

The Kingdom Turn Part 2

# KINGDOM PERSPECTIVE



*A ReVision Resource*

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**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

Kingdom Perspective  
The Kingdom Turn Part 2  
A *ReVision* Resource from The Fellowship of Ailbe  
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### Welcome to *ViewPoint*

Welcome to *Kingdom Perspective*, the second study in our 8-studies series on *The Kingdom Turn*. In this study we want to gain an overall understanding of how to view our lives and the world from within our calling to the Kingdom and glory of God. *Kingdom Perspective* is a *ReVision* Resource of The Fellowship of Ailbe.

These studies are designed for individual or group use. While you may derive much benefit from studying on your own, that benefit can be greatly enhanced by joining with a friend or a group to read, discuss, share, challenge, and pray for one another.

Take one lesson at a time, reading the Scriptures and narrative aloud, and pausing to reflect on and discuss the questions provided. Don't be in a hurry. Be willing to take more than one session on a lesson if it will allow you to delve more deeply into the subject matter.

If you're in a group, make sure you prepare for each study by reading through the lesson in advance and answering the questions in writing. Take turns leading your group. Let every member share in the privilege and responsibility of facilitating discussions. Group leaders should not feel like they have to "have all the answers." Their task is simply to lead the group through the readings and questions, and to help everyone participate.

These studies are designed as brief introductions to the subject under consideration. We hope they will enlarge your worldview, help you to become more firmly rooted in Scripture, equip you to minister to others, and stimulate you to want to learn more about the Word of God and the Biblical worldview.

We are happy to receive your suggestions for future topics and studies. Contact us at our webpage. And if you're not receiving *ViewPoint* first thing every day, then be sure to register on the website, [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org).

T. M. Moore  
Principal

## 1 Above

*But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...Ephesians 2.4-6*

### *The view from here*

Growing up as I did in the St. Louis area, I was a natural-born St. Louis Cardinals fan. I have watched Cardinals games at three different stadiums, usually occupying a seat somewhere along the left field foul line.

I always enjoyed going to the games, and while it's better than watching them on TV, still, I found it difficult to follow all the action. Typically, when the ball is hit, a fan's eyes, trained by television, follow the ball. In the process, you miss a lot. You don't see, as in a continuous glance, how the players on the field move to get into position to make a play. You can't see into the dugouts, to watch the reactions of various team members. You can't watch the umpires as they move to their pre-determined positions in order to render proper judgments. And certainly you can't watch the runner as he's watching the ball, the first-base coach, the movements of the opposing players, and, if he gets that far, the third-base coach, as he signals "slide, slide" or "come in standing up" or "keep moving for home."

You just can't see all that happening at once when you're sitting at field level, and so you can't really appreciate the beauty, symmetry, energy, and dance of any play. You just can't see the game all at once.

Unless, of course, you sit in the stadium club sky box above the left field wall and seats – like I did one day in the summer of 1967. From that vantage point, I could see everything all at once, the entire orchestration and choreography of big league baseball, unfolding wondrously, thrillingly, and mysteriously with each swing of the bat.

That change of perspective, from field level to sky box, made all the difference in how I watched that game.

The same thing is true when you've made the Kingdom turn.

### *Seated with Christ*

What does it mean to be seated with Christ in heavenly places? This is a seating arrangement available only to those who have been called to God's Kingdom and glory and who are born-again and indwelt by His Spirit. It must be an important privilege and prospect, because Paul commands us to fix our minds there, to let our thoughts, plans, outlook, and worldview be shaped and guided by the vision of unseen things above, where we have been seated with Christ (Col. 3.1-3).

In Psalm 110 David explains that, from His seat at the right hand of God, Jesus Christ administers the progress of His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. He sends His people out like the refreshing dew of the morning to live and proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom (v. 3). He plants His scepter of uprightness (Ps. 45.6) plunk down in the midst of his enemies – all their culture, institutions, and puny plans – and exercises His power in their midst, doing good, restraining evil, preparing the soil of men's souls, creating doors of opportunity, and furthering the progress of His Kingdom (v. 2). He engages all His enemies by His powerful Word, working by His Spirit in and through His Church (vv. 5, 6; cf. Ps. 45.4, 5). And He intercedes with the Father for this far-flung, all-comprehending work, a work the triumphant end of which He already rejoices to see (vv. 4, 7).

This is what Jesus sees as He sits in heavenly places. Angels await His instructions to carry out the details of

His will. Departed saints keep up a chorus of praise and glory, anticipating with unceasing excitement the reuniting of their souls with their glorified bodies in the new heavens and new earth.. And a landscape of wondrous sights, sounds, sensations, and smells envelops the whole, where everything cries, “Glory!” without end (Ps. 45.6-12; Ps. 29.9).

*You are there!*

And all who have made the Kingdom turn are seated with Christ, there in the heavenly places. They have the mind of Christ and full access to His Word (1 Cor. 2.16). They live in the midst of that glorious then and there in every moment of their here and now. They see the events of their lives and times through the lens and according to the agenda of Christ’s Kingdom. They receive His grace that they may go into their lives to refresh, redeem, and renew every moment of time and everything in that time.

From this *above* perspective those who have made the Kingdom turn see everything differently. They see the world and their lives more completely and more truly. They see with the eye of the heart (Eph. 1.15-23), and they position themselves according to what they see, within the orchestration and choreography of the advancing Kingdom of God. They live as real players in that holy domain, and they rejoice with their Lord to see the coming victory which even now – and always – is in their purview.

Fellow citizens of the Kingdom, set your mind on the things that are *above*, and live from the vantage point of eternal glory and unlimited power. Do this, and you’ll never again look at the game of life the same.

*For reflection or discussion*

1. You have been seated with Christ in heavenly places. How do you experience that?
2. Meditate on Colossians 3.1-3. What would you suggest as a good way to fulfill what Paul commands in these verses?
3. Meditate on Psalm 110. Where would you put yourself in that psalm? Doing what?
4. What does it mean to have “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2.16)?
5. What are your goals for this study? What do you hope to learn?

*Next steps: What suggestions do you have for yourself and other believers to help you in setting your minds on the things that are above? Talk to some fellow believers and a church leader or pastor about this question.*

*Prayer:*

## 2 In

“...for in Him we live and move and have our being...” Acts 17.28

### *Too small?*

Early in my walk with the Lord I came upon a book by J. B. Phillips entitled, *Your God is Too Small*. Phillips’ basic argument was that the God many Christians worship is not the God of the Bible, but a God they have created out of their own best ideas. I don’t recall all the different “too small” ideas of God that Phillips presented and debunked, but I believe his insights were sound, and I think it’s possible many people today have a “too small” view of God and His Kingdom.

How big is your God? How vast are His powers? How grand is the scope of His Kingdom and rule? For many believers today, God is barely big enough to meet their personal needs or satisfy their wants. Other believers would say that God is big – pretty big, anyway – but that He doesn’t interfere in everyday life or the workings, say, of science. He certainly should not be expected to have much influence in culture or social issues, or matters of public policy.

He’s just God, you know? He loves us. He saves our souls. He comforts us and meets our needs. We’re going to be with Him in heaven when we die. God is all about us, and it’s all good. Mostly.

“Too small” ideas about God are widespread among Christians whose view of God and of what it means to relate to Him is formed, not by the plain teaching of the Word of God, but by their experience in a secular culture where God is expected to mind His own business and stay out of ours.

### *The vastness of God*

This is not, of course, what the Scriptures teach.

When the Apostle Paul explained to those Greek philosophers that he and they and everyone else and all things have their existence, movement, and continuance *in* God, he was merely echoing a belief Greek philosophers had understood for centuries. God is big. Really – *really* – big. Big enough to contain within Himself everything that is, all of time, and everything that ever will be. *In Him* we live and move and have our being.

Some time this week, do yourself the favor and watch the 1977 classic video, [Powers of Ten](#), a film by Charles and Ray Eames. *Powers of Ten* can help you to gain a better sense of the magnitude of the cosmos – the creation that God has made – in terms of its vastness, diversity, complexity, hugeness, majesty, and mystery, as well as in its sub-particular, way-beyond-microscopic smallness and beauty.

The film begins with an overhead shot of a couple having a picnic. The narrator explains that, every ten seconds, the camera will back up by a magnitude of ten, as he explains at each stage what we are seeing. Soon enough we reach the far frontier of the vast cosmos, whereupon the camera quickly collapses back through the powers of ten images to the hand of the man, lying on his back. Then we proceed by powers of ten into the world of molecules, atoms, and particles that make up the cells of a person’s hand.

A 9-minute whirlwind tour of the cosmos, and a fun watch, to boot!

And all this, Paul insisted, exists *in* God. God is not part of the cosmos. He made it. He is a most pure Spirit, and all material being is separate from Him, but exists somehow within Him. He is bigger, vaster, more wonderful and mysterious and powerful than *everything* He has made, all of which exists *in Him*.

*Upholding it all*

Indeed, as Paul and the writer of Hebrews agree, Jesus Christ, seated at the right hand of God – and us with Him – upholds everything that exists by His powerful Word. Everything holds together in Him, by His command, according to His pleasure and will (Col. 1.17; Heb. 1.3). Nothing exists apart from God or beyond the reach of Jesus’ power. He rules everything, all the time, from the smallest sub-atomic particle to the far-flung reaches of the material cosmos. Everything exists in Him and everything obeys His will.

The rule of Jesus Christ – His Kingdom – encompasses everything, and He works *all* things, Paul tells us, according to the counsel of His will (Eph. 1.11). God calls us into this Kingdom, to know the power of Christ, sustaining, harmonizing, bringing into being and allowing to pass away everything that is.

So when Paul reminds us that the Kingdom of God, which all who have made the Kingdom turn have entered, does not consist in mere words, but in *power* (1 Cor. 4.20), he intends for us to think on this cosmic scale, to understand that the power that created and upholds the universe is now the power that is at work in and through us to do what pleases God and men, exceeding abundantly above all that we could ever ask or think (Phil. 2.13; Eph. 3.20).

*In Him, and in His Kingdom, we have all the power for righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit we will ever need.*

*For reflection or discussion*

1. What would be some examples of a “too small” view of God?
2. What’s wrong with holding on to a “too small” view of God? What are we missing if we continue in this?
3. Summarize your response to the film, *Powers of Ten*:
4. In the light of this film, how do you understand Colossians 1.17 and Hebrews 1.3? How do you understand what it means to say that you are seated with Christ in heavenly places?
5. In what sense or senses are you is your life “hidden with Christ in God”? How do you experience that during the normal course of your daily life?

*Next steps: How do you experience the power of God? How does knowing this power is at work within you affect the way you plan your week or live each day? Share your thoughts with a Christian friend. What will you dare to think or ask of God’s power, that you’ve never dared to think or ask before?*

*Prayer:*



### 3 Under

*I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for wind. Ecclesiastes 1.12-14*

#### *Under the circumstances*

The problem with many of us who have made the Kingdom turn is that we live according to the wrong set of circumstances.

I recall Howard Hendricks, of Dallas Theological Seminary, giving a talk on the things that limit the Christian's power to realize full and abundant, fruitful life in Jesus Christ. Foremost among these, he explained, is that we let our lives be determined by the external *circumstances* of life rather than the indwelling power of God.

What kinds of circumstances? Well, our past experience, for one. If we have never experienced something, then we're not likely to believe we ever will. Or we'll always be seeking those experiences which, in the past, felt comfortable to us. Or adversity, for another. When difficulties or trials come our way, rather than plunge into them with the power of God, we shrink back, hunkering down until circumstances become favorable once again. Fear of potential circumstances can also freeze us in our tracks, for example, when we think about sharing the Gospel with a friend, but fear how he might respond.

Dr. Hendricks related how he'd asked a brooding student one day how he was doing. The student said, "Pretty well, I suppose, under the circumstances." To which Dr. Hendricks replied, "Under the circumstances! What are you doing under *there*?"

#### *Rehoboam's problem, and ours*

In the book of Ecclesiastes Solomon is at pains to persuade his son, Rehoboam, to acquire a new set of cues for how to live, and how to govern once he became king. Rehoboam was hanging with the wrong crowd. He was sowing his wild oats, living the good life, and avoiding any entanglements or obligations that might inconvenience him or cause him discomfort. Solomon implied he was living "under the sun." He was taking his cues from the material world and materialistic-minded people, and arranging the circumstances of his life to avoid responsibility and indulge comfort by every possible means.

Solomon explained that such a life, built upon and around favorable material circumstances, is like chasing after the wind. It's the way the fool lives, who seeks only comfortable situations and lives for maximum personal advantage in the midst of world of suffering, sorrow, want, and oppression. Under such circumstances, fools can get through life with a minimum of trouble. But they add little or nothing in the way of wisdom or neighbor love to those around them.

Isn't this the problem of many of us, even many of us who claim to have made the Kingdom turn? We spend our lives trying to arrange the best possible circumstances so that we can live happy and at ease, with as little sacrifice or suffering as possible. Let something in our agenda go awry, and we become sad, depressed, or angry until we can once again arrange our temporal and material circumstances to suit our preferred sense of wellbeing.

We're living like Rehoboam, under the sun, rather than under the heavens, where Christ rules at the right hand of God.

*Under the heavens living*

Solomon went on to explain that if we organize our lives according to *eternal* circumstances – the reality and rule of God our King – then everything in life makes sense, everything that comes our way is bearable, and everyone we meet will know the blessings of wisdom and love at our hands.

Under the heavens we accept that life is difficult, and that it's necessary to *grow into* our Kingdom calling and the power that comes with it (Eccl. 1.12, 13). Solomon explained that everything involved with what it means to be a human being *hangs* on fearing God, lining our lives up with His Word, and keeping our eyes focused on Him in all the situations and circumstances of our lives (Eccl. 3.1-11; 12.1, 9-14). The only circumstances worth living *under*, in other words, are those that acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father, and that we live and reign with Him over the whole vast cosmos, which He rules.

Those who have made the Kingdom turn must not be ruled by their temporal circumstances. Our everyday lives can look in many ways like those of our unbelieving neighbors and friends. But if we can learn to live *under* the heavens rather than *under* our temporal and material circumstances, we will find that the power whereby King Jesus rules at the right hand of God will flow *to* us and *through* us into all our relationships, roles, and responsibilities, so that the progress of Christ's Kingdom becomes increasingly evident in everything we do.

*For reflection or discussion*

1. Do you ever find yourself trapped “under the circumstances”? What's that like? How does that happen?
2. In the text that opens this lesson, Solomon uses both phrases, “under the heavens” and “under the sun.” He started his reign with one perspective, and then he gave way to the other, before finding his way back again (apparently) late in life. Explain how you see that in Solomon's life.
3. What kinds of “gods” do people cling to who live “under the sun”? Are you ever tempted to “worship” any of those gods?
4. “Under the heavens we accept that life is difficult, and that it's necessary to *grow into* our Kingdom calling and the power that comes with it (Eccl. 1.12, 13).” Do you agree? If so, how are you pursuing this growth?
5. How would you explain to an unbelieving friend or neighbor what it means to live “under the heavens”?

*Next steps: Are there any areas of your life where you're not living as fully “under the heavens” as you should? What can you do to begin remedying this? Ask a church leader to help you think this through.*

*Prayer:*

## 4 Around

*And Elisha prayed, and said, "LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. 2 Kings 6.17*

### *The all-around God*

One of the great lessons we could learn today from the saints of Celtic Revival is the sense of the "all-aroundness" of God.

The Celtic Revival marks that period of Church history between the years 430 and 800 AD, when Irish missionaries and preachers brought Christ's Kingdom to the world and the Church with renewing and transforming power. Thomas Cahill chronicled this period in his book, *How the Irish Saved Civilization*, and that title just about says it all.

For Celtic Christians God was not far away in some inaccessible region beyond the clouds. Or rather, He was indeed far beyond the clouds, to the far reaches of the cosmos, but He was everywhere present with them as well. They met God in lakes and rivers, woods and creatures, storms and gentle rains, and even the humble food that grew wild around them. They met God in their fellow believers, saw Him at work preparing lost people for salvation, and sensed His presence in ways that caused them to tremble with rejoicing.

And they invoked the presence and protection of God and all the unseen hosts of heaven in memorable prayers, songs, and chants.

### *"Patrick's Breastplate"*

Nothing from this period expresses this "all-aroundness" of God better than their *lorica* poems. A *lorica* – or "breastplate" – poem acknowledges the presence of God with us at all times, and calls upon God to surround, sustain, precede, protect, direct, and keep us every step of the day. Here's an excerpt from the best known of these poems, "Faeth Fiada," or, "Patrick's Breastplate":

*May Christ protect me today  
against poison, against burning, against drowning, against wounding,  
that many rewards may come to me.  
May Christ be with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,  
Christ to my right, Christ to my left,  
Christ where I lie down, Christ where I sit, Christ where I stand,  
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks to me,  
Christ in the eye of everyone who looks on me,  
Christ in every ear which hears me.*

Celtic Christians lived in the then and there, here and now, not only because of their clear vision of the unseen realm and of the hosts of heaven arrayed and marshaled for their protection, but because of the promise of Christ, that He would be with them always. They took that promise seriously and

looked to Him and His angelic hosts to guide and guard them through the trials and duties of daily life.

*Power at hand*

The power of Christ's Kingdom is not merely something to talk about; it's a power to be lived (2 Cor. 4.20) in the everyday circumstances of life, a power deriving from *eternal* conditions that can enable us to rejoice, be strong, and have hope no matter the circumstances of our everyday lives.

But we will only know how to engage the presence of the all-around-us God as we work harder to develop our Kingdom perspective on the life into which we have been born again by the Spirit. We are seated with Christ in heavenly places! Every aspect of our lives have been hidden with Christ in God! We live above our temporal circumstances because we always have an eye on Christ exalted and our souls grounded in His Word of promise!

And we can peer beyond the veil that separates time from eternity and call upon the Lord to be all around us and to accompany and protect us on our journey in life with the help of saints, angels, and the Holy Spirit. This is what it means to live from a Kingdom perspective, for all who have made the Kingdom turn.

*For reflection or discussion*

1. Meditate on 2 Kings 6.8-17. Is what Elisha "saw" true today? In what sense? What should this mean for us as we pursue our walk with and work for the Lord?
2. Meditate on Hebrews 12.1. In what sense are we surrounded by heavenly witnesses? What should that mean to us?
3. How do you respond to the excerpt from "Patrick's Breastplate"? Do you think that's a good perspective with which to enter life each day? Why or why not?
4. What, specifically, are the "*eternal* conditions that can enable us to rejoice, be strong, and have hope no matter the circumstances of our everyday lives"? How should this affect our daily lives?
5. How would you counsel a new believer to "engage the all-around-us God" in the course of his daily life? Why should he?

*Next steps: How do you experience the "all-aroundness" of God? How can Christians help one another experience the presence of the unseen realm around them more consistently? Talk with some Christian friends about these questions.*

*Prayer:*

## 5 Within

*“The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”* Luke 17.20, 21

### *The body within*

The season is upon us, and flu shots are in the air. Seems like just about everybody’s ready to stick us and guard us against the danger of flu: “Fill ‘er up? Check ‘at awl fer ye? Need a flu shot?”

I confess, I’ve never had a flu shot. But I suppose the idea is sound. Once flu gets inside your body, it can create a mess. And that mess isn’t confined to *inside* the body, either, as we know.

The insides of our bodies are designed to function just so. We feed them and care for them, for the most part, so as to keep all those unseen working parts operating at maximum efficiency. And when some invader like flu tries to take up residence within us, we and our bodies will do everything we can think of to expel it and get our insides back to sound health.

We need to be even more circumspect and vigilant concerning our souls.

### *The nature of the soul*

Jesus said the Kingdom of God is within us. That cosmic-sustaining power of the Kingdom, focused in Christ and His Word, that redeems and refreshes all things, operates from *within* the lives of those who have made the Kingdom turn. And not within their *physical* lives, but from within their *spiritual* lives – within their souls.

The soul is the unseen, spiritual entity, unique to every human being, that determines the moral and spiritual character of our lives. It consists of three overlapping, inter-communicating components – the heart, the mind, and the conscience.

The heart governs our affections – the things we love and hate, and the intensity and propriety with which we love and hate them. The Kingdom power of Christ operates with the hearts of His people to shape them for loving God and neighbors. The Spirit of God, Who dwells in the soul, accomplishes this work by teaching and applying the Law and Word of God to the soul, beginning with the heart, which is the heart of the matter where spiritual life is concerned (Ezek. 36.26, 27; Prov. 4.23).

The mind is that part of the soul where the Spirit works with the Law and Word of God to nurture us in the mind of Jesus Christ, so that we think like Him, plan according to His plans, remember as He remembers, and know as He knows.

And the conscience serves as a kind of arbitrator in the soul between the impulses of the heart and the notions of the mind. The conscience reads the Law of God from the heart to the mind, and from the mind to the heart, and then leads the two to submit and cooperate for actions consistent with love for God and neighbors (Rom. 2.14, 15; 1 Tim. 1.5).

*Health souls*

But the soul of each believer must be tended to and cared for diligently. A law of sin continues to operate within us which wants to rob us of the full presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom of God (Rom. 7.21-23). We need to understand how sin tries to insinuate its presence into our hearts, blur and confuse our thinking, and overthrow the Kingdom values and priorities of our consciences. And we need to know how to resist the law of sin by working hard to nurture our souls into the image of Jesus Christ – so that, increasingly, our affections and desires are His, our thoughts and ideas are His, and our priorities are those of His Kingdom.

You can tell when the flu of sin is messing with your inner person. You begin thinking the world revolves around you; you can do what you want; others need to look out for themselves; everyone's against you; you know better than anyone else; just this once won't be so bad...and so forth. There is no vaccine for dealing with the virus of sin. Continual vigilance and the hard work of nurturing our souls on the Word and Spirit of God: This is the remedy for "sinfluenza" and the key to unlocking the power of Christ and His Kingdom within us.

*For reflection or discussion*

1. Why is it important that we have a clear understanding of the soul and how it works?
2. Explain the difference between the heart, the mind, and the conscience?
3. Give some examples of how these three components of the soul continuously interact and overlap:
4. What does T. M. mean by "sinfluenza"? What are the symptoms that we're beginning to be infected with it?
5. How can Christians help one another to nurture the Kingdom of God from within their souls?

*Next steps: Do you have a soul friend, to watch over your soul with you? Would you benefit from having one? The elders and shepherds of your church are charged with watching over your soul (Heb. 13.15). How do they do this work? Ask some of them.*

*Prayer:*

## 6 Unto

*But now they desire a better, that is a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.* Hebrews 11.16

### *The far horizon*

The Kingdom of God is not like earthly kingdoms. It's not so much a *place* as a *domain*, a sphere or arena of spiritual power that operates to bring to light the glory of God and the Good News of Jesus Christ.

And as earthly kingdoms are static and geographically situated in a particular place and time, the Kingdom of God is fluid, flowing and progressing and advancing over all the earth, moving ineluctably like a mighty, growing river toward its destination in eternity.

When you make the Kingdom turn, therefore, don't think you can just settle down in some comfy spiritual neighborhood of your choice in a static, temporary realm. Rather, understand that you have launched your little boat onto the river of grace and truth, and you must hoist your sails into the wind of the Holy Spirit on a voyage *unto* the eternal City to Come. In this life we are buoyed up and blown forward by the Spirit working with God's Word, and we are navigating toward the far horizon, just beyond which we see the radiant glow of the new heavens and new earth.

### *The journey of faith*

What are the implications of this for our daily walk with the Lord? How should the idea of the Kingdom as a journey or voyage of the here-and-now *unto* the yet-to-come affect our everyday relationships, roles, and responsibilities?

I think a good many of the followers of Jesus Christ are taking the wrong approach to life in the here and now. Rather than focus on the City to Come, and preparing themselves for arrival there, they tend to get bogged down in the details, diversions, and distractions of the here and now. The result is that they end up living under their circumstances rather than over and above them in an ongoing voyage to the distant shore.

Many Christian leaders have written about this idea of life as a journey. Columbanus, John Bunyan, and Jonathan Edwards come immediately to mind. Together they offer sound advice about what is involved in having a Kingdom perspective on daily life, one that sees everything as moving toward the City to Come.

Let's consider a few of these.

### *Aspect of the journey*

First, we have to say to ourselves, over and over, "*This* life, here and now, is not the life that matters *first*." This life matters, of course. We have to eat, drink, work, relate, and all the rest. But all our daily activities can become a grind and a drudgery if we see them as ends in themselves, or as means to merely temporal ends. When we see them as *means* to the end of the Kingdom, they take on a new significance, a new excitement, and new meaning.

If we're working with a view to the City to Come, for example – no matter the work we do – then we'll want that work to reflect the priorities and traits of the eternal City: God's glory, love for our neighbors, excellence in all things, and so forth. Keeping the eye of your heart fixed on Christ and your seat with Him will affect everything you do, giving your life an eternal glow reflecting the hope that is within you because of radiant promise toward which you are journeying.

Second, beware of anything that can cause you to lose sight of your destination and lead you into becalmed waters or stormy seas. Keep your eye on the charts – the Word of God. They're clearly marked as to where dangers of sin lurk beneath the attractive waters of the world. Guard your heart and your mind with the peace of Jesus, and He will surround you and keep you on course in your journey (Phil. 4.6, 7).

Finally, seek the advice of wise counselors, and follow the example of those voyagers who have gone before you, to live your life after the pattern presented in theirs. We're surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12.1), and the more we know about them, the more their example can help us to navigate the dangerous shoals of worldly existence.

In the Kingdom our lives are on the move at all times, filled with the wind of the Spirit and riding on the grace and truth of the river of God. Keep your vessel situated there, and well-trimmed, and you'll realize more of the eternal then-and-there in the everyday here-and-now of your life.

*For reflection or discussion*

1. What role does the City to Come play in your walk with and work for the Lord?
2. Is it helpful to think about your life in Christ as a journey or a voyage? Why or why not?
3. Meditate on 2 Peter 3.10-18. What should our priorities be as we journey toward the City to Come?
4. Which "wise counselors" from the Christian past have you found to be helpful in your journey with the Lord? In what ways?
5. "In the Kingdom our lives are on the move at all times, filled with the wind of the Spirit and riding on the grace and truth of the river of God. Keep your vessel situated there, and well-trimmed, and you'll realize more of the eternal then-and-there in the everyday here-and-now of your life." On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is the highest rating, to what extent does your life represent this statement? In what ways would you like to see improvement?

*Next steps: Have any Christians inspired you in your walk with the Lord? How? Share your thoughts with another believer.*

*Prayer:*



## 7 Throughout

*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.* Isaiah 9.7

*What's the matter?*

There's a good bit of talk these days among scientists who study the cosmos about what they refer to as "dark matter."

Now let's be clear about two things. First, dark matter is not really dark. It's just that scientists can't "see" it with any of their instruments. So it's dark to them.

And further, dark matter is "matter" only because, well, that's the way scientists think. They think everything that exists must be the sort of thing one can weigh, measure, manipulate, and use for human purposes. Nothing else exists except matter, so everything must be matter of some sort.

"Dark matter", as it's referred to, is really an unseen power or force that holds the universe together. Scientists can't see it (hence, "dark") but they can see its effects. They don't know for sure that it's matter, but matter's what they do, so "matter" will have to do for now as well.

At any rate, what dark matter does in the vast cosmos is hold everything together. Apparently there's not enough *real* matter in the cosmos – planets, stars, and other big floaty space things – to keep the universe from flying apart. Yet the universe doesn't fly apart. The reason for this is that something scientists can't see, something that may be other than matter, is holding the universe together and exerting powerful effects on everything in it.

Let's just leave that there for now, shall we?

*Fill all things*

The Lord Jesus Christ is described by the Apostle Paul as "filling all things in all things" (Eph. 1.15-23). Seated at the right hand of God, upholding the cosmos and everything in it by His powerful Word, advancing His rule like a river of grace and truth on earth as it is in heaven, Jesus is "in" all things "filling all things" with Himself. He is throughout the world, in every place, and increasingly so.

To which prophets like Daniel and Isaiah would say, "That's what I've been saying for years!"

We're all familiar with Isaiah 9.6, 7, especially at Christmas time, when we sing about Jesus who rules the world with truth and grace, and who comes to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found. In fact, I think we have become so familiar with some of these texts that we don't reflect on what they're actually saying.

Isaiah, for example, prophesied that, once Jesus had come to earth, His Kingdom would begin, bringing righteousness and justice wherever it flows. And, Isaiah continued, there would be no end to its advance. Daniel witnessed to the same hope in Daniel 2.44, 45 and then again in 7.18-27. The coming of the Kingdom at the incarnation of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit began a spiritual infusion and transformation that is flowing and growing, advancing and overcoming, refreshing and renewing all things, and there will be no end to it, nothing to hinder or stop it, until Jesus returns in judgment.

*Some Kingdom!*

Jesus Christ, by His Word and Spirit in His people, is filling the world with Himself, with His righteousness, peace, and joy. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. Science can't measure the spiritual power of Christ – *they're* in the “dark” about such things – but anyone can certainly see its effects. The course of history is lavished with example after example of good works accomplished by people who made the Kingdom turn and became citizens and ambassadors in an ever-advancing, unseen realm of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit.

And that Kingdom continues advancing to this day. Jesus Christ, Who holds the cosmos together by His Word of power, is advancing His unseen Kingdom – with all its glorious effects – on earth as it is in heaven, filling all things in all things to the praise of the glory of God.

Can you see this? Have you entered into this glorious new perspective on life, the cosmos, and everything in it? Have you made the Kingdom turn?

*For reflection or discussion*

1. In what ways would you like it to be more apparent that Christ is filling you and all things through you?
2. Does it matter whether we think of the Kingdom of God as expanding and overcoming, or just an idea to hope for? Explain:
3. What are the primary hindrances preventing your church from being more of a “Christ-filling” presence in your community?
4. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this study?
5. How are you planning to put that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

*Next steps: What are some ways you've seen the Kingdom of Jesus advancing in your life? Through your life to others? In your church? Through your church to your community? Talk with a pastor about these questions.*

*Prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org) to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.