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**TO MY POLITICAL FRIENDS, BRIEFLY:**

I was terribly disappointed with the outcome of the Georgia Senatorial election. It was my prayer and expectation that a Republican majority in the U.S. Senate would bring some balance to national rule. The future for America and especially for Christians appears dire.

But the reaction of many Christians, even people whom I know to be deeply committed Christians, is in my opinion completely out of bounds. Some of them are so angry and frustrated that they seem to be espousing civil war.

"They are evil, they are of the devil; we are right, we are on God's side. Whatever we have to do, we must prevail politically, we must!"

Some people on the right and on the left feel exactly this way, and I have loved ones in my immediate family who represent these two extremes. I love them so much I would die for them, and I have been trying to act as peacemaker. It really breaks my heart.

When the citizens of Israel attempted to draft Jesus as their king and leader to throw down their oppressive rulers in Rome, He absolutely refused and said they completely misunderstood His purpose in coming as their Messiah. And remember that their rulers were demonic men like Herod, Titus, Nero and Domitian.

Please, dear friends, consider what you are feeding on. If you continue to feed on media and messages of hate, outrage and violence, your heart will continue to lead you down that dark path. *Out of the heart come the issues of life.* And please dial down the rhetoric. I beg of you. Please pray about the kinds of messages you are forwarding to your mailing list. Are they the kinds of things Jesus would say?

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**WHAT ON EARTH IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?**

So here comes this Rabbi, this teacher, wandering around the country. We know who He was, but they didn't have a clue. He was the one for whom they had been looking for hundreds of years!

What does He do? What does He say? How does he start? Mark describes it as follows: *THE TIME IS FULFILLED, AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND. REPENT, AND BELIEVE IN THE GOSPEL.* (Mark 1:15, NKJV)

What a loaded declaration! First, He said, **THE TIME IS FULFILLED**. This moment was the culmination of their history.

- Abraham was called by God about 2,000 years before Christ

- Abraham's family spent 430 years of slavery in Egypt
- Moses came and delivered them from slavery, then they spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness
- Joshua led them into the promised land
- Judges ruled the land for 320 years (Samson, etc)
- Kings ruled the land (Saul, David, Solomon....)
- Prophets were raised up (Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel.....)

During all these centuries, there came forth a progressive revelation of God -- through this long history of the Jews -- revealing facets of God's nature, character and purpose: "God is Creator; there is only one God; He is universal, holy, Judge; He is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent; He is Redeemer; Healer, Deliverer; and on and on." These revelations came forth through over 1,500 years of history (the canon of the Hebrew Bible, our Old Testament, was closed about 430 years before Christ came on the scene). This was a unique way of revelation, there has been nothing like it in all of history.

And all of this revelation pointed to the coming of the Messiah, "Christos" in Greek, "Christ" in, English. The Christ would be the ultimate revelation of God, He would fulfill and tie together all of the partial revelations that had come previously. Over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament pointed to the coming of the Messiah: that He would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14); born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:1); sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12); His hands and feet would be pierced (Psalm 22:16); His garments divided by lots (Psalm 22:18); He would come forth from the grave (Psalm 16:10, & the example of Jonah); etc. These prophecies all fit Jesus of Nazareth and can fit no one else, and they were written from 400 years to 1,500 years before Jesus was born.

Consider carefully what the resurrected Christ spoke to His disciples as recorded in Luke 24:44-45 - *These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.*

Jesus was saying that their entire Bible was written about Him (the "Law of Moses" was the first five books of the Bible, whose human author was Moses; the Prophets were all the major and minor prophets; and the Psalms or Writings included Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, etc.) Jesus said, *When you have seen Me, you have seen the Father.* Jesus Christ is the ultimate revelation of the one true God!

Next, Jesus says in Mark 1:15, **AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND**. Note: It is "at hand," near, close, not just close in time but close physically; in fact, you can reach out and touch it, for you can reach out and touch Me! I am carrying it, I have brought it to earth with Me.

The focus of Jesus' ministry when He walked the earth was the Kingdom of God. This phrase is used 107 times in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Actually, Matthew uses the phrase Kingdom of Heaven, which means the same, because his book was directed primarily to the Jews and they did not write or speak the name of God because they felt His name was too holy to be used directly.

- Matthew 4:23 - *Jesus went about all Galilee preaching the gospel of the Kingdom and healing all kinds of sickness and healing the demon-possessed.*
- Mark 1:15 - Quoted above.
- Luke 8:1-2 - *Jesus went into all the villages preaching the Kingdom of God and healing all their infirmities.*
- Luke 9:1-2 - *Jesus sent out the 12 and gave them power and authority over all demons; He sent them to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick.*
- Luke 10:9 - *Jesus sent out 70 others and said, Heal the sick and say to them, the Kingdom of God has come near you.*
- There are many other similar passages.

Do you notice something in the above Scriptures? Note the connection of the Kingdom of God to healing the sick and authority over the demonic. 1 Corinthians 4:20 says, *For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.* Jesus didn't just bring inspirational words about God but power - -

- Power to set people free from their sins
- Power to heal their broken hearts
- Power to heal their sicknesses and pains
- Power over the devil and the work of demons
- Power over death itself

That is the God we serve! He is alive, active in the world, powerful to set us free and establish His Kingdom among us.

Jesus poses this rhetorical question again and again: "What is the Kingdom of God like?" or "With what shall I compare the Kingdom of God?" He answers His question by telling stories, parables, 40 of them, which He calls "Mysteries of the Kingdom."

*The Kingdom of Heaven is like a sower who went out to sow seeds; some fell on rocky ground, some among thorns, some on good ground.... The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed which grew into a great tree.... It is like a woman who hid leaven in the dough.... Like a pearl of great price.... Like a net cast into the sea.... Like workers in a vineyard.... Like wise and foolish virgins.... Like a man who entrusted money to his servants and went away for a season.... Like a man who threw a party.... Like a lost sheep .... Like a prodigal son.* Forty parables explaining the Kingdom of God.

So what is the Kingdom of God? Since it is the focus of Jesus' ministry, the focus of the New Testament, why is it so obscure to us? Could you give a simple definition? Some people say it is the church, but it is not the church although it certainly includes the church.

**The Kingdom of God is any place where God rules as King.** Is God truly King in your heart? Then the Kingdom of God is within you. God is the Creator, and He is the King over

the entire universe, including the earth. But there is presently another king over the world (mankind), a kingdom of evil. The devil has a kingdom. In Matthew 12:26, Jesus said, *If Satan is divided against himself, then how will his kingdom stand? Is God king over the world right now? Have you looked at the news lately? Chaos, evil, war, crime, sin, disease, starvation, terrorism! It doesn't look like heaven, does it? On this earth there is presently the rule of evil, the kingdom of darkness. But Light has come into the darkness, Jesus is the Light of the world, and the darkness will not overcome it! Jesus has come to set up God's Kingdom right in the midst of the darkness.*

In Exodus 8:1, Moses spoke for God and confronted Pharaoh: **Let my people go!** Pharaoh did let them go, but it took more than words, it took miracles, plagues, the power of a mighty God. Moses was a type of Christ.

Jesus comes into the world, confronts the devil, and His voice is like thunder: **Let my people go!** Jesus was not a type, He was the Messiah, the promised Deliverer and Savior. Jesus won the victory over darkness on the cross. Victory is certain, but it has only begun. He left the mopping up operation to you and me so we can be a part of it.

Where is the Kingdom of God? In Matthew 6:9, the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us to say, *Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* This prayer states plainly that the Kingdom of God is where God's will is being done. God's will is already being done in heaven, we are to pray that His will to be done on earth. First of all, in this earth that is our body. We are made of clay, of earth. Scientists say that the average man is composed of eight buckets of water and a bucket and a half of dirt. If you don't believe it, wait 50 years and look around. It is strange that we can have so much pride when all we are physically is water and dirt. We are to pray for God's will to be done in my body, my life, and in my school or business, and in my community, and in my nation. Our purpose on earth is to bring God's Kingdom to every sphere of our influence.

Many would say, "Well, Glenn, that's high-flown rhetoric, but it is all imaginary. A Kingdom of God versus a kingdom of evil. That is just religious jargon. It is not my reality, my paradigm, my worldview. I know people are not perfect and bad things happen, but I believe that people are basically good, and I certainly don't believe in a literal devil. I can't see two kingdoms. I just don't perceive the world like that."

In John 3:3, Jesus says to Nicodemus, *Most assuredly, unless one is born again (or born from above), he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* You may believe in God, and you may belong to a church, but if you can't see, perceive, comprehend the Kingdom of God amidst a kingdom of darkness, there are two possibilities:

1. You have not been "born again," or "born from above."
2. You are still blind to spiritual reality, in which case you need to read and meditate on the teachings of Jesus and pray for revelation.

**Correction:** As I proof-read this newsletter, I realized I had added my own thoughts to the clear teaching of Jesus. Jesus

said that "Unless one is born from above he cannot see the Kingdom of God." He did not add an addendum like I did with No. 2 above. Jesus simply said to Nicodemus that the reason he couldn't "see" the Kingdom of God was because he had not been born again, or born from above. Only God can give us a spiritual second birth. We must be "born from above."

In line with this insight, Jesus says in John 3:5, Unless you are born from above, you can't enter the Kingdom of God. We must see this. This is the focus of Jesus' teaching.

Next, Jesus says in Mark 1:15, **REPENT AND BELIEVE THE GOSPEL (or the GOOD NEWS)**. The essence of sin is (as I put on my cardboard crown): I am my own king! All sin comes from this.

- I am in control
- I choose my own lifestyle
- I decide what is right and wrong for me
- If it is right for me, no one can tell me differently
- I am the center of the universe
- All selfishness, greed, substance abuse, porn and sexual addictions, crime, war come from this idea.

Look at the first bullet: "I am in control!"

1. A husband dominates his wife - berates her constantly, is selfish with the money, curses her, even beats her
2. A wife manipulates and criticizes her husband
3. Father or mother dominate and control their growing children
4. People adopt New Age beliefs, Hinduism, astrology, fetishes, spells, to control other people and to control their circumstances
5. People use money to try to control and protect themselves, to give them security

The idea that I am in control is an illusion. Money can't protect you. Can you really depend on the stock market? Witchcraft can't protect you. We are not even in control of the time of our death. You may have a stroke before the week is out, or you may have an encounter on the highway with someone sending a text message. Only God is ultimately in control.

The only wise course is to lay your crown at Jesus' feet, abdicate your kingdom, and make Him King of your life. Surrender the control of your life to Him. You don't elect a King, you acknowledge him and obey him. Some people say, "I'm not ready to decide. I think I will stay on the fence for awhile." There is no fence. Jesus says, "You are either for me or against me." Today, this very moment, you are either in the kingdom of self or the Kingdom of God.

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**HOW ARE WE DOING WITH THE MAIN THING?**

As we enter a new year, it is surely a good time to take a little test: How are we Christians doing regarding the main thing, the most important thing? And what is that? you ask. Jesus said that the main thing, He called it The Great Commandment, is *To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength; and to love your neighbor as yourself.* So how are you doing? How am I doing? Maybe we need to ask the Lord to show us how we're doing with love?

Let's be reminded that **God is love!** (1 John 4:8) What a statement, what a revelation! The very nature of God, the invisible Being who created the universe, is love. He loves mankind. *For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* (John 3:16) Oh, but note that "whoever" is not general, it's individual and personal. God doesn't just love mankind, He loves you and me personally.

A certain woman was raised in a terrible home: rejection, cursing, physical and sexual abuse, abandonment, alcohol and drugs. Her home had it all. In her early 20's she heard the Good News and accepted Christ as her Savior. Her life changed dramatically, but like many who are raised with rejection and abuse she found it hard to believe that God really loved her personally. On a Sunday in mid-winter she was feeling depressed, and she went to the altar of her church again to beg God for help. Suddenly she was transported in a vision to the foot of the cross. She felt herself to literally be standing there looking up as the suffering Savior. He looked down directly into her eyes and said, "Sarah, I did it for you." Those words melted the ice around Sarah's heart and transformed her life. That is His word to you and me today. Jesus didn't die just for mankind, He died for Glenn, and Marilyn, and Mike, and Jose', and Bev, and you.

So how much do you love God the Father? How much do you love God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ? How much do you love the Holy Spirit, God with us moment by moment? Do you love Him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength? Do you love Him more than you love money? Sports? Politics? Your family? Your security and comfort? John goes on to say, *This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.* (1 John 4:10) We see that John returns time after time to the ultimate proof that God loves us - He sent his Son to die in our place on the cross.

But remember that Jesus said there were two parts to the Great Commandment. The first and most important part was to love God, and the second part was to love others. John even makes an amazing statement in 1 John 4:20, *If anyone says "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.* We all need to think long and hard about that statement, especially if we have resentment and hatred in our heart against anyone.

One of the most beautiful descriptions of love in all literature is found in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 13. It is commonly called "The Love Chapter." I am using The Passion Translation:

Vs. 1 - *If I were to speak with eloquence in earth's many languages or in the heavenly tongues of angels, yet I didn't express myself with love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.* Paul has been teaching about the gifts of the Spirit in Chapter 12, including the gift of tongues. The Corinthian church people had received this gift, and they had been bragging that it meant they were superior, more spiritual, than other Christians. Paul reminds them that God's gifts are gifts, not achievements, and using any of these gifts without love is just calling attention to yourself like a loud cymbal.

Vs. 2 - *And if I were to have the gift of prophecy with a profound understanding of God's hidden secrets, and I possessed unending supernatural knowledge, and if I had the greatest gift of faith that could move mountains, but have never learned to love, then I am nothing.*

Vs. 4 - 6 *Love is incredibly patient. Love is gentle and consistently kind to all. It refuses to be jealous. Love does not brag about one's achievements nor inflate its own importance. Love does not traffic in shame and disrespect, nor seek its own honor. Love is not easily irritated or quick to take offence....Love never stops believing the best for others ....and never gives up.*

Someone suggested that as a little test we take 1 Cor: 4-6 and replace "Love" with your name. Thus, "Glenn is incredibly patient. Betty is gentle and consistently kind to all. Eric doesn't brag.....(Your name) is not easily irritated or offended or quick to take offence. Etc."

Good night, I fail about half of those declarations. Those who know me best might give me a lower grade than that.

Paul goes on to say, "Make love your aim," or "Follow the way of love" Love should be our highest goal.

Remember Jesus' precious words to us in The Sermon on the Mount, and I think this teaching might especially apply in these days to our thoughts and words about our political opponents:

*You have been taught "Love your neighbors and hate the one who hates you." However, I say to you, love your enemy, bless the one who curses you, do something wonderful for the one who hates you, and respond to the very ones who persecute you by praying for them. For that will reveal your identity as children of our heavenly Father.....What reward do you deserve if you only love the ones who love you? Don't even the tax collectors do that? How are you different from others if you limit your kindness only to your friends. Don't even the ungodly do that? Since you are children of a perfect Father in heaven, you are to be perfect like him.*

I am so grateful to the Lord for loving me when I was his enemy. Because of his love and patience, eventually my hard heart melted and started changing. His kindness led me to repentance. So how are we doing with the main thing, the command to love?

## **INVITATION TO TUESDAY NIGHT ZOOM MEETING**

On Tuesday evenings at 7:00 PM, Lynne Cumming and I have been leading a one-hour Zoom meeting for a few people that are overcoming their addictions and learning to be followers of Jesus.

There is some teaching and a lot of discussion, answering questions about real issues in people's lives. We talk about such things as:

- Dealing with fear, panic, stress
- Overcoming self-hatred and self-condemnation
- What does it mean to live a life of love?
- How does God guide us in life?
- How can you tell whether impressions that come to you are from God, your imagination or the devil?
- How can we deal with the death of loved ones?

You are invited to join us:

Tuesday, 7:00 PM

Meeting ID - 3286045985

Password - 12345

## **THE OLIVE PRESS**

Ancient people used oil in their simple little lamps. Lamp oil could be made from a wide variety of plants, including nuts and seeds. Animal fats were also used - butter, fish oil, whale blubber, etc. In the Middle East, olive oil was most commonly used. Oil was extruded from the olives by pressing them. Olive oil was the superior oil; it was odorless, smokeless, safe to use indoors and gave off more light than other oils.

The finest olive oil, and the oil that God ordained should be used in the seven-branched menorah in the Temple, was oil that came from olives by pressing them (or "beating" them) in a way specified in the Law. (Exodus 27:20)

On the night he was betrayed, Jesus led his disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane. "Gethsemane" is the Hebrew word for "olive press." There, as Jesus prayed alone and faced the cross where he would take upon himself the sins of the world, his agony of soul was so great that clots of blood came forth with his sweat and fell to the ground.

John wrote about Jesus' birth: *The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.* (John 1:9) And thirty-three years later, Jesus suffered unimaginable pressure in Gethsemane so that on the following day, on the cross, he could shine forth as the Light of the world.

Happy New Year,

Glenn

I would like to thank each of you for your support of this ministry. If any of you want to receive tax credit for your financial contributions, you may send them to:  
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