Where the Roads Split: Word of the Kingdom Theology and the Wider Religious Landscape — Part One

Paper 12 in a 12 Part Series

by Escape the Mustard Tree

Introduction

Every paper in this series so far has set Word of the Kingdom theology beside traditions that share its starting points. Catholic, Reformed, Wesleyan, and Orthodox Christians all confess one God in three Persons. They all confess that Jesus is God come in the flesh, and they all receive the Old and New Testaments as the word of God, however differently they read them and whatever authority they set beside them. The disagreements in those papers have been real, but they've been disagreements inside one house.

This paper walks out to where other roads leave the main one. Some of the groups surveyed here left it at the very beginning: they confess a different God, or a different Jesus, than the One the whole Church has confessed since the apostles. Others share the starting point and left it further along, at the question of who decides what God has said, or when the kingdom arrives, or who Israel is. And a few left it while keeping its road signs, so that a traveler can walk a long way down the wrong road reading familiar words the whole time.

For that reason the paper is organized by *where* each road splits, not group by group. A reader new to this material gains two things from that. First, every departure happens at a definite place that can be named and checked against Scripture, and naming the place is half the work of answering it. Second, it keeps the comparison fair. Several of these groups hold something Word of the Kingdom theology also holds, sometimes something most of the mainstream has let go: a literal thousand-year reign, a restored Israel, a literal 144,000. Where two roads run side by side for a stretch, the paper says so. Agreement on a conclusion is not agreement on a route, though, and the route is what tells a reader whether the conclusion can be trusted (1 Thess. 5:21).

The split points fall into two groups, so the paper comes in two parts. Part One takes the three places where the road splits at its foundations: who God is, what counts as His word, and whose name "Christ" is. Part Two takes three places closer to home, where groups that confess the same God part ways over the timing of the kingdom, the identity of Israel, and the end of the ages. Part Two is where Word of the Kingdom theology has the most to explain about itself, because some of the movements surveyed there use its own vocabulary for very different things.

A word on method. Each group is described from its own published sources (its scriptures, its doctrinal statements, the writings of its founders) before anything is said against it, and a member of any of these groups should be able to recognize his own church in the description. Founders and authors are named where their published teaching is being cited, the same way this series names Augustine or Calvin. The test applied throughout is the one this series has applied to every tradition, its own included: what does Scripture say, read in its own setting and compared with itself (Isa. 28:9-10; Acts 17:11)?

One more thing belongs at the start. To say a group has left the road at its foundations is a judgment about its *teaching*. It isn't a verdict on the standing before God of any person who sits in its pews. That belongs to Him alone: "The Lord knows those who are His" (2 Tim. 2:19).

Where the Road Splits at Who God Is

The first fork comes at the first question anyone can ask about God: who is He? Since the apostles, the Church has answered that there is one God, uncreated and without beginning, who exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that the Son, fully God, came in the flesh as Jesus of Nazareth and is fully man (John 1:1, 14; Matt. 28:19). The four groups in this section all leave that road, and they leave it in four different directions. The Latter-day Saints change who God the Father is. Jehovah's Witnesses change who the Son is. Oneness Pentecostals keep the Son's full deity but fold Father, Son, and Spirit into a single person. And the Christadelphians deny that the Son existed at all before Bethlehem.

This might look like a question the series could leave to the creeds, but Word of the Kingdom theology can't, because the story it teaches is a story between Persons. The Son of Man comes to the Ancient of Days and is *given* a kingdom (Dan. 7:13-14). The Father tells the Son to sit at His right hand *till* His enemies are made His footstool (Ps. 110:1; Heb. 10:12-13). In the meantime the Son serves as High Priest, living always to make intercession for His own (Heb. 7:25), and at the end He delivers the kingdom to the Father and is Himself made subject to Him (1 Cor. 15:24, 28). Change who God is, and every one of those sentences changes meaning. So each group below is measured against Scripture, and also against what its doctrine of God does to the kingdom.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Joseph Smith organized the church, commonly called the Mormon church, in Fayette, New York, in 1830. Its scriptures are the Bible, which its eighth Article of Faith receives "as far as it is translated correctly"; the Book of Mormon; the Doctrine and Covenants, a collection of Smith's revelations and some of his successors'; and the Pearl of Great Price. Its ninth Article adds that God "will yet reveal many great and important things," and the church holds that He does so through a living prophet and twelve apostles. The second section of this paper takes up what an open canon does to the authority of Scripture. Here the concern is what the church has drawn from its canon about God.

What the church teaches about God. In 1843 Smith recorded a revelation stating that "the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also" (D&C 130:22). The next year, preaching after the death of a church member named King Follett, he told the assembled Saints that God "was once as one of us" and that "you have got to learn how to be a god yourself." Lorenzo Snow, the church's fifth president, put the teaching into a couplet: "As man now is, God once was: As God now is, man may be." In fairness, the church's own published essay on the subject notes that the King Follett sermon was never canonized and that "little has been revealed about the first half of this couplet." The second half, though, *is* canonized. A revelation recorded in 1843 and tied to eternal marriage in the temple says of those who keep its covenants, "Then shall they be gods, because they have no end" (D&C 132:20). Latter-day Saints call this exaltation. They

hold every human being to be a child of heavenly parents in a literal sense, with a divine nature that can grow into godhood.

Where the roads run together. More of the road runs side by side here than most readers expect. The church holds a literal millennium; its tenth Article of Faith says that "Christ will reign personally upon the earth," and it expects a literal gathering of Israel. It teaches that the redeemed receive different degrees of glory rather than one uniform reward (D&C 76). And when it defends exaltation from the Bible, two of the texts it reaches for are Romans 8:17, "joint heirs with Christ," and Revelation 3:21, the overcomer's promise of a seat on Christ's throne. A reader of this series has met both verses before, and more than once. Word of the Kingdom theology teaches a real future glorification and a real share in Christ's rule for the faithful, so the disagreement is not over whether the promise is large. It's over what kind of thing is promised.

Where they split. The split is categorical, and Isaiah draws the line in a single verse:

> "You are My witnesses," says the LORD, "And My servant whom I have chosen, That you may know and believe Me, And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, Nor shall there be after Me." (Isa. 43:10)

That verse closes off both halves of Snow's couplet. "Before Me there was no God formed" rules out a God who was once a man and became God. "Nor shall there be after Me" rules out men who will one day become gods. God "is not a man" (Num. 23:19); He is God "from everlasting to everlasting," before the mountains were brought forth (Ps. 90:2). And He says it again a few chapters later in Isaiah: "Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one" (Isa. 44:8).

Now set the borrowed texts back in their places. The overcomer's promise reads:

> "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." (Rev. 3:21)

Every part of that sentence keeps the overcomer *under* someone. The seat is granted; he doesn't attain it. The throne is Christ's own, and the overcomer sits on it *with* Him, the way Christ now sits with His Father on the Father's throne. Romans 8:17 runs the same way: heirs "of God" and joint heirs "with Christ," on condition that "we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." An heir receives what belongs to another. Nothing in either verse turns the heir into the one he inherits from.

Latter-day Saints also cite Psalm 82:6, "You are gods," and Jesus' use of it in John 10:34. But the psalm doesn't stop at verse 6:

> I said, "You are gods, And all of you are children of the Most High. But you shall die like men, And fall like one of the princes." (Ps. 82:6-7)

The "gods" of Psalm 82 are Israel's judges, men who held God's authority to judge and were about to die for abusing it (Ps. 82:1-4). Jesus' argument in John 10 runs from the lesser to the greater. If Scripture could call men "gods" because "the word of God came" to them, how could the One "whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world" be blaspheming when He called Himself the Son of God (John 10:35-36)? He uses the psalm to defend a claim that belongs to Him alone. He doesn't use it to hand godhood to His hearers.

One more reason keeps this series off that road, and it's the series' own starting point. Man was made to rule: "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion" (Gen. 1:26). Rule was always his destiny, but it was rule inside God's creation, as God's image-bearer, under God. The kingdom this series teaches is that purpose finally restored, in the Son and with those who are His. The first offer of anything more came from the serpent: "you will be like God" (Gen. 3:5). The Latter-day Saints read Genesis 3:22, "the man has become like one of Us," as the first step of a good progression. Scripture's name for that step is the fall. When man's created purpose is fulfilled, it's fulfilled as dominion *with* the Son and under the Father, and never as a promotion out of the creature's place.

Jehovah's Witnesses

The movement began with Charles Taze Russell's Bible Students in Pennsylvania in the 1870s, publishing through what became the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. Under Russell's successor, Joseph Rutherford, it took the name Jehovah's Witnesses in 1931. Today a Governing Body at the movement's headquarters sets its doctrine, and Witnesses are taught to receive its revisions as God's progressively revealed understanding.

What they teach about the Son. Jehovah's Witnesses deny the Trinity. In their teaching Jesus is the first and greatest of God's creations, the one through whom God then made everything else, and the holy spirit is God's active force rather than a Person. They identify the Son with the archangel Michael; one of their magazines states that "Michael the archangel is Jesus in his prehuman existence," and they teach that He resumed His place as Michael after His resurrection. Their own Bible, the *New World Translation*, renders the last clause of John 1:1 "the Word was a god."

What they teach about the kingdom. Witnesses teach that God's Kingdom is a real government set up in heaven at a fixed date. Their current study book teaches that "God's Kingdom started ruling in heaven in the year 1914." With Jesus in that heavenly government are 144,000 "anointed" Christians, chosen from Pentecost onward, who rule with Him as kings and priests over the earth for a thousand years. They count the number as literal. They take "the tribes of the children of Israel" in the same passage as a figure, though, and identify the 144,000 as "spiritual Israel" drawn from every nation. Everyone else God approves, the "great crowd" of Revelation 7:9, hopes to survive Armageddon and live forever on a restored paradise earth. For decades the organization taught that the heavenly calling was essentially complete by 1935; in 2007 *The Watchtower* withdrew that and said no date could be set for when the calling ends.

Where the roads run together. Three stretches run side by side. Witnesses read the 144,000 as a literal number, as this series does. They expect a literal thousand-year reign over the earth. And their kingdom has two levels, a company ruling from heaven and a people living on the earth, while Word of the Kingdom theology also teaches a heavenly portion and an earthly portion of the coming kingdom. A reader can come away thinking the two systems are close.

Where they split: who the Son is. The first split is the deepest. John opens his Gospel this way:

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. (John 1:1-3)

Most Greek scholars outside the movement reject "a god" as a rendering of verse 1, but the question doesn't have to be settled on grammar. Verse 3 settles it on its own. If everything that was made was made through the Word, and nothing made was made without Him, then either the Word isn't among the things made, or He made Himself. Paul says the same of the Son: "by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth... All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things" (Col. 1:16-17). The *New World Translation* renders the passage "all other things," adding a word the Greek doesn't contain.

The identification with Michael fares no better. Hebrews spends its whole first chapter setting the Son *against* the angels: "For to which of the angels did He ever say: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You'?... But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: 'Let all the angels of God worship Him'" (Heb. 1:5-6). "But to the Son He says: 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever'" (Heb. 1:8). Then comes the verse in which Hebrews names its own subject:

> For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. (Heb. 2:5)

The coming age is the one thing Hebrews says angels will *not* be given. If the Son were an angel, the King of the world to come would be the very kind of being that verse excludes from ruling it. Jude adds a smaller detail that points the same way. When Michael disputed with the devil over the body of Moses, he "dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'" (Jude 9). Michael appealed to a higher authority. Jesus never did; He said "Away with you, Satan!" in His own name (Matt. 4:10). And the Witnesses' main proof text, that the Lord descends "with the voice of an archangel" (1 Thess. 4:16), puts that voice beside "the trumpet of God" in the same sentence. Nobody concludes from it that Jesus is a trumpet.

Where they split: a kingdom since 1914. The second split is about timing, and it lands near the center of this series. Witnesses teach that Jesus began ruling as King in 1914, invisibly, from heaven. Scripture's word for where He is now is *waiting*: He "sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool" (Heb. 10:12-13). The office He holds now is High Priest (Heb. 8:1). The kingdom comes when He comes, and it comes in the open: "every eye will see Him" (Rev. 1:7). This series' third paper works out the difference between His present session at the Father's right hand and His future reign on His own throne (Rev. 3:21). A reign that began in 1914 and that no one saw folds the two together.

Where they split: the 144,000. The overlap on the 144,000 is real, and it's also the clearest case in this paper of two systems reaching one number for incompatible reasons. Here is the passage:

> And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed: of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed... After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. (Rev. 7:4-5, 9)

Word of the Kingdom theology reads every part of that passage the way it reads the number. The 144,000 are Israelites, twelve thousand from each named tribe, sealed by God before the judgments of the Tribulation fall on the earth (Rev. 7:1-3). They're preserved through that period to carry the gospel of the kingdom to the nations before the end comes (Matt. 24:14). The Witnesses

hold on to the number and let go of the tribes, turning the named sons of Jacob into a figure for Christians of every nation. But John himself sets up the contrast their reading erases. First he *hears* a number, counted out tribe by tribe from Israel; then he *sees* a multitude "which no one could number," drawn "of all nations" (Rev. 7:4, 9). The passage keeps Israel and the nations apart in the very verses that are made to merge them, and that distinction is what this series' sixth paper is built on.

The two levels of the kingdom divide differently, too. In the Witnesses' teaching the line between heaven and earth runs between two classes of Christians. Most Witnesses today belong to the class that will never be in heaven, never partakes of the bread and wine at the Memorial, and isn't counted among the anointed sons. In Word of the Kingdom theology the line between the heavenly and earthly portions runs between Israel and the Church. Israel as a nation forfeited the heavenly portion (Matt. 21:43) and keeps the earthly promise God made to her fathers (Rom. 11:26-29). And within the Church, what decides a Christian's part in the heavenly portion is not a calling closed by a date. It's his own faithfulness, assessed at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 3:21).

Oneness Pentecostalism

Oneness Pentecostalism grew out of the young Pentecostal movement itself. At a camp meeting at Arroyo Seco, near Los Angeles, in 1913, a preacher pointed out that the apostles in Acts baptized in the name of Jesus rather than with the threefold name of Matthew 28:19. Within two years ministers were being rebaptized "in Jesus' name," and the question of the Godhead followed close behind. In 1916 the Assemblies of God adopted a Trinitarian statement, and the Oneness ministers left. The largest Oneness body today, the United Pentecostal Church International (UPCI), was formed by a merger in 1945. The Assemblies of God and most Pentecostals worldwide stayed on the main road here and remain Trinitarian; their distinctive teaching on the sign gifts doesn't split at who God is, so it's taken up in Part Two, where the question is the timing of the kingdom.

What they teach. Oneness theology holds that God is one in the strictest sense: one Person. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three manifestations or roles of that one Person, and the name of the one God is Jesus. So when Matthew 28:19 commands baptism "in the name" (singular) of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the name is Jesus, and the apostles carried out the command correctly when they baptized in it (Acts 2:38). Baptism with the threefold formula is held to be invalid. The UPCI's Articles of Faith state its fundamental doctrine as "the Bible standard of full salvation," and give it three parts: repentance; baptism by immersion in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, with speaking in tongues as its initial sign.

Where the roads run together. Oneness Pentecostals confess that Jesus is fully God. On that point they stand nearer the road than the Witnesses or the Christadelphians, and they hold to the Bible without adding to it. Their churches also affirm, alongside the three-part standard, that salvation is by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9). The tension between those two affirmations is where most of the disagreement lives.

Where they split: one Person or three. The Gospels put the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in a single scene, each acting distinctly:

> When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:16-17)

The Son stands in the water, the Spirit descends on Him, and the Father speaks to Him from heaven. Oneness teachers answer that the voice is the one God speaking to the human nature He had taken on. But the Son's prayer in John 17 reaches back before there was any human nature to speak to: "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (John 17:5). *With You* is a relationship, and the Son says it existed before creation.

For Word of the Kingdom theology the question goes past one scene, because, as the opening of this section showed, the kingdom itself passes between Persons. "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool'" (Ps. 110:1). One speaks; the other is seated and waits. The Son of Man is brought before the Ancient of Days, "then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom" (Dan. 7:13-14). At the end the Son "delivers the kingdom to God the Father" and "will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him" (1 Cor. 15:24, 28). If there's only one Person, the whole transfer of the kingdom becomes a person handing something to himself.

Where they split: what saves. The second split is the more practical one, and it rests on one verse read out of its setting. Peter's words at Pentecost close a sermon addressed to "Men of Israel" (Acts 2:22) about a Messiah the nation had just crucified:

> "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:36-38)

The men who heard this belonged to a redeemed nation, a people already God's own, who had just learned they'd put their own Messiah to death. Peter called them to do what John the Baptist had called Israel to do, in nearly the same words: John came "preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4). That was the washing of a people already in relationship with God, turning back from their sin. Peter's next sermon says what the nation's turning was meant to bring: "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ... whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things" (Acts 3:19-21). The kingdom was in view. Acts 2:38 is Israel being called to turn to her Messiah, and the forgiveness it offers is the cleansing a redeemed people needs along the way. It is not the formula by which a man first passes from death to life.

When Scripture answers *that* question, it answers in one word. The jailer at Philippi asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" and was told, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:30-31). "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). Baptism in water is commanded, and it matters a great deal for the life that follows (Rom. 6:3-4). The three-part

standard does something else with it: it takes an act of obedience that belongs to the saved person's walk and makes it a condition of being saved at all.

The tongues requirement runs into Paul's own question to the Corinthians: "Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?" (1 Cor. 12:30). The Greek is framed to expect the answer *no*. Paul also says what tongues were for. He quotes Isaiah 28:11, "With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people," and concludes that "tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers" (1 Cor. 14:21-22). In Isaiah, "this people" is Israel. The tie between the sign gifts and God's dealings with Israel and the kingdom is taken up in Part Two, since it bears on far more groups than this one.

The Christadelphians

The Christadelphians trace their beginning to John Thomas, an English physician who emigrated to the United States in the 1830s and worked for a time in Alexander Campbell's Restoration movement before breaking with it. During the Civil War his followers needed a name to register as conscientious objectors, and they took "Christadelphian," meaning brethren in Christ. Their statement of faith was drawn up in Birmingham, England, in 1877 and amended in 1898, and most of their congregations, which they call ecclesias, still use that Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith. There's no central authority above them.

What they teach. The Christadelphian statement is unusually concrete about the kingdom. God will send Jesus Christ "personally to the earth at the close of the times of the Gentiles" (clause 20). The kingdom He establishes "will be the Kingdom of Israel restored, in the territory it formerly occupied" (clause 21), with the Jews regathered and Jerusalem rebuilt "to become 'the throne of the Lord' and the metropolis of the whole earth" (clause 22). At His appearing, before the kingdom is set up, the responsible, "obedient and disobedient," will be summoned before His judgment seat (clause 24). The faithful will be "exalted to reign with Jesus as joint heirs of the Kingdom," and the unfaithful "consigned to shame and 'the second death'" (clause 25). The kingdom will last a thousand years, "during which sin and death will continue among the earth's subject inhabitants, though in a much milder degree than now" (clause 26).

Alongside that, the statement's list of doctrines to be rejected includes "that God is three persons," "that the Son of God was co-eternal with the Father," "that the Holy Spirit is a person distinct from the Father," "that man has an immortal soul," and "that the devil is a supernatural being." In Christadelphian teaching, Jesus began to exist when He was conceived in Mary. "The devil" names sin in human nature rather than a fallen angel. And the second death that awaits the unfaithful is extinction.

Where the roads run together. No group in this paper runs further alongside Word of the Kingdom theology, and a reader who wanders into a Christadelphian Bible class should know it. They preach the kingdom as the content of the gospel itself, "the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 8:12). They expect Israel restored to her land and Jerusalem as the seat of Christ's rule. They reject the idea that the Church *is* the kingdom, and they reject the teaching that Christ won't return until after the thousand years. They put a judgment seat for Christians *before* the kingdom, they expect obedient and disobedient Christians both to stand there, and they

expect only the faithful to reign. They even cite Isaiah 65:20 for a millennium in which death still occurs, the same verse this series' third paper uses to show that the coming age fits neither this age nor the final state. A Christadelphian and a Word of the Kingdom teacher can agree on a great deal of chapter and verse about the kingdom before discovering they disagree about who is coming to rule it.

Where they split: the Son before Bethlehem. The Christadelphian answer to John 1 is that "the Word" is God's plan or purpose, which became flesh in Jesus. But a purpose doesn't share glory with anyone: "Glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (John 17:5). "Before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:58). Paul describes a Person who, "being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:6-7). Someone had to exist in order to make himself of no reputation. Hebrews applies Psalm 102 straight to the Son: "You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands" (Heb. 1:10). And the Lord's own title in Isaiah, "I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God" (Isa. 44:6), is taken up in Revelation by the risen Jesus, who adds what could only be said of the Son: "I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead" (Rev. 1:17-18).

Where they split: the devil. This split matters more to Word of the Kingdom theology than to almost any other tradition, because the kingdom it teaches has an incumbent ruler. Ezekiel's lament over the king of Tyre looks past the man to the one behind him:

> "You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you." (Ezek. 28:14-15)

That's a created being, given his place by God, who fell. He still holds the rule over this world that came with that place, which is why he could show Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time" and say, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish" (Luke 4:5-6). Jesus did not dispute the claim; He refused the offer. Scripture names this being "that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan," and he's the one bound when the thousand years begin (Rev. 20:2). This series calls him the disqualified incumbent: appointed, rejected, and not yet removed, the way Saul went on reigning after God rejected him and before David took the throne. Take away the personal devil and there's no incumbent to remove. The coming of the kingdom shrinks to the replacement of human governments, and the story of a ruler cast down and a rightful King waiting for His throne loses the very ruler it's about.

Where they split: what the judgment seat decides. The Christadelphian judgment seat looks almost exactly like the one this series teaches, which makes the difference easy to miss. In both, Christians stand before Christ before the kingdom begins, the obedient and the disobedient alike, and in both only the faithful reign. But for the Christadelphian, life itself is what's being decided there. Salvation comes by believing the gospel, being baptized, and "continuing patiently in the observance of all things he has commanded" (clause 16), and the unfaithful are finally extinguished. Nothing of a man's standing is settled before he arrives.

Word of the Kingdom theology holds that the spirit's standing *is* settled, at the moment a person believes, and that "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Rom. 11:29). What the Judgment Seat decides is the inheritance: whether a Christian rules with Christ in the coming age or suffers loss. Paul draws that line inside a single verse: "If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Cor. 3:15). The loss is real, and the man himself isn't extinguished. The Christadelphian has kept the shape of the Judgment Seat and removed what lets a Christian stand there with confidence: a standing before God that the verdict on his works cannot reopen.

Where the Road Splits at What Counts as God's Word

A group doesn't have to add books to its Bible to change what counts as God's word. It only has to give someone's voice the final say over what the Bible means. The books stay closed, the meaning stays open, and whoever holds the meaning holds the canon in practice. This series' opening paper gives one answer to that question for every tradition it compares: Scripture is its own interpreter, and no living office, council, or prophet stands beside it as a second authority (Isa. 28:9-10; Acts 17:11). The Latter-day Saints' living prophet and the Witnesses' Governing Body are cases of the same thing, and they've been described above. This section takes two movements in which one founder's voice became the lens for reading the whole Bible, and in which, both times, the result was a doctrine that never rose out of the text on its own.

Seventh-day Adventism

Adventism grew out of the Millerite movement of the 1830s and 1840s. William Miller, a Baptist farmer-preacher in upstate New York, worked from Daniel 8:14, read each of its 2,300 days as a year, and concluded that Christ would return around 1844. His followers settled on October 22, 1844. When the day passed, the movement broke apart in what came to be called the Great Disappointment. Among those who held together, a new reading took shape: the date had been right, but the event had been misidentified. On that day Christ hadn't left heaven; He had passed from one compartment of the heavenly sanctuary into the other to begin a new phase of His priestly work. A young woman named Ellen Harmon, later Ellen G. White, began receiving visions in December 1844, and her writings confirmed and shaped that reading, along with the seventh-day Sabbath. The Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized in 1863.

What the church teaches. Adventism today is Trinitarian; its fundamental beliefs confess one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three coeternal Persons. Its departures lie elsewhere, in three teachings that hold one another up:

- The gift of prophecy was manifested in Ellen G. White, whose writings, the church's eighteenth fundamental belief says, "speak with prophetic authority." The same belief makes the Bible the standard by which all teaching is to be tested.
- In 1844, at the end of the 2,300 days, Christ entered the second and final phase of His atoning ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, the antitype of the Day of Atonement. The church calls this work the investigative judgment. It reveals which of the dead are asleep in Christ and worthy of the first resurrection, and which of the living are abiding in Him and ready to be taken into His kingdom. When it's complete, human probation closes and Christ returns (fundamental belief 24).

- The seventh-day Sabbath, instituted at creation for all people, binds every Christian under the fourth commandment, and keeping it marks the remnant church of the last days (fundamental beliefs 13 and 20).

The Adventist millennium has its own shape too. At Christ's return the righteous dead are raised and, with the righteous living, taken to heaven. For the thousand years they reign with Christ *in heaven*, while the earth lies desolate, empty of living people and occupied only by Satan and his angels. When the thousand years end, the holy city descends, the wicked dead are raised and destroyed, and the earth is made new (fundamental beliefs 25-27).

Where the roads run together. A good deal of road runs side by side. Adventists expect a literal, personal, visible return of Christ before the thousand years, which puts them in the premillennial camp with this series rather than with the amillennialism of Rome and much of the Reformed world. They teach that Satan is a real, created being whose rebellion began in heaven, and they read Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 of him, as this series does. They put heavy weight on Christ's present work as High Priest. They see the seventh day as a picture of a rest still to come. And they expect a judgment of professing Christians *before* the kingdom that decides who is counted worthy to receive it, language this series also uses, since Scripture speaks of being "counted worthy of the kingdom of God" (2 Thess. 1:5; Luke 20:35).

Where they split: a judgment that began in 1844. The first split is about what Daniel 8 describes. Here is the verse together with the question it answers:

> Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, "How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled underfoot?" And he said to me, "For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed." (Dan. 8:13-14)

The question is how long a sanctuary will lie trampled by an enemy, its daily sacrifices taken away by the "little horn" of the vision (Dan. 8:9-12). The answer gives the length of the desolation, and the cleansing at the end is the sanctuary set right after it. Gabriel then tells Daniel that "the vision refers to the time of the end" (Dan. 8:17), and Daniel's prophecies of the end belong to his own nation, the end appointed "for your people and for your holy city" (Dan. 9:24). Nothing in the chapter describes Christ reviewing the records of professing Christians in heaven. That reading arrived after October 22, 1844, as the explanation of a date already fixed, and it was held in place by a prophet's visions rather than drawn from the chapter.

Hebrews also says where Christ went when He ascended. Christian hope "enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 6:19-20). "Behind the veil" is the Most Holy Place. He went in once, with His own blood (Heb. 9:12), "into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9:24). He did not wait eighteen centuries to go in.

Where they split: what the judgment decides. The deeper split is over what's being judged. In the Adventist account, the investigative judgment reveals who among professing Christians is in Christ at all, and therefore who will have part in the resurrection and the kingdom. Adventists speak warmly of assurance, and many present the judgment as good news for the faithful. But the question it settles is the one this series holds settled the moment a person believes. Paul's

instruction about the judgment of Christ's servants points the other way, on timing as well as subject:

> Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God. (1 Cor. 4:5)

The servants' judgment waits "until the Lord comes." It brings hidden things to light, and what it weighs is how a steward has handled what was entrusted to him (1 Cor. 4:1-2). That's the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10), held after His coming, where a Christian's works are tried by fire and his inheritance is decided while "he himself will be saved" (1 Cor. 3:15). Being counted worthy of the kingdom is a real question in Scripture. It's a question about the kingdom, put to men whose standing before God is no longer on the table.

Where they split: the Sabbath. Adventists are right that the seventh day reaches back to creation, and right that it points forward; this series agrees with both. They part over whom the weekly Sabbath was given to and what it points to. When God gave it in the law, He said who it was for:

> "Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed." (Exod. 31:16-17)

The Sabbath is a sign between God and Israel, and covenant in Scripture belongs to Israel. When the apostles met in Jerusalem to settle what Gentile Christians must keep, the Sabbath wasn't on the list (Acts 15:28-29). Paul treats the observance of days as a matter of conscience, "One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike" (Rom. 14:5), and then tells the Colossians what the Sabbath was:

> So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. (Col. 2:16-17)

A shadow "of things to come." The weekly rest after six days of work pictures something still ahead, and Hebrews names it. God rested on the seventh day of the creation week (Heb. 4:4); Joshua didn't bring Israel into the rest it pictured (Heb. 4:8); and so "there remains therefore a rest for the people of God" (Heb. 4:9). Six days of work and a seventh of rest, at the measure Peter gives, "with the Lord one day is as a thousand years" (2 Pet. 3:8), make the thousand-year reign of Christ the seventh day of the story Scripture sets out in its first chapter. That's the substance the shadow points to.

Here the two splits meet. The Adventist millennium leaves the earth empty and puts the saints in heaven, so the great Sabbath the weekly Sabbath foreshadows never reaches the earth where the six days of work were done. Scripture’s reign is heavenly and earthly together, and its rule reaches the earth itself. The redeemed sing, “we shall reign on the earth” (Rev. 5:10), and the meek “shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). And when the thousand years end, the enemy goes up “on the breadth of the earth” and surrounds “the camp of the saints and the beloved city” (Rev. 20:9). There is a beloved city on the earth to surround because the earth has not been empty.

Armstrongism and the Worldwide Church of God

Herbert W. Armstrong, an advertising man from Iowa, was ordained in 1931 in the Church of God (Seventh Day), a Sabbath-keeping body that came out of the same Millerite stream as Adventism. In the early 1930s he began broadcasting from Eugene, Oregon, founding what became the Radio Church of God, renamed the Worldwide Church of God in 1968. Through radio, television, and *The Plain Truth* magazine he reached millions. He regarded himself as God's chosen apostle for the end of the age, the Elijah promised in Malachi, through whom lost truths were being restored.

What the church taught. Armstrong rejected the Trinity. He taught that the Holy Spirit is God's power, and that God is a family, at present the Father and the Son, into which human beings can be born. His book *The Incredible Human Potential* (1978) taught that man's destiny is to be born into the God Family itself, the Latter-day Saint move by another route. He taught British Israelism, the theory that the British and American peoples descend from the lost tribes of Israel and inherit the birthright promises given to Joseph's sons. He required the seventh-day Sabbath, the annual holy days of Leviticus 23, and the dietary laws. And he taught that no one is yet born again: a Christian is only begotten now and is born into the God Family at the resurrection.

Where the roads run together. Armstrong insisted that the kingdom of God is still future and that the Church isn't it. He taught a literal reign of Christ on the earth, and he took Israel's promises seriously enough to look for their fulfillment in history. Those are stretches of road this series also walks.

Where they split. Most of the splits have already been mapped. The God Family teaching runs into the verse that answered the Latter-day Saints: "Before Me there was no God formed, Nor shall there be after Me" (Isa. 43:10). The denial of the Spirit's personhood runs into the Spirit who can be lied to, which Peter calls lying "to God" (Acts 5:3-4), and who can be grieved (Eph. 4:30). The Sabbath and the holy days are answered above. British Israelism belongs to Part Two, where the question is who Israel is; for now it's enough to note that even the Christadelphians, who share so much of Armstrong's kingdom, list it among the doctrines they reject.

The reason Armstrongism belongs in *this* section is what happened after its founder died in 1986. His appointed successor, Joseph W. Tkach, and the church's leadership began comparing Armstrong's teachings with Scripture point by point, and one by one they gave them up. The church accepted the Trinity, abandoned British Israelism, and in late 1994 taught that Christians aren't bound to keep the Sabbath or the annual holy days. It cost them dearly. By the church's own account the membership split roughly in half, and several splinter churches formed to carry Armstrong's teaching on. In 2009 what remained renamed itself Grace Communion International. Of all the groups in this paper, it's the only one whose road bent back to the main one, and it bent for the reason this series has given from the start: when its leaders had to choose between their founder's voice and the text, they chose the text.

That test applies to every teacher, the ones this series draws on included. No teacher's standing is a reason to believe what he teaches. The Bereans "searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11), and the teacher they were checking was an apostle.

Where the Road Splits at the Name "Christ"

The groups in the first two sections left the road and, for the most part, said so. Each knows it holds something the creeds reject, and each defends the difference openly. The movements in this last section are different in kind. They keep every road sign. They speak of Christ, of the Christ within, of ascension, of the I AM, of sons of God and the kingdom. They use the same vocabulary as the Church, but they read it from a different dictionary. A reader can walk a long way down this road and never see a sign that reads differently from the ones he grew up with.

For that reason this section is shaped a little differently from the first two. It describes three related streams, shows where the same move has reached readers inside ordinary churches, and then spends its length on what a Christian needs most here: the ability to hear the difference.

Theosophy and the ascended masters

Helena Blavatsky, a Russian émigré, founded the Theosophical Society in New York in 1875 with Henry Olcott and William Judge. Her books, *Isis Unveiled* (1877) and *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), drew on Hinduism, Buddhism, and Western occultism to teach that all religions descend from one ancient wisdom, guarded by a hierarchy of masters who guide humanity's spiritual evolution. In that system "Christ" stopped being the name of a Person. It became a principle, a divine spark latent in every soul, and a stage the soul could reach. Annie Besant, who led the Society after 1907, taught in *Esoteric Christianity* (1901) that the Christ is born in the soul as it advances.

Theosophy also spoke of a great World Teacher, whom it identified with Christ, who returns from age to age by taking over the body of a prepared human being. In 1909 Besant's colleague Charles Leadbeater picked out a fourteen-year-old Indian boy, Jiddu Krishnamurti, as the coming vehicle, and in 1911 an order was formed to prepare the world for his appearing. In Besant's words, as a newspaper reported them in 1929, the World Teacher would speak through him "just as He spoke through the body of the disciple Jesus two thousand years ago." Krishnamurti himself refused the role that year and dissolved the order. But the sentence shows the whole system in miniature. Jesus is a disciple, His body is a vehicle, and "the Christ" is something that passes from one vehicle to the next.

In the 1930s Guy and Edna Ballard of Chicago reshaped the Theosophical masters into "ascended masters," among whom Jesus is one, and taught that each person has a divine "Mighty I AM Presence" of his own. Their followers worshiped chiefly by speaking decrees, commands spoken aloud in the first person to call down the power of that Presence or of the masters. Mark Prophet carried the same teaching into the Summit Lighthouse in 1958, and after his death his wife, Elizabeth Clare Prophet, reorganized it in the 1970s as the Church Universal and Triumphant. Its decrees, including decrees addressed to Archangel Michael and "his legions," spread well beyond the church's own members.

New Thought and Christian Science

A second stream ran through nineteenth-century New England. Phineas Quimby, a clockmaker turned mental healer, taught that sickness is a mistaken belief that right thinking can dissolve. One

of his patients, Mary Baker Eddy, published *Science and Health* in 1875 and founded the Church of Christ, Scientist in 1879. Her textbook draws the line between Jesus and Christ in so many words:

> "Jesus is the human man, and Christ is the divine idea; hence the duality of Jesus the Christ." (Eddy, *Science and Health*, 473)

The Unity movement, founded by Charles and Myrtle Fillmore in Kansas City in 1889, carried the same idea in a gentler register. Christ is the divine idea of perfect humanity present in every person, and Jesus is the one who expressed it fully. Through Unity's publications and the wider New Thought movement, "the Christ within" and "Christ consciousness" passed into the vocabulary of American spirituality, where most of the people who use the phrases have never heard of Quimby or Eddy.

The same move inside the church door

The move doesn't stay outside the church. Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest and one of the most widely read spiritual writers in America, opens his bestselling *The Universal Christ* (2019) with a chapter titled "Christ Is Not Jesus's Last Name." His argument is that God's first incarnation was creation itself, that "Christ" names God's presence in all matter from the first moment of the universe, and that Jesus is a second, personal incarnation of that larger Christ. Rohr writes as a Christian, for Christians, inside a Christian institution, and his books sit on the shelves of many churches. The vocabulary is entirely familiar. What it names has changed underneath it.

Where the roads run together

In substance, almost nowhere. What these movements share with the Christian faith is vocabulary, and that's exactly the danger. A reader of this series in particular should notice how much of it overlaps with the series' own: sons of God, overcoming, glory, ascension, the kingdom, a destiny higher than this life. Theosophy has its masters who have overcome; New Thought calls every person a son of God; Rohr speaks of a glory hidden in all creation. The words are shared. Nothing they point to is.

Where they split: whose name "Christ" is

"Christ" is not a principle or a state of mind. It's the Greek form of the Hebrew *Messiah*, the Anointed One, and in Scripture it names an office in the story of Israel's kingdom. The kings of the earth take counsel "against the LORD and against His Anointed" (Ps. 2:2). When Andrew found his brother, he said, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ) (John 1:41). The angel told Mary to name her Son Jesus, and said of Him, "the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:31-33). Peter's confession, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16), named a particular man as Israel's promised King. At Pentecost he named Him again: God has made "this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

That is why the split matters so much to Word of the Kingdom theology. "Christ" is a kingdom word. It names the King who will sit on David's throne, and a King needs a body, a throne, and a city. A Christ who is a principle present in all matter has no throne to sit on and nowhere to return to. Scripture's Christ does: "This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in

like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11), and "in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east" (Zech. 14:4). The One who returns is the same Jesus, in the same body, to the same hill. Paul says where the fullness of God dwells: "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). In Him, and bodily. Not in all things, and not as an idea.

The apostle John met this move in his own lifetime. A teacher named Cerinthus, active in Asia Minor in John's last years, taught that Christ descended on the man Jesus at His baptism and departed from Him before the cross, so that Jesus suffered while the Christ remained untouched (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.26.1). That is Besant's "vehicle" seventeen centuries early. And John knew the man. Polycarp, who had known John, used to tell how John once went in to bathe at Ephesus, saw Cerinthus inside, and rushed out without bathing, saying, "Let us fly, lest even the bath-house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within" (*Against Heresies* 3.3.4). John's letters draw the line exactly where Cerinthus had drawn his:

> Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. (1 John 2:22)
>
> By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. (1 John 4:2-3)

The test is not whether a teacher speaks warmly of Christ. All of these teachers do. The test is whether he confesses that Jesus *is* the Christ, the one Person, come in the flesh. And Jesus warned that the counterfeit would come using His own title: "many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many" (Matt. 24:5). He even named the inward version: "if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. 24:26-27). The Christ Scripture promises does not arrive quietly in a vehicle or wake up inside a consciousness. He comes in the open, and every eye sees Him.

There's one more thing to see about the name. The angel gave the personal name first: "you shall call His name JESUS" (Luke 1:31). That name belongs to His earthly body and to what He did in it. It's the name Peter used when he said, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12), meaning "the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified" (Acts 4:10). Every system in this section keeps "Christ" and lets "Jesus" fall away. Scripture holds them together, because the King and the man from Nazareth are one Person.

Hearing the difference

The ascended-master decrees show how far this vocabulary can travel. A typical decree in that tradition is spoken in the name of Archangel Michael and his legions, calls on the sacred fire or the rays of the masters, and has the speaker declare in the first person, "I AM," what he is and shall remain. To a congregation that has never met the source, it can sound like a bold prayer for protection. In 2021 a congregation at a church conference in the American Midwest was led from the platform in a prayer built on this kind of decree, and few in the room noticed until someone set the two texts side by side afterward. Nobody needs to know who led that prayer or why. What

every Christian needs is to be able to hear what the people in that room didn't. Four tells give it away:

What is said	Ascended-master usage	What Scripture does
Words addressed to an angel	Michael and his legions are invoked directly	Angels refuse worship and send it to God (Rev. 22:8-9); worshiping angels cheats a Christian of his reward (Col. 2:18)
"I AM" in the speaker's mouth	The divine Presence within the speaker, declaring what it commands	God's own name (Exod. 3:14), claimed by Jesus (John 8:58); a creature's "I will" belongs to Lucifer (Isa. 14:13-14)
Commands rather than requests	Decrees direct power to bring about a result	Prayer asks in Jesus' name and yields to the Father's will (Matt. 7:7; John 14:13; Luke 22:42)
"Christ" without "Jesus"	A title or consciousness any soul may reach	The anointed King, one Person with Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 2:36; 1 John 2:22)

Take the first tell, because Scripture has already spoken to it. Michael is real, and Scripture names his charge: he is "the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people" (Dan. 12:1), Daniel's people, Israel. And Michael himself never decreed in his own name. When he disputed with the devil, he "dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'" (Jude 9). If Michael won't speak in his own name, no Christian should speak in his. Paul tied the matter straight to the subject of this series: "Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind" (Col. 2:18). The cost of this road, for a Christian who wanders onto it, is measured at the Judgment Seat.

The second tell runs deeper. "I AM" is the name God gave Moses at the bush (Exod. 3:14), and the one Jesus took on Himself in the temple: "before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:58). The only creature in Scripture who speaks a string of first-person decrees about his own divine destiny is the one who said, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God... I will be like the Most High" (Isa. 14:13-14). The Christian's posture in prayer is the opposite one, and Jesus showed it on the night He was betrayed: "nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42).

None of this requires a reader to know where a phrase came from. It only requires him to set what he hears beside what Scripture says, line upon line, and to notice when the two don't match (Isa.

28:10). "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

Why It Matters

Every group in Part One changed something at the foundation, and every change, followed through, reaches the kingdom. The Latter-day Saints changed the God who gives the kingdom, so that the heir becomes what he inherits from. The Witnesses changed the Son who receives it, so that an angel would rule the world to come. Oneness theology folded the Persons together, so that the kingdom has no one to pass between. The Christadelphians removed the Son's existence before Bethlehem and the incumbent the kingdom displaces. Adventism and Armstrongism let a founder's voice decide what the text means, and the text came out saying what the founder needed. And the last stream kept the King's title while emptying it of the King.

For a reader of this series, two things follow. The first is that sharing a conclusion settles nothing. Several of these groups reach a literal reign, a restored Israel, a judgment of Christians before the kingdom, or a literal 144,000. Each of those agreements is real, and each was reached by a route that also produced a different God or a different Christ. The second is that the vocabulary of the kingdom is widely shared. Same vocabulary, different dictionaries: so the vocabulary can't be the test. Sons of God, overcomers, glory, the throne, the kingdom: every one of those words appears in at least one system surveyed here, meaning something this series doesn't teach. The test is the foundation under the word, checked against Scripture compared with Scripture.

Conclusion to Part One

The roads in Part One split at the foundations: who God is, what counts as His word, and whose name "Christ" is. Part Two turns to roads that split closer to home, among people who confess the same God and the same Christ and part ways over the timing of the kingdom, the identity of Israel, and the end of the ages. That's where this series has the most to say about itself. The Word of Faith movement collects the reward now. The New Apostolic Reformation and its forerunners claim the reign now, and some of them do it in this series' own vocabulary of overcomers and sons. The Hebrew Roots movement merges Israel and the Church from the opposite side. And Christian universalism walks the same road as this series on the meaning of *aionios* before turning toward a destination this series doesn't reach. Each of those roads runs close enough to this one that a reader deserves to see exactly where it turns.

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