

GRAND OPENING: GOD'S BUSINESS !!!

You have started a new business and have done lots of planning and preparation. The day has finally come to open your doors as you announce to the world.....GRAND OPENING! Something similar happened when Jesus arrived at Jordan river to announce a new kingdom. Before we look at that event, let's go back in time to what God had in mind from the beginning.

God had purposed that Adam and all mankind would rule and reign under God's leadership. It was a government. (see Genesis chapters 1-3)

Man **under** God and **over** creation.
Enter the serpent who subverts that dominion.
Now it became man away from God and under creation influenced by Satan.

But God had a plan, even before the beginning of time. Father, Son and Holy Spirit made a covenant promise of eternal life - Titus 1:2. Jesus would come to restore mankind's original authority of dominion in the earth - Psalm 115:16. God gave the prophet Isaiah a word about the coming government through a promised Messiah.

A child is born, a **Son** is given, the **government** will be on his shoulders.....
of the increase of his **government** and peace there will be no end. - Isaiah 9:6-7

That child was born of a virgin in the small village of Bethlehem as prophesied by the prophet Micah over 700 years before. (Micah 5:2-4)

Birth of the King in Bethlehem

But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will come forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His times of coming forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity. Therefore He will give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth. Then the remainder of His kinsmen will return to the sons of Israel. And He will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. And they will remain, because at that time He will be great to the ends of the earth.

As the prophet Isaiah wrote, 'A child is born, a Son is given'. Son there means a '**mature Son**' who is able to govern and exercise authority. Jesus would be the fulfillment of that prophecy given 700 years before his birth.

Israel had waited 400 years for God to speak, but that silence was about to end with the arrival of a 'voice crying in the desert', John the Baptist. He was God's chosen forerunner to announce the coming of a new kingdom and king. Jesus would arrive on the public scene to begin a demonstration of kingdom life, love and authority. Now, at the age of 30, he would launch the family business to a waiting world. **The kingdom of heaven was about to invade the dark kingdoms of this world!**

A SPECIAL LOCATION

One would have expected Jesus to announce his kingdom in the populated city of Jerusalem, but the world would soon see that God's kingdom ways are in contrast to those of this world system. The opening of God's Kingdom business on earth would commence at an unlikely place, out near the desert at the lower Jordan river area. However, to God it was a significant and historical place.

1400 years before this, a miracle had taken place at that location. (see Joshua 3) Joshua had brought the Israelites just to the east of the Jordan river, in preparation to enter the promised land. The Jordan river was now at flood stage. so they camped out for three days. God then revealed his plan to Joshua and his officers who then passed on the orders to all the people. The next day the priests were to take the ark of the covenant to the Jordan and the people were to follow them, but they were to get no closer than 1000 yards to the ark of the covenant for God's holy fire and powerful presence was in the ark. Joshua told the people:

Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you. - Joshua 3:5

The next day Joshua told the priests to carry the ark and stand in the river. God had showed him that when the priests carrying the ark set foot in the Jordan, the water flowing downstream would be cut off and stand in a heap. That is what happened! They crossed the river bed on dry ground (just as their ancestors had done at the Red Sea - Exodus 14). God was glorified once again and these Israelites now had greater faith in the promise he had previously given to them; that they would be able to drive out their enemies in the promised land.

When Jesus arrived at the Jordan river in 27 A.D. , he was similar to the ark of the covenant that had carried God's holy and powerful presence and had led the Israelites through the desert, to the Jordan river and into the promised land. Jesus had also now come to lead the people into a different promised land. He referred to it as the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God. For the next 3 1/2 years, he would demonstrate that kingdom with signs and wonders and also teach about it. However, he would also have to deal with the number one enemy of that kingdom in order that the world could enter and fully enjoy life in the new kingdom.

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. - 1 John 3:8 NKJV

Quite often when there is a grand opening of a new business or enterprise, there is a lot of extravagant advertising and promotion. At times the local newspaper reporters and politicians will also be there. and sometimes ribbons are cut. There was no such fanfare the day that Jesus came to introduce the KGB (Kingdom of God Business) It was a humble, unattractive setting with a crowd of ordinary people. Some were curious onlookers, others sought hope for a better life, and there were also a few skeptics. There were two others looking on that day who were invisible to the crowd' One descended upon Jesus at his baptism in the form of a dove. The other spoke words of affirmation over Jesus.

'This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.'

These three had been working together on many great events throughout history, including the very creation of the universe and all that is in it. Now, what was about to take place at the baptism and early ministry of Jesus was the introduction of a kingdom from God that mankind as a whole had never experienced before. The crowd that was gathered there would not have fully appreciated what was happening.

At the creation of the heavens and earth, the morning stars sang and the angels shouted for joy. - Job 38:7. The angelic hosts of heaven appeared again to shepherds in a field outside of Bethlehem and praised God for the announcement by an angel of the Lord about the new born child who was the Savior, Messiah and Lord. - Luke 2:8-14. There may have angelic hosts there the day Jesus was baptized, but we have no record of it. As we close this message, you may wonder why I entitled it a grand opening. What does the word 'grand' mean? Not all of these definitions are applicable for the opening of God's kingdom, but I will star * those that are and will make my own comments in parenthesis in bold letters.

VARIOUS MEANINGS OF GRAND

- 1 a: Having more importance than others : *FOREMOST
b: Having higher rank than others bearing the same general designation
(the opening of God's kingdom was more important than any business ever started)
- 2 a: INCLUSIVE, COMPREHENSIVE *
(most businesses have a certain niche in the market that they excel in as they cater to certain groups of people. The kingdom of God is relevant to all people everywhere in all walks of life and activity)
b: DEFINITIVE, INCONTROVERTIBLE
(The kingdom of God is God's will being done....nothing more, nothing less)
- 3 CHIEF, PRINCIPAL * *(Jesus said for us to 'seek first the kingdom of God, because it is more important than any earthly kingdom!')*
- 4 Large and striking in size, scope, extent, or conception *
(The kingdom of God/ Heaven will one day make all earthly kingdoms obsolete. As Handel's Hallelujah chorus says: 'The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. and He will reign forever and forever!')
- 5 LAVISH, SUMPTUOUS
a: grand celebration
b: marked by a regal form and dignity
(Jesus began with humility, simplicity, not with lavish pageantry)
c: fine or imposing in appearance or impression
d: LOFTY, SUBLIME
(Jesus was ordinary looking but did make an impression with his miracles and authority)
- 6 a: pretending to social superiority : SUPERCILIOUS
b: intended to impress
(Jesus came as a servant and did not seek a name for himself but only to do the heavenly Father's will)

7 very good : WONDERFUL*

(Jesus whole life and ministry was filled with signs and miracles of God's kingdom activity. He did things that made people 'wonder' about his words and actions. His first miracle was changing water to wine at a wedding. However, as Jesus began His ministry at the Jordan, no one there could fully comprehend the immensity and ultimate extent of the kingdom of heaven that arrived that day.)

However, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were not unaware, for they had planned this day in the far reaches of eternity. Now the time had fully come for their kingdom of light to pierce the darkness that had blinded the world since the fall of mankind in Eden.

*When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as He was praying **heaven was opened** and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: You are my Son whom I love; with you I am well pleased. - Luke 3:21-22 NIV*

God now expects his church to be agents of his kingdom in a similar way. He told his disciples to '**Occupy until I come back**'. Luke 19:13. The word occupy is a business term about trading or investing. In this case, Jesus refers to 'kingdom business'. He first mentioned this when he was 12 years old in the temple and said that he must be about his 'Father's business'. The public ministry of Jesus demonstrates what the kingdom business is all about. - Luke 4:17-19

The world changed forever the day that Jesus introduced His kingdom and heaven opened.

IT WAS A GRAND OPENING

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Dec.2021

