

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

ANDY SNOKE

I have a United States of America passport. I am a United States citizen. Through the years I have had the great blessing and privilege to visit friends, family, and saints all over the world. This includes places in India, South America, Africa, the beautiful Islands of the Caribbean, the Philippines, and the UK. As I enter each of these countries I promise to abide by the laws of that particular land while I am visiting.

However, at all times I am a temporary visitor. At all times, I remain a citizen of the United States of America. I have a blue colored passport to prove my citizenship. I am a visitor, a sojourner in these foreign lands, but I always remain a citizen of my home country the USA.

In a similar sense, I am a citizen of the kingdom of God as quoted in Philippians 3:20 ***"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."*** I abide by the rules and truths and promises of the kingdom of God. I partake in the glory of the coming kingdom of God, to a degree, while I am still here in this earthly realm. In a real sense, I can say that this earthly kingdom is not my home. It is as if I am visiting a foreign land, this earth, while my true citizenship remains in heaven. It is almost as if I were carrying a Kingdom of God passport.

When Pilate was passing judgment on Jesus, the Lord proclaimed that His kingdom was not of this world. If His kingdom was not of this world, and we are followers of Christ and His kingdom, then neither is our kingdom of this world.

John 18:36 (NKJV), *"Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."*

After the resurrection of Christ, just before He ascended into Heaven, the disciples must have thought that His kingdom would soon be an earthly kingdom. The disciples were anxious to see the foreign rule of Rome come to an end in Israel. They were ready for the Jews to once again have ownership over their land. It is no wonder they asked the Lord about when His kingdom would be set up.

Acts 1:4-8 (NKJV), *"And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; 5 for John truly baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." 6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. 8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

To the dismay of the disciples, the Lord made it clear that He would rule not only Israel but all of this earthly domain, and that it was not their right to know the times or the seasons.

I am writing this article in the infamous year of 2020. As I write these words, we are in the midst of a worldwide pandemic and an economic decline not seen in modern times. I wonder sometimes if we may be seeing some fulfillment of Jesus' words in Matthew 24:8 when he exclaimed, *"These are the beginning of sorrows"* (literally birth pains).

Our great peace and confidence come from knowing that we belong to a heavenly realm. We belong to the kingdom of God and not to the kingdom of the earth and of men. Even as it was in the days of Noah, as the rains fell from heaven, Noah belonged to that heavenly kingdom as he boarded the ark of safety. The same rain and floods that destroyed the earth caused the Ark of Noah to rise above the waters.

In this day and hour, the call of God is still the same. Come. Come and board the ark. Come. Safety and security and salvation are available to all who will answer Him. The door is still open, for now. But the day will come when the door will shut for many. Today is the day of salvation. We cry as the angels declared in the last chapter of the Bible:

Revelation 22:20 (ESV), *"He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"*

Hebrews 3:7-8 (NKJV), *"Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: 'Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness.'"*

Matthew 24:36-39 (NKJV), *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."*

The Bible promises us that the entire world system will be shaken to its very foundation. Everything that can possibly be shaken, will be shaken. This must mean multiple physical shakings such as earthquakes, pestilences, economic downturns, and much more. The shaking of the powers of the heavenlies will ultimately be so great that even our satanic enemies will ultimately be cast to the earth.

Revelation 12:1-11 (NKJV), *"Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman (most likely representing the church) clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days. And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, 'Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our*

God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

In the midst of these great trials, both present and future, the church has no reason to fear. For truly, our abiding place, our peace and security, comes not from earthly governments, but from our citizenship in the kingdom of heaven which cannot be shaken.

Hebrews 12:25-28 (NKJV), *"See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, 'Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.' Now this, 'Yet once more,' indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."*

As the democratic nations of the earth look to their choice of leaders to bring them peace and security, it makes no difference, in the long run, what earthly king rules. His glorious kingdom, the kingdom of God, made of the architecture of Christ and His church, will ultimately fill the earth. His glorious kingdom will ultimately stretch from shore to shore.

When Daniel prayed a prayer of praise and thanks to God for revealing to him the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel prayed these very profound words:

Daniel 2:20-21 (NKJV), *"Daniel answered and said: 'Blessed be the name of God forever and ever; For wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding.'"*

Proverbs 21:1 (NKJV), *"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes."*

The scripture we often quote at Christmas (Isaiah 9:6-7) speaks of His coming kingdom, and His dominion ultimately over all of the earth. The angels in the Book of Revelation will, one glorious and final day, declare that the kingdoms of men will become the kingdom of God:

Revelation 11:15 (NKJV), *"Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!'"*

Isaiah 9:6-7 (NKJV), *"For unto us a Child is born (this speaks of His birth as a child), Unto us a Son is given (this speaks of the Son of God being given for the sins of mankind); And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace, There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice. From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."*

When Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel Chapter 2, he prophetically saw all of the kingdoms of earth prior to the coming kingdom of God. The Lord condensed the vision of all human governmental histories by measuring the length of time

before the coming kingdom of God, by the measurement of four worldwide kingdoms.

Each worldwide kingdom would be conquered and assimilated by the next kingdom. Daniel described the kingdom of Babylon ruled by Nebuchadnezzar. He then saw the dual kingdom of the Medes and the Persians conquer and swallow up Babylon. The Medes and the Persians were followed by the Grecian empire. And finally, the greatest earthly kingdom of them all, Rome. Rome was ruling when Jesus was crucified.

Towards the end of the vision, Daniel describes the earthly kingdoms possessing the strength of Iron, and yet the weakness and fragility of clay. I often think that democracy is like this. It is both strong and weak at the same time. The rulers of a democracy reflect the attitude and will of the people. If a nation is comprised of moral, Godly citizens, then the elected leaders will reflect those values. However, if a nation is comprised of predominantly godless, immoral people who have forgotten the spiritual values of the Scriptures, then they will elect leaders that reflect the emptiness of their hearts.

Daniel 2:42-43 (ESV), *“And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. As you saw the iron mixed with soft clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay.”*

The good news of this vision is that Daniel saw in the midst of these kingdoms, a “rock,” Jesus Christ and His church, cut out of a mountain not by hands. In other words, it was not a “human movement” it was a “spiritual movement.” This Rock, this Jesus, this Church, destroyed all of the kingdoms of human leadership and became a kingdom that shall never be destroyed or left to another people.

Daniel 2:44-45 (ESV), *“And in the days of those kings the God*

of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever; just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.”

Is your name written in the Book of Life? Are you in that ark of faithfulness and safety? Have you learned to “watch and pray?” Do you have a “kingdom of God” passport? Do you have an abundant life? Are your sins forgiven and washed away?

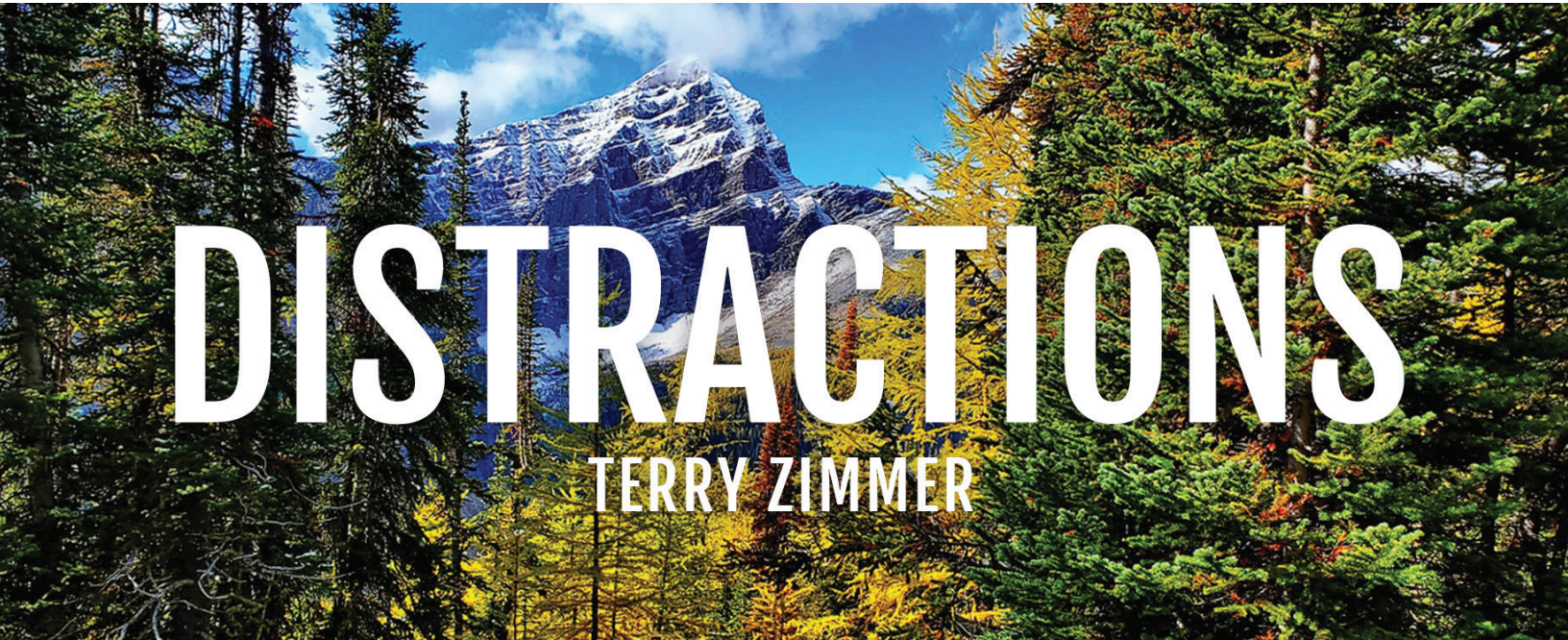
The love of God was poured out through the sacrificial gift of Jesus Christ for you. Jesus paid the price for us all. By the grace of God, we can be in that place of protection. The door is open for you and me.

If you have never done it, take a moment, confess your sins to Jesus and allow His Spirit to wash over you. Let the Lord be the Lord of your life, your thoughts, and your actions. Now is the time.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV), *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”*

John 3:16 (ESV), *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”*

Romans 10:9-10 (ESV), *“Because, 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, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”* ✝



DISTRACTIONS

TERRY ZIMMER

“It’s a glorious salvation, it’s a wonderful way.” How blessed we are to walk together in Christ. *“From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work”* (Ephesians 4:16, NIV).

“But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it” (Matthew 13:16-17, NIV).

We have been called for this very hour; we have been called to be the church in this dark and dying world, which we are in, but remember, we're not of it. This dark and dying world must not be in the church, but the church is to be in the dark and dying world as a beacon of light that leads the way to life in Christ Jesus.

God sent a flood to destroy the world. God's people were safe in the ark, and the ark was in the water that was destroying the earth. Noah and his family were safe in the ark, even though the water destroyed the people and all the whole earth. A couple of Sundays ago, we heard a prophecy that told us that we were safely in the ark. The ark is in the river of life. We were instructed not to be distracted by the shoreline as we are in the ark going down the river.

If you are in a boat floating down a river you are perfectly safe, but if the water from the river comes over the sides of the boat and begins to fill up the boat, the boat will begin to sink. That's what these distractions will do to the ark that God has placed us in. Don't even look out at the shore. There is nothing there for us. In the ark that Noah's family was in, all that they needed was in that ark. So it is for us. There is nothing in this world that we need.

"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing" (Psalm 23:1, NIV). All we need and will ever need is in the ark.


Last Sunday someone shared a testimony with us. It was a word of wisdom on raising children. Our sister said, "It is more important to raise your children to be polite, kind, respectful, loving and forgiving than to put so much priority on having them have top marks, be the best one on the team, or win the gold medal in some sporting event." It made me think about the prophecy about the ark and the shore. Our sister was saying that we are to have our hearts and minds set on what God has for us in the ark and not hunger after the things that are on the shoreline.

I recently heard a testimony from a man who became a Christian while serving a prison sentence. He talked about how the Christians in prison were on fire for the Lord. They had Bible study every day. They all showed up for prayer meetings. Sunday was an all-day service, and the meetings were glorious. They couldn't get enough of what God had for them. He said that God had set them free from their sins, and they were grateful and on fire. He eventually got out of prison and was excited about meeting Christians on the outside. He went to different churches and met a lot of good Christian people. However, he said the Christians on the outside of prison never had the fire that his brothers inside the prison had, and this troubled him. He prayed and thought about it. What he saw to be the cause of the lack of fire in his new brothers and sisters was **distractions**. They had too many distractions. And that is exactly what God told us in the prophecy. You are in the ark. Don't get out on the shore; don't even look out at the shore because it will just distract you, causing doubt, fear, confusion and anxiety.

In the same meeting where God told us not to be distracted by the shore, He warned us about staying away from, and having nothing to do with, listening to opinions and to not be quick to give our opinions in the affairs of this world.

"Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer" (2 Timothy 2:3-4, NIV).

Man's opinions change with the wind, but God's Word is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, the devil came to him with his opinions. Jesus didn't come back with his opinions, but simply spoke God's Word. A great example for us.

"Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him. Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge" (Psalm 62:5-8, NIV). 

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Headquarters:
802 Airport Road
North Battleford, SK S9A 2Z3 Canada

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 934
North Battleford, SK S9A 2Z3 Canada

Telephone:
(306) 445-2733

Email:
info@globalmissionsinc.org

Online:
www.globalmissionsinc.org

Traveling Ministry Contact List:
www.globalmissionsinc.org/about

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