

Life Group Notes 3/16/2025
Pastor Mark Warren—Kingdom Come
Week 2: Living the Gospel of Matthew

No doctrine is a given unless it has been found in the Word given by the Holy Spirit and received by you. If you have observations or questions, feel free to send me an email with your comment or observations at tbeachhead@comcast.net. Thank you for taking the time.

– *Pete Mehegan, the Scribe.*

Remember: Be good to one another. Be sensitive and kind. Let God heal our heart and guide our discussions.

Please pre-read these notes and choose the direction that is appropriate for your group.

Be cognizant of your group's time and be sensitive. *Some groups would like to dwell on a single idea. Let the Spirit be your guide. Never feel obligated to complete this study.*

Note: I have highlighted suggested discussion questions that Pastor Mark has raised this week, 3/16

. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to guide all our discussions, using the highlights as trail blazes. ***The purpose is to minister to one another.*** I include each of the passages mentioned in full, to facilitate the enjoyment of these notes. Footnotes are not meant to distract. This week's footnote speaks:

1. [On Mathew as author of the book.](#)
2. [On the parables of the kingdom.](#)
3. [On weeping and gnashing of teeth.](#)
4. [On the Kingdom of God within you or "in your midst."](#)
5. [On the Welsh revival and the Kingdom of God.](#)
6. [On the late Arthur Blessitt and taking up your cross.](#)

Important: At [the very end of these notes](#), I've included passages that were mentioned in this week's message for deeper study using SOAP journaling to help further your study during the week.

Pastor opened today directly with the parable of the feast from Matthew 22: **1**Once again, Jesus spoke to them in parables: **2**"The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. **3**He sent his servants to call those he had invited to the banquet, but they refused to come.

4Again, he sent other servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner. My oxen and fattened cattle have been killed, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.'

5But they paid no attention and went away, one to his field, another to his business. **6**The rest seized his servants, mistreated them, and killed them.

7The king was enraged, and he sent his troops to destroy those murderers and burn their city. **8**Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited were not worthy. **9**Go therefore to the crossroads and invite to the banquet as many as you can find.'

10So the servants went out into the streets and gathered everyone they could find, both evil and good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

11But when the king came in to see the guests, he spotted a man who was not dressed in wedding clothes. **12**'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?'

But the man was speechless.

13Then the king told the servants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

14For many are called, but few are chosen."

1. What do you see?
2. Explain the parable in your own words then answer the following questions.
3. Who is the King? Whose wedding is being prepared?
4. Why do you need guests at a wedding? Can one celebrate alone?
5. How lavish is a Jewish wedding banquet? (Describe the wedding feast at Cana, to what degree are the guests served? What happens when there is not enough wine to go around.)
6. Who were the first invitees that refused to come?
7. Look at verse four. What is the King's response to their refusal? Is there punishment? How does he enhance the value of the invitation?
8. What is their response to His grace?
9. Look at verse seven. What do you see?
10. What happened to Jerusalem after Jesus was rejected?
11. Looking at the death of Christianity's first martyr, Stephen, in Acts 7, how accurately does this parable foresee what comes next?
12. What was the King's response to the second rejection? Whom does he invite?
13. Which are you?
14. At the feast itself, who gets accosted by the King, and why?
15. How did the one guest get past the gatekeepers into the wedding feast without a wedding garment? Is it possible that the gatekeepers allowed only one guest in without proper garments?
16. By what way do you think this one miscreant guest entered?
17. What happened to him in the end?
18. Where is the weeping and gnashing of teeth? Is this biblical? Old Testament, New Testament or both? (You can peek at [footnote 3](#) for help if you need to.)
19. Explain verse 14.
20. Look at Matthew 7: **13**Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. **14**But small is the gate and narrow the way that leads to life, and only a few find it. How did the guest need to enter the banquet? Why come in any other way? What is one avoiding?

21. Where do I find proper wedding garments? The parable tells us the guests included, “*everyone they could find, both evil and good,*” yet only one was improperly clothed. Where did the rest get their proper garments from?
22. Why is the way so narrow?
23. Mark asks of the called and the chosen, “Who are the many? Who are the few?” Answer him.
24. If some are picked and some are not, does God have favorites?
25. Between Netflix and God, do you have favorites? Where do you fall in this story?

Pastor Mark says today’s lesson will look at our calling, and our own personal response to that calling. Then he makes a paradigm shifting statement: “I believe that the Kingdom of Heaven is here and now, and not waiting until you die and go to heaven.”

1. Respond to this Is there scriptural support?
2. Look up Luke 17:[20](#)When asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The kingdom of God will not come with observable signs. [21](#)Nor will people say, ‘Look, here it is,’ or ‘There it is.’ For you see, the kingdom of God is in your midst.”
Where is the Kingdom of God, according to Jesus? (See [footnote 4 below](#) to learn more.)

He continues, “The Kingdom of Heaven is a spiritual kingdom, and we live in a world that is both physical and spiritual at the same time. And so even though we’re living in a physical world, there is a moment in time where we are going to experience the calling from Jesus, an invitation from Jesus to...”

1. Finish Mark’s sentence. What are we being called to?
 2. Is the “wedding feast” in heaven, or now, on the earth, in this life?
 3. Do you have a testimony? What is being served at this feast today?
 4. How are you being clothed?
 5. Look at the response to the newcomers to the feast: Luke 15:[6](#)...*comes home, and calls together his friends and neighbors to tell them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep!’* [7](#)In the same way, I tell you that there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous ones who do not need to repent. Explain.
 6. Review again the above excuses of those who rejected the invitation. List the excuses. What does this say about their priorities?
 7. List your excuses.
 8. What does it say about your priorities? Do you have a farm? Is it reasonable to think you need to tend your farm?
 9. Is it reasonable to leave your farm for the King’s Son’s wedding feast? Explain.
- Pastor relates this parable to Matthew, the Jewish publican/tax collector’s calling.
1. Does it relate? To what was he invited? Explain.
 2. Did Jesus say to Matthew, “Believe in me?” Or did He say, “Follow me?” What is the difference? Which is costs more to comply?
 3. Look up James 2:[18](#)But someone will say, “*You have faith, and I have deeds.*” *Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.* [19](#)You believe that God is one. Good for you! Even the demons believe that— and shudder. [20](#)*O foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is worthless?* What does this have to do with wedding garments?
 4. Mark says, “Belief is clearly not enough. Even the demons believe. But belief is a starting point.” Explain. (Is the seed the actual tree? [Romans 10:8-10](#) says *if you*

- believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord, and confess with your mouth that God raised Him from the dead you will be saved. How is faith only the beginning?)*
5. What does the Lord require of us as believers? (Review Micah 6:8 *He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you but to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. Now review Ecclesiastes 12: 13* *When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is this: Fear God and keep His commandments, because this is the whole duty of man. 14* *For God will bring every deed into judgment, along with every hidden thing, whether good or evil.* Explain.
 6. What evidence does a believer collect? If you were arrested for being a Christian, what evidence does the enemy have to prove the charge?
 7. Pastor Mark says, "Calling means you leave something behind, **and** you pursue Jesus. He is looking for transformation." Explain.
 8. Re-read question 4 above. How is our growth in the kingdom like the planting of a seed? Is it good when beings take shelter in your branches as you grow? Explain. How is you being shelter a part of God's plan for you?
 9. If both your own faith and the kingdom in you begin as a seed, how many of the parables does this picture of organic, biological growth explain?
 10. Why is it a bad idea to reject the invitation of God's calling? How many heroes of the faith, Old and New Testament, can you name that dropped and left their profession and followed the call they were issued?
 11. Is this a one-time call? Or is this an every-day call? Explain.
 12. Pastor Mark spoke of "...following Jesus wherever you go. Follow Him into your workplace. Follow Him into your school." What changes when you know you are following Jesus into your workplace or school? When you are working or in class, where does Jesus sit? Have you ever seen Him there?
 13. Why is entering your workplace with only a (perhaps strong and informed) belief system different from entering, following Jesus Who goes ahead of you? At whom is Jesus looking, while you follow Him through your days?
 14. Is there anyone in your workplace that is not invited to the feast? How many have already made excuses? What is your response to your good friend or your close family member when they make excuses to avoid the feast?
 15. Is Jesus picking and choosing who gets it, or is He inviting all? Who makes the ultimate choice?
 16. Pastor Mark lists the benefits of attending the feast. What grows inside of you once you enter into the festivities? (Where in the New Testament is the fruit of the Spirit listed? Where are the gifts of the Spirit enumerated?)
 17. Mark says, we are here, and responding, but are we allowing the transformative work to take place. Explain.
 18. **Caution:** Describe the steps to seeing the Kingdom of God expand here on this earth. Be political for a moment: Can the Kingdom of God expand in this life on this planet among these nations? Will it expand by the effort of government and laws, or by the transformation of individuals behaving better, without the imposition of any new law? (See footnote 5 below.)
 19. How must any nation become Christian? Is it by new laws? Or with new hearts? Does any written law matter in the end, if a nation follows the King?

20. Why do some respond, and some not? Do you remember the parable of the sower and the four soils? What percentage of those who receive the seed bears fruit? Does the fault lie with the seed? Or the soil? Explain.

Look up Luke 9: [57](#) As they were walking along the road, someone said to Jesus, "I will follow You wherever You go." [58](#) Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head." [59](#) Then He said to another man, "Follow Me." The man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." [60](#) But Jesus told him, "Let the dead bury their own dead. You, however, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." [61](#) Still another said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first let me bid farewell to my family." [62](#) Then Jesus declared, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and then looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

1. How like are the excuses made here to the excuses made in the parable of the banquet above?
2. How like is the invitation Jesus makes to the invitation to the guests at the banquet?
3. What is the cost of discipleship? What must you do? Write a list. When do you start?
4. Matthew 16 puts the cost in these terms: "[24](#) Then Jesus told His disciples, "If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." [25](#) For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it." Describe the cost in practical terms. What does this mean for you?
5. In Luke, the context of Christ's statement is different, and yet, He adds to this the word "daily." He must deny Himself daily. Does that make it easier or harder to do? If we take up the cross daily, how does that change how our morning begins each day?

Pastor Mark went on to describe the wedding garment that the guest did not have. He referred to Paul's description of how we receive that garment from Galatians 3: [27](#) For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

1. How did we come by this garment? Did we purchase the clothing or was it handed to us by the Gatekeeper?
2. Who purchased these our wedding garments? Explain.
3. Mark now says there's a cost to entering into the "free" banquet. Explain.
4. He says, "The cost is the cost of discipleship." Revisit [the list you made](#) above. Does it change?
5. Check out [footnote 6 below](#), and see how one man took up his cross, and the net result.

Immediate obedience...delayed obedience...disobedience

Pastor Mark says, "We say in our household, delayed obedience is disobedience. I want to be ready to do as Matthew, to hear the call and drop everything and just go. (The depiction of Matthew's call from *The Chosen*, was linked last week. Here is the link again. https://youtu.be/7IUL9yq0We8?si=8Rlux48TmvdzB_G- It's 3 minutes long, and very moving.) If you [read footnote 6](#), compare the two responses to Jesus' call, that of Arthur Blessitt, and that of Matthew.

1. What are you hearing right now?
2. From what well is courage drawn?
3. Is delayed obedience the same as disobedience? Explain.

4. Can you think of a biblical obedience, where delayed obedience led to disaster? (Numbers 14:36-45—The spies with the bad report had all died, so Israel decided to “obey” despite Moses’ warning. More died.)
5. Mark talked about being given specific words for your co-workers who needed encouragement...and asked if you would be obedient. Do you have a testimony?
6. What gifts of the Spirit specifically speak to the broken and needy around you? (1 Corinthians 12).

Pastor then said, “We have to intentionally train our ears. Shore up our understanding, be in prayer be in the Bible. So I hear you asking, ‘If I don’t hear the needs of the people around me, I can’t be accountable for missing the call, right?’,” and he said, “I think you probably are. There is a point where you can no longer say, ‘Ignorance is bliss,’ where God is pursuing us, giving us this opportunity to join Him in this ministry He has for us, we must train ourselves to respond, or make the above excuses.”

1. What’s your response?
2. Is this rebuke? Or is this a promise and a call to greater privilege and opportunity?
3. How important is the decision? What is the cost of missing the banquet by prioritizing distractions over the invitation?
4. When Jesus says, “*No one who puts his hand to the plow and then looks back is fit for the kingdom of God,*” describe the importance of our choices.
5. Who is fit for the Kingdom of God?

Pastor went on to say, “After giving yourself to Christ, from that moment of decision, I think the first thing we need to do in our response is to make sure we are cloaking ourselves with the righteousness of Christ.

1. If we put Jesus on as an outfit, what do we look like?
2. Whom do we seek to act like?
3. Colossians 1 says the mystery of the gospel, hidden for ages, has been revealed to us, and through us by us, and this is that mystery: [27](#)*To them [His saints] God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.* If Christ is truly in us, what glory never fails to follow us?
4. Whose reputation is damaged when a minister of Christ falls?
5. Why is it essential for all our neighbors, for our brothers and our sisters, that we put on and wear Christ’s righteousness daily?
6. Remember, the French writer/filmmaker, Marcel Pagnol once said, “Honor is like a match. It burns once.” Why is that a Christian principle to help keep us sober and focused? Is it true?
7. Mark says, “We have to be conscious of ‘wearing Christ today.’” How is this the same principle as Luke’s “...taking up our cross *daily*...” and following Him?
8. List the pieces in the armor of God from [Ephesians 6](#). Which piece fits you easily. What piece of the armor do you need to reinforce?

Finally, Pastor spoke of the servants in the parable, after the first were mistreated, who were sent out to go to the highways and byways to bring in all who would come to the feast. He claimed, “We are those servants.”

1. Do you agree? If not us, who?
2. What is our purpose?
3. Whom are we inviting? Who is excluded?

4. Pastor says, "That is an opportunity and a responsibility that we have, to share this invitation." How does our willingness to invite daily confirm our call daily?
 5. What is the feast that God offers your closest friends, those whom you love most?
 6. He says, "The invitation [to Easter service] is in your hands. To whom will you give it?" What is your response?
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Follow up application:

1. Use the [Soap study below](#) to pursue your own understanding.
2. Pray before you go. Then, follow Jesus every day into your workplace, instead of Him following you there. Write down what changes. Where does He sit in your classroom? In your office? In your truck?
3. Write down the cost of discipleship. What do you need to leave behind? Be attentive to the Spirit as you do. (This will not have the same answer for all.)
4. –or—Write down those distractions that prevent your own obedience and inhibit your willingness to say, "Yes," to the call and the destiny He has laid out for you since the beginning of time.
5. If you've never done this, list the whole armor of God from Ephesians 6 on a 3X5 card, tape it to a mirror and each morning as you dress, declare out loud how you are cloaking yourself in it. Be deliberate. Observe how you utilize the shield and the sword throughout the day, and make journal entries for each surprise.
6. Make a list of those whom you intend to invite to Easter service. He says, "Their response is not your responsibility unless they were never invited...which would be the excuse you make."

Take the time to pray.

Scribe's Footnotes:

1. **On Matthew as the author of the book**—Scholarship looks to ancient texts with critical discernment, and argues over history, language and content. The science of textual criticism seeks to purify the text to get as close to the author's original, historic work as possible. The book of Matthew offers the challenges of any ancient work: Who is the author. How does one make the claim? Do we have the original language of the original work? Or did the Jew write in Hebrew, and so we have a translation of the original. (The Greek of Matthew is excellent, said to be among the best in the New Testament.) These questions make a great study for the curious. Here are two friendly sites that delve into questions you might not have thought to ask:
<https://www.gotquestions.org/who-wrote-the-book-of-Matthew.html>
<https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/who-wrote-gospels>
2. **On the parables of the kingdom**—The parables were spoken to describe invisible, spiritual principles in physical, comprehensible terms. The Parables of the Kingdom address principles of the kingdom. When the New Testament says Jesus went everywhere preaching the good news of the Kingdom, this is how He did it, and He explains why, using the prophecies of Isaiah, in Matthew 13: "**13** *This is why I speak to them in parables: 'Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.'* **14** *In them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled: 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.* **15** *For this people's heart has grown callous; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have*

closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn, and I would heal them.” Notice how all bets are off, and benefits lost when one hears on his own terms, and interprets according to one’s individual understanding. Some translators call the parables “comparisons” for a reason. When reading these parables, you find that the Kingdom is always compared to something we know. The Kingdom is “...like a seed.” The kingdom is “...like a sower who sowed good seed.” The Kingdom is “...like a treasure buried, ...like a merchant who deals with costly pearls.” If you want to test your own ability to hear, look at these latter two parables in Matthew 13, repeated in Mark 4. Ask yourself, “Who is the pearl of great price.” If you say, “Jesus,” you have to read both parables again. The kingdom of heaven is the treasure buried in the first version...but the kingdom is the merchant buying pearls in the second. When you understand who the pearl is, you will understand your own value to the king, and why he went to the extent He did to purchase you at all cost.

3. **On weeping and gnashing of teeth**—The concept of a hell of torment is not, as some critics say, a New Testament concept. When you study the issue, you’ll find the Jews ascribed a place to the dead, and recognized that there is no death in “dead.” (God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, “...is God of the living and not of the dead.”) The departed didn’t die. They slept, and the dead were gathered to their fathers. The place to which the dead went was called in Hebrew *Sheol*, and translators wrongly call that place “hell.” But hell in English has the inseparable concept of torment linked to it, and *Sheol* does not...necessarily. That place of hell fire and torment has a separate description in Hebrew, *Tophet* in *ge ben Hinnom*, “the valley of the sons of Hinnom,” (*Gehenna*) which was the valley south and west of Jerusalem where babies were burned in human sacrifice under the evil king Menasseh. That foul practice prefigured the end destiny of those who participated in like abomination. In the New Testament, *Sheol* is called Hades, the location the Greeks recognized as the underworld, ruled by Hades himself, or Death. In Greek that place of torment is called Tartarus, to which Zeus exiled the Titans, his parents, or *Gehenna*, the Greek word, which is only a transliteration of the Hebrew.. Jesus speaks of this place in these verses, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, and elsewhere as a place where “...their worm never dies, and the fire is not quenched.” He describes the surroundings when he tells the story of Lazarus’ and the rich man’s demise. Lazarus ends up in Abraham’s arms, living and warm and welcoming. The rich man ends up in *Tophet*, across a chasm that no one may cross “even if they wanted to” among the flames. This concept is drawn from Isaiah 62: [24](#) “As they go forth, they will see the corpses of the men who have rebelled against Me; for their worm will never die, their fire will never be quenched, and they will be a horror to all mankind.”
4. **On the Kingdom of God within you or “in your midst”**—Different translations bring different results with this concept. Most modern translations, with the exception of the New American Standard and the New King James, say the Kingdom is “*in your midst*.” The King James version and the others say, “...nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is *within you*.” What is the difference to you? The issue this time is not manuscript, but translator’s choice...hence it is up to you to choose. Here is the original Greek: οὐδὲ ἐροῦσιν Ἰδοὺ, ὧδε ἢ Ἐκεῖ· ἰδοὺ γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐντὸς ὑμῶν ἐστίν. (Note, I write this here because my own study of Greek

began with a curiosity to know the original languages of the Bible, and so I bought, when I was in high school, an interlinear Greek New Testament to look at. This is now entirely available online for free at <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/luke/17-21.htm>. In looking at this footnote you can contemplate the depth available to you for any study.) In Roman letters, this says “*Oude erousin “Idou hode” he “Ekei idou,” gar Basileia to Theou entos humon estin.*” Translated, it says, “Neither will they say, ‘See here,’ or ‘There...look!’ because the Kingdom of God is *within you/in your midst.*” Notice the last word. The Greek preposition, ἐντός, *entos*, allows for both meanings. Bible hub’s article on this word (<https://biblehub.com/greek/1787.htm>) is clear. It says, “*While there is no direct Hebrew equivalent for “entos,” the concept of inner spiritual reality can be related to Hebrew words like “לב” (leb, Strong’s H3820), meaning “heart,” which often signifies the inner person or the seat of emotions and will. Usage: The Greek word “entos” is used to denote something that is inside or within a particular boundary or space. It is often used in a metaphorical sense to refer to the inner being or the spiritual realm within a person. In the New Testament, it emphasizes the internal aspect of faith and the kingdom of God as an inward reality rather than an external one.*” It is used twice in the NT, here, in reference to the kingdom, and in Matthew 23:26, to refer to the inside of the cup. If Deuteronomy says in chapter 30: **13** *And it is not beyond the sea, that you should need to ask, ‘Who will cross the sea to get it for us and proclaim it, that we may obey it?’* **14** *But the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you may obey it.*, and Paul quotes this verse, you have license to conclude that having the kingdom “In your midst” is not the best literal choice. The kingdom is IN your heart to the degree that the Word is at home in your heart. And it’s your choice and His invitation.

5. **On the Welsh revival and the Kingdom of God**—Is it possible to establish the Kingdom of God on this earth in any nation? History proclaims that it is. True revivals of religion see nations turn around without government intervention, and often despite hostile government attempts at intervention. Evan Roberts led one such revival in Wales from 1904-1906, a period so brief and its impact so extensive that the impact sets the standard today by which “revivals” are measured. During the days of that revival, pubs were closed not by law, but because the patrons of the pubs had left their former haunts for the prayer meetings. Police saw reduction in force, and those who remained went to the prayer meetings. Wikipedia is not unkind in its article. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evan_Roberts_%28minister%29
6. **On the late Arthur Blessitt and taking up your cross**—There was a famous evangelist who began his mission in the sixties during the revival days of the Jesus Revolution and the Charismatic Renewal. He heard God tell him to take up his cross and go to all the nations, so he did. He became world famous carrying a 12 foot cross on foot across the country from Hollywood to DC, and then forty thousand miles around the world, including to Russia during the cold war, North Korea and the nations of Islam. He passed away this year on January 25. Here is his ministry’s web page, saying adieu. <https://blessitt.com/arthur-blessitt-completed-mission-on-earth-january-14th-2025/>

For further study:

Take a moment each day this week to apply the **SOAP method** (**S**cripture—Copy the scripture. / **O**bservation—Write what you see. / **A**pplication—Write what God is saying. / **P**ray—Write what your response is.) to some of the scripture we looked at this week. Each scripture is a now hot link to the BibleHub's passage:

Monday: Matthew 22:3-6
Tuesday: Matthew 22:8-10
Wednesday: Matthew 22:11-14
Thursday: Luke 17:20-21
Friday: Luke: 15:7,10
Saturday: James 2:18-20
Sunday: Micah 6:8 , Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

Once again, some passages suggested here have more than the usual number of verses. This is not to increase the burden but to provide clarity of context. Pick the verses that speak to you most clearly, and run these through the SOAP steps.