

Alternate Life Collection	<b>7th of</b> <b><u>10 Big Ideas of Christian Faith:</u></b>  <b>History Is Going Someplace (to the Alternate Life)</b>  Rev 21.1-4 (ABC New Years Day, B All Saints, C 5Easter) 1 Peter 3.13-16  by Tim Isbell	Preached first on 1/4/2009. Revised for 5/011 sermon at San Francisco BigFish4God
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Thesis: God's primary mission in human history is to redeem people into a community suitable to live with him forever.

*(If you're preaching this sermon as part of the 10 Big Ideas series, you'll want to remind the congregation where this sermon fits into the whole. All the sermons in this series stand alone and can be preached in any order - except the 7th flows logically into the 8th ([Living in God's Kingdom](#))).*

*In addition, the 7th and 8th sermons eventually led me to develop the [Alternate Life Collection](#), which offers several more preaching options for preaching about the Kingdom of God.)*

## The biblical worldview is NOT

*(I use some props to get this sermon started. You use all of these, but they should be enough to give you ideas of how to illustrate what the Kingdom is not. This needs to be only a couple of minutes long)*

### **... Meaningless.**

Solitaire Story: My wife plays, so I thought I'd give it a try. After realizing that I virtually always lose (unless Robin is looking over my shoulder and helping), I decided to keep score to make the game more interesting – well, to me, anyway. From 6/12/2009 to 4/7/2011 here's the data: Best: once I won 2 in a row! Worst: 61 consecutive losses. Total wins = 13 out of 455 games played. No matter how I do, solitaire is a meaningless game – just a waste of time. My conclusion, solitaire is not a metaphor for the biblical worldview.

Or, sometimes I use a children's Swordfish-ring game. You push a button to make little rings float up in a water container in order to get them all to encircle the snout of a little plastic swordfish.

**... Circular/cyclic (like those philosophies that believe in reincarnation, etc.).**

Music box – it just goes round and round. I used my granddaughter's music box.

***... Running down.***

Finger-top on a plate. Eventually, the top runs out of energy and falls over.

Sure we can see some of these in subplots of scripture. But they are not the main plotline of the biblical worldview.

**The main plot: the biblical world view is like my electric train.**

(I brought in a few pieces from my 1952 American Flyer electric train).

God has a distinct plan for his world and he is determined to bring it to fullness.

**History is going someplace – and here's where it's going:** read Rev 21.1-4.

John's vision is of a holy city – not a rural town or a farming village.

This city comes down rather than his people going up to escape from a sinful city.

It's a city where God dwells every day with his holy people – for all eternity.

This is where God's story is going.

**But let's back up.**

**1. Bible is the true story of the world in which all humans find a role.**

It's not a book just for Jews, Europeans, or North Americans; it's for every person everywhere.

**2. God's mission in human history is to build a kingdom of people suitable to live and reign over creation with him for all eternity.**

To do this he must redeem us from our sin and free us from enslavement to the evil one.

This redemption and restoration process is scripture's main storyline.

There are many sub-plots that in isolation suggest different plots. But when we step back from them we see that they are just that: subplots.

**3. In the Old Testament God chooses Abram and Sarai.**

God faithfully worked with their descendants and a few centuries later he's turned them into the nation of Israel. It was a nation different from all other nations – it still is.

From his first conversation with Abram, God's intention is clear: (Gen 12.1-2)

God did not choose Abraham and reject other nations.

He chose this particular childless couple to launch his kingdom on earth. Eventually, he invites all humanity to join it.

Abram/Sarai's family history is rocky, full of recurrent relapses in devotion to God and

even outright betrayal of God's Lordship.

Through it, all God sticks with his main plot-line.

#### **4. 2000 years later: the biggest turning point in human history.**

God himself comes to live within his creation, in the form of Jesus, a child born to a humble couple who are descendants of Abram/Sarai.

Despite Israel's unfaithfulness, God remained faithful to his promise: He offers the blessing of redemption and restoration to the entire human race through Jesus.

All God asks is that we admit our sin and begin following Jesus.

#### **5. God didn't wait another 2000 years for the next big turning point in his story.**

He knew that we need more than forgiveness and a new start.

So he graciously provided the Spirit of Jesus into the life of anyone, anywhere who confessed their sin and gave themselves to Jesus as best they can. This Spirit brings new birth and a new creation inside us. We celebrate this coming of the Spirit of Jesus into the life of the believer every Pentecost.

Immediately after that first Pentecost, Jesus' Spirit began gluing believers together into local churches, which in the next 100 years spread throughout the then-known world!

***Just like God had a mission for Abram/Sarai, he had a mission for the believers and their local churches:***

"As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." (John 20.21)

Jesus' mission was to bless the entire world with the offer of redemption from sin and restoration into a relationship with their creator.

This is still Jesus' mission. And believers and local churches everywhere comprise the literal body through which Jesus lives his life today.

#### **6. The mission of God's church involves an encounter with the culture.**

God offers us an alternative lifestyle to the people living around us.

Our assignment is not just to live good lives with the help of the Spirit, our assignment is to let the Spirit live the actual life of Jesus through us – day by day.

It's what the Bible means when it says we are "living letters" of invitation to others to join God's new community. (2 Cor 3.3)

We don't do this by force. Or coercion. Or by taking over governments.

We do this by living lives of ordinary practices among our friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors. We live transparently, always being ready to give an answer for the reason for the hope people see in us. (1 Peter 3.14-15, Year A 6Easter)

As a carpenter, auto mechanic, business leader, salesperson, engineer, student,

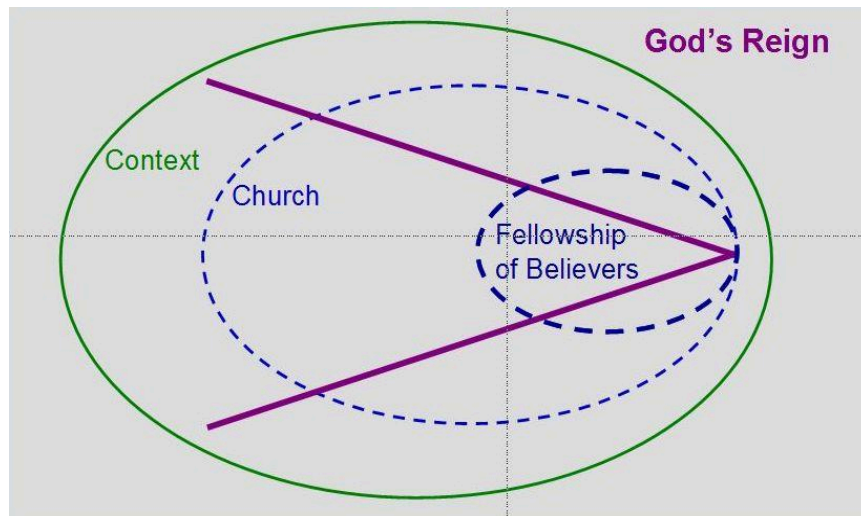
housewife, parent, office worker, job seeker, hospital worker...

God's assignment for you is to go there and do your job as Christ would do it if he were in your place. And while doing your job, expect people to ask you for the reason for the hope they see in you?

***This is the life we're created for; it's the only life where we find full soul-satisfaction.***

### **Here's a graphic to help us remember today's message.**

(I use this graphic throughout the Alternate Life series. I got it from Darrell Guder's *Missional Church*, but have modified it slightly. It's in the Presentation File, too.)



### **Unpacking the graphic.**

#### ***The arrow: God's Reign is going someplace:***

God's Kingdom is an Alternate to the kingdoms of this world; God's Reign is the place where what God wants done gets done (phrasing from Dallas Willard).

Life under God's Reign has an alternate vocabulary (including words like sin, confession, grace, salvation, Spirit-filled).

People who live in God's Kingdom follow the Christian calendar more than the various secular/cultural calendars. The Kingdom calendar includes keeping a Sabbath and other Christian seasons throughout the year (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost).

It operates according to different economics (its citizens spend \$ differently).

It lives by a different politic (its citizens use power differently),

It embraces different morals (sexual purity, forgiveness rather than revenge/getting even, generous rather than materialist, Christ-centered rather than me-centered).

***Fellowship of Believers oval reminds us that this is an outpost of God's Kingdom in this world.***

Fellowship people do not always have perfect behavior/attitudes...

But they deliberately pursue holiness. The test of true holiness is not measured so much in terms of rules of behavior or attitude... but in terms of Christ-likeness. The test of whether we are growing in holiness is whether we are growing in love for God and for others. (Matt 22.34-40)

We come to see each other as brothers and sisters – in the best sense of brothers and sisters.

***Church oval represents the place where the Fellowship worships the Lord, learns, and serves together. It's also a place for investigators to "taste and see that the Lord is good." (Ps 34.8)***

***Context oval is the greater world in which we live.***

*FRANs (friends, relatives, associates, neighbors), government leaders, and beyond.*

## **Let's remember where the Bible says God's train is going:**

### **Reread Rev 21.1-4**

Our assignment is to live as citizens of God's holy city now, even while living at postal addresses in this sinful world.

### **Are you living this Alternate Life yet?**

***It's available if you will receive it.***

You'll need to confess your sin and begin following Jesus.

You'll need to ask God to fill you with the Spirit of Jesus and teach you to live as a full citizen in God's kingdom – now.

You'll need to become a full player involved in one of his outposts – a Fellowship of Believers.

**Maybe today is your time to begin living the Alternate Life.**

<b>Other resources:</b>
Click on the link to get the <a href="#">Google Presentation file</a> .