that every book and letter agrees together and that they point to the same conclusion is, in itself, a giant miracle! Man could not have accomplished this task on his own. And we have more proof - by way of copies - of these ancient texts being authentic, than we have proof of any ancient manuscript... including Homer's "Iliad." God has insured that we have reliable copies of His very, important message to us... if we choose to read it and believe it. The Bible is the true Word of God! Because of our spiritual darkness and because of God's enemy is busy blinding men and women, we mock the truth and refuse to see life on this earth as it truly is.

You and I can see the result of "The Fall of Man" everywhere we look and in every nation of the earth where humankind desires to be "their own god"... in charge of their own destiny. They have even made up their own gods in an attempt to fill that "GOD sized hole" in their heart, and to explain what, seemingly, cannot be explained. Women and men are confused, and Satan likes it that way. It makes his "reign" upon this earth much easier. He loves seeing the precious creation of God destroy itself. He loves to confuse God's natural order, causing men and women to hate their own bodies... their own sexuality. Satan loves to kill babies and, for the ones who are born, he loves to mutilate them through sex changes and abuse them through pedophilia. Don't you see? Mankind is in utter darkness! More and more people are walking away from the little bit of God's light afforded them, choosing to do great evil... all in the name of "Love" and "Acceptance." They don't even know what those words mean anymore! They are now, even in Canada, allowing assisted suicide of

children if they are able to ask for it. Satan is the source of this great evil. All the while, The Evil One keeps men and women ignorant of the message of the good news of the Heavenly Kingdom! Jesus exposed Satan's evil plan to keep your soul in the dark...

*"When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one (Satan) comes and snatches away what has been sown in his (or her) heart."*

Did you know the devil is called, "The Prince of the Power of the Air"? He has a lot of freedom to do his work on this earth. And he especially desires to target the faithful servants of his enemy... those who desire to grow "God's kingdom here on earth." People, like me, who want to save lost souls who are blinded to the truth. People, like me, who want to warn those who cannot see their eternal destruction and their fiery end... doomed to a very real place called "Hell." Why hell? Because GOD is a God of Justice and He must punish sin. This is why I am sharing this booklet with you. I want to point Satan's captives toward FORGIVENESS and to FREEDOM found in God's Heavenly Kingdom! But the devil can't have that, now, can he? He wants to keep souls in bondage to sin and death. He fights hard and he fights dirty. I know this first hand.

In the Spring of 2020, I had allowed the enemy to lie to me. With great secrecy and deception, Satan, with the help of my own pride, erected a stronghold of bitterness and envy in my heart, poisoning my spirit. I couldn't see it for what it was! Questions about God began to enter my mind that I had never entertained in all the 46 years that I had walked with Jesus. Because of many, terrible things that had happened to me and to my family through the years, I decided that God had chosen to be my enemy. "He certainly is not proving Himself to be my friend," I thought to myself. God was "on the hook" and I wasn't going to let Him off! At least twice, during that dark, two-year period of time, I was fully aware that I could have turned away and walked away from my King and from my eternal inheritance in heaven... the inheritance He was giving to me free of charge! *(We will discuss this later.)*

Do you see? That is Satan's goal... to destroy God's influence here on earth by destroying the faith of God's children. And, he is good at what he does!

*"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."* (this warning was written to Christians!)  
(1 Peter 5:8)

He almost devoured me! How did that happen? I am a believer in Jesus Christ! I am a redeemed soul who walked closely with my Savior. I want you to understand that when you humble yourself and give your life to Jesus Christ to serve Him as your King, life does not get easier. When you live in such a way as to "make God's kingdom come to earth," you put yourself on the front lines of a spiritual battle. You become a target of the enemy. The closer we dwell with Christ and the more obedient to the Word of God we desire to be, and the more sensitive we become to the leading of God's Holy Spirit... We become that much more of a threat to the kingdom of Satan as we continue doing the will of God upon this fated globe.

*"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the evil schemes of the devil." (Ephesians 6:11)*

Don't misunderstand me... Satan may just as well choose to make your life "easy and sweet" while you take your journey upon this earth. He is a great strategist and has many schemes he uses to defeat his enemy. He can make your faith of no affect by tempting you to wallow in self-pleasure and in the comforts of the "American Dream." I am afraid that most Christians are suffering from this passive attack and their faith in God is much weaker as a result.

It is, for this very reason, I am writing this little booklet for you.

I could give you 5 or 6 Bible verses that might give you an idea of how to find "Salvation" through faith in Jesus Christ. And, most Christians find it easier to oversimplify salvation in this way... But this approach to "evangelism" is highly inadequate! Even, dangerous. You must be given enough information to "count the cost" of believing and following Jesus Christ on this earth, in the face of temptation and coming persecution. For Jesus, again, was emphatic when he proclaimed...

*"But whoever DENIES (disowns) me before men, I also will deny (disown) before my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 10:33)*

If you decide that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He is Lord and Savior, and you decide that you want Him to save you from the wrath of God that is coming in judgment upon this sin-filled earth, and you decide you want to be His disciple... You must first "count the cost" of such a decision. Eternal Life in Heaven sounds wonderful, but you will be choosing a life of self-denial and suffering before you get there. You will be changing your allegiance from Satan's kingdom to God's Kingdom... making yourself an enemy of the Devil, himself! Are you willing to do that? Are you willing to suffer for Jesus at the hands of God's enemies?

Yes... Jesus calls for you to come to Him. But, He calls for you to take a "kingdom journey" that is full of opposition, and even danger, as you pass through life upon this earth on your way to a heavenly reward. You will gain an inheritance that God has ordained will last for all eternity... IF you hold fast to your original profession of faith and endure unto the end. I didn't say it... God did... many times.

Oh! By the way... Because Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself on the cross and shed his blood to make atonement for our sins... And, because He rose up from the grave proving His power over death (which is why we celebrate Easter)... Our enemy, Satan, is DOOMED! He knows his time is short. He will be cast into "the pit." And so our victory over sin and the grave is assured! Yes! Our enemy has been defeated! But, beware... His attempts to overthrow God's Kingdom will continue for a little while longer.



## THE KINGDOM

When Jesus began his preaching ministry here on earth, he went from city to city with this basic message...

*"Repent! For the kingdom of heaven is near to you."*

The word "repent" means to "have a change of mind." You choose, no longer, to think the way you used to think. You choose, no longer, to live for the things you used to live for. You trade your old values for the values of your new, heavenly kingdom. In this case... You change from embracing the kingdom of this world to embracing the things that pertain to the kingdom of heaven. It is a complete, 180 degree, turn around! You see... Jesus doesn't want you the way you are. He wants you to be, completely, broken over the way you are. He hates the sin that shaped who you are. Never forget... it was that sin that made Him suffer on the cross and it is that sin that has banned you from His Kingdom. For this reason, He wants you to be willing, for the way you are right now, to be... destroyed. He desires for His life to, entirely, consume you. And, He wants His Kingdom to be your life's focus, all the way to the end. Think of it this way... Jesus doesn't want to be a piece of your life's "pie," He wants to be the filling that permeates every other piece and oozes out in truth and goodness! It will take time... but if you remain faithful, He will complete His work in you! Jesus and His Kingdom will become EVERYTHING to you. If you continue to abide closely with Him, you will have no need of anything else. Nothing else will satisfy you. That is the "take away" from Jesus' brief story about "The Pearl of Great Price." (Which inspired, both, the title and the cover art of this book.)

*"Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant who seeks out beautiful pearls. One day he found one pearl of great price. He, then, went and sold everything he owned and he bought that one pearl." (Matthew 13:45-46)*

Do you see why the accepted way to evangelize lost souls is, highly, inadequate? We either, never mention "The Kingdom of God" or, if we do, the Kingdom is certainly not something we present as having to "give up everything" to obtain. We tell people to "confess your sins" and ask Jesus to "come into your heart." "If you do that," they say... "You are saved and heaven will, surely, be your home one day!" There are, now, countless tens of thousands of lost souls who think their ticket to the Kingdom of Heaven have been stamped because they prayed a prayer. Jesus has, simply, become an "addition" to their earthly life. That is not the "way of the Kingdom," at all.

There should be a stark difference in how citizen's of God's Kingdom live their lives and how unforgiven sinners live theirs. Don't get me wrong... Christians don't become perfect saints when they humble themselves and choose to follow Jesus Christ. We aren't perfect... just forgiven. That being said, God has redeemed our souls and placed His Holy Spirit in our hearts, enabling us to say "NO" to sin, and "YES" to doing those things that please Him. We couldn't please God before salvation, but with our new heart and redeemed will, He has made it possible!

And, you can be sure... He does expect His subjects to be obedient to His commands! But, the opposite is, also, true... There are things we do, and think, that are NOT acceptable to God. He makes it very clear... Those who choose to practice these things have no part in His Kingdom.

*"Don't you realize that those who practice wrong doing will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, or are thieves, or are greedy, or drunkards, or abusive to others, or those who cheat people, will not inherit the Kingdom of God." (I Corinthians 6:9,10)*

This list may be long, but it isn't exhaustive. There are other sins that God condemns, like... hating another person, living in pride, and ignoring the needs of the poor. These are things that God hates. This is why He gives us The Bible and gives us His Holy Spirit to teach us to practice doing things that are right and wholesome. Can Christians "mess up?" Oh, yes... royally! But we can also find forgiveness. If we confess our sin, God forgives us and never holds that sin against us, again. But, let me be clear... We must stop practicing sin!

If you haven't grasped this truth already... The Kingdom of Heaven is set against the kingdom of this world. Because the world is Satan's domain, it will be no friend to Jesus and no friend to His followers.

God's holy standards will make Christians a lot of enemies while we walk through this sin-filled, earthly kingdom. If we are living to please our King, it will only cause those, in the world around us, to feel rebuked. Because we cannot support them, nor affirm them, in their sinful choices... many will attack us. We don't even have to say anything... people just don't like being made to feel guilty. It is for this reason that Christians, and even most pastors, shy away from this very important aspect of Jesus' kingdom message. We are afraid of making enemies.

Jesus told his disciples...

*"If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. " (John 15:18-20)*

Why would the people of the world persecute the servants of Jesus Christ? Why do they hate us? What is the big deal if we have our own "religion"? We aren't hurting anybody... right? That would all depend on how you define the word "hurt." Christians are "Ambassadors" on behalf of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. We represent Him by living and speaking to this culture as Jesus would live and speak if He were here in bodily form. So, herein lies the problem. Most people don't like being called "sinful" and "rebellious." They don't like being told they can't live their lives the way they want to live it. On the contrary, they want, only, for their feelings to be affirmed. They don't want to change anything and they, certainly, don't want

God, with His stifling rules, cramping their style of life. The Bible says, *"There is no FEAR OF GOD before their eyes!"* So, when the citizens of heaven share the message that "sinners" must "repent" before the King of kings and that they must "surrender" to His control in order to be forgiven and to obtain salvation... the citizens of Satan's domain become "hurt" in the deepest part of their collective hearts. As I wrote before, just by token of Christ's followers living lives differently than the world around them... they become "offensive" enough to cause others to hate them. It may even provoke them to violence! But this is an opportunity for the "children of the light" to demonstrate the love of Christ to the "children of darkness."

*"Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."*  
(Matthew 5:16)

Again... we are told that MOST people will not glorify God. But if we live in such a way that our love and our good deeds "shine" brightly in front of others, a few will see it and be drawn to it. They are the ones who will be changed by the good news of the kingdom and will, then, glorify your Father who is in heaven.

As citizens and ambassadors, we are responsible for bringing God's Kingdom down to this earth. In word, yes, but in real, tangible ways, as well. As we humbly demonstrate the love and the power of God in acts of kindness and selflessness, our families, our neighbors, and our coworkers can get a small glimpse into God's original plan for the human race. They should see in us, what it will be like when Jesus returns to rule over all the earth!

When Jesus' disciples asked Him how to pray, one of the phrases He shared with them demonstrated this idea very clearly...

*"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth in the same way as it is done in heaven."*

Do you see? Heaven isn't just a location we wait to enter sometime in the future... It is a lifestyle we exhibit "in the here and now," as we make our kingdom journey upon this earth. Kingdom values and Kingdom work must permeate every aspect of our lives. This is what is expected of every child of God... every follower of Jesus Christ.

But don't think you can do this on your own, because you, absolutely, cannot.

There is a key to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Trying to do Kingdom Work without accessing this key will not get you in. You have been reading about it all along, but allow me to share, in no uncertain terms, what "salvation" means, and how forgiveness for your sins and an entrance into the Kingdom can be made a reality!

## THE KEY TO THE KINGDOM

We have already discussed the original sin that separated all humankind from their Creator. And, we have already discussed the personal sin for which we are all made guilty before God.

*"For all have sinned, and fall short of God's glory."  
(Romans 3:23)*

We have all earned something because of our sin and rebellion against a holy God, and we will be paid in full one day.

*"For the wages of sin is DEATH. But the gift of God is ETERNAL LIFE through Jesus Christ our Lord."  
(Romans 6:23)*

We have all earned judgment and eternal separation from God in a real place called "Hell."

*"But if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell... the Lord knows how to reserve the unjust (sinner) unto the day of judgment to be punished."  
(2 Peter 2:4,9)*

*"In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might."  
(2 Thessalonians 1:9)*

This is our hopeless condition as humans born upon this earth. There is nothing we can do about it. But there is something that GOD did about it! You see, God is holy and He cannot allow anything unholy to enter into heaven. Since we are sinners we deserve to be punished, and since God is a God of justice, He must punish our sin. He must. It stands to reason, someone has to shed their blood. Someone has to suffer the penalty of death. That someone should be me and you... right? We deserve to die. BUT... What if God allowed "someone else" to be punished in our place? What if someone else shed their blood and died so that we didn't have to? That is exactly what happened. Jesus Christ, God the Son, came to earth..., as a baby. That is the reason we celebrate Christmas! He chose to become our substitute. He died on the cross, in your place, that you might live for eternity in heaven!

*"And all are justified (declared innocent before God), freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a SACRIFICE of ATONEMENT (Jesus paid the price for our sin), through the SHEDDING OF HIS BLOOD (on the cross) – to be received by FAITH."  
(Romans 3:24,25)*

*"For by grace (God's undeserved favor), are you saved through faith (believing in Jesus Christ), and this is not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; it is not of (personal) works, so that no one can boast (brag about it). (Ephesians 2:8,9)*

THIS IS THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN!!! We now have access to God where we can find forgiveness for our sins and obtain hope of eternal life! If you don't know the BAD NEWS, that you are a sinner and that hell is your destination... then, the GOOD NEWS won't mean anything to you. Right? And, no amount of drinking, drugs, sex, or expensive things can satisfy your heart. No person or group of people could ever hope to fill the divine void... the true emptiness that infects every heart on this planet. No career could ever satisfy one's desire to find meaning in their life. Only Jesus can do that! Are you seeing better why Jesus called it a "Pearl of Great Price"?

*"In Him we have redemption through His blood (we have been bought back from sin's slave market), the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of His grace." (Ephesians 1:7)*

I want to encourage you to read the Gospel of John in the Bible. As you read about who Jesus is and what He did upon the earth – His birth, His teaching, His ministry, His death, His burial, and His resurrection – It will all start to make much more sense. It will help you to make an informed decision about surrendering your life to Jesus Christ and confessing Him as your LORD.

*"That if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified (declared righteous before God), and with the mouth, one confesses and is saved." (Romans 10:9,10)*

*"Believe on the Lord, Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." (Acts 16:31)*

Let me be very clear... A prayer does not SAVE you. There is much more to "Believing" than that! Going to church and giving a tithe does not save you. Being a "good" person does not save you. What DOES save you is...

1. Humbling yourself before your Creator God and acknowledging that you have foolishly disregarded Him and sinned against Him. Come to Him in a spirit of repentance... willing to change your allegiance and your citizenship.
2. Receiving, by faith, the only "key" to the Kingdom of Heaven - Jesus Christ.
3. Believing that He paid the price for your sin when He shed His blood and died on the cross of Calvary. Believing He won your justification when He rose from the dead! (This is why we celebrate Easter!)
4. Confess Him, openly, as your Lord and Savior, unashamed of your close association with Him. It is always a matter of faith that grows from a thankful heart.

## ENDURING FOR THE KINGDOM

(NOTE: *This section is also written to my fellow believers. I write it out of love and out of a great concern for your continued faith as we face dark days ahead for the church. There is a great apostasy happening, and there is great danger in believing that neither you, nor any of your Christian brothers or sisters, could be a part of it. Apostasy is "falling away." As you will see, you cannot fall from a position you never held.*)

I know I have already touched on the subject of "enduring unto the end," but this is a part of salvation that many evangelicals ignore... as if remaining faithful to God is something that just comes automatically. They teach that Christians don't have to concern themselves with "perseverance" for this reason... "The Perseverance of the Saints" is something that God already took care of. They teach that all Christians will endure and overcome, simply, because God ordained it to be so, and that "keeping ourselves in the faith" and "finishing our course" has no bearing on our eternal inheritance. They believe it is impossible for any "true" believer to forfeit their salvation since "an eternity in heaven" was something that God promised. They teach that all the warnings about "falling away from the faith" and "turning away from God" were written to "false believers" or to "tares" in the church. This is a dangerous teaching... and let me tell you why.

Jesus could not have been clearer when He spoke these words to potential followers...

*"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross (a symbol of personal death), and come after me, he cannot be my disciple. (Read, carefully, this exhortation)... For, which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down and first COUNT THE COST, whether he has enough to finish it – lest, after he has LAID THE FOUNDATION (has already begun to believe), but is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him." (Luke 14:26-29)*

Jesus was not encouraging any of us to "HATE" our relatives. We are to love them. But what happens when they decide to hate you because you chose to follow Him? What if they turn against you and threaten to cut you off from the family unless you "leave your faith"? In that situation, you will have to make a choice... Continue walking with Jesus as His disciple, unashamedly... Or, choose the love of your family. Turn away from them or turn away from Him. You can't have it both ways, in that scenario. Do you understand? You will "love them less" than you love Jesus.

Also... What would be your decision if evil men entered your home and threatened to kill your family if you did not say, *"I deny that I ever knew Jesus Christ."* The moment those words, or similar words, exit your mouth... You will have denied your faith. In that case, you would be "Fearing Men" instead of "Fearing God." We are not playing a game, here. This is very serious, indeed. You would be choosing "love of family" over your love for Jesus Christ, your King. And, NO... You could not "lie" to the men and deny you follow Jesus because you have a sudden thought...

*"God knows my heart. He knows I'm just faking to save my life and the lives of my family."* Yes, He does know your heart. He knows that, in the face of death, your family is more important to you on this earth than your love for Jesus and more important to you than your verbal profession of faith in Him. He knows that your eternal inheritance in His Glorious Kingdom is no longer worth suffering for. Like Esau, you have sold your birthright. You decided to "SAVE YOUR LIFE." You took it back and walked all over the blood of Jesus Christ as if it meant nothing to you. As "the salt of the earth," you "lost your flavor" and became "unworthy," and good for nothing except to be "cast out" and "trampled under the feet of men."  
(Matthew 5:13) (THIS is the correct, and only, application of that Bible passage.)

*"And in nothing you should be terrified by those who oppose you, which will be to them clear evidence of their eternal ruin, but to you, evidence of your salvation, and that from God! For it is given to you, in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake."* (Philippians 1:28,29)

*"Fear none of those things which you will suffer... be faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life (representing salvation)."* (Revelation 2:10)

*"And they overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony (they continued to confess Jesus), and they loved NOT THEIR LIVES even UNTO DEATH."* (Revelation 12:11)

One day, after someone acknowledged their commitment to follow Jesus, they said...  
*"But, FIRST, let me go back and say goodbye to my family."*  
To which Jesus replied... *"No one who puts a hand to the plow (has already begun to believe), and LOOKS BACK (for any reason), is fit for the Kingdom of God."*  
(Luke 9:61,62)

Look at what Jesus taught concerning perseverance...

*"And you shall be hated by all, for my name's sake; but HE THAT SHALL ENDURE UNTO THE END, the same shall be saved."*  
(Mark 13:13)

*"Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of many will grow cold, but the one who ENDURES TO THE END will be saved."*  
(Matthew 24:13)

*"He who holds fast to my commandments, and continues to observe them, he is the one who loves me; and he who loves me shall be loved of my Father."*  
(John 14:21)

You need to understand that before our initial exercise of faith - before we "believe" in Jesus - we are spiritually dead. As spiritually dead people, we are unable to understand the Word of God. We are unable to do God's will. We are unable to respond to God, at all, on our own. That is why God places faith in our hearts. That is why God illumines our minds so that we can spiritually discern the facts. That is why

God the Father draws us to Jesus and saves our souls. He must do it, because we cannot.

That being said... At the time of your initial "believing," God does something amazing! He redeems your freewill. You see...you never had a freewill before. You think you did... but you didn't. It was dead... dead to God. You did not have the ability to "choose" to please God; you could only serve sin. Once you repent and confess Jesus as your Lord, you become spiritually awakened! You now have a choice to do the will of God and to follow Christ's example... or not. You did not have that choice before. But, now that you have been enabled by a regenerated freewill and by the presence of God's Holy Spirit, you begin a maturing process. You are expected to grow in faith and to produce fruit to the glory of God. It is a process called, "Sanctification." You are to do good works and to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom to others. And, yes... You are responsible for keeping yourself in the way of the kingdom. God expects this from every believer. You must not "neglect so great a salvation!"

The Apostle Paul, who wrote a large portion of the New Testament, served Christ faithfully for many years and suffered many beatings and hardships. Near the end of his life, he wrote a letter to a younger man in ministry named, Timothy. In that letter, this is how Paul summarized his life and ministry for the Kingdom of Heaven...

*"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness (representing salvation), which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."*

(2 Timothy 4:7,8)

Many evangelical preachers will say that every "true" Christian will finish their race and keep the faith. This is a lie, at worse, or, at the least, it is disingenuous. Not all of us will choose to be faithful. Not all of us will choose to suffer with Christ when things get hard or scary. Not all will push back from temptation. Many will, actually, give in to it and embrace it, and continue to live a Godless life. Some will become bitter of heart or, will become offended in Christ... denying Him. The Apostle Paul taught that many would turn away from the truth they once embraced, simply because they heard false teaching that sounded good to them. This is called "Apostasy." True believers will be guilty of turning away from God, despite the many warnings. Please do not be fooled... These warnings were not given to "false believers." For, you cannot fall away from a position you never held, nor can you stop running a race you never started. The men who wrote the Bible knew this.

On his way home from his final missionary journey, Paul warned the pastors from the church located in Ephesus, that many disciples will be pulled away from the faith by false teachers.



*"I know, that after I leave, fierce wolves (false teachers) will come in among you and will not spare the flock (the church congregation), and from among your own selves, will arise men distorting the truth to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears."*  
(Acts 20:29-31)

With the same intensity, Paul warned the Galatian church not to become *"entangled again with the yoke of bondage"*... referring to the religion they were a part of before they came to Christ. His warning should have put a good amount of fear into their hearts, for he told them that, if they insisted on following the false teaching, *"Your faith would be in vain,"* and *"You will be severed from Christ"* and *"You are fallen from grace."* It is clear that choosing to follow any teaching contrary to the Gospel of the Kingdom means that you have committed high treason against the King and are unworthy of the eternal inheritance that He extended to you.

This is in keeping with the teaching in Hebrews chapter 6...

*"For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come (heaven), then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance."*

*"But exhort one another daily... lest any of you become hardened by being deceived by sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, IF we hold the beginning of our confidence, stedfast unto the end."* ("confidence"- an assurance we are abiding in Christ)  
(Hebrews 3:13,14)

*"Let the truth, that you have heard from the beginning, continue to dwell in you. IF that which you have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, you, also, shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he has promised us, even ETERNAL LIFE."* (1 John 2:24,25)

I need to say something more about God's "promise" of eternal life made to us by God. The history of Israel was given to the church as a lesson to be learned. So, keep in mind that, Israel making their journey to the Promise Land, is a picture of The Church making our own kingdom journey to our heavenly Promised Land. That being known, we need to accept the fact that, out of all those to whom the promise was made, as they were coming out of bondage in Egypt... NONE of those responsible adults ever made it to the land God promised to them. Why? Because, even though they believed God when they saw the plagues in Egypt and experienced the parting of the Red Sea, and they praised Him for their deliverance... they chose to stop believing. They rebelled against God and chose to worship other gods. They let sin, the fear of man, and idols pull them away from their faith in the God... the GOD who had saved them out of bondage.

*"So, we see that they could not enter in, because of unbelief. Take care, brethren (fellow Christians), lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God." (Hebrews 3:19,12) (NOT written to false believers)*

Because God is the same yesterday, today, and forever... And, because He is, both the God of Israel and the God of the Church... Christians have a closer tie to Israel than we have been taught. As I study the Scriptures, more and more, I realize this serious truth... "As goes Israel, so goes the Church... IF..."

*"For if God did not spare the natural branches (Israel) neither will He spare you (The Church). Note, then, the kindness and the severity of God; severity toward those who have fallen away (Israel), but God's kindness to you (The Church) provided you continue in His kindness, otherwise, you too will be CUT OFF." (Roman 11:21,22)*

There are so many more places in the New Testament where these serious warnings are given to the followers of Jesus, but I want to leave you with just one more warning from the letter to the Galatian church. You know how Paul warned them not to turn away from the beginning of their faith by mixing it with their old beliefs. Near the end of the letter he, once again, warns about being deceived and going back to their old, fleshly ways. Perhaps you have heard the old phrase, "You reap what you sow."

*"For he that sows to his flesh shall, of the flesh, reap corruption; but he that (continues to) sow to the Spirit shall, of the Spirit, reap LIFE EVERLASTING." (a future event)*

Now, read carefully Paul's next statement about enduring and persevering and what the outcome will be... IF...

*"And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall REAP, IF WE FAINT NOT." (Galatians 6:8,9)*

Reap what? He has already told us. We will reap EVERLASTING LIFE... IF we don't give up and turn away from the truth we already embraced.

It is all, so, very clear... God has "outfitted" us with everything we need to live the Christian life on this old earth in the midst of great evil. He has supplied us with a heart to know and to understand His will and to DO IT! He has empowered us with His Holy Spirit to think and to act in ways that are pleasing to Him. He can strengthen us to stand strong in the face of terrible and painful opposition and against strong temptation. Now, with our redeemed free will, we have an even greater responsibility than Israel had to "keep the faith even unto death."

It is important to understand that The Bible teaches there is a specific time we choose to confess Jesus as Lord. At that point... we "Are Saved." (Acts 16:31) But the Bible also teaches that we are in the process of "obtaining salvation" as we are "Being Saved." (1 Corinthians 1:18) And, we cannot ignore the teaching that we "Will Be Saved" (1 Thessalonians 5:9 ; 1 Peter 1:5,9) as we come to the end of our journey... IF we do not fall away from the faith and turn away from the God of our

salvation. Salvation is an ongoing process as we take this difficult kingdom journey through this foreign land filled with the enemies of our King.

There is a well-known preacher who says, "If it were up to me to keep my salvation, I would lose it. I would fail... every time!" These words sound humble... even biblical. This pastor and so many like him, desire to give God the glory for saving them and for keeping them. But what they are NOT doing, is giving God the glory for the incredible transformation of their hearts, souls, minds, and wills at the time of their initial believing in Jesus. They went from being spiritually dead to being completely alive to the things of God and to all the things that pertain to the Kingdom of Heaven. When they were translated from Satan's kingdom to God's Heavenly Kingdom they were filled with God's Holy Spirit and He enables them to understand and to obey the Word of God - The Bible. He gives wisdom to stand for the truth when it is under attack from skeptics. He upholds them when the fear of man and the weakness of the flesh tempt them to run and to hide. What these, well-meaning men, fail to accept is that... The undeserved grace of God has enabled them to prove themselves worthy of their inheritance in the Kingdom of God. This teaching is all throughout the New Testament if they would just open themselves up to seeing it. God wants heaven to be filled with those who continue to desire to be there. Just like He tested the hearts and minds of Israel in the wilderness before they entered their Promised Land, so He tests the RENEWED hearts and minds of His Church to see if we will endure many temptations and persecutions on our earthly journey to inherit our Eternal Promised Land.

And, keep in mind... the early church fathers, in their writings, clearly warned the church against being disinherited and being "cast forth from the Kingdom of God". (On a personal note... I did not believe this way for 40 years of my ministry, until a six year study of the subject, through much prayer and fasting, led me to see "Salvation" in the correct, biblical, sense.) It was only about 400 years ago that Calvin proposed a different interpretation that has led to the dangerous and erroneous idea of "once saved, always saved." Which will be responsible, in part, for a great "Falling Away" that is, even now, happening in the true Church of Jesus. Is it not a real possibility that Satan has planted the seed of a doctrine - in the rich, western church - a teaching that removes from Christ's followers any need to be faithful and to hold fast their profession of faith lest they deny Him, either, by their life or by their lips? There is a great danger in being "weak" and "feeble" of faith. The "Perseverance of the Saints" is not a forgone conclusion. It is a great evil to tell Christians that if they do not "hold fast" and remain faithful to Jesus Christ, it is only because they never had faith to begin with! THAT is a lie from the pits of hell! It is also a lie to tell them that, if they truly placed faith in Christ, heaven is their final destination even if they choose "another love" or "another gospel." You see... God will keep us. But, in our redeemed and renewed state, we have the responsibility to "keep ourselves" all the way to the end of our faith - the receiving of our eternal inheritance! Even Martin Luther, who began the Protestant Reformation, believed that Christians could forfeit their eternal inheritance. And, NO... I am not convinced

he had a change of heart later on in his life. The great evangelist, John Westley, also, strongly held to the same belief. They taught it because it is in the Bible!

I want to end this booklet with the great promise the Apostle Paul shared in Romans chapter 8...

*"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, or any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (versus 38,39)*

I concur with Paul. There is, absolutely, nothing - OUT THERE - around us or facing against us - that could ever divide us from God. He has ordained it to be so! We can take great hope in this truth when we face terrible opposition. But the possibility of our own redeemed heart deceiving us, our own heart choosing another love, our own heart fearing man more than fearing God, and our own heart apostatizing from the truth we once embraced... THAT is quite another matter. Our old, sin nature is still tied to this earth and prone to rebel against our Creator. Don't ever discount that fact or whitewash the danger that it poses to our very faith. THAT is why, as the Scriptures teach, we must be watchful and guard our hearts with great care. Just like God tested Israel in the wilderness, He tests those who follow Christ, today! For we must all prove ourselves worthy of the heavenly kingdom on that day when ALL THINGS WILL BE MADE NEW!

Do you see? We are not "earning" our salvation... That was already purchased for us by the death and resurrection of Christ - The Atonement - Jesus shedding his blood on behalf of our sin! And, GOD can and will keep us by His power so that our "blessed hope" will always be available to us - to those who endure unto the end. This is in keeping with the "New Covenant" God has made with His own. The Church will be preserved and will inherit their eternal home... This truth is sure! Though, sadly and regrettably, many individual believers will choose to walk away from their faith along the way... for various reasons. (Read the Parable of the Soils with this truth in mind. You will find it in Luke 8:11-15)

Jesus strongly warned his followers concerning the time of the end...

*"As you endure, you will keep your souls. Always stay alert, and pray that you might have the strength (of faith) to endure all these things that are going to take place, and that you will be able to stand before the Son of Man (Jesus). (Luke 21:19,34)*

And, as we endure, we have a great hope to look forward to!

*"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. Who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body." (Philippians 3:20,21)*

*"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory at the*

*appearing of Jesus Christ. Receiving the conclusion of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” (1 Peter 1:7,9) (We will be saved!)*

One day, our eternal inheritance in the heavenly kingdom will become a physical reality! Our bodies will be made whole! Our “HOPE” will be made “SIGHT”! God will restore the Kingdom back to its original condition!

1. Is He calling out to you? Do you sense it in your heart? Is God prompting you to place your faith in His Son, Jesus Christ?
2. Will you REPENT? You must “change your mind and heart” and turn away from embracing this worldly kingdom and from living life for yourself.
3. Will you BELIEVE in Him? He wants to save you, but you should, first, count the cost of surrendering your life to Him. It will be no easy road to travel. You will be tempted to “turn back.” You will be tempted to fear man and to deny your faith in Jesus Christ, God’s Son.
4. Will you finish the journey... no matter how sad, scary, or dangerous it becomes? Jesus will empower you and give you strength to endure as you walk closely with Him each day.
5. Will you, unashamedly, confess Jesus as your Lord?

In doing these things, you will purchase a “Pearl of Great Price” – The Kingdom of Heaven. Now, dear friend... Count the cost. Make your choice... if so be that God is calling out to you and drawing you to Jesus. You will know it in your heart.