

# Adam Failed, but King Jesus and You Will Succeed

*The Bible is a royal story*

Adam was created and commissioned to rule over the world God had created for him and had given him as his home. So we read in Gen. 1:28; Ps 2:7-12. (What Christ is promised we are promised too, Ps 8:4-6; Rev. 2:26, 27). Adam was created to be king of the world. The Bible is from Genesis to Revelation a royal drama. Man was supposed to have everything under his feet, under his control, and look what has happened! Turn on the news, and what do they talk about incessantly day after day? Only one subject: Who is going to take charge of this chaos? The answer is that only Messiah-King Jesus will be able to do this. The nations are warned to pay attention to and obey King Jesus (Ps. 2).

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Growing up, the young Jesus was fascinated by the Hebrew Bible, our OT which is two thirds of the whole Bible. Messiah needs help; Jesus knew that he needed help, and you are it. Jesus was born into a Jewish home and Luke 1:32 announced and reminded him of his royal destiny: “The Lord God will give Jesus the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Israel forever” (see 2 Sam. 7).

Later on they tried to make him king (John 6:15), but he escaped to the hills. It was not yet the right time, and when the same issue was raised in Acts 1:6 Jesus did not know the exact span of time before the Second Coming. Growing up, he appeared to be a Mozart of theology, totally fascinated by the Scriptures. Reading Scripture he saw that he as Messiah-King was the one planned by God to announce the future, first and only successful one-world government (Isa. 2; Dan. 2, 7). His job was to succeed where Adam had failed so dismally. Imagine understanding yourself as the solution to the whole world’s problems. Jesus desired to share that destiny with others — and that is where YOU come in. But the counter narrative goes very deceptively like this: Your objective is “Heaven at death.” This is what churches have talked about, propagandized incessantly and effectively, but heaven is a drastic diversion and obfuscation of your destiny. Your destiny is defined and promoted by the Christian Gospel of the Kingdom — how Jesus not only died for you, but is training you to rule the world with him when he returns at his Parousia, to bring in his Kingdom.

The Devil has worked hard to cancel that staggeringly interesting story of the world and its destiny. He knows that he is going to be defeated, and so his object is to try to see that you fail — that you miss out on your destiny. Hence Luke 8:12: Satan has this one key objective, and you are to work hard in the opposite direction. Note now this brilliant intelligence report from Jesus: When anyone hears the Gospel message *about the Kingdom* [Matt 13:19], the Devil comes to snatch away that Kingdom Gospel from your heart **so that you cannot believe it and be saved. Yes, be saved.** Salvation depends on an intelligent grasp of the Kingdom.

You and I are commanded to obey Jesus, and Jesus’ *first* command is Mark 1:14-15: Change your mind (repent) and believe the Gospel of the Kingdom. Believe, that is, in your destiny as a co-regent with Jesus to manage the world

when he returns. Here is an illuminating, almost unheard-of statement from a famous Scottish preacher:

“We shall dwell in these glorified bodies on the glorified earth. This is one of the great Christian doctrines that has been almost entirely forgotten and ignored. Unfortunately the Christian Church — I speak generally — does not believe this, and therefore does not teach it. **It has lost its hope**, and this explains why it spends most of its time in trying to improve life in this world, in preaching politics...

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“But something...remarkable is going to be true of us according to the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:1-3: ‘Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will govern or rule the world?...’ We are destined to rule, with Christ, over the world...”

**“This is Christianity.** This is the truth by which the New Testament Christians lived. It was because of this that they were not afraid of their persecutors...They knew that this glory was coming. This was the secret of their endurance, their patience, and their triumphing over everything that was set against them.”

— Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: Final Perseverance of the Saints*, p. 72, 75, 76

In Matthew 24:14 we read: “This Gospel about the Kingdom of God will be heralded in the whole wide world for all the nations, and then the end of the age will come.” That is to say, then Jesus will come back to inaugurate that Kingdom — the subject of his own Gospel, the Kingdom of God. It seems to us that the evangelical world is in a tremendous muddle about what the Gospel is. Church goers do not speak of the Gospel of the Kingdom, but Jesus always did, with unrelenting emphasis.

That muddle over the Kingdom spells chaos for millions of would-be believers. How can they respond to Mark 1:14-15, Jesus’ first and fundamental command — what you must believe and do, if you want to be a Christian. How can anyone respond to Jesus, if they do not know what the Kingdom of God is? They remain baffled and confused, at first base, and they are unable to build their Christianity on the *words* of Jesus, the only safe way to build it.

Let us rehearse the royal, Kingdom story: First Paul’s horror and protest over confusion as to the Gospel of the Kingdom: “Some of you think you are reigning now! Would to God that you **were** reigning now so that we might be reigning with you!” (1 Cor. 4:8). This was a huge timetable error, the seed of amillennialism and post millennialism, preterism, any unclarity about **when** the saints will rule. When the saints go marching in!! Did any of you think that when you sign up for college you expect to graduate that same day? One fatal mistake is to think that “Kingdom” in the Bible means some abstract “reign” rather than a real Kingdom. King Charles III in our day is King of a Kingdom. A Kingdom without territory is not a Kingdom in the Bible’s sense. All this is more than obvious from the Hebrew Bible, what we wrongly call the Old Testament.

### The absence of the Gospel is glaringly obvious

An article in *Christianity Today* showed that most Christians cannot define the Gospel, if asked to do so (“Good news, bad news,” August 6, 2005). I want to suggest to you that that is nothing short of a disaster! Can one have accepted the Gospel, can one possibly have accepted Jesus, if one cannot articulate the Gospel?? If one doesn’t know and understand what the Gospel is and cannot speak of it with clarity, is it clear that one has accepted it and understood it? I think the situation must be perilous and dangerous at this point.

Another series of articles in *Christianity Today* allowed nine evangelical leaders to define the Christian Gospel (“What’s the Good News?” February 7, 2000). There was an extraordinary variety of explanations. Nothing was said about the Kingdom of God. No definition of the Gospel of the Kingdom was offered.

Mortimer Arius, a professor of Missiology conceded our point like this:

“When I left the seminary I had no clear idea of the Kingdom of God and I had no place in my theology for the Parousia (Second Coming). I had no concerns about the future. Thousands of books are printed and circulated every year on evangelization; most of these fall into the category of ‘how to’ manuals for churches (devising plans, strategies, methodologies, goals)... Our traditional mini-theologies — ‘the plan of salvation,’ ‘four spiritual laws’ — do not do justice to the whole Gospel. Not all this activity or activism is a sign of health or creativity. [Me: it is a sign of apostasy!] The Good News of the Kingdom is not the usual way we describe the Gospel and evangelization. The Kingdom of God has practically disappeared from evangelistic preaching and has been ignored by traditional evangelism.” [So Christianity has disappeared!]

And yet, plainly and obviously, the Bible’s Gospel is about the Kingdom of God. Jesus came into Galilee preaching God’s Gospel, saying, “Repent and believe the Gospel about the Kingdom” (Mark 1:14-15). He said: The Kingdom of God is approaching. Repent/turn/be converted/reorientate yourself and *believe that Gospel about the Kingdom of God*. That is reminiscent, incidentally, of “Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as making him right” (Gal. 3:6). So, Jesus says: Repent and believe the Gospel concerning the Kingdom of God for conversion. The Gospel was preached ahead of time to Abraham (Gal. 3:8).

It is brilliant that Mark labels this foundational information “the beginning of the Gospel” (Mark 1:1). Why not follow Mark’s and Jesus’ well-defined scheme for evangelization?

In Matthew 13:19 we find the Gospel called the “**word of the Kingdom**,” not any old “word,” but the word about the Kingdom — same as the Gospel of the Kingdom. It is the seed, or germ, of immortality to be sown in the hearts of people. And it’s only when they understand and grasp and embrace and accept *that* Gospel of the Kingdom that they can possibly be accepting Jesus. The Bible doesn’t speak vaguely about “accepting Jesus” or “asking Jesus into your heart”; rather it speaks about God and Jesus accepting *us*, only when we understand and receive God’s Gospel about the Kingdom of God as preached by Jesus.

Now back to that series of articles in *Christianity Today*. Nine leading spokesmen attempted to articulate the Gospel. There was an extraordinary confusion and an extraordinary lack of any reference to the main agenda in the Gospel as Jesus preached it — the Gospel about the Kingdom. This prompted a letter from Charles Taber, Professor Emeritus of World Mission from the Emmanuel School of Religion in Johnson City, TN, who wrote:

“I read with great interest the nine statements attempting to answer the question, ‘What’s the Good News?’ I am amazed and dismayed to find not even a passing mention of the theme which was the core of Jesus’ gospel in three of the four accounts: the kingdom of God. Every one of these statements reflects the individualistic reduction of the gospel that plagues American evangelicalism” (*Christianity Today*, April 3, 2000).

You see, if one hasn’t grasped that the Gospel is about the Kingdom, what *has* one grasped of the New Testament? This is the ABC, the foundation of everything, the rock. The essential Gospel message concerns what Jesus called the Kingdom.

### **So What Is the Kingdom?**

So then, what does this mean to believe in the Gospel of the Kingdom as Jesus commanded in his first command? The answer is not difficult. If one traces the Kingdom through Mark, one will find that it is obviously a Kingdom which has not yet come. It would be very strange for Mark to write a document in which he intends you to understand that the Kingdom of God came with the ministry of the historical Jesus, and then at the end to record that Joseph of Arimathea (who from Matthew’s account we know was a Christian disciple) was still *waiting for* the Kingdom of God after the end of the ministry of Jesus (Mark 15:43). Had Joseph missed the Kingdom? Are we to understand that the Kingdom of God had come with the ministry of Jesus and yet Joseph, as a Christian, was still **waiting** for it? It makes no sense at all. It makes nonsense.

The fact is that Mark did not intend us to believe that the Kingdom of God had come, except in the sense that the “spirit” of that Kingdom was being displayed in advance of the coming of the Kingdom. That’s why the Lord’s Prayer and the precious book of Daniel is where we should begin with evangelism, because everybody who knows anything at all of the Bible knows, “Your Kingdom come.” The preaching of the Kingdom was of course in full swing as the objective of Christianity. And we point out that for Jesus, “Your Kingdom come” of course means that the Kingdom hasn’t come. You don’t pray for the coming of the Kingdom if it has already come!

In addition to that, we lay the foundation of the Kingdom message in Matthew, the first Gospel, when John the Baptist in the third chapter introduces the idea of the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven. Of course those two terms are entirely synonymous — no difference at all; they mean exactly the same thing. And any system of theology which tries to tell you that the Kingdom of God is different from the Kingdom of Heaven is introducing a fatal confusion into the teaching of Jesus from the start. John the Baptist introduced the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven/God. He announced that it was at hand and commanded repentance. He then talked about fleeing from the wrath to come and he defined

the Kingdom as that time when judgment will decide between the good and the bad, going into the barn or the bonfire. It will be the time when the wheat, the good seed, are ushered into the “barn” of the Kingdom, and the wicked are destroyed like the chaff (Matt. 3:2-12), in the lake of fire. That’s what the Kingdom of God is. It’s the coming of judgment to destroy the wicked at the return of Jesus and the coming of the Kingdom to be inaugurated at the same time, at the future spectacular coming of Jesus.

That fact about the Kingdom is clearly laid out in Matthew 3, and that of course is the beginning of the New Testament documents. And we learn the facts about the Kingdom progressively. It therefore makes a considerable nonsense and chaos of the Gospel from the start, if one fails to tell the public that the Kingdom is essentially, primarily, predominantly that Kingdom which is going to come when Jesus returns. People talk vaguely about being born again as young children, but they tell us nothing of any response to the Kingdom Gospel

Another good place to start would be Luke 19:11-27 where precisely that question about the presence or future of the Kingdom was raised. The people there thought that the Kingdom of God was going to appear *immediately* — implying of course that it had not yet appeared in the ministry of Jesus — but they **thought** it was going to come right then. Why? Because, the text says, Jesus was standing near Jerusalem. And it should be obviously clear then, not only to that audience but to us, that the Kingdom is something *headquartered in Jerusalem*. Because the King, the Messiah, was **standing near to Jerusalem**, it would appear reasonable to suppose that the Kingdom of God, that is to say the Royal Empire, the Davidic empire, promised by all the prophets, and the basis of the Abrahamic covenant, the land promise — it would be reasonable to suppose that that Kingdom was to appear immediately. Well, of course.

And what did Jesus do? Did he say, “Folks, you’ve missed it! The Kingdom is really not an empire in the Davidic sense at all. It’s just the reign of God in your hearts. It’s just ethics and good behavior now. Being a good person! It’s just a ministry of exorcism and the casting out of demons. And so you’ve misunderstood the Kingdom. Don’t expect the Kingdom to come!” Did Jesus say anything like that? Well, of course not! He most carefully and specifically said: The Kingdom of God, as you *correctly* understand it, indicated by my proximity to Jerusalem — and I’m King of that Kingdom and I will rule the world from the capital of the Kingdom in Jerusalem — that Kingdom is *not* going to come immediately. In fact, I am going to leave. I am the nobleman, the royal person. I am going off to heaven to acquire possession of the Kingdom, to be authorized to rule in that Kingdom headquartered in Jerusalem, and then I’m going to return and establish the Kingdom and reward my followers with positions of executive power in the Kingdom — authority over five cities, ten cities and so on — and I’m going to slay my enemies, those who did not want me to reign over them (Luke 19:14, 27).

This is exactly the picture we had in Matthew 3 — the destruction of the wicked, the ushering in of the good seed of the Kingdom, the royal personnel and family, into the Kingdom of God when Jesus returns in power and glory. This has not happened yet!

## The Church's Problem

**Firstly**, if we lose track of this framework of the Kingdom teaching in the Synoptics (Matthew, Mark and Luke) we lose the entirety of the Christian faith. Churches constantly lament the fact that they are not doing very well. It's hardly surprising! They have dropped the Gospel as Jesus preached it. They have dropped the vocabulary of Jesus, which was always about the Gospel about the Kingdom of God, as we see most clearly in the summary statements given by Matthew, Mark and Luke.

In Matthew 4:23 Jesus went about all of Galilee proclaiming, heralding the Gospel concerning the Kingdom of God. And again in 9:35 there is a summary statement, holding together the whole book of Matthew so that we would never forget the Gospel is about the Kingdom — the King and the Kingdom. So, **firstly** churches have abandoned the Gospel for some so-called "Pauline" Gospel, which is not a Pauline Gospel at all, because Paul did not make the mistake of dropping the Kingdom from the Gospel.

**Secondly**, if on a rare occasion an evangelical preacher does mention the precious phrase "Gospel of the Kingdom," he almost certainly collapses that *future* Kingdom immediately by concentrating almost exclusively on the present, what he calls the "presence of the Kingdom." Now, granted that the spirit and power of the Kingdom was being demonstrated in the ministry of Jesus, in advance of the *coming of the Kingdom*. But that's not the emphasis. The "presence of the Kingdom" is not where the interest mainly lies in the Synoptic Gospels. Not at all.

Let's point out that the Kingdom in Mark is *always* something future. In Mark 9:47 it's the Kingdom which comes when the wicked are destroyed just as we saw in Matthew 3. In Mark 11:10 the people shout with passionate enthusiasm for their national hope: "Blessed is the **coming** Kingdom of our father David!"

## The Kingdom Within You?

Interviewing numerous members of the Salvation Army, on my way to teaching languages at the American School in London as I did some 50 years ago, I would inquire, "How do you define the Christian Gospel?" The invariable and only response was to offer Luke 17:21, mistranslated in the King James Version, with disastrous consequences: "The Kingdom of God is within you." That may mean the King was in their midst. That is possible, or it is much more likely gives us a future reference: when the Kingdom does come *in the future*, it will be all over and visible; it will not be localized. It will not be a question of saying, as Jesus warned against, "Look here" or "Look there," rushing off into the wilderness. No, the Kingdom of God will be massively evident, public — "like lightning, flashing from one end of the sky to the other" (17:24). That's what the Kingdom of God will be like. It's the Kingdom of God which Jesus, standing close to the royal capital of the Kingdom, Jerusalem, hasn't yet even obtained in Luke 19. But he had to go off to heaven as the noble Messiah, to acquire that Kingdom and then to return. The Kingdom begins at the stupendous event of the Second Coming.

In my Church of England days I remember no sermons on the Kingdom of God, not one. Heaven was our assumed goal, and our vocabulary was laced with references to "heaven at death," as the place old people "passed away" to. This

was the taken-for-granted, never discussed point and objective of our “Christianity.”

About 98% of the references to the Kingdom of God in the Synoptics are to the Kingdom to be established in the future on the renewed earth when Jesus returns. That’s the heart of the Gospel! But one can read, as I have had the opportunity to do, evangelical tracts in church foyers and bookstores, even evangelical “scholarly” literature on the Gospel, without finding a single reference to the Gospel of the Kingdom of God! And yet we say we love Jesus! No wonder Jesus raised his voice for emphasis when insisting that he was useless without his own Kingdom=Gospel words!

Why then do we not speak the language of Jesus and use his words? No wonder he warned, “He who is ashamed of **me and my words...**” — ashamed of me and my Kingdom Gospel (Mark 8:35, 38). No wonder he said, “Unless you are converted and accept the Kingdom of God as a little child, you will not enter it” (Matt. 18:3; Mark 10:15; see v. 26). Whoever does not receive the Kingdom message as a child will not enter it, i.e. will not *be saved*.

The Bible story from start to finish is a royal book. It is about the royal family. Jesus will be King Jesus the First — and Only! It is about the destiny of the world and about your personal, royal destiny. Have you taken in the fact that Daniel in Daniel 1:3 was a member of the royal family (NASV), literally the “seed of the Kingdom.”

Jesus was all about the seed (family) of the Kingdom, choosing and training kings to rule in the future Kingdom. No wonder then that Jesus in his most fundamental parable spoke of the seed Gospel of the Kingdom (Matt. 13, Mark 4 and Luke 8). He spoke of the good seed as the sons of the Kingdom, that is, the royal family. Jesus as the King of the Kingdom was on a mission with the task of planting, sowing the good seed, the seed of the royal family. If there is going to be a Kingdom, then that Kingdom needs kings to function in it. Churches have for centuries been telling you the fake news that your destiny is to go to heaven, to depart from the earth, as a disembodied soul. They should have been telling you that Jesus has elected you, if, on condition that, you first believe and obey his Gospel of the Kingdom. You are in training now to be, to function as, the kings of the Kingdom, the royal family.

Evangelicals have been given half of the Gospel. Churches are told that the Gospel means that Jesus did three days’ work, quoting Billy Graham: “to die, to be buried and to rise.” That is not the whole Gospel. Jesus did three days’ work!? What an insult!

That is a half Gospel and it misses out on the beginning and foundation of the Gospel in Mark 1:1. The first command of Jesus is to us (and salvation is obtained by obeying Jesus): Repent ( a command, an imperative) and believe the Gospel about the Kingdom (a command and an imperative). The Devil knows very well that the Gospel is firstly and foundationally about the Kingdom of God and the royal family. Salvation is obtained by believing the Gospel about the Kingdom, in addition to the death and resurrection of Jesus. The Billy Graham half-gospel tries to keep the Gospel of the Kingdom out of sight! Some dispensationalist systems say explicitly that the Gospel of the Kingdom is *not* the Christian Gospel for today!

They say that the Gospel for us now is the Gospel of grace. Acts 20:24-25 correct that fatal mistake.

To be a Christian is to become royal family, kings and priests destined in the future to rule and reign as kings with Jesus. That is the grand goal of the faith. To be a son of the Kingdom (Matt. 13) is the same as being the seed of the Kingdom (Dan. 1:3). The NASV and many translations correctly render this as “royal family” in Daniel 1:3.

Popular evangelism is very keen to tell you about the *work* of Jesus, dying to forgive you, but they have not told you about the *words* of Jesus: his invitation to you to become royal family and help him rule the world when he comes back.

Jesus knew who he was and what his destiny was: “I was born to be King; that is why I came into the world” (John 18:37). Nathaniel was amazed to discover who Jesus was: “You are the King of Israel” (John 1:49). “We have found the Messiah” = the Christ, the King (John 1:41).

Nathaniel said, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.” If you meet a real Christian you can say “you are the royal family,” selected and elected to rule and administer the world with Jesus. You are a co-heir with Jesus; what he inherits you inherit with him. Revelation 2:26-27 is blatantly clear. Sons of the Kingdom are the princes, i.e. royal family.

Here is how Jesus worked. He was the King. He had read about that future King and also “**rulers**,” plural (Jer. 33:26). So Jesus reproduced himself, not physically, since he was not married, but spiritually by sowing the seed of the Kingdom — other members of the royal family. Hebrews says that Jesus “had children” (Heb. 2:13). How was that? It was by evangelizing others with the Gospel of the Kingdom, which he called the seed message in the primary parable, that of the sower. He needed assistant kings and princes to rule the world with him at this future return. Is that not a privilege as Peter said:

1 Peter 2:7: “This supreme honor is for you who believe. [Cp. 1:7: ‘this praise, glory, and honor is for you.’] For those who refuse to believe, though, the stone the builders tossed aside has become the capstone.”

1 Peter 2:9: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may announce the excellence of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

I hope that these reflections will strengthen your understanding of what the Christian faith is all about.