

# The Good News

September-October 2012

A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING

## What Is the Kingdom of God?

The Kingdom of God: A Vision for Your Life **11** • God's Blueprint for Peace on Earth **20**  
Whom Would Jesus Choose to Be a World Leader? **24** • Please Heal My Broken Heart **38**

BEYOND  
TODAY  
UNDERSTANDING YOUR FUTURE

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## There's a New World Coming!

**W**hy is our world plagued with so many problems? If God exists and is really in charge, why doesn't He put an end to all these evils?

These crucial questions have perplexed people for centuries. Some, seeing so much suffering, conclude that God doesn't exist. Paradoxically, some look at the same troubled world, yet they're convinced that the Kingdom of God spoken of in the Bible exists now on earth in the form of one or more church organizations, or in the collective worldwide efforts of Bible believers, or in the hearts of men.

Thus the theme of this issue—what exactly is the Kingdom of God? What does the Bible really teach about this critical subject? And how can we become a part of it?

Few realize the real answer as to why our world suffers from so many intractable problems. Yet the answer is simple: In terms of human society this isn't *God's* world, it's *Satan's*.

This evil being is called "the god of this age" (2 Corinthians

**Few realize why our world suffers from so many intractable problems. Yet the answer is simple: In terms of human society this isn't *God's* world, it's *Satan's*.**

4:4). He "deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9). Jesus Christ calls him "the ruler of this world" (John 14:30; 16:11). John tells us that "the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one" (1 John 5:19). (To learn more, download or request our free booklet *Is There Really a Devil?*)

So no, this world is not the Kingdom of God. Jesus Himself said Christians are to pray that the Kingdom will *come* (Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2). It is to be our foremost goal (Matthew 6:33). Flesh and blood cannot inherit it (1 Corinthians 15:50).

So what is this Kingdom, and when does it come? At Christ's return to the earth, the announcement will be made that "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever" (Revelation 11:15, English Standard Version).

Many Bible passages reveal that this will be a literal Kingdom established on earth. Jesus told His 12 disciples that when He reigns on His throne in that Kingdom, they would reign with Him, "judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 1:28). Daniel 7:14 is a prophecy that in this everlasting Kingdom given to Jesus Christ, "all peoples, nations, and languages [will] serve Him."

What will this Kingdom be like? Again, many prophecies tell us. Great miracles of healing will occur—the blind will see, the deaf will hear, the lame will walk and the mute will speak (Isaiah 35:5-6). The world's desert areas will be transformed, made lush with streams and flowers (verses 1-2, 6-7). Agricultural areas will be astoundingly productive (Amos 9:13). Peace will break out across the globe, and people will no longer learn war (Isaiah 2:4).

All this is but a taste of the future. Yes, a new world is coming. It won't be a world of merely human leaders, human government and human ideas about what works best. It will be a glorious world in which Jesus Christ will reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

And the truly good news is that He wants you to have a part in it! "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's pleasure to give you the kingdom," He tells us (Luke 12:32).

Learn more about that invitation in this issue. Are you willing to take Him up on His offer?

—Scott Ashley, *Managing editor*



# The Good News

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# What Is the Kingdom of God?



Some think it's heaven. Others say it's here on earth. Some think it's a feeling of brotherhood among Christian believers or the Church itself. Others deem it wholly apocalyptic. What is this Kingdom of which Jesus Christ spoke so often? *by Tom Robinson*

It's remarkable that among the 2 billion people in the world identified as Christian, few give much if any thought to the concept of the Kingdom of God—and that fewer still have even a remote clue as to what it actually is. Remarkable because according to the founder of the Christian faith, Jesus Christ, it's supposed to be priority number one for every Christian. As He said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33).

Jesus spoke of the Kingdom in one

instructive parable after another, explaining that nothing is of greater worth and importance (see Matthew 13:44-45). This Kingdom was the subject of the gospel—or good news—that Jesus preached (Mark 1:14-15).

In His outline on how to pray, He taught that we should express this fervent desire to God: "*Your kingdom come*" (Matthew 6:10, emphasis added throughout).

So just what is the Kingdom of God—and *where* is it? Does it exist now? Or is it

yet future? And why is it so important?

## Heaven or end-time hope?

One source of confusion lies in the term "kingdom of heaven," as found repeatedly in the Gospel of Matthew. Some have taken this as a reference to going to heaven at death—a common yet erroneous misunderstanding (send for or download our free booklet *What Happens After Death?*)

Parallel passages in Mark and Luke use the phrase "kingdom of God." So the terms are synonymous. Matthew was writing mainly to a Jewish audience, among whom it was common to avoid directly saying God's name out of reverence. Thus Matthew substituted the phrase "kingdom of heaven" instead of "kingdom of God"—heaven simply being where God is.



# Exploring God's Word

The biblical prophets referred to the kingship of God as well as His rule over both heaven and earth—and to His eventual reign over all nations of the earth. Many Jews of the first century were, as Joseph of Arimathea, “waiting for the kingdom of God” (Mark 15:43)—that is, expecting it to come in the future.

Many Jews were then looking for a military overthrow of their Roman rulers and the establishment of an independent Israelite kingdom restored under a Messiah sent by God. As they viewed Bible prophecy, this earthly kingdom would subdue all enemies at the end of the present age and reign

## Jesus Christ spoke of the Kingdom of God as a real government to come in a future age—although He also made clear that it was more than that.

supreme in a glorious age to come. To some this was synonymous with the time of divine judgment and the resurrection of the dead.

### Inner acceptance and the Church?

However, some began to focus on the Kingdom in a more personal sense, rabbinic interpretation eventually taking it to mean accepting God as one's King. This and certain statements of Jesus, such as one often translated “the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21), has led many to conclude that Jesus' use of the phrase “Kingdom of God” principally refers to inner acceptance of and personal submission to God as Sovereign today.

This notion has further led many to view the Church—the collective body of true Christian believers—as the Kingdom. From this point of view, the Kingdom of God has already come. And as more and more become part of the Church and accept the rule of God in their lives, so the thinking goes, the Kingdom of God is advanced on the earth.

Many have gone further in proclaiming it the Church's responsibility to take over the present world and set up biblical government throughout it as the Kingdom of God. Some have even advocated military conquest, while others envision takeover through the political process. These ideas are antithetical to Jesus' teachings about the Kingdom.

Yet we should realize that, as we will examine more clearly, Jesus did speak of the Kingdom of God as a real government to come in a future age—although He also made clear that it was more than that.

### Definition and the King of all creation

In seeking to define the Kingdom of God, it makes sense to start with the definition of the word *kingdom*. The term refers either to the reign or rule of a monarch or to the sphere of his rule—the realm.

In both cases, there are four elements: 1) the ruler himself; 2) the realm over which the monarch rules; 3) subjects within

the realm; and 4) a system of laws and government under which the kingdom is administered. So the terminology “Kingdom of God” must refer essentially to the governance or government of God.

By this definition, the Kingdom exists now, as the Creator God is sovereign over all creation, with all subject to Him by law. “The LORD reigns,” the Psalms proclaim (93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1). However, Scripture also looks forward to a time when God's rule is universally accepted, which is not the case today.

### The present ruler of this world

Prior to man's creation, a great rebellion against God by a third of the angelic host took place under the leadership of an archangel now known as Satan, a name that means Adversary (compare Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28). Satan was cast down to the earth along with His cohorts, now known as demons (see Luke 10:18; Revelation 12:4). And they now hold sway over the earth.

Our first human parents chose to give in to Satan's temptation in the Garden of Eden to sin against God (Genesis 3). From that time on, human civilization has been under the *misrule* of Satan and his demons.

Scripture tells us that Satan deceives the whole world (Revelation 12:9) and spiritually “broadcasts” his wrong moods and

attitudes to a receptive humanity (see Ephesians 2:2). Jesus called him “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and acknowledged that he has a “kingdom” (see Matthew 12:26; Luke 11:18). The apostle Paul later called him “the god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Thus, the present world is effectively *the kingdom of Satan*. Yet God has allowed this so that people will learn the lessons about choosing the wrong way to live and what it means to be cut off from Him.

God maintains ultimate rule over His creation (see Psalm 29:10; 89:9; Job 38:8, 11). And at times He intervenes to ultimately direct the course of nations according to His prophesied plan (see Daniel 2:20-21; 4:17, 32, 34-37). But most of what happens in individual and national affairs—and especially within the human heart, which is “desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9)—is due to the powerful influence of the devil.

### God the King of Israel

From the time of Moses until the establishment of the monarchy under King Saul, God Himself ruled the people through a system of judges and priests. The judge and prophet Samuel described that time to the Israelites as a period “when the LORD your God was your king” (1 Samuel 12:12). So the nation of Israel was in a certain sense the Kingdom of God on earth at that time.

But the hearts of the people were still greatly influenced by the king of this world, Satan the devil. And they rejected God's direct rulership in favor of a human monarch like other nations around them (1 Samuel 8:7).

Still, the human king was to represent God and even “sat on the throne of the LORD” (1 Chronicles 29:23). Yet most of the Israelite kings were wicked rulers—and even the more righteous ones failed to fully obey and properly represent God.

A great part of the lesson of ancient Israel and its monarchy was that even if a nation has God's laws and actual presence among it and its leaders, this is not remotely sufficient to lead people into the utopia mankind longs for. Miraculous change must take place in the human heart. And the enemy of God and man must be removed from the picture.

Rest assured, that day is coming. God's



plan all along was to establish His Kingdom over all nations—but with a changed heart of the leadership and people to set a righteous example for the rest of the world.

## The Messiah or Christ to reign on David's throne

Many prophecies foretold a future King, of the line of Israel's King David, known as the Messiah or Christ who would lead and govern the world.

As Isaiah the prophet wrote: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; 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*" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Likewise, the archangel Gabriel announced to Mary just prior to Jesus' conception: "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. *And He will reign over the house of Jacob [Israel] forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end*" (Luke 1:32-33).

This is clearly speaking of a real throne, a real dynasty, a real kingdom—the Israelite Kingdom of God becoming the ruling Kingdom over the entire world.

When the Roman governor Pontius Pilate asked Jesus during His trial if He were a king, Jesus responded: "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world" (John 18:37). Jesus was not speaking of some sentimental symbolic leading of people. As many passages proclaim, He was referring to a complete overhaul of the world order by extending His rule over all nations!

## Human kingdoms will cease with God's Kingdom

In ancient times, Israel often fell under domination by gentile kingdoms under the rule of Satan. Yet prophecy foretold that a succession of great gentile empires would be followed by another kingdom from God.

As recorded in Daniel 2, God gave the Babylonian emperor Nebuchadnezzar a vivid dream of a great humanlike image composed of a succession of metals from head to toe. It was struck at the bottom by a stone, which smashed the image to dust and grew into a great mountain filling the whole earth (verses 31-36).

The different parts represented a succession of four great kingdoms through history. The first was specified to be Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian kingdom, while the others would follow in order—the Medo-Persian Empire, the Greco-Macedonian Empire and then the Roman Empire. The latter would continue on in some form to the end of the age, experiencing a resurgence then under a group of 10 kings. The same succession is presented under a vision Daniel had of four beasts in Daniel 7.

What should be clear is that these prophecies are speaking of literal, earthly kingdoms. Then a fifth kingdom appears. We see it in Daniel 2 in the stone growing to fill the earth. Note the interpretation God gives: "And in the days of these kings [the 10 making up the final revival



of the Roman Empire] *the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people [as the former ones were]; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever*" (verse 44).

This fifth kingdom that increases to fill the earth is the Kingdom of God—and it is a very real kingdom that will take the place of former earthly kingdoms. This is confirmed in Daniel 7, which shows the dominions of the previous kingdoms taken away and given to "One like the Son of Man [the Messiah] . . . *To Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed*" (verses 13-14).

This is speaking of Jesus the Messiah coming from heaven to take over the world. This is wonderful good news—the only hope for a

world rushing headlong toward destruction!

## The transformed world of the age to come

The reign of the world's present king, Satan, will then be over. He will be banished for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-3), a period often called the Millennium (this simply being the word for a 1,000-year period).

Many prophecies speak of the awesome transformation the world will experience when Satan has been removed and Jesus Christ is at last the world's ruling King.

Jerusalem will be the planet's capital—then called "The Throne of the LORD" (Jeremiah 3:17). God's law and Word will go out from there to the rest of the nations, as people seek to be taught by God (Isaiah 2:2-3). They will no longer be at war, for all will learn to live in peace with one another (verse 4).

Even the nature of animals will be changed so that there will be no hurting or destroying throughout this future godly realm (Isaiah 11:6-9). This also represents human beings dwelling peacefully together—as it is a result of the earth being "full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (verse 9).

Barren wastelands and deserts will be transformed to become like Eden (Isaiah 35:1-2, 7; 51:3). And agriculture will become immensely productive (Amos 9:13). People will be healed—both physically and spiritually. The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the lame will leap, the mute will speak (Isaiah 35:5-6).

Some see all of this as merely figurative of a better world under the spread of the Christian faith. But that is denying the plain sense of many passages. There may be some figurative or spiritualized applications of some of these passages, but that's with the understanding that their main thrust is quite literal.

## Christ's followers to reign with Him

It is also incredible to learn that the Messiah will share His rule over the earth with His followers from this age—who at His return are either resurrected or transformed to be given immortality (1 Corinthians 15:50-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

As the prophecy of Daniel 7 states of the fifth kingdom following the four gentile empires of this age: “Then *the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints* [people set apart] *of the Most High*. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him” (verse 27).

The book of Revelation further shows that the saints, Christ's followers from this age, will reign with Him in the age to come

coming to rule all nations in a wonderful age to come. We see it in the changed level of existence we must experience to reign forever with God in His divine family and in the perpetual increase of God's government and peace throughout time and eternity.

All of these elements are important to understand. Some Christian believers focus only on future aspects of God's Kingdom, so that any thought of its present reality is ignored or denied. Usually, though, the problem is just the opposite. People focus on present rule, claiming the Kingdom is here now, and give little thought to the future coming of the Kingdom—maybe not even knowing anything about it. Yet the future aspect is the principal conception in the Bible.

What Jesus meant by the Kingdom of God is primarily the reign of God becom-

## Many prophecies speak of the awesome transformation the world will experience when Satan has been removed and Jesus Christ is at last the world's ruling King.

as kings and priests (20:4, 6) and that “they shall reign on the earth” (5:10, ESV)—again, not in heaven.

Jesus Himself spoke of this future reward to His disciples, stating, “I assure you that when the world is made new and the Son of Man sits upon his glorious throne, you who have been my followers *will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*” (Matthew 19:28, New Living Translation).

And note this parallel description: “I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:29-30).

This passage is very instructive, for it identifies the Kingdom of God with an actual government to be set up in the future—and being “in” the Kingdom with that time. Clearly, the reference to the Kingdom here did not merely mean accepting the reign of God in one's heart at present (see also Luke 22:16, 18; 19:11-27; 21:31—and be sure to read the Questions and Answers on page 45).

### A vital message that matters deeply

The Kingdom of God is a central and unifying theme of all Scripture. We see it in God's role as King over all creation and as the King of Israel. We see it in His rule in our personal lives now and later in Christ

ing established over all people to lead all nations into God's ways and future divine glory too.

This is the way Jesus' apostles still understood His message even after His post-resurrection appearances and instruction. As He was about to ascend into heaven, their last question to Him was, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6).

This is how they understood His Kingdom message, and He did not contradict their conception—He only told them that it wasn't for them to know the timing, which was in the Father's authority (verse 7).

So why is a future conception of the Kingdom so important? Why should we care? The fact is, our lives must be guided by a goal—a vision of the future. Without a guiding vision or revelation from God, we will spiral away from God and ultimately perish (Proverbs 29:18).

As Paul said, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable” (1 Corinthians 15:19). And we will have no motivation to strive to follow Him (compare verses 30-34). The truth is, all we do is for the future God will bring, or it is all for nothing.

Yet understanding the present sense of the Kingdom of God is also vital. For to attain to the foretold future, we must connect with and submit to the rule of the Kingdom today.

## Accepting the Kingdom now

We cannot enter the Kingdom now (again, see the Questions and Answers on page 45), but we can receive it in the sense of accepting it and humbly submitting to it. And we must—otherwise we will *not* enter it in the future. Note what Jesus said: “Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it” (Mark 10:15). We must receive it—accept it—right now to enter it later. And we must do so with childlike trust and humility.

Right now we can have the laws of the Kingdom written in our hearts, and we can have the King of the Kingdom live in our hearts to help us obey those laws (Hebrews 8:10; Galatians 2:20).

We can live the future today—the future age breaking into our lives now, just as it did when Christ came teaching and performing miracles 2,000 years ago. The Bible describes those who are converted with God's Holy Spirit as those who “have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come” (Hebrews 6:5).

As we pray to God daily, “Your kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10), we are effectively cheering on its establishment over all nations. But we are also asking that its rule begin with us right here and now. For if we truly desire the future God proclaims, we will begin living by its terms today.

Continuing, “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” we recognize that God's Kingdom now rules in heaven, where the angels carry out His will in perfect obedience. And we ask that this be so on earth as well—among all, of course, but starting with *us*.

And finally, seeking first God's Kingdom (Matthew 6:33) means to make all that it stands for our very reason for being. And indeed, it truly is the reason we exist! **GN**

### Learn More

The Kingdom of God was at the heart and core of Jesus Christ's teaching. It's a theme found throughout Scripture. It's to be the goal of every Christian. But how much do you know about it? And how can you be a part of it? To learn more, request or download your free copy of *The Gospel of the Kingdom* and *What Is Your Destiny?* today!

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# How Can You Be Part of the Kingdom of God?

The mystery of our existence has puzzled humanity for some 6,000 years. We are curious beings—acutely aware of our good green earth and its marvelous material mechanisms. But why is this uniquely inhabited planet here at all? We probe the universe for answers when they are deftly hidden right here before us in the Bible. *by John Ross Schroeder*

Scientists and would-be scientists write books searching for a “theory of everything”—some unifying framework that would explain and tie together all the loose ends of our existence. Science desperately wants to discover an all-encompassing theory that would solve the many great problems that seriously threaten human survival.

For centuries many have dreamed of humankind eventually bringing about a universal utopia on earth. But the opposite has happened.

Movies have been made that make fun of the meaning of life. Yet philosophers, scientists and theologians continue to diligently look for it.

It's rational to contemplate: Were we intelligently designed and put here to achieve a great plan and purpose? Or was it a great cosmic accident? Logically, life must have meaning and purpose. We should further ask, then, what is that purpose? Does one particular phrase made

up of just four words sum it all up?

## The pearl of great price

Mainstream Christianity speaks continually about Jesus Christ. Yet it never seems to emphasize what He really said. Christ constantly spoke of *the Kingdom of God* to His followers. In parables He compared this spiritual Kingdom to earthly, material things so they could begin to grasp its vital meaning and significance.

Jesus stated, “The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found *one pearl of great price*, went and sold all that he had and bought it” (Matthew 13:45-46, emphasis added throughout).

Jesus' clear point is that the Kingdom of God is so precious that it becomes worth sacrificing everything else to actually enter it. The previous parable makes the same point: “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid, and for joy over it goes and sells all

that he has and buys that field” (verse 44).

This Kingdom of which Jesus spoke embraces the solution to all our human problems and dilemmas. It answers everything! This Kingdom should be the primary goal of all mankind—the central focus of all our necessary subordinate goals.

However, a supremely clever but perverted spirit being has sidetracked humanity into believing all kinds of other philosophies and religions, teaching a witches' brew of false gospels of every type (see Revelation 12:9; Ephesians 2:1-2; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15). Even many if not most churches have lost the plot!

## Can people really enter the Kingdom?

Jesus Christ spoke of the prophets and patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob being in the Kingdom of God (Luke 13:28-29). Matthew in his parallel account uses the term “kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 8:11-12), employing “heaven” as a synonym for God since he was writing to a Jewish audience who avoided using the name of God. The terms Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Heaven are thus synonymous.

Just before His suffering and subsequent death by crucifixion, Christ said to His original apostles: “But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom,

and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:28-30).

Jesus is clearly talking about a literal kingdom, with literal people whom the apostles would “judge”—lead, guide, train and teach!

But the Kingdom will encompass many more than just the Hebrew patriarchs and prophets and the New Testament apostles. The apostle Paul, facing the end of his life, wrote to his beloved friend Timothy the evangelist that “there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord [Jesus Christ], the righteous Judge, will give to me in that Day, and not to me only *but also to all who have loved His appearing*” (2 Timothy 4:8).

These biblical passages show us that people can definitely enter the Kingdom of God. All true Christians will participate

last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead [in Christ] will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (verses 51-53).

In a similar account in 1 Thessalonians 4 Paul corroborates these awesome truths. “For this we say to you *by the word of the Lord . . .*” he writes. The truths that follow in this passage are not his personal ideas, but rather teaching obtained directly from Jesus Christ.

Continuing, he says: “We who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep [in death—with no consciousness at present]. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven . . . with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then

stained by sin. As long as we remain in this rebellious attitude of defiance and disobedience, we are unfit for the Kingdom of God. As a first step to embracing the road to eternal life, we must understand what has already gone awry in our lives.

Sin stands in the way of God’s great plan and purpose for human life—directly in opposition to our eternal salvation as potential sons and daughters in the everlasting Kingdom of God. Sin remains such a stubborn, implacable, deep-rooted enemy that only the death of God’s Son could cancel and blot out its horrendous consequences.

The Bible usually depicts death as the natural consequence of our sins. Disobedience to God’s law of love brings divine punishment (Romans 6:23). So Jesus Christ, completely and totally without sin, died the death which our sins so richly deserved (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)—giving us the awesome opportunity of obtaining forgiveness and full reconciliation with God the Father.

“Sin is the transgression of the law,” we are told in 1 John 3:4 (King James Version). A more modern translation puts it this way: “Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness” (New International Version). Both translations are correct. The apostle James states the same thing: “If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well; but if you show partiality, *you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors*” (James 2:8-9).

We can fail to love both God and our neighbor by what we do as well as what we *don’t* do. To neglect to do what you know is right can be as serious in its consequences as a deliberately conceived, lawless act with malice aforethought. “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

The apostle Paul views sin as a grim and dreadful activity. He regards unrepentant men and women as being “slaves to sin” (Romans 6:17, 20), “sold under sin” (Romans 7:14) and even being taken into captivity by it (verse 23). So we are sinners by nature as well as by choice (Jeremiah 17:9). And yet the sin of human beings can be completely and totally erased through the work of a loving Mediator.

Jesus clearly said, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth [crucified], will draw all peoples to Myself” (John 12:32). But the fact still remains that divine forgiveness can only occur in the lives of *those who really repent*.

## The Kingdom of God embraces the solution to all our human problems and dilemmas. It answers everything! This Kingdom should be the primary goal of all mankind—the central focus of all our necessary subordinate goals.

in and have their part in it!

### The clear boundaries of the Kingdom

The Bible’s “resurrection chapter,” 1 Corinthians 15, contains a rich repository of many critical biblical truths. Verse 50 in particular focuses on our present humanity and mortality. This human, flesh-and-blood physical existence was never intended to be an end in itself; it serves only as a training ground for the Kingdom.

Notice what the apostle Paul wrote here: “Now this I say, brethren, that *flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God*; nor does corruption [decay] inherit incorruption.” Our human bodies age and run down over time. We simply cannot exist permanently in the material flesh. In fact all physical matter, however long it takes, remains in a process of change toward disintegration and decay.

So, then, how can we enter and become a part of the spiritual Kingdom of God? How does God make it possible for flesh-and-blood, mortal human beings to enter that Kingdom?

Paul outlines the solution in the next few passages of 1 Corinthians 15: “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep [in the grave], *but we shall all be changed*—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the

we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (verses 15-17).

However, we will not be able to meet Christ this way while still existing as human flesh. “For our [Christian] citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, *who will transform our lowly [fleshly, perishable] body* that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able to subdue all things to Himself” (Philippians 3:20-21). Jesus is God along with the Father! They know how to accomplish the transformation. We don’t!

Jesus Christ will do for us what we simply cannot perform for ourselves. But there remains something we can and must do in intimate partnership with God and Christ: “*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13). We have to embark on a series of necessary spiritual steps to overcome the obstacles in our way.

### Sin stands ominously in our path

Whether we realize it or not, our mind and thinking are hostile to God and His law of love (Romans 8:7). We have all been

## Transforming our lives

Our first step on the road to ultimate salvation is genuine and heartfelt repentance. The apostle Peter said, "Repent therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19).

Jesus Christ continually stressed the importance of repentance. He stated, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Luke 5:32). Christ plainly taught that our highest priority in life should be to enter the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33). But repentance is the first in a series of basic steps leading to redemption and salvation. God the Father responds to the repentant sinner with total forgiveness, applying the sacrifice of His Son to the humbled and repentant individual (1 John 1:7-9).

When is the best time to repent? *Now!* Ominous clouds of global turmoil and tragedy darken the horizon. Paul stated even during his day, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, *but now commands all men everywhere to repent*" (Acts 17:30).

And what does Jesus demand of those who hear the message of the Kingdom of God? "Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand [in the person of Christ]. Repent, and believe in the gospel'" (Mark 1:14-15).

Everlasting life in the family of God is available to only those who repent of their sins. No exceptions are possible, because "all have sinned and fall[en] short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Repentance is not an ethereal concept which no one can fully grasp. In its most basic sense, it means to *change*. We are to change our minds, change our way of thinking, change our behavior, change our priorities, change our lives.

We are to demonstrate in our lives a changed way of living. This change away from our previous lifestyle will prove the genuineness of our repentance. "Let him who stole steal no longer," for instance (Ephesians 4:28). We should produce "fruits worthy of repentance" (Matthew 3:8)—positive changes in our lives that clearly demonstrate that we indeed now put God first in our lives. Professing to know God, but showing no change in our lives, doesn't cut it (Titus 1:16 ; 1 John 2:3-6).

Like King David of Israel, we must ask God to create a "clean heart" and a right spirit and attitude within us (Psalm 51:10).

Repentance produces a humbled and submissive heart, one that seeks and even begs for God's mercy (Luke 18:13). Then we are ready to take the next fundamental step, asking a true minister of God for baptism for the forgiveness of our sins (Acts 2:38).

## Baptism and the receiving of the Holy Spirit

When the apostle Paul was miraculously struck down and called by God, what did the man to whom God directed him, Ananias, instruct him to do? "Why are you waiting? *Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord*" (Acts 22:16).

Paul had clearly repented and was now willing to do whatever Christ asked of him. His deeply felt regret for his previous life of persecuting Christians emerges several times in his writings. His heartfelt goal was

## Everlasting life in the family of God is available to only those who repent of their sins. No exceptions are possible.

to put it fully behind him and press forward toward the Kingdom of God (Philippians 3:11-14). Later in life Paul never forgot that his old sins had been completely cleansed, washed away and totally forgiven. He had become fully fit for the family of God, enduring as a Christian to the very end.

Many biblical passages tell us that water baptism is a necessary step to obtaining salvation. The symbolism is very clear. Figuratively, our sins are washed away to lie at the bottom of a watery grave—and we should leave them there. This immersion in water pictures the death and burial of our old selves—the former man or woman of sin (Romans 6:2-6). We arise out of the water to begin a new life—ordered by God's great spiritual law, the Ten Commandments.

Jesus commanded His ministers to baptize repentant sinners (Matthew 28:19; John 4:1-3). In fact, Jesus set us all a right example by asking John the Baptist to personally baptize Him even though He had never sinned and had no need of repentance (Matthew 3:13-15; compare 1 Peter 2:21-22). Christ submitted to water baptism in order to fulfill all righteousness.

But this is not all. Scriptural example shows that, after baptism, the next step in the salvation process involves the laying on of hands by one or more of God's true ministers so that the repentant person may receive God's Holy Spirit. In the brief list of basic Christian doctrines in Hebrews 6:1-2, the laying on of hands is mentioned along with

repentance, baptism and faith toward God.

The basic formula is plainly articulated in Acts 2:38 when Peter delivered His sermon on the day of Pentecost: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission [forgiveness] of sins, *and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*"

## A life of spiritual growth commences

This completes our brief study about how to enter the Kingdom of God. After an encouraging and joyous beginning, we are to grow in the Christian faith. Among the last words the apostle Peter wrote were that we are to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). This is a lifelong process requiring dedication and commitment on our part.

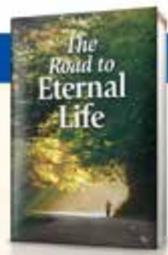
We must also patiently endure the trials and tests that will inevitably follow, trusting in God for deliverance (Acts 14:22; Psalm 34:19). "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21:19, KJV).

Jesus Himself said in the lengthy prophecy of end-time events He gave to His disciples on the Mount of Olives shortly before His death, "He who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13). In context, the very next verse speaks of preaching the "gospel of the kingdom."

Finally, we need to recall an earlier admonition, also from the lips of Jesus Christ, in Luke 12:31-32: "But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things [our material needs] shall be added to you. Do not fear little flock, *for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*" **GN**

## Learn More

The Kingdom of God and how we may enter it is a huge and important subject, with only the basics covered in this article. Scripture has much more to say, so we recommend that you request or download our free booklets *The Road to Eternal Life, Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion, The Gospel of the Kingdom* and *What Is Your Destiny?*



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# The Kingdom of God:

## A Vision for Your Life

Do you have a vision that guides your life? If so, what is it? What vision does God have for you, and how can you make that vision your own? *by Dennis Luker*

**W**hat keeps you going? When you get up in the morning, what motivates and energizes you to tackle tough problems and keep moving forward?

Speaking some of the most comforting and powerful words ever voiced, Jesus Christ encouraged His disciples, “Do not fear, little flock, for *it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom*” (Luke 12:32, emphasis added throughout).

What is this Kingdom and what does it mean for us? What does it mean to you?

The Kingdom of God is nothing short of the centerpiece of the Bible. We receive grace and salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ so we can be a part of this everlasting Kingdom.

Prophets and apostles alike eloquently speak time and again about the establishment of the Kingdom of God—resulting in the literal spiritual transformation of Christians into the family of God as immortal sons and daughters (2 Corinthians 6:18)—as God’s main focus and purpose.

The Kingdom is one that, as Daniel prophesied, “shall never be destroyed” and that “shall stand forever” (Daniel 2:44).

In stark contrast to the trials of this world, we see beyond today a prophesied time of unprecedented wonder, peace and plenty (Isaiah 11:6-9; 35:1-2, 5-7). For those of us awaiting and anticipating this Kingdom, it represents a mighty vision.

Again, what does this vision mean for you?

### **An unexpected change of plans**

As a young man in college more than half a century ago, these words didn’t mean much for me at all. I’d read them, but being biblically naive, I didn’t understand them.

But I was to find that God had His own plan for me, just as He has a plan for you. You may find elements of what God did for me in what He is doing for you. Here’s a bit about how He led me to attaining a vision of His Kingdom.

Almost 60 years ago while in high school in Michigan, I found that I was good at math and liked it, and my coach told me

that I was also good in football as a full-back. To my pleasant surprise, I applied for and was accepted into the University of Delaware’s engineering program and was able to attend on a full football scholarship.

As I traveled there I had no thoughts at all about a future career in serving Jesus Christ as a minister. I wanted to be a mechanical engineer. Preaching and teaching the truth of God to people around the world was one of the furthest things from my mind.

After I arrived at the university, having little knowledge of biblical teachings and no understanding of the Kingdom of God, I soon became interested in and enrolled in the U.S. Army’s Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) program on campus. As the years progressed I learned much about engineering principles, and I also was promoted to the rank of captain in the university’s ROTC program.

In my senior year everything seemed to be coming together in great fashion. A senior U.S. Army officer approached me and offered me what I thought was a great opportunity. The 1950s was the height of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, and the officer told me that he and others had been impressed with my ROTC service.



He told me that if I enlisted after graduation, the U.S. Army would immediately give me a full commission as a second lieutenant, and I would be fast-tracked on an Army career. At the time that sounded really good to me.

But God had other plans for me, just as He has plans for you.

During my last football game that season, I unexpectedly suffered a serious knee injury. Orthopedic surgery and rehabilitation in the 1950s were far behind where they are now, and I was going to be hobbling around for quite a while. What came later was more devastating.

When I went for my Army physical, fully expecting to be inducted as a commissioned officer, the Army doctor, after looking at x-rays of my knee injury, pronounced me physically unfit to serve. I was classified "4F," which meant I was barred from active military service.

### Change of scenery leads to a life-changing experience

Deeply discouraged, I had no idea the door that God was planning to open on the other side of the continent.

After graduating with my degree in mechanical engineering, I received several job offers. I didn't know how to properly evaluate the positions, but God did. The doors opened for me to take a high-paying position at an aerospace engineering firm clear on the other side of the United States in Southern California. I still had no idea that an engineering career wasn't what God had in mind for me.

Shortly after I took the job, I asked one of my new colleagues at the Los Angeles engineering firm where he went to church. He seemed like a decent person, and I thought that going to church would be a good way to meet new friends.

He invited me to a Bible study in nearby Pasadena, which I attended with him. The content of the Bible study was quite different from anything I had heard previously. Plus, there were many young people at this Bible study, many more than I had typically seen at any church.

Learning that this church had a college associated with it, I decided it would be a good thing to attend the college to learn more about God and the Bible, which in retrospect is what God clearly wanted me to do.

During the next three years I met my wife, now of nearly 50 years. And far from becoming an engineer, I was ordained into the ministry of Jesus Christ. I've since

pastored many churches and served in administrative positions around the world, including as far away as Australia. Currently, I am privileged to serve as president of the United Church of God, which publishes this magazine you are reading.

Since God's calling and intervention in my life more than 50 years ago, the biblical vision of Christ's return and the Kingdom of God being established here on earth is what keeps me going.

### A guiding and sustaining vision

This vision can motivate you as well.

As regular *Good News* readers know, the plan of God for you and for all humanity is revealed in the annual biblical festivals. (If you haven't yet read it, request or download our free booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*.)

Perhaps you haven't thought of it in this way, but God's annual festivals represent a *personal prophecy* for you and for all of humanity. The first three—Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost—have

them annually, they help us build and sustain a vision of what is to come—the return of Jesus Christ to this planet, the binding of Satan to remove his evil influence and the establishment of the glorious Kingdom of God on earth. And all of this will be capped off by the opportunity for salvation for all people who yield to become heirs in God's family.

This vision, this hope, fills us with incredible joy and gratitude. It sustains us day by day. It sustains those in the United Church of God and our other coworkers who support and make possible this magazine, our *Beyond Today* TV program, our



## In the parable of the pearl of great price, Jesus compared the Kingdom of God to a merchant who sold everything he had to acquire it. It was that important!

already been fulfilled in major respects in history and the personal lives of believers.

Giving His life as the incredible holy sacrifice that blotted out our sins and reconciled us to God, Jesus Christ became our Passover lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7). The symbolism of the Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures our active daily duty in overcoming and striving to avoid sin (verses 6-8).

The day of Pentecost was fulfilled in part with the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4), which enables and motivates us to keep God's holy law (Romans 7:12) and thus overcome habitual sin (Matthew 19:17) through forgiveness by grace, repentance and the subsequent development of holy righteous character (1 Peter 1:15-16) by producing good spiritual fruit (Matthew 7:16-20) through good deeds and works (James 2:26).

The events symbolized by the remaining four biblical festivals represent a profound vision of the future for us. By celebrating

dozens of free booklets, our *Bible Study Course* lessons and guides, and more.

### The Kingdom of God—a central theme of the Bible

Reflecting the biblical statement that "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9), no one has ever painted a physical picture, drawn an illustration or come up with any kind of video special effects that can come close to capturing the magnificence of God's Kingdom.

To try and convey this, the many biblical parables and teachings about the Kingdom use metaphors and similes—for example, the Kingdom is *like* a treasure, it is *like* a mustard seed, it is *as* sowing seed. But even these traditional ways of explaining complex spiritual teachings—commonly used by rabbis in ancient Judea—fall short of fully describing the Kingdom of God and what it means for you.

Even Jesus remarked: “How can I describe the Kingdom of God? What story should I use to illustrate it?” (Mark 4:30, New Living Translation).

### Seek the pearl of great price

When God Himself opens our minds to what the words of the Bible actually say and mean, we can begin to grasp the dramatic scope of this great future! Once again using a metaphor—a figure of speech—to explain a complex thought, Jesus compared the Kingdom to a merchant who specialized in seeking pearls of splendid quality (Matthew 13:45-46). To be able to do this, the person had to have a considerable net worth—he (or she) was wealthy.

One day, Jesus said, the merchant came across *the* pearl. This pearl was so fabulous that it transcended anything the merchant had previously seen. But the cost was high. Yet it was so outstanding, so exemplary, that it was worth it.

What happened? The merchant sold *everything* he had to acquire it (verse 46). It was that important and it required that degree of sacrifice.

To understand our great future and pursue it with the same passion as the business professional described above, Jesus tells us not to worry about physical things. He tells us: “Do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about your body, what you will put on . . . For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things” (Luke 12:22, 30).

What then are we to be concerned about? Jesus commands us: “Seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33).

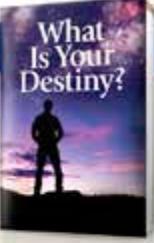
### Making God’s goal *your* goal

Our main purpose therefore mirrors that of God’s: Strengthened by the Holy Spirit

## Learn More

God has an amazing and awe-inspiring purpose for you. But do you understand what it is? Do you grasp why you are here, why you were born? The awesome truth is right there for you in the pages of your Bible! Request or download your free copy of *What Is Your Destiny?* today!

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through prayer and the study of God’s Word, we are to be constantly preparing ourselves—overcoming with God’s help our defects of character, growing daily in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, striving to obey all God’s commandments, yielding and developing spiritual love toward one another, focused on becoming holy even as God is holy—all in anticipation of receiving the gift of eternal life and entering the Kingdom of God!

What does this mean for you? It is indeed good news that God’s plan is intensely focused on “bringing many sons to glory” (Hebrews 2:10). I personally learned and experienced this when my hopes to become an Army officer dissolved. In retrospect it is clear that military service was not God’s will for me, nor was a long career as a mechanical engineer, which is what I was trained to do.

What have I learned? That unless we humbly yield ourselves to God’s will in our lives, we can tragically miss this great vision.

Before the Kingdom of God is established throughout the earth, Jesus Himself emphasizes that the good news—the gospel—of this Kingdom and what it means will be proclaimed, declared and preached to the entire planet (Matthew 24:14). We in the United Church of God have dedicated ourselves, our lives, to doing our part in meeting this objective as God so guides and enables us.

Jesus has told faithful followers, “I have set before you an open door” to preach this gospel (Revelation 3:8), and as God empowers us we will walk through that door. The fact that you are reading this magazine at this very moment is evidence of our commitment.

Concerning the Kingdom of God, we know from the Bible that the Father “desires *all* men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). We read further in God’s unbreakable Word that “*all* nations” will keep the Feast of Tabernacles during the age of the coming Kingdom of God (Zechariah 14:16). Jesus Himself kept the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7), which pictures the coming Kingdom of God, setting us all an example.

We urge you to capture your personal vision of the coming Kingdom of God and partner with God in overcoming sin and growing in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18). And above all, never forget Jesus’ commandment in Matthew 6:33—“seek *first* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness”! **GN**



**W**ho’s behind *The Good News* magazine? Many readers have wondered who we are and how we are able to provide *The Good News* free to all who request it. Simply put, *The Good News* is provided by *people*—people from all walks of life, from all over the world, as enabled by God.

And those people have a common goal: **to proclaim the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God to all the world as a witness and to teach all nations to observe what Christ commanded** (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20).

We are dedicated to proclaiming the same message Jesus Christ brought—the wonderful *good news* of the coming Kingdom of God (Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43; 8:1). That message truly is good news—the answer to all the problems that have long plagued humankind. Through the pages of *The Good News*, various booklets (also free) and our *Beyond Today* TV program, we show the biblical answers to the dilemmas that have defied human solution and



threaten our very survival.

We are committed to taking that message to the entire world, sharing the truth of

God’s purpose and plan for us as taught by Jesus Christ.

The United Church of God has congregations and ministers around the world. In these congregations believers assemble to be instructed from the Scriptures and to fellowship. For locations and times of services in your area, contact us at the appropriate address on page 2. Visitors are always welcome.

**For additional information, visit our website:**

[www.ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org)

# The Divine Secret

A Good News interview with author Joe Kovacs by Jerold Aust

**B**est-selling author and award-winning journalist Joe Kovacs, executive news editor at WND, has recently written a new book, *The Divine Secret: The Awesome and Untold Truth About Your Phenomenal Destiny*. This insightful new book documents little-understood truths from the Bible that few are aware of but that everyone needs to know.

*The Divine Secret*, published July 17, 2012, is a sequel to his 2008 best seller, *Shocked by the Bible: The Most Astonishing Facts You've Never Been Told* (see our previous interview with him in the March/April 2010 issue of *The Good News*).

**The Good News: Can you give us a brief rundown on your professional work—what you do beyond writing your helpful books?**

**JK:** I'm a news reporter by trade and have been in the news industry since age 19 when I started in radio. I was in radio for about 10 years and made the jump to television and ran some television stations for five years.

Then I moved to Europe as the editor for the *Budapest Business Journal* and am now back in America as executive editor for WND.com (formerly WorldNetDaily), the leading Internet news site. So I'm a news junkie, basically. I just find, write and report news.

**GN: It's clear from your work on the WND website that you're very good at what you do.**

**JK:** We're just trying to do the job that the rest of the media is failing to do in order to inform Americans on the news that they want to know. I think that what I have written in my book *The Divine Secret* is the biggest story of all time. And I'm not trying to scoop anybody that has this information out there, but people have not been paying attention to what this huge news is.

**GN: I agree. Your new book is *The Divine Secret: The Awesome and Untold Truth About Your Phenomenal Destiny*. We'll get to that in a moment, but would you give us a brief update on the details of your first book *Shocked by the Bible* and how it was received—how some appreciate it and perhaps some who didn't, and why?**

**JK:** *Shocked by the Bible* was my first book ever, and I never thought I was ever

going to be an author. But I wrote *Shocked by the Bible* because I got fed up with hearing untruths about the Bible in the media, whether it was television or the radio, or just in general discourse in life.

People misquote the Bible, and they think it contains things that are simply not there. This reached a critical point with me, where I said that somebody has got to put an end to this. Let's just get the facts on the table and clear everything up.

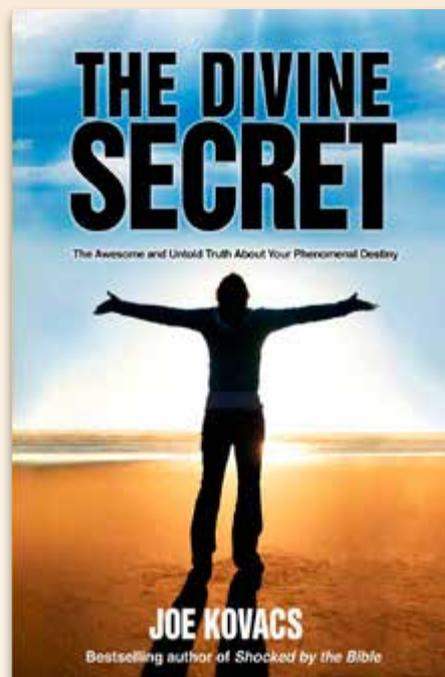
The book rocketed to number one on Amazon.com even before it was officially released in 2008, and I was stunned by that myself. The book is still available, and people can go to [shockedbythebible.com](http://shockedbythebible.com) if they would like their own personalized copy.

When the book first came out, I think that many Christians thought wrongly, for some reason, that I was putting down the Bible and putting down Christianity. That is not the case at all. I'm a Bible-believing Christian, and I want people to read the Bible. And all they have to do is crack open their own Bibles and read the words on the page and they'll be shocked, like I was shocked, by what is actually there.

**GN: I really appreciate that, having with others written about what's in the Bible for a number of decades. But you write in such a way that people out here in the nonreligious world can read your book—and even those in the religious world—and not see you as connected in some way with a particular religious group. In that sense, you are unique.**

**JK:** Many people have actually told me exactly that—that it's because I am not connected to any official group or church and that I'm just a guy, an American, a Christian, and I write news for a living and I just want to help educate people to the truth.

The truth is in the Bible, and it's all revealed there—every part of the Bible is



true. So I'm just using my God-given talent. I don't claim any talents on my own. It's all a gift from the Creator of the universe. I'm trying to help people understand that billions of people on this earth have a fantastic future coming to them if they just wake up out of their slumber and read the Bible and find out what it is.

**GN: People have their own worldviews, see things from their own perspective, and they're protective about that. So it's difficult to make an inroad into their lives, as you're doing here. It's vitally important what you're doing.**

**So let's get into your new book now. Considering the success of your first book *Shocked by the Bible*, I wonder what motivated you to come up with this sequel, *The Divine Secret*. What's the bridge between the two books? Did the idea come from the first book, something you researched there, or did it just come to you unexpectedly?**

**JK:** After the first book, *Shocked by the Bible*, I realized that people had a huge interest in one subject that I briefly touched on in the first book—and that focuses on our incredible destiny. It seems like everyone wants to know what's in store for them in the future, and there are so many unanswered questions such as the meaning of life, what lies ahead in the future, and what in the

world is God actually doing with people?

I thought, the Bible's told them the answers. And it provides solid answers, answers they most likely have never heard—and answers much better than “Oh, God only knows,” or “I guess we'll find out after we're dead.” It's very good news, by the way—it's the greatest news you could possibly imagine.

**GN: That's a good way you put it. I liked in particular something in your book, where you not only show a scripture or a number of scriptures supporting your point, but you go into that verse itself and either highlight it or capitalize it—and you make come alive that aspect of the verse that you're showing is really what you find in the Word of God when you study it. You bring that out for the reader to see.**

**JK:** When I read other people's books about God or the Bible or religious matters, I tend to be bored by them—not because of the writer's writing style, but they don't put the Bible verses in their writings. They will just refer to the verses, like Genesis 1:1.

But if you're not a Bible expert, you're not going to know what's in it. So I actually copy and paste the whole Bible verse. You don't even have to have a Bible to read *The Divine Secret* or *Shocked by the Bible*. I want people to see the words on the page, the words they've never seen before—or maybe they have seen them but they just haven't had a light bulb go off in their head and say, “Oh, this really says this.”

For example, the Bible doesn't say there are three wise men coming to the manger. It doesn't say there were wise men coming to the manger to see Jesus the night when He was born. There was an unspecified number who showed up some time later, but they didn't show up when Jesus was born. So I want people to see the words on the page.

A unique highlight of *The Divine Secret*, my new book, is that I put all personal comments from God in red letters, even from the Old Testament. Now I know many people have red-letter New Testament versions of the Bible where the words of Jesus are shown in red letters, but now you can see the words of God in red from the Old Testament as well. So every time God is speaking personally, like “Let us make man in our image,” those words show up in red in *The Divine Secret*.

**GN: That's unique! I've never seen that before.**

**JK:** I think it's a fantastic feature that will help to wake people up and make them

realize that the God of the Old Testament is actually the One who became Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and it really stands out on the page and it gets your attention to see things that you may have glossed over before.

**GN: Let's get into your own thinking—how you came to this. In the table of contents, you have only three chapters, but they cover 180 pages of narrative. Give us a short overview of why you chose the structure you did.**

**JK:** Well, the book is titled *The Divine Secret*, and I thought about how to present this in an easy format, and I started off in chapter one saying that the Bible declares that it has a secret.

**“I'm trying to help people understand that billions of people on this earth have a fantastic future coming to them if they just wake up . . . and read the Bible and find out what it is.”**



Joe Kovacs

You see so many times statements in it about “God's secret,” “God's secret wisdom,” “a mysterious plan,” “a wonderful secret,” “the secret of the Good News” and “the mystery of the kingdom of God.” So the Bible has what it calls “a secret.”

Colossians 1:26 says that this is the secret that has been hidden from everyone since the beginning of time. So right off the bat I established the fact that the Bible does have its secrets.

The rest of the chapter—I don't make you wait until the end of the book to find what the divine secret is. (I knew that it would really irk some people to wait to find out

what it is.) So by the end of chapter one, I do show what the divine secret is—so people wouldn't get too antsy before they get to the end of the book.

I tell them what the divine secret is, and it has to do with our ultimate destination. And the remaining chapters, two and three, have to do with what the meaning of the secret is as it applies to our lives and the coming Kingdom of God, and how the world and the universe will be structured as Jesus Christ and God the Father come from heaven to dwell here on earth.

**GN: I just noticed that you go from the secret itself, what it is, and then you go to how we can apply it personally,**

**and finally how it applies to the world at large, which kind of gets us out of our selfish way of thinking.**

**JK:** People in this world, in our temporary existence, we are not eternal but instead mortal creations of God, who are in training. People want to know how things benefit them. That's why self-help books are so popular. Everybody wants to know how they can improve their health, or cook better, or make more money.

It's always the books about self-help that are the best sellers. And *The Divine Secret*, considering the subject, is one of the best self-help books ever. But you realize that you need God's help to help you. You can't just do it on your own. When you allow God into your life, you will have success—and it's success beyond your wildest dreams. If people knew what was coming, if they knew their destination, then they would get their act together.

**GN: There's so much more we could cover. Thank you for this interview about your new book *The Divine Secret*. We wish you the best success on your unique treatment of God's divine secret for the benefit of all humanity.**

A longer audio interview, from which this is excerpted, can be heard at [www.GNmagazine.org/DivineSecret](http://www.GNmagazine.org/DivineSecret). Interested readers can learn more or order the book at [www.thedivinesecret.com](http://www.thedivinesecret.com).