

Kingdom Progression – Part 1

Welcome to Kingdom Progression, Part 1, January 23, 2008. Recall that today we begin a new series that I've entitled Kingdom Progression. Last week we finished the Kingdom of God and after a long passageway coming into the doorway of salvation and ending at Unity in Christ. Today we'll simply have a bit of an introduction to lay the framework. Next week is when we will really begin the process of going through what I call Kingdom Progression. You're familiar with the fact that I use models and posters to capture spiritual truth. I'm using this poster, not for its content, but simply to use as an example of how I use posters. On this poster I use the words happiness and joy to make a spiritual point—that point being that there are two different emotional states, positive emotional states on our Christian journey. One of these positive emotional states is sensitive to circumstances and since it's sensitive to circumstances it's time limited. So I use the word happiness to refer to that positive emotional state.

Another positive emotional state is based on communion with God; thus, that is circumstance resistant and time prolonged. So I use the word joy to refer to that positive emotional state. Truth is not determined by which words I chose to use. Truth is truth independent of whatever words I use to represent that truth. However, to communicate spiritual truth, I must use words. Although whatever words I use will necessarily fall short of capturing the fullness of the spiritual truth being communicated. It's no different from which is the bigger reality—God, or the word “God” that we use to represent God? The point being the truth; the point is not whether you would have used the same words, or whether you would have used different words, or whether you would have used better words. If I tell you how I am using the words, then I should be able to communicate with you about the truth that I am presenting. Vague usage of words causes vague communication. Vague usage of words can cover up a lack of understanding and can cause misunderstanding. Vague usage of words can allow presumptions to run rampant in the mind of the one speaking and in the mind of the one listening. I try to combat that by congealing thoughts that I can put on posters and to produce models of truth that I can put on the posters in order to communicate precisely with those that are listening.

This next poster is a poster about posters. This is a poster about how I use posters. First of all, as a tool; we all use visual aides when we speak as a way of communicating in order to enhance communication, enhance understanding. Secondly, I use it as a spiritual discipline. This means that I take the attitude that if I cannot write it down, then I probably do not understand it. Of necessity I have to test my understanding and congeal that understanding in order to produce a poster. For that reason I would probably produce posters even if I were never asked to speak. For me it has been a powerful, spiritual discipline to test my own understanding about truth. God gave me a logical, sequential, analytical mind. He loves it when I use it. He just doesn't want me to worship it. He wants me to use it to His glory, not my own.

That takes us to the third level—the testimonial aspect. Simply put, this is how the Word of God works in my life through the mind that He gave me. You should always be able to accept my posters for their testimonial component, even if you might suggest changes in the content of it. No more than the blind man who said I was blind but now I see. That's his testimony. And though people may debate how he came to see or how blind he used to be, but he can tell you I

was blind but now I see. So I can tell you what I now see compared to how I used to see things as a testimonial aspect even if you might want to dismiss the rest of the poster itself.

Fourthly my posters are meant to present basic concepts only. You remember John wrote, if all the things that Jesus did were written, then all the books of the world wouldn't be able to contain them. Well likewise, if posters were used to try to capture all of spiritual truth about an omniscient sovereign Being, then posters would fill the world and there would be no room for air to breathe. This is also part of the testimonial. Most weaknesses in my personal spiritual journey, when I've viewed them in retrospect, have flowed out of a poor understanding and poor application of the most basic concepts of Scripture. That is to become as a little child. My posters are not intended to capture the breadth and depth of theology. It's my experience that what seems to be incredibly complex in theology is actually simplicity when the root of it is understood. So my calling is to present the simple root; then to have that root lead to transformation through the renewing of the mind. The goal of my posters is make the apparently complicated simple and to have the simple then become transforming in our Christian lives. It's not to say that the root is all that there is; but it is to say that without the root, the rest is meaningless. This protects me from fulfilling II Timothy 3:17 which describes those who are always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. After all if basic concepts of Scripture are missed, then academics about Scripture become academic.

Fifthly, it's a model to depict truth. The model is not truth; the model depicts it. Even Jesus used models of a sort to enhance understanding in the minds of the non-omniscient listeners to Him. He used word pictures to do so. The Kingdom of God is like a treasure hidden in a field. He used parables to do so, particularly using the agricultural model. Well His Word wasn't a seed; but by using the agricultural model, His listeners could understand the spiritual truth that He was talking about.

Sixth, a model can be thought of as a best-fit mathematical model. Mathematicians use the concept of the best-fit curve. They have an equation that will take many data points and draw a single curve that best captures the flow of the many scattered data points. That allows you to then see clearly a relationship between variables that may not be clear at all if you try to look at the thousand different data points individually. You have to look for the underlying essential unifying truth that best fits the data points. An example for me from the Word of God is the usage of the words like heart, soul, and spirit. Those words can be thought of as different data points that are scattered because each of those words is used different ways in different context in different Scriptures. So sometimes it's hard to relate to them if you insist on taking a concrete interpretation to the word that is the same for each data point. But there is a best-fit curve for those.

Number seven: This poster is not the final word. I never view them as the final word of anything. I try to walk in the light of I Corinthians 8:2 – the man who thinks he knows does not know as he ought to know. They are not the final word, but they are the best word that I can produce at the time. I have the attitude of Peter and John when they were at the temple gate and the lame man in Acts 3:1-6 was asking them for alms. And Peter's reply was silver and gold have I none; but such as I have I give to you. So I can't give to you anything other than the understanding that I presently have; but that I give freely.

Number eight: Spiritual truth is always greater than any model. In fact, spiritual truth is always greater than any model or even any word used to capture the truth. Words even are symbols to represent truth; but truth is always greater than the symbol utilized. Just like a tree in reality is always beyond the word tree or any specific word you may use to try to describe the tree. But that doesn't mean that using words cannot be helpful to communicate certain aspects of truth to a certain degree to certain people. And the same point applies to any model including my posters.

Number nine: Any model will always be inadequate. That's a given. Just like my poster with a circle with God drawn into pie-shape cuts showing the three essences of God. Well obviously God can't be contained in a circle in a two-dimensional plane of a poster; and He isn't carved into portions like a pie. But that poster can be incredibly helpful to demonstrate that there are three essential characteristics of our Holy God that are to be viewed in perfect harmony at all times. And when you try to take one essential characteristic and interpret God in the light of that alone and dismiss the other two, you will get a misguided perception of God. So the poster isn't the truth; but it depicts a part of the truth that can lead to a beautiful revelation of how to walk with God. The model is intended to capture and to communicate a specific point as its primary thrust. If someone were to focus only on the perceived inadequacy of the model in one area, and dismiss the adequacy of the aspect of truth that the model is trying to depict, then they will miss a blessing. So don't dismiss that which the model has to offer because you may be able to think of something that the model does not offer.

Number ten: Each one will be changed with any new illumination. I've made many adjustments to my models and posters through the years as new illumination has come. That is the unavoidable pathway of what we call a human being who is less than omniscient. As omniscience shares portions of His omniscience progressively with the person who is seeking His face, then naturally your understanding, your posters, and your models will progressively change if you're guided by a passion for the truth. So my drive is never to defend a model. My drive is to seek the truth. And my basic thrust is to keep seeking the truth while holding tightly with one hand what truth I have and the other hand open toward Heaven to receive the greater progressive revelation that is sure to come.

Number eleven: As a corollary to that, if I'm shown a better model, I'll adopt it. My goal is to progressively understand, to walk in, and to communicate what God is and how God views everything else. I'm wedded to Jesus Christ, not wedded to any particular model. You may have heard the quote that no one yet has ever erected a statue to a critic. That is to say statues may be erected to ball players, but not to critics of ball players. They may be erected to politicians, but not to critics of politicians. Statues are erected to those who are rolling up their sleeves and actually doing something and are never erected to the one who is simply a critic. So the person who never preaches, but constantly criticizes the preacher is in fact behaving as if he thinks the statue should be erected to him. The point is this; and I'm not saying this toward ya'll; I'm saying this toward myself all the time. Criticizing is always easy work. Producing something better than what was given is always hard work.

Number twelve and lastly: My models are always more useful for some than others. That will always be true. I don't expect all people to benefit from my models all equally. But don't allow

that to prevent you from benefiting maximally to the maximal degree that you can. Even with speaking techniques, if you choose to listen only to the one who speaks the way you most prefer, then you'll miss the blessing potentially available through any of the others who don't use the technique that you may prefer.

So why have I discussed all this today? Because I'm starting this new series that is going to include obligatorily numerous posters to make graphic points. If I didn't go through some of this, and I think there are those potential listeners who will listen, but do the things that I've tried to warn against on this poster about posters. I don't want anybody to miss the maximal blessing available from the simple truths that will be presented on these posters. You could easily do so if you don't use what I'm stating today and understand how I may be applying certain words. Going back to the words soul, spirit, and heart—in the Word of God insofar as I can discern at various places, they may represent the mind of man, the emotion of man, the attitude of man, the will of man, the deepest part of the mind of man, the immaterial man in his entirety, the immaterial man in various components or various functions, or the desires of man.

For the purpose of my discussion, think of all those various usages of words like that as different data points. And I've attempted to develop what I call a best-fit mathematical curve through the various data points. The best-fit curve is meant to make sure that we capture the underlying spiritual truths that are driving the communication and not get lost in the scatter of various data points. I'm going to use the words soul and spirit in vary specific ways. I'm attempting when I do so to honor Psalms 119:160 – the sum of Thy Word is truth. Scripture does give us progressive revelation. Certainly the New Testament enhances and explains a fair amount of what's contained in the Old Testament. I've attempted to take New Testament revelation and retrofit it to Old Testament Scriptures to produce a model that serves as the best fit to honor the sum of the Word of God including the progressive revelation in the Word of God.

So let me make certain points before we even begin. Man does have a material self—a physical self. That was created from the dust of the Earth—that is to say from that which we are all familiar with, that which is visible and palpable and physical and material. We all know what we mean when we say body in that context. Therefore, on my posters, I've left off the material man because we all know what it means and it would have added complexity to the drawings and eliminated the simplicity of the spiritual truth and added no increased understanding. Man also has an immaterial, non-physical self. The immaterial man always exists as a unit. It is never divided one part from another just like God is not divided into three pie-shaped pieces of His essences. While material man is alive, the immaterial man is in the material man. But when material man dies, then all of the immaterial man goes together as a unit to its next destination whatever that destination may be. Immaterial man exists as a unitary being from the moment of creation on into eternity future. However, there are certain stages or phases where immaterial man can be viewed as a homogenous unit—that is where it's all alike including in all of its functioning. And there is a stage or a phase where immaterial man can be viewed as non-homogenous—that is to say as not all alike and not the same in its functioning. I'm going to go through those various stages as we progress here. In the non-homogenous phase, then different words must be used to describe these different components or functions of immaterial man. I've also omitted certain aspects of even the immaterial man from the diagrams. We all know what

emotions are. Trying to add emotions on to my drawing would have added complexity without adding understanding.

Let's use this next poster as a starting point. Don't get lost in the complexity of the words; this is really a simple concept. Here I'm using two frames of reference to capture how two camps within Christianity use the words soul and spirit. They are consistent in using the word body; so I'm not even going to discuss that. Roman numeral I is for the splitters; the splitters in regard to the usage of the words soul and spirit. They use spirit to indicate man's identity at its most basic level—that is to say who man really is at a level beyond which you cannot go, who man really is. They use soul to refer to that part of immaterial man with the functions of will, mind, and emotion. Since emotion and will are split off as separate functions, then mind is what I would call the focal mind—that is to say not inclusive of emotion and will; such things as fund of information, thought, memory, problem solving, and so on. Roman numeral II would be for the lumpers. This is for the ones who regard soul and spirit as basically synonyms to refer to all of immaterial man. So when you have the word soul and you have the word spirit, they're simply synonyms used at different times in Scripture. These people may also use the word mind at times; but commonly when they do so, they're not splitting out will and emotion. They mean the global mind. That is to say, the focal mind, a fund of information, thought, memory, and emotion and will to make up what I would say the global mind, all of the functions of mind. So this person might say at times body, mind, and soul or body, mind and spirit; but they would never say body, soul, and spirit. They would never use soul and spirit as meaning two different things. For my discussion, I'm going to (at least during a portion of it) use the frame of reference one since frame of reference two presents some problems related to certain Scriptures that can be approached by using another poster.

This is a poster that will help us get started because it expresses in summary fashion what I've been discussing. This depicts man at different phases: Unsaved, saved and still on Earth, saved at the time of physical death, and saved after the rapture. The key at the bottom is important and the key shows up particularly over here in this column. A filled-in circle means dead or dying. An open circle means perfected. A circle that is mixed—that is to say that is half dark and half white, is a circle that is mixed. Now in the unsaved condition, all of man is dead or dying. The body is dying because it has upon it the curse of sin. The immaterial man is dead because the immaterial man is completely separated from God. Nobody seeks God, there's none who does good, and so on. Since soul and spirit are both dead to God, then all of immaterial man is dead just like physical man is dead or dying; therefore, which word you use in this context seems to have less meaning since all of immaterial man is dead or dying. However, when that person is saved, but still on Earth, the situation changes. At this point, immaterial man has two components. Differing words are necessary to capture the truth of the two components. Paul does that in I Thessalonians 5:23 – May your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete. So Paul progresses here in the New Testament writings to describe immaterial man as spirit and soul; not by using spirit or soul and using them as synonyms.

The author of Hebrews seems to do likewise. Hebrews 4:12 – For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit. He doesn't use soul or spirit as synonyms; but he uses soul and spirit to indicate two separate entities. Paul again writes in two other Scriptures that seem to call for making such a

distinction about two components of immaterial man; one which has been perfected and one which has not. Ephesians 4:24 he writes – And put on the new self which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. That has been perfected. Whatever Paul is referring to, he seems to be referring to an aspect of immaterial man which has been perfected. Now compare that concept with Romans 12:2 where he writes – that you be transformed by the renewing of the mind. Well clearly Paul would not call upon us to transform something if it had already been perfected. Furthermore, all of us know from experience that our minds have not been completely renewed. The mind, of course, is part of the immaterial man; thus, after salvation, while yet here on Earth, the spirit I draw as an open circle since the spirit is no longer dead. It is alive to God. It is born of the Spirit of God, indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. So I use spirit in the saved man while still on Earth to mean the part of immaterial man that has been perfected in righteousness and true holiness in the image of God according to Ephesians 4:24. I use soul to include the portion of man that still has a partially unrenewed mind. In fact, that mind in large part remains unrenewed. During this portion of saved on Earth, I do not use soul and spirit as synonyms unless I backslide to prior usage before I began to synthesize these various verses. I use them as two separate components of man with soul meaning mind, emotion, and will, the mind not yet having been perfected, but spirit being the new creation self which has been perfected. Now when man dies, at physical death, his material self goes into the grave and rots. It is corrupted because of sin. But immaterial man now goes into the presence of Jesus Christ. Absent from the body...present with the Lord. Since all of immaterial man goes as a unit, that includes soul and spirit as the two components of immaterial man that existed after the moment of salvation.

But when you go to the presence of the Lord at the time of physical death, another change occurs. The spirit has already been perfected. That changes no more. But the soul which while here on Earth was still in large part consisting of an unrenewed mind, now comes into the presence of Jesus Christ. I John 3:3 – When He (Jesus) appears, we shall be like Him because we shall see Him just as He is. At the moment of physical death, when your immaterial man in its entirety comes into the presence of Jesus, you will see Him just as He is and all that is not like Him will melt away if it hasn't already melted away just prior to that. Your mind will now be totally renewed according to the mind of Christ. You will not keep an unrenewed mind. You will not keep your own self on the throne nature. You will not keep your sin factory that existed within you while your time still remained here on Earth. At that point, all of immaterial man will be perfected. Now the distinction between soul and spirit becomes again less meaningful. Either word could now be used to represent the entirety of immaterial man. You could revert back to the usage of soul or spirit as synonyms so long as you know that you're talking about perfected immaterial man in his entirety. Thus, in Revelation 6:9 and in Revelation 20:4, the entirety of immaterial man is called soul. The entirety of the disembodied, immaterial, perfected man is designated by calling them souls that I saw before the throne or before the altar. But at that time, having two different words is less critical because all of immaterial man has been perfected. At the rapture, of course, saved after the rapture, when we come out of the grave and receive our glorified bodies, the glorified body will now be in its state of perfection to join the immaterial man in its perfection to render man then perfect and complete.

Now the next time that I speak I'm going to take this foundational introduction and begin to draw from all of this explanation to begin looking at a schematic representation of our various

stages involved as we progress through our kingdom progression while yet here on Earth. We're going to begin with Adam pre-fall and progress all the way into eternity future. My goal by doing this is that our understanding be sharpened. Our confusion be diminished. Our communication be enhanced. And God, thereby, be more glorified. For just as unfaithfulness never testifies of a faithful God, confusion does not testify of a God Who is not a God of confusion as we're told in I Corinthians 14:33. So my point in going through this is not that you accept everything that I say. The point more appropriately is that you take what I say to use it to test all that you think and say. Then together we'll fulfill Proverbs 27:17 – Iron sharpens iron, so as one man sharpens another. Because one thing about this group that I know is that we have a passion for the truth and we want that passion for the truth to transcend our passion to be thought right as we held to our own frame of reference and our own notions. May our passion for the truth always transcend our passion to be thought right. If so, then we will truly, as a group, be glorifying God with our minds as we progress into oneness with Him through His truth on our joint kingdom progression.

So my time is up and I thank you for yours.