



The kingdom of heaven

What is the kingdom of heaven? This question has been asked for centuries. It was the subject of much interest and debate at the time of Christ and much of His teaching is dedicated to bringing clarity and understanding to His contemporaries and future generations of believers. To this day, many differing beliefs and opinions exist and it would be good for us to enrich our understanding as well. I invite you to delve more deeply into the Gospel within your small group discussions across all congregations over the coming summer months regarding the following questions:

- Where is the kingdom of heaven?
- Is it a physical location or a state of the soul?
- Does it exist now or is it a future reward for good deeds here on earth?
- Who can enter this kingdom?
- What are the requirements for those who wish to abide there?

This article can only scratch the surface and by no means should be considered an exhaustive treatment of the questions above. Perhaps it will serve to whet our appetite for further research and discussion. Let us begin with the question asked of Christ by the Pharisees as reported in the book of Luke: *Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."* (Luke 17: 20-21)

From this conversation we gain insight into a number of our questions. We see that the Kingdom can be here with us now and it can exist within our hearts. Christ further described this state of being when He prayed "Your kingdom come" followed immediately by "Your will be done".

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Dear brothers and sisters,

We have now passed through the exciting season of Eastertide in our celebration of Holy Week and Easter, the welcoming of our young brothers and sisters into the congregation through Confirmation, the visits of our Chief Apostle to our nation, and the Pentecost feast. May the wonderful impulses we have received inspire us in new ways as we continue our journey of faith forward.

I have occupied myself with the theme of offering and sacrifice over the past months. These truly are deep elements of our faith with which we express our thankfulness and adoration to our Heavenly Father. Further I have read in Proverbs 3:9 – *"Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase"*. Here we can understand that offering is also a way to honor the Lord, i.e. to give Him acclaim and esteem. In this way, our offering and even the sacrifices we make, become a part of our worship which expresses how much our dear God means to us. I feel this to be an essential element that actually precedes thankfulness. In other words, we must first express to God what He means to us and articulate the benefits we receive from Him before we can fully perceive the scope of our thankfulness. Tobit is wonderful example of this and is highlighted in this edition.

In another perspective, sometimes our possessions actually become stumbling blocks or dangers in our life. Honoring the Lord with them allows them to be blessings for us and our future generations.

I wish for you a peaceful, yet productive summer in discovering your own ways to honor and serve the Lord.

With love,

The kingdom of heaven

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This is an indication that the kingdom is gained by embracing the rule and authority of God's will. Christ's singular and wholehearted embrace of His Father's purpose, to redeem mankind from sin, resulted in victory over hell and death and brought His kingdom within our reach.

Likewise, we abide in the kingdom when Christ rules within us and His purpose becomes ours. We thereby transition from a "dual life" (a church life and a non-church life) to a singular one. A singular life still has balance. But regardless of where we find ourselves; in church, in school, in work or at play, we are within the kingdom of God if Christ is at the center of our life.

Now let us be very specific. God's kingdom has a purpose and guiding principles. Again, the Gospel gives us much to consider.

- The Great Commission. *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* (Matthew 28:19-20)
- The Great Commandment: *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."* (John 13:34-35)

Let me conclude by directing your attention to another teaching that relates to the kingdom. This is the kingdom yet to come commencing at Christ's return where He will rule all the nations in glory and power. In the example of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-44) we are given a clear and stunningly graphic view of Christ's expectations.

It is my strong conviction that this passage is hugely relevant for our time. Again, within our small group discussions, let us delve deeply into its meaning. Is it literal? Is it figurative? I would like to refrain from commenting at this time in the hope that each congregation will actively wrestle with Christ's words. Let us prayerfully engage the Holy Spirit in finding a deeper understanding and real life applications that are meaningful in 2012 and beyond.

Within this passage, we see the future, eternal implications of a life of serving others ("the least of mine") contrasted to a life that is dedicated to serving one's self. May we choose to dedicate our lives to His kingdom. - LRK

The Invitation

The following poem was written by Ron Ferry, a retired priest from Los Angeles after his son passed away.

As we approach service for the departed, please contemplate these words and the invitation that it offers, not only to those in eternity, but all here on earth as well.

Come! Into the house of God,
The Lord has paved the way.
Come! You've been invited,
For a very festive day.

Come! And sit and listen,
To the angels from above.
Come! They are the choir
And they sing the songs of love.

Come! Experience the comfort,
Of the peaceful atmosphere,
Come! And you will understand,
The Holy Spirit lives here.

Come! And see the altar where,
The Word of Life is given.
Come! Hear the precious words,
Your sins are forgiven.

Come! Take the bread and wine,
Of Jesus' sacrifice.
Come! And find redemption,
For the Lord has paid the price.

Come! Join God's joyful children,
In fellowship and fun,
Working, striving, waiting,
For the coming of God's Son!

No matter where you come from,
No matter what your past.
The most important thing is,
You are home at last!

Welcome!



PERSPECTIVE:

Offering

The story of Tobit comes from the Apocrypha. While this may cause some to question its authenticity, it holds a special place in my heart because there are pearls of wisdom embedded within the account of Tobit's life that bear closer scrutiny. It illuminates the attitudes and emotions of a God fearing man who chose to live his life according to timeless principles of faith. In anticipation of the coming season of Thanksgiving, perhaps we could engage in some summer reading of Tobit's adventures and gain new insights into the subject of offerings.

The book of Tobit takes us on the journey of a pious man who encountered adversity, uncertainty and injustice. Perhaps many of us could relate to this personally. He responded with kindness to others, a willingness to give of himself and a renewed trust in God even when it was not expedient and led to his persecution. I ask you to take special note of the following:

- Tobit was moved by the suffering and tragedy of others and sought to remedy it at his own inconvenience (Tobit 1:16-18).
- He felt compelled to support the house of God and the activities that cared for the well-being of those in need. He voluntarily created a unique formula of offering out of his love for God that greatly exceeded the traditional law of tithing (Tobit 1: 7-8).
- He worshiped and praised God even during times of personal hardship (Tobit 1: 11-12).
- God accounted for Tobit's anonymous kindness to others.
- God befriended Tobit via a stranger (the arch angel Raphael) and accompanied his son Tobias on a journey with many twists and turns. God engineered an elegant solution to the seeming insurmountable difficulties his family encountered.
- Tobit transferred his wisdom and principles of faith to his son. He created a legacy for Tobias by sharing his experiences and his beliefs. This led to an upward evolution from one generation to the next. Tobias was moved by this teaching and his

own experiences to share his inheritance when he experienced God's help and benevolence in times of need.

This is not so much the story of a man who was rewarded by God for offering: that is a concept that I would like to discourage. Rather, we can see a story of a man overcome with love for God who needed to find an expression for his gratitude and who felt a personal responsibility to support the activities of God's house and to care for those in need. Once again we recognize the common thread described in Christ's parable of the sheep and goats and the reward for that which is done to the "least of His", referenced in our lead article.

And finally we perceive that God measured Tobit's willingness to give regardless of the amount. Tobit was not limited by the tithing tradition of his time. In essence he gave three tithes when he went to Jerusalem because he perceived there was a need. His example must have influenced his son. Tobias was willing to share one half of his inheritance with the angel Raphael during a season of abundance in gratitude for his help (Tobit 12: 1-5). On the other hand we remember the widow's mite who gave what she could in her season of poverty and Christ was moved by her gift.

So our seasons may change and likewise our ability to offer, however our desire to please God and our willingness to express love and adoration for Him remains. Like Tobit and Tobias, our understanding of offering can evolve to a higher plane and form a blessed legacy for our children and future generations.
- LRK

Upcoming Events

The **2012 Youth Summit** will take place at Brock University, in Ontario, Canada on the weekend of August 19th.

Also our next **National Pillar Conference** will be October 19-21 in Chicago, IL. Registration will open on July 1st and close on August 31st. Please check www.NACPillars.com for more information and to register.



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A decorative image in the top left corner showing a paint palette with several wells of color (pink, blue, yellow, green) and brushes resting in them.

A new look at the World Relief Fund

The NAC USA World Relief Fund ("WRF"), founded after the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina, has assisted with multiple disaster relief efforts around the globe.

Whether in an independent and direct role, or in cooperation with the church's international humanitarian entity NAK Karikativ (www.nak-karikativ.de), (Hurricane Katrina, the 2007 drought in East Africa or the 2010 earthquake in Haiti), or through local partners in the affected areas (2010 Pakistan Flooding Emergency, 2008 China Earthquake and Hurricane in the Dominican Republic) the WRF has made an impact in more than 10 major disaster events since its inception.

With its more than five years of international disaster relief experience as a foundation, the WRF will be expanding its mission and scope of activities, to include a proactive domestic USA presence. This strategic decision was made by the WRF board to support the community related projects of our NAC-USA congregations across the country. Thanks to the activities of our members, our congregations have become increasingly integrated within their communities and have created opportunities to demonstrate the teachings of Christ, particularly to love and care for those in need. This community collaboration is seen as both a method to further the Great Commission and the Great Commandment of Christ as well as the humanitarian mandate of the WRF.

At the same time it is important to understand the WRF's strength and limitations. As a small micro-NGO (non-Vision | Summer 2012| Page 4

governmental organization) the WRF will have to be careful not to enter into commitments, whether of a financial or resource-based nature, that go beyond its abilities to support them on an ongoing basis.

To avoid any misunderstanding – the WRF will continue its disaster-relief work as in the past. In fact, donors may stipulate that their gift be used for a specific relief purpose if desired. However, going forward this focus will be complemented by a tiered system of programs that support interested members and outside partners in more local and ongoing Christian-humanitarian involvement. All programs must have one core requirement in common: They must possess a strong and sustainable volunteer component before the WRF will become involved:

Small, one-time local projects

Domestic

- o Under this program, a limited number of micro-stipends (up to \$100/each) will be made available each year to assist (one-time) local community activities of our congregations and members. A simple application will be required.

Extended local projects

Domestic

- o Making a lasting and sustainable impact in our communities often requires a more long-term oriented, ongoing commitment. For congregations, youth groups and similar member activities the WRF will provide a limited number of one-year stipends of up to \$2,000. A formal application, quarterly reports and other deliverables are required for participation in this program.

New programs

Domestic & international

- o Over the next years, the WRF plans to carefully develop

and set up a limited number of volunteering opportunities abroad. Participation in this program will require substantial commitment of time and funds on behalf of each volunteer, in particular to cover their travel and local living costs. Stipends by the WRF will then be available to fund the cost of the actual local project. Further information will become available over the course of the next months. Participants in this program might at times be required to have specific skills in order to support a specific project (e.g. teaching support in a school).

In addition, the WRF is looking for volunteers to serve on its Program Management Committee. This committee will be responsible for selecting and approving applications throughout the course of each year. Volunteers would be asked to commit for either a one or two-year period to achieve staggered terms and thereby ensure smooth transitions between the members. If you are interested in serving in a voluntary capacity on this committee, please submit a brief introduction of yourself as well as any prior humanitarian experience to nacusa-wrf@nac-usa.org. Candidates will be selected on an ongoing basis.

Lastly, with the expanded scope of the WRF's activities we also would like to ask interested members to submit their ideas for a new name that more accurately reflects this new scope of activities. Please submit your ideas either by email or mail to

NAC USA World Relief Fund
c/o Stefan Heinzelmann
3753 N Troy St
Chicago, IL 60618
nacusa-wrf@nac-usa.org

New developments in Sunday School

In years past, Christmas gifts including new Bibles, devotionals and resource materials were sent to our Sunday School children each December. The children will continue to receive a small package of candy around Christmas time as a gift from the Church; however the funds that were traditionally used for such gifts will instead be used toward a new initiative within our Children's Ministry.

Beginning in September 2012, each child of Sunday School age will be receiving a new age-appropriate Bible to be used for the duration of their time in their current Sunday School class. Beginner children (ages 4-5) will receive the My First Hands-On Bible, Primary children (ages 6-7) will receive the Hands-On Bible, and Primary children (ages 8-10) will receive the Adventure Bible. Religious Instruction students will receive a Student Life Application Study Bible to be used throughout their Religious Instruction and Confirmation classes, as well as for their time in the youth group. This will be a working Bible for the children to make their own as they grow in their faith and biblical studies. This initiative promotes our children to become familiar with their Bible, resulting in an increase of Biblical knowledge, and a greater relationship with our Heavenly Father, the Lord Jesus and Holy Spirit.

Local districts and congregations are encouraged to present the Bibles in a special ceremony after a Sunday morning service before the 2012-2013 Sunday School Kick-Off Day on September 9th. In subsequent years, children ages 4, 6, 8, and 11 will receive the next Bible each fall, as they continue their spiritual education.

The Work Group Children has also recently released the first edition of the Building Blocks newsletter. This quarterly publication will be a resource to our Sunday School teachers.

Hey Kids!

Did you ever want to be a published author or illustrator? Well, here's your chance! Each month you will have an opportunity to share your thoughts, ideas and experiences with everyone in the Our World section of the Our Family Magazine.

All you need to do is:

- check the topic and questions for the month on the nac-usa website
- write about your thoughts and/or draw a picture
- send your entry to communications@nac-usa.org

Make sure you send in your submission before the posted deadline, so we can process it in time. Then check out the Our World section each month to see if your writing or drawing is chosen for printing. We will also publish every entry we receive right here on our website!

If you need or want help, just ask a family member, a friend or your Sunday School teacher. Hurry up and grab your pen, paper, and crayons and get started. We can't wait to read and see your submissions!

Understanding NAC tv

Over the past 2 years a new concept called NACTV has been evolving and gaining popularity. We would like to provide background information on this new tool as well as share our future plans for its further development and best use.

In actuality, NACTV is an internet based system for broadcasting divine services to remote users within the NAC-USA district. The initiative was begun by Priest Russ Gee in San Francisco, in coordination with Apostle Orlofski. Early broadcasts originated from the San Francisco and Milwaukee areas. Since then additional congregations have been added to the mix in all time zones and to accommodate the needs of our Spanish and Chinese members.

Currently, the services are broadcast on a dedicated web site www.newapostolicchurch.tv and are accessible without a password. The original intent was to provide a connection for our NAC-USA members only who are unable to attend the divine services; specifically those who are sick and infirmed and those at great distance from a congregation. Additionally, there are congregations currently without an ordained priest who receive the broadcast either in our church buildings or a member's home.

In the near future, its role will be expanded to support our linked members around the country, our college students at their campuses and our members in the armed services. It may also become a tool to link smaller congregations with our newly formed flagship congregations and as a more efficient replacement for the satellite transmission broadcasts of special services.

However, as usage continues to grow, it is important to keep certain cautions in mind. This system is for internal communications only and is not intended to be accessed by international members or as a tool for outreach. Likewise, the viewing of a divine service via webcast should never be considered an alternative for attending the service within the local congregation, when possible. The experience of sharing the word of God and His Sacraments in fellowship with our brothers and sisters cannot be substituted. It is a vital component of New Apostolic life.

With these factors in mind, NACTv will soon be converting to a user profile system. The new method will be explained on the NACTv and NAC-USA websites with plenty of lead time for our members to make the transition and create profiles that will allow them to watch the services when logged in. A special help line will be created to assist those with technical difficulties. Please walk with us as we explore new methods and continuously evolve.

Creating a Bethany... for Singles

As you know, one of the cornerstones of the Stepping Forward plan for the NAC-USA district is to improve the quality of our pastoral care. I would like to write to you about a unique group of members within our church requiring their own brand of pastoral support. Often, our pastoral programs are organized around the needs of certain age groups; i.e. the youth, the children, and the seniors. Their needs tend to be similar as the groups are homogeneous. This is not true however with the pastoral group that we refer to as the "Singles". What is noteworthy about them is that their circumstances are so very diverse.

We recognize that each single adult has their own unique and rich experience in life. Some were never married, some are divorced, some are raising children as a single parent, some have said farewell to their loved ones and are widows or widowers, and some have been single for one month and others thirty years. The very nature of this diversity brings me to the first point; that our serving and culture all begins with the understanding and the love of Christ.

Everyone experiences moments of loneliness and isolation from time to time, but let us take a moment to expand our understanding for those who are more vulnerable than others. How does it feel to wake up every morning alone? How does one start their day, eat their breakfast and prepare for the challenges of the day? With whom do you share successes and failures, strengths and weaknesses? How do you celebrate your free time? How do you deal with the joy and pain of past experiences and how do you keep hope alive for the future? Our single members understand these feelings all too well; and those who have not experienced this have the opportunity to reach out in love and understanding. It is quite possible that being single will touch all of us at some point in our lives. Let's not wait for this moment in life to take notice.

We turn to the Lord Jesus, whom according to Scriptures was also single. We could hear the despair in His words "*Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.*" (Matthew 8:20) Almost in response, we see how God provided His Son with a wonderful place in Bethany in which He could share warm fellowship with Martha, Mary and Lazarus.

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“All the same in His sight...”

Birney is a special congregation located on the Cheyenne Indian Reservation 130 miles from Billings. It has a mixture of Native American Tribes.



Here, we can find, besides Cheyenne, Crow, Navajo, Assiniboine, other mixed blood Indians. But our Heavenly Father knows no race or color. We are all the same in His sight. Our Native American brothers and sisters are aware of this and are happy to be in service with us. From services being held in a community hall, a sister's home, and then a community trailer, the move was made in 1988 to the beautiful new church they are in now.

In the beginning, it was the heartfelt desire of Apostle Ernie Vovak to bring the Lord's work to the Indian nations in our area. Various contacts were made in different areas. Priest Ken Szillat and Priest Dan Munson felt that the best results could be found if they could get the backing of the Tribal Chief or Medicine

Man. Visiting one Chief, they discovered that the Northern Cheyenne Tribe had 44 Chiefs, but only one Medicine Man.

In June of 1985, at a church picnic in Laurel, a young Indian woman joined the fellowship.



It turned out that this woman was related by marriage to the Northern Cheyenne Medicine Man! She gave the brothers directions to the Medicine Man's home in Birney. When they went to visit, they mixed up the directions, so they drove to the first house they saw with an open door. To their surprise, the Medicine Man, Elmer Fighting Bear, was home!

Elmer and his family were receptive to starting service in Birney. Bi-weekly visits and Bible studies were started. In April of 1986, the first service was held in Birney, with 19 Indians present, Elmer's nearly blind wife walked one-half mile to be at the service.

On January 4, 1987, Apostle Ernie Vovak conducted the first sealings on the Indian Reservation. Thirteen Native Americans were sealed at that time, and another 12 on July 16, 1987. In 1988, Apostle Wilbert Vovak dedicated the church for 25 sealed and 3 adopted members. Present membership totals 70.

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Creating a Bethany...

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As we can read in Luke 10 and John 11, they not only enjoyed a good meal but also discussed the kingdom of God and the resurrection. It became a place of love and reassurance; a necessary human connection, even for Christ, that supported Him. Because of this relationship, the very word "Bethany" now carries a powerful connotation that we instantly grasp. When Lazarus died, Christ was clearly grieved by the loss of His friend. The end result was the commentary of the people: "See how He loved him!"

May we also learn from the example of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. With growing understanding we can provide a warm fellowship and share the love that Christ taught us. This can occur in a telephone call, a home visit, around a dinner table, a car ride together, in private or joint prayer and even a nice smile. After a good measure of listening, the Lord can also inspire us through the Holy Spirit to say the right words at the right time. Our time together does not only touch the earthly but most of all promotes the assurance we have in the promise of eternal fellowship with our Heavenly Father.

In our renewed culture of learning, let us continue to seek understanding by being aware of those around us. In the love of Christ we want to be approachable so that we can stimulate heart to heart conversations. These efforts and our constant prayers will create a Bethany for our singles so that no one feels alone. In so doing we serve Christ by serving each other.

- Submitted by Bishop Walter Schmidt

Year end scheduling changes

At a recent meeting with the Chief Apostle and all District Apostles, it was decided that divine services should align with Sundays as much as practicable. Additionally, there needs to be flexibility when scheduling holiday services to better match the cultural norms of each region. Adjacent district churches could therefore collaborate to determine the optimal scheduling for their congregations. With this in mind, District Apostle Woll and I have agreed to a new end-of-year divine service schedule for 2012. We would like to share this with you now in the hopes that it will help you plan your holidays more effectively. Starting with 12/23/2012, divine services will be on the following dates only:

Sunday, December 23, Normal Service Time
Christmas Day

Tuesday, December 25 at 10:30 AM

Year-End Service

Sunday, December 30, Normal Service Time

Year-Beginning Service

Sunday, January 6, Normal Service Time

Our normal divine service pattern will resume after 1/6/2013. I am hopeful that this schedule will create the opportunity for peaceful worship and loving fellowship with family and friends.