

The Gospel Reign of the SON OF GOD

He Has All Authority
Over All Things



DICKSON

The Gospel Reign Of The Son Of God

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CONTENTS

Introduction – 3

- 1 – *Introduction To Millennialism* – 7**
- 2 – *Understanding Apocalyptic Revelation* – 15**
- 3 – *Understanding Revelation 20* – 19**
- 4 – *Nature Of The King’s Reign* – 25**
- 5 – *Prophecy Of The King’s Reign* – 28**
- 6 – *Gospel Reign Of King Jesus* – 34**
- 7 – *King Jesus Reigns In Heaven* – 46**
- 8 – *The Throne Of David* – 53**
- 9 – *King Jesus On David’s Throne* – 60**
- 10 – *Restoration Of The Remnant* – 65**
- 11 – *Return To The Land* – 70**
- 12 – *The Salvation Of Israel* – 75**
- 13 – *Reconstruction Of The Temple* – 79**
- 14 – *Restoring The “Lost” Ten Tribes* – 83**
- 15 – *Establishment Of The Gospel Kingdom* – 92**
- 16 – *Kingdom/Church Prophecy & Fulfillment* – 97**
- 17 – *Reality Of The Kingdom* – 104**
- 18 – *The Resurrection Of All* – 106**
- 19 – *The Last Days Of National Israel* – 114**
- 20 – *Arrival Of The Last Days* – 120**
- 21 – *Uncomfortable Conclusions* – 126**

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INTRODUCTION

Old Testament prophets excited the minds of those who lived before the cross about the One who was coming to be King over all things. Indications were given concerning what we now refer to as the gospel. It was a mystery before its revelation, but now the gospel is fully known. The exciting thing for us today is that all these prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus. After His atoning sacrifice, He ascended to the right hand of the Father. He assumed kingdom reign over all things. He now reigns with all authority over all things, and will so reign until He comes again. When we recognize the present kingdom reign of Jesus over all things, we seek to live the gospel that He revealed. Those who submit are the church that is a manifestation of the kingdom reign of Jesus on earth through those who live in gratitude to His gospel sacrifice.

The Bible teaches a millennial (1000 year) reign of Jesus. John revealed, *“Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years”* (Rv 20:6).

There are two general views of what John wrote in the preceding statement: First, there are those who believe that this one-thousand year reign is a present authority of Jesus over all things, by which authority He exercises power over the kingdom of darkness through the power of those who live the gospel. The church is the group of gospel lovers in the world who have taken up heavenly citizenship by submitting to the gospel and the present kingdom reign of Jesus. All the church is kingdom. However,

all the kingdom of Jesus includes more than the members of the church. Jesus’ **spiritual kingdom reign** is present and active over all things.

Second, there are others who affirm that the one-thousand year reign about which John wrote in Revelation 20 will be a physical and earthly kingdom. It will be a future literal reign of Jesus on this earth wherein the saints will have power over the unrighteous. In conjunction with this power, the saints will supposedly take possession of the riches of this world. This is a view that pictures the reign of Jesus to be a **physical kingdom reign**. This view of the millennial reign of Jesus is referred to as **premillennialism**.

The word “premillennialism” is one of those words that can be quite challenging to understanding. It has

a meaning that is derived from a combination of several words. The root word “millennium” originated from two Latin words. *Mille* is the Latin word that means “one thousand.” *Annus* is the Latin word that means “year.” Put the two words together and we come up with the meaning, “one thousand years.” Add to this the prefix “pre,” meaning “before,” and we have the word “premillennial.” Thus the word means, “before one thousand years.” Add to this the suffix “ism,” that denotes a doctrine, philosophy, theology or theory. In the religious world, we have the teaching of premillennialism. This is the belief that when Jesus comes again, He will come to reign on this literal earth for a period of one thousand years.

We live in a religious world where there is a vast difference between theologians concerning the teachings of spiritual and physical millennialism. The difference between the above two views is so vast that they are antagonistic to one another. In other words, if one is true, the other cannot be true. Because of the anticipation of a supposed future reign of Jesus on this earth, and some inherent differences between these two teachings, it is imperative that Bible students understand both views.

One of the most publicized religious teachings in the world today is a supposed future reign of Jesus on

this literal earth. In order to promote this physical millennial view, the religious world is constantly bombarded with proclamations as “the rapture,” “the signs of the times,” “the kingdom of God on earth is about to be established,” and “the signs of the end.” People are confused, and rightly so in view of the inconsistent and biblically challenged religious world in which we live.

Because of the often hysterical excitement of the religious world that is often stimulated by the modern-day premillennial preachers, many have been led astray to twisting some prophecies of the signs of the times and the end of the world. Because of the materialistic urges of some religionists, and man’s desire to rule over his fellow man, there is a concert of the teaching that cater to the carnal desires of men. Some affirm that the righteous will literally rule over the wicked, and subsequently, lay claim to all the riches of this world. Premillennialism is actually a “prematerialism” by its proclamation that the saints will inherit the possessions of this physical world. These are teachings that are certainly contrary to the self-denial that is inspired from living the gospel of Jesus who gave up heaven for all of us (See Ph 2:5-8).

In any study of this subject, the biblical interpreter is challenged to

understand prophecy. This is one area of study where we must remind ourselves of some basic biblical principles of interpretation. First, we must remember that any passage or group of passages can be easily misinterpreted **if they are interpreted with preconceived ideas**. If we believe that Jesus is going to somehow in the future assume an earthly reign on this earth with all His saints, then certainly we will assume that this understanding should be read into some prophecies. As we study through those few scriptures that are used to promote the teaching of premillennialism, this principle will be immediately recognized. Premillennial theology is a teaching that appeals to the basic instincts of power and materialism. These human instincts affect the interpretation of many scriptures. This is not a theology that simply makes no difference whether one believes it or not. The most fundamental beliefs of the teaching affect some very fundamental teachings of the Bible, specifically, teaching in reference to the gospel.

Second, scriptures must always be interpreted in the context in which they are given. When examining the teaching of premillennialism, we must force premillennialists to stay within the historical context of their proof texts. This is a critical point of this study. If we fail to honor the histori-

cal setting in which any particular prophecy was made, then we will fail to understand the fulfillment of the prophecy.

It is not necessary to study premillennialism by examining every scripture that is used to support the teaching. **If just one scripture is found that contradicts the teaching, or any fundamental Bible teaching, then the teaching is erroneous.** If the contexts of key “proof texts” do not support the premillennial theology, then certainly the scriptures cannot be used as proof texts for the teaching.

Some have stated that a future millennial reign of Jesus on earth does not affect any fundamental teachings of the Bible. We would challenge this thinking because of the fact that passages that are used to support the theology are passages that are misinterpreted in reference to God’s prophecy of the gospel. If a future reign of Jesus on earth is true, then certainly such would be clearly affirmed in the Scriptures, and thus a part of the gospel message. If the earthly reign of Jesus is true, then it must be the foundation upon which we should interpret the final event of the gospel, that is the final coming of Jesus.

We do not know the nature of the new heavens and earth that is to come (2 Pt 3:13). We as Christians are headed for this new heavens and earth,

but we do not believe that such will be an extension of this present physical environment. As the patriarchs of the Old Testament, our hope is for a heavenly country, a city whose builder and maker is God. The Christian's hope is not in more of this world, but to enjoy a realm of existence that is free of the hardships of this world.

One objective of our study of biblical prophecy of the Old Testament is to discover the fulfillment of prophecy in the New Testament. We do not believe that the Old Testament prophets' primary concern in prophecy was directed toward a millennial reign of the Messiah on earth that was centuries removed from both the prophets and the early Christians. The prophets' prophecies were fulfilled, but they were fulfilled in the cross and Jesus' present kingdom reign. If this is true, then there is no room for a

physical millennial view of Old Testament prophecy.

Some have said that the future is God's business for He will work things according to His plan. This is certainly true. We cannot fully understand that which will transpire in the future. However, enough information has been revealed in the Scriptures in order to allow us the opportunity to walk by faith. We cannot understand the nature of the new heavens and earth to come. But because we cannot fully understand things in the future does not justify misinterpretation of Scripture, especially Old Testament prophecy that was fulfilled in Jesus. The future is God's business, but it is our business to understand Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (See Lk 24:44).

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION TO MILLENNIALISM

One of the primary difficulties with the teaching of premillennialism is finding those within the camp of premillennial teachers who agree on the same thing concerning the theology. All premillennialists agree on the earthly reign of Jesus, but often disagree extensively on details surrounding the beginning and ending of the earthly millennium. Nevertheless, there are several teachings that surround the theology that are generally taught by all premillennialists. Some of the major teachings that are being proclaimed by those who advocate the theology are the following:

PREMILLENNIAL TEACHINGS

1. Jesus is not now reigning over all things. When He returns in the future, He will establish an earthly reign over all things on this earth.
2. Jesus will reign on this literal earth when He returns.
3. Jesus will reign for a literal period of one thousand years on this literal earth when He returns.
4. Jesus is not at this time reigning on David's throne as prophesied in the Old Testament. However, He will reign on this throne in Jerusalem of Palestine during His one-thousand year reign.

5. The Jewish temple will be rebuilt in the city of Jerusalem in order to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies concerning its reconstruction.
6. The living generation of the nation of Israel at the time of Jesus' coming, that is, the fleshly descendants of Abraham through Jacob, will be nationally converted and restored to the land of Palestine in order to fulfill prophecies concerning the restoration of national Israel to the land of promise.
7. The "lost ten tribes" of the northern kingdom of Israel will be gathered out of the nations of the world and restored to the land of Palestine in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies concerning their restoration to the land.
8. When Jesus came in the first century, the Jews rejected His earthly kingdom reign that He intended to establish at that time. Because of this rejection, the earthly kingdom reign was postponed until the time of His last coming when He will forcefully establish His earthly kingdom reign.
9. The righteous dead will be raised at the beginning of the one-thousand year reign on earth and the

unrighteous dead will be raised at the conclusion of the millennium. These two resurrections will be separated by one thousand years.

10. This present age is not the last dispensation of time of God's work with this literal earth. The one-thousand year reign of Jesus will be the conclusion of this environment.

Though the above points are some of the principal concepts of the premillennial teaching, they do not comprise the entire teaching. There are a host of subsidiary beliefs. In fact, there are so many subsidiary beliefs that the theological world that affirms the doctrine of premillennialism is constantly in debate over the subject. The division of belief concerning specific aspects of the teaching is so great that the only concepts of the teaching on which the premillennial theologians agree are usually the preceding basic beliefs.

It is not our purpose here to examine the totality of the many beliefs of premillennialism. We want to simply examine some of the key beliefs, and then examine these in view of some fundamental biblical teachings that these beliefs contradict. We will thus confine our study to the above principal teachings. If these principal teachings of the theology are erroneous, then certainly the doctrine is

false. It is subsequently the invention of men who have failed to recognize the totality of the present reign of Jesus over all things in these times. It is a failure on the part of some to understand the finality of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus that was revealed over two thousand years ago.

It is our belief that those who have turned on their calculators and computers in order to determine the signs of the time, have done so in an effort to frighten people into submitting to the will of God. Certainly, understanding God's work in the affairs of this world, especially in relation to final judgment, should strike fear in the hearts of the unbelieving. However, the primary motivation to obey the will of God is one's love response to the grace of God (the gospel) that was revealed on the cross (1 Jn 4:19). But in an effort to revive lethargic religious movements, some have sought to scare subjects into submission by calculating the "signs of the times," counting "blood moons," and mapping out some calendar of events that will lead up to the final coming of Jesus. This religious speculation has been going on since Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians. Nevertheless, the predictions of religious seers continue to fail in their predictions. Adherents to their predictions seem to be continually captivated by those who have an earthly perspective of the Scriptures.

In order to have their religious inclinations sensitized by twisted Scriptures, too many are being willingly led astray by those who are simply determined to reject some simple statements of the Bible in reference to the prophetic fulfillment of gospel.

Premillennialism is not a new doctrine that has been invented by theologians in recent times. It is simply an old theology that is being revived by modern-day prophets who find it fascinating to count wars and rumors of wars in an effort to captivate a following and sell books. These “sign-seekers” are only descendants of those in the past who have always tried to produce a following by proclaiming the signs of the end and a supposed imminent return of Jesus in our lifetime.

Because this theology has been affirmed by theologians in the past does not prove it true. In fact, in reference to this particular teaching, the opposite is often true. Countless predictions of the end of time and the establishment of the physical millennium by past self-proclaimed prophets have all failed to come to pass. All these past prophets, with their failed prophecies, prove at least one thing: **Their misinterpretation of prophecy in reference to end of time events prove that God gave no clear discernible “signs of the end” for the establishment of a supposed**

millennial reign of Jesus on earth.

Modern-day prophets are making the same theological mistake as those of years past. They are still predicting the end of the world and the establishment of some earthly reign of Jesus. Our children and grand children will look back on their failed predictions and say the same thing we are now saying concerning the failed prophecies of those in our past.

The Bible is a book of prophecy. It is a book of **fulfilled** prophecy. When Jesus came, He came to fulfill over three hundred Old Testament prophecies concerning Himself and the revelation of the gospel. He came into a religious culture of prophecy, for the Old Testament was loaded with prophecies that would prepare the way for Jesus and His new Israel. At the conclusion of His ministry, and prior to His ascension, Jesus said to the disciples, *“These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me”* (Lk 24:44).

Jesus fulfilled all prophecies concerning Himself and the gospel. However, since He came into a religious culture that was built on prophecy, He gave warnings to His disciples about those who would miss the fulfillment of all prophecy in Him. In missing the fulfillment of Old Testa-

ment prophecy in Jesus, some would continue to seek fulfillment of those prophecies that Jesus had already fulfilled. Essentially, the premillennialist is ignoring this warning today. He is as the Jew who failed to recognize the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy that was made exclusively in reference to Jesus.

Old Testament prophecies that were fulfilled in the first century were ignored by the Jews, and subsequently, they are also being ignored today by premillennialists in order to place emphasis on speculations concerning the future. In view of this, the Holy Spirit placed warnings in the New Testament concerning those who would fail to recognize the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in Jesus and the revelation of the mystery of the gospel

A. Jesus warned of false prophets.

Jesus warned that there would be those who would proclaim, “Lo, here or there” in reference to the Messiah. In the context of His prophecies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, He warned His disciples, “*Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ Do not believe it*” (Mt 24:23). This warning is given in the context of a people who rejected Him as the Messiah, but were thirsty for signs of the times. Of His

generation, Jesus judged, “*An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign*” (Mt 12:39).

Jesus knew that the Jews were sign-seekers. The irony is in the fact that they could not find Jesus in their seeking. Their prejudices blinded their eyes. Jesus said of these misguided seekers, “*You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me*” (Jn 5:39).

The sign-seekers thought they could have eternal life through their calculated interpretations of the prophecies. However, they failed to believe in the One about whom the Scriptures prophesied would bring eternal life. If we are a sign-seeker, Jesus’ exhortation would fall on our shoulders. We would be no different than those of His day who were seeking for signs in reference to the coming Messiah, which Messiah was standing there in their midst. If we are a sign-seeker looking for a coming supposed reign of Jesus of earth, we will fail to see Him right now to be reigning over all things from heaven.

Jesus knew that His personal presence must terminate the sign-seeking concerning Himself among His disciples (See Lk 24:44). All prophecies were fulfilled in reference to Him. His disciples, therefore, must not have their attention diverted to

speculations of another reign of Jesus that is yet in the future. Even concerning His prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus warned, *“But of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only”* (Mt 24:36). If only Jesus knew of the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in time, then there would be no sense in trying to calculate when it would happen. He was not given that privilege by the Father while on earth. We would certainly conclude that He was also not given that same privilege in reference to the end of the world.

Jesus sought to keep His disciples away from the religious culture of sign-seeking in reference to making prophecies beyond Himself. Christians must simply be about their work and let God take care of those things that are yet to come. In the context of future things, therefore, Jesus wanted His disciples to be prepared at all times. In the context of the future destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, Jesus said, *“Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him”* (Mt 24:44).

If Jesus were on the earth today, we are sure there would be those in the religious world who would ask, “Teacher, we would seek a sign from thee.” The religious world is filled with those who are sign-seekers.

They are trying to predict those things about which Jesus forewarned the disciples not to be concerned. The Bible teaches that Jesus is certainly coming again. Christians, therefore, must simply be prepared at all times for the end of all things. Their preparedness is a sign that they believe that Jesus will do what He has promised to do, that is, to come again in order to take them home into eternal glory.

B. Jesus encouraged caution about His coming in time.

In preparation for His coming at anytime, Jesus stated that His disciples must be prepared at all times. There are too many in the religious world today who are seeking to prepare for the final coming of Jesus just in time for the major event. They thus seek to discover the signs of the times in order to make those last minute preparations. These religious seers calculate famines, wars, earthquakes, and last “blood moons” in order to make some predictions concerning the exact time when Jesus will come again. However, there have always been these events since Jesus lived on the face of the earth. If such events were intended by God to be indications of the end of the world, then such warnings have deceived the saints for almost two thousand years.

The point is that Jesus and the

New Testament writers have exhorted Christians of all time to always be prepared for the end of all things. Jesus' warning concerning the end of the Jewish age in the destruction of Jerusalem is also true in reference to the end of the world. *"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him"* (Mt 24:44). For the Christian, this principle is always true. Christians must always be ready for God to accomplish His work in reference to this world.

Paul wrote, *"But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you"* (1 Th 5:1). There is a principle in this statement that every Christian should know. If Paul is saying anything, he is saying that Christians should not worry themselves about those things that are yet in the future. Christians know that God is going to do what He has said He will do. Things concerning salvation have already been revealed. Our worry concerning our salvation was taken care of through the gospel of the cross (See 2 Tm 1:12). It is not our place, therefore, to worry about those things that are in God's control concerning the end of time. Our prayer is only that God expedite the events. Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:11,12,

Therefore, since all these things will

be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God.

Our realization that an end is coming should stimulate gospel living (2 Pt 3:11). Our gospel living should set us apart from this present world. Our understanding that this world will be dissolved away should encourage the desire that the end of this world come soon (2 Pt 3:12).

Paul continued, *"Therefore, let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober"* (1 Th 5:6). The word "watch" does not refer the Christian to endless speculations of things to come. Emphasis is on always being prepared for the consummation of God's work in this world. The New Testament does not teach that we should be concerned about times and seasons, but stresses daily preparedness through godly living.

Regardless of the warnings that we find in the New Testament about being cautious of speculations concerning the future, there are those who are excited about world events in their efforts to predict the future. Their excitement has led to a host of scriptures that have been twisted in an effort to make the Bible predict some specific date for the end of the world. The Bible has thus been used in ev-

ery manner in order to prove and confirm the theological sign-seeking of modern-day speculators. Many precious prophecies of the Bible have been misquoted, misconstrued and simply misapplied in an effort to confirm the supposed millennial reign of Jesus on this earth. Because we live in such a misguided religious world, one should be cautious in his or her studies of prophecy in the Bible. We should be cautious concerning anyone who would predict the future. The behavior of the Bereans is still a good example to follow:

These [Berean Jews] were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so (At 17:11).

C. Jesus warned of false prophets.

The New Testament is filled with warnings concerning false prophets. The reason for this is obvious. In the religious world there is always an end those who have allowed their imaginations to be fertile soil for the teaching of religious speculations.

The church was based on the fulfillment of prophecy. The Old Testament is a book of prophecy. It would be the natural result of those who know little about the Bible to allow

their imaginations to run wild concerning prophecy. Jesus and the New Testament writers knew this. Therefore, the Holy Spirit placed within both the Old and New Testament Scriptures a host of warnings concerning those who would seek to be recognized as great prophets by their predictions of the future (See Dt 13:1-5). The warnings are there to protect the sincere and innocent Bible believer from those who would seek a following by proclaiming themselves to be some prophet of future events.

Those who are premillennial in theology consistently use the Old Testament in a way that bypasses reference to Jesus' universal reign that he now enjoys. They do this by focusing the attention of people on a supposed reign at the end of the world. In doing this, they fail to recognize the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in the first century concerning the present universal reign of Jesus. Such prophets have been able to do this because we live in a religious world today wherein it is easy to excite people about some "end of time" event of world history.

The Holy Spirit knew that some would do the preceding in reference to the Bible. He thus warned through Peter that some things are difficult to understand in the Bible, "***which those who are untaught and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do***

also the rest of the Scriptures (2 Pt 3:14-16).

It is not that the Scriptures cannot be understood. It is that those who are untaught in the Scriptures fail to understand the difficult Scriptures. In their lack of knowledge of the Scriptures, they subsequently twist and distort the Scriptures in order to speculate concerning those things about which they know little.

But the above was nothing new concerning the religious world in which Peter lived and those before him. Peter wrote,

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed (2 Pt 2:1,2).

The fact that Peter warned his immediate readers that many would follow the speculations of misguided religious teachers should be warning to every Bible believer today not to be led astray by those who have little or no knowledge of the Bible. John warned, *“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 Jn 4:1). The only way this test can be made is by referring to the Bible. Therefore, before we believe any speculations of self-proclaimed prophets today, we must first thoroughly examine the Scriptures.

Christians should take heed in reference to the teachings that are commonly proclaimed in the religious world today. Simply because religious people are proclaiming religious statements, does not mean that their teachings are true. The principle of Jesus’ statement concerning the end of the Jewish state is also true concerning the end of time: *“But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father”* (Mk 13:32).

The fact that Jesus made this type of statement in the context of prophecy, indicates that Christians should not trouble themselves about those things in the future that the Father has placed within His own knowledge and working. Our minds, therefore, must not be focused on seeking out that which is only within the knowledge of the Father. Christians must concentrate on that which is at hand by putting their trust in God who is working all things together for their good (Rm 8:23).

There are things that God has chosen not to reveal. Moses stated,

“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever; that we may do all the words of this law” (Dt 29:29). Christians must focus on what is revealed. They must not trouble themselves about those “secret things” that God has not revealed. When we consider a great deal of specifics in reference to the end of time, God has remained silent. He has only revealed that the end is coming. Therefore, we must

be prepared for this end.

It is not our task to seek signs of the end in order to make last minute preparations for the coming of Jesus and the end of the world. It is the work of the Christian to carry on with the work of God in preparing lives for life and death (Ep 2:10). Therefore, we must caution ourselves about those who would detour our attention from our task of doing good by focusing our minds on things God has not revealed.

Chapter 2

UNDERSTANDING APOCALYPTIC REVELATION

The key text that is used to support the physical millennial view is Revelation 20:1-6. This is the only text in the Bible that mentions a “one-thousand year reign.” If it were not for this text, there would be no such theology of a one-thousand year reign of Jesus. But the fact is that John revealed something concerning a one-thousand year reign of the saints that we must understand.

For many years, a misunderstanding of this text has led to a host of celebrated theories that have been used to excite the imaginations of people around the world. Our challenge is not to sort through the many speculations that are imagined from this text. It is our challenge to go to

the text itself in order to understand the simple message that John was trying to convey to his audience.

The book of Revelation is probably one of the most misunderstood books of the Bible simply because of some improper Bible study principles that are used to interpret this highly figurative book. Therefore, when we come to a study of any part of Revelation, there are a few principles of interpretation that must be emphasized in order to properly understand the book as a whole. If these principles are honored, much of the confusion that has resulted from a mishandling of Revelation can be put to rest. Consider the following principles that must be understood in or-

der to interpret properly the book of Revelation:

A. Understanding Revelation:

We must first assume a figurative interpretation of Revelation, and then consider a literal interpretation. This is the reverse principle of interpretation that is used with most other Bible books. With other Bible books, the principle is first to understand the message in a literal manner. But if there is justification in the context, one can understand the message figuratively. However, when we come to the book of Revelation, **we must first understand the general nature of the message figuratively unless there is a reason in a particular text to understand it literally.**

John cautions us to use the above principle in the very first verse of the book: *“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John”* (Rv 1:1). John alerts us to interpret this book in a manner that is different than the interpretation of most of the rest of the Bible. The book of Revelation was “signified” to John who recorded the symbols for the readers to interpret. Therefore, we first interpret Revelation figuratively.

Many of the symbols that John

used are taken from the Old Testament. Others are derived from the historical setting of the audience to which the book was first written. It is not difficult for us to understand the symbols that were taken from the Old Testament. However, it is often quite challenging for us to understand those symbols that were taken from the historical circumstances that surrounded the audience to whom John first wrote.

John often uses **cryptic** symbols to convey spiritual thoughts. These are unreal, and often terrifying symbols that are used in order to shock the readers imagination. The original readers understood the meaning of these symbols. Our problem is that we are over two thousand years removed from the historical environment of the original readers. Our understanding of some texts, therefore, is somewhat limited. We must keep this in mind as we interpret our way through this book.

The book is also what is classified as **apocalyptic literature**. This was a style of literature that was written to conceal the message of the writer from the unbeliever, or enemies of Christianity. However, this style of writing was used to reveal a message of encouragement and hope to the disciples. Through the skillful use of figures, the Holy Spirit in Revelation conveys an encouraging message

to the readers who are headed for times of great persecution. This was the situation with the audience to whom John wrote Revelation.

In reference to numbers that are used by John in the book, John resorts to a figurative meaning of the numbers. This was a common practice of the Jews in their literature. They often used numbers to convey ideas. In order to remain consistent with the figurative tenor of the book, **the careful interpreter will first interpret the numbers of Revelation in a figurative sense.** For example, John used numbers as three, four, seven, ten, twelve and the multiples thereof (100, 1,000, 1,200 or 144,000) in a symbolic sense. The number **three** was associated with certain acts of God (See Ex 19:11 Hs 6:2). **Four** signified completion or the whole of creation (See Is 11:12; Jr 49:36; Ez 37:9; Rv 6:1-8; 7:1; 9:13). The number **seven** signified completeness or perfection (See Mt 12:45; 22:25-28). The number **ten** and its multiples (100, 1,000) represented a specific and complete period of time (See Rv 7:4; 20:4-7).

In the symbolism of the book of Revelation, it is vital that the interpreter recognize the symbolic use of numbers that John used throughout the letter. If one interprets that numbers literally in the book of Revelation, then he will certainly come to some erroneous conclusions. Never-

theless, some fail to see John's symbolic use of numbers, and thus are led to some very confusing contradictions.

B. Reference to first recipients:

The events of Revelation were soon to come to pass. John again alerted his first readers that the historical events about which he spoke would soon take place. In Revelation 1:1 he wrote that God have him a message *“to show His servants—things which must **shortly take place.**”* In 22:6 he concluded the book by saying, *“And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things **which must shortly take place.**”*

The events of the entire book, therefore, must first be interpreted to apply to the historical context of the first recipients. John does talk about the end of things, but his primary emphasis in the book is to reveal to the first readers those things that would bring persecution into their lives, for they were headed into an era of Roman state persecution.

“Shortly take place” does not mean that these events would take place more than two thousand years later. Therefore, any effort on the part of interpreters to twist out of historical context the events about which John prophesied is an unfortu-

nate attempt to steal the message of encouragement away from the first recipients. Unfortunately, many speculators today are willing to do this. But when John said that the events about which he wrote would shortly take place, he meant that the events would take place sometime in the immediate future of the disciples to whom he wrote.

C. Without contradictions:

The Bible does not contradict itself. Another important principle to remember in studying any figurative portion of Scripture is the following: **One need not understand fully the figures that are used in a text in order to understand a false interpretation that is made of the text.** One may not fully understand all the book of Revelation. However, **if someone develops a theology from the book that contradicts other clear statements in the Bible, then we know that the interpretation is false.** If an interpretation of Revelation contradicts any fundamental teaching of the Bible, then certainly we would conclude that such an interpretation is erroneous. Interpretations that are inherently contradictory are false simply because the Bible does not contradict itself. Therefore, we must not read Revelation in a manner that would make it contradict it-

self, or any other part of the Bible. If we do, then we have made the Holy Spirit reveal contradictory material to confuse the saints.

D. Encouragement:

The key message of Revelation is encouragement. The Christians to whom John wrote were enduring the persecution of the Roman state. However, in the years to come, the persecution would become worse before it got better. The first readers had just passed through the persecution of Nero in the early 60s. They were headed for the Roman state persecution that would take place during the reign of Domitian.

Nero unleashed a personal vendetta against Christians. However, by the time of Domitian, the Roman state made Christianity an illegal religion. Christians were subsequently persecuted to the extent that they had to live an underground existence for many years. John knew that the disciples were headed in the direction of this great persecution. He thus wrote to encourage them. The encouragement of John is revealed in the key verse of 17:14: *“These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.”*

From the beginning of the document to the end, John's assurance was that the believer would overcome. Therefore, the Lamb promised, "*Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life*" (Rv 2:10). The

saints' knowledge that they would overcome as the Lamb was an encouragement to help them endure the suffering that comes in living the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 3

UNDERSTANDING REVELATION 20

The above principles of interpretation bring us to this commonly misinterpreted chapter of Revelation. As previously stated, Revelation 20 must first be interpreted figuratively, unless there is reason to understand the context literally. This principle of interpretation is in harmony with what John forewarned his readers at the very beginning of the book (1:1).

In order to emphasize this principle, a good exercise in reference to Revelation 20:1-6 is to draw a line down the middle of a page of paper. At the top of the page, write "literal" on one side of the line and "figurative" on the other. Read through the chapter, writing on one side or the other what one believes to be either literal or figurative. This simple exercise will at least prove one thing.

Revelation 20:1-6	
LITERAL	FIGURATIVE
?	?

Those who want to make this chapter of revelation literal in every sense cannot be consistent in their interpretation. Interpreters will identify the "dragon" as a figure, but will literalize the "one thousand years." They will make the "chain" figurative, but literalize the "one thousand years." They claim that the "key" is figurative, but the "one thousand years" is literal.

What must be emphasized is the fact that we are consistent in our interpretation of this chapter. One problem with the premillennial interpretation of Revelation 20 is that one cannot be consistent in his interpretation of the language John used to convey his message. One must go back and forth from literal to figurative, and from figurative to literal if he uses this text to promote a one-thousand year reign of Jesus on this earth. In this confusion of jumping back and forth from literal to figurative, and too many people are left confused. With the above thoughts in mind, the

following is a brief survey of Revelation 20:

A. Satan is bound (vss 1-3):

In the first three verses a messenger of God is pictured with authority (key) to use a means of confinement (chain) to confine Satan to a certain realm (bottomless pit, or abyss). This confinement of Satan began with the ministry of Jesus. Jesus alerted us to this understanding when He said, *“Or else how can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house”* (Mt 12:29).

Jesus came that *“He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage”* (Hb 2:14,15; see 1 Co 15:20-24).

During His ministry, Jesus not only proclaimed that He was the resurrection and the life (Jn 11:25,26), but He also came to be the sacrificial Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world (See Jn 1:29). He came to manifest His authority over all things when He ascended to the right hand of the Father. He was the strong man who despoiled the house of Satan with the revelation of the gospel.

When Jesus received the seventy

disciples He had sent out on a preaching trip during His ministry, they returned and said to Him, *“Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name”* (Lk 10:17). Jesus then responded to them, *“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you”* (Lk 10:18,19). It was on the foundation of this authority that the work of Satan was crumbling during Jesus’ earthly ministry. Jesus proclaimed, *“Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast down”* (Jn 12:31). Jesus came to disarm Satan. He came to cast him down, and to despoil his kingdom of darkness. Jesus thus *“disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in” the cross* (Cl 2:15).

When Jesus died on the cross, the confinement of Satan was sealed. **Satan has no victory over the body of Christ.** Satan goes about as a roaring lion in the world (1 Pt 5:8). However, among God’s people he is bound by the power of the blood of the Lamb (1 Jn 1:7). He is shut up and sealed by the gospel. The Holy Spirit would remind us of the following:

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who

loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, or any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rm 8:37-39).

Christians now live in the age of the confinement of Satan. Since Satan is now confined in this time by the power of gospel, then there is no confinement yet in the future. The only thing that now awaits Satan and his angels is destruction (Mt 25:41). He is not headed for more confinement. He is headed for destruction. **This age is, therefore, the designated period of confinement, the one thousand years where the saints reign over the power of Satan by the blood of the Lamb (Rv 17:14).**

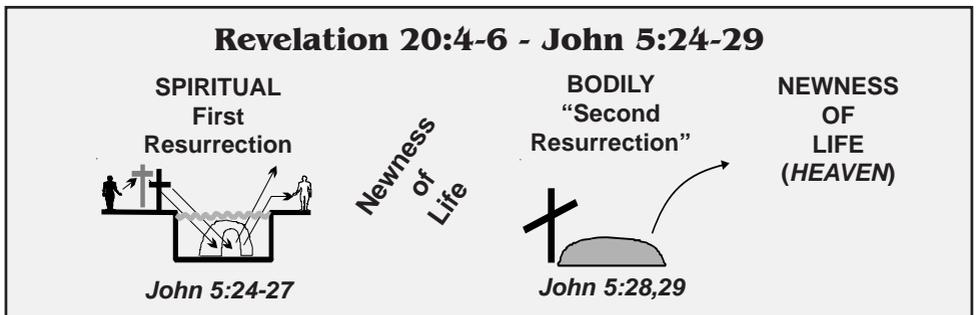
B. Resurrect and reign (vs 4-6):

“Thrones” in this passage are symbolic of authority and royalty.

When one is raised from the waters of baptism in obedience to the gospel, he or she is resurrected to walk in newness of life (Rm 6:3-5). Herein is the first resurrection. Those who have participated in this first resurrection with Jesus will also reign in this life with Christ (Rm 5:17). *“For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him” (2 Tm 2:11).*

Christians have crucified themselves with Christ through repentance and commitment to be Jesus’ disciples (Rm 6:6; Gl 2:20). They have died to themselves and buried the old man of sin in the grave of baptism. Because they have died with Christ, they also live with him. It is this group about whom John revealed, *“And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years” (Rv 20:4).* Thus the second death, that is, eternal separation from God, will have no power over them when Jesus comes again (Rv 20:6).

We must keep in mind that the “reigning” in verse 4 is speaking of



the reign of the saints. Simply because the passage says the saints reigned with Christ for a thousand years **does not mean that the reign of Christ is limited to the thousand years.** All that is emphasized is the reign of the saints for the thousand years, not the reign of Christ for a thousand years.

The context of Revelation 20:4-6 speaks of a spiritual resurrection (resurrection from the waters of baptism), and the assumption of a second resurrection (the bodily resurrection) at the end of time when Jesus comes again. In the context of John 5:24-29, Jesus also spoke of both a spiritual and physical resurrection in the same context. Jesus revealed that those who believe on Him have “*passed from death to life*” (Jn 5:24). This refers to a spiritual resurrection from a state of being spiritually dead to a state of being saved. Jesus continued, “*I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live*” (Jn 5:25). Those who would live are those who would hear and obey the gospel by immersion for the remission of their sins (At 2:38; Rm 6:3-6).

In John 5:28,29, however, Jesus changes from the spiritual resurrection to a physical resurrection that would take place in the future. “*Do not marvel at this,*” Jesus responded

to His stunned audience, “*for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.*” Those who have worked good, and will be resurrected to life, will be resurrected at the same time as those who have worked evil, but will be resurrected to condemnation. Both resurrections will take place in the same hour.

John 5:24-29, therefore, is a commentary on what John symbolically revealed in Revelation 20:1-6. Jesus came to preach to those who were spiritually dead. Those who heard could in their lives bind Satan by their obedience to the gospel. In Christ, therefore, they are protected from the power of Satan, for in Christ we are not allowed to be tempted beyond that which we are able to endure, but with temptation we are given a way of escape (1 Co 10:13). Satan is bound in the realm into which the Christian has come through the blood of Jesus. As long as one remains in this realm, he or she will not suffer the second death, that is, destruction from the presence of God (See Rv 2:11; 20:14; 21:8; 2 Th 1:7-9).

The key statement in Revelation 20 is verse 6. Once this verse is understood in the context of the gospel ministry of Jesus, and the obedience

of the saints to the gospel, then there is no problem in understanding that the context of the passage refers to the present “one thousand year” era that began with the atonement of Jesus and will conclude with His final coming. The following would be a narrative commentary of what John reveals in verse 6:

The ones who have obeyed the gospel are blessed and sanctified because they have been raised from the waters of baptism in order to walk in newness of life. They are no longer spiritually dead, and will not suffer the second death at the final judgment. They are presently priests of God and Christ. They presently reign with Jesus during this dispensation of the gospel.

C. Crushing of Satan (vss 7-10):

In the context of the historical situation of the audience to whom John wrote, Christians were suffering the persecution of the Roman government. Satan was using this government to suppress the work of God in the lives of Christians. In the symbolism, Gog and Magog, that are also figures taken from the Old Testament (See Ez 35-40), are shown here to be the enemies of the church (the beloved city). John pictures the deceived at the end of the gospel dispensation to

be the vast majority of the world. However, Satan’s release from prison is only for a brief period of time in reference to time.

Satan’s time is swiftly ended. He and his angels are cast into destruction (Mt 25:41). Keep in mind that Satan’s release from prison is symbolic of releasing those earthly influences and earthly government powers that are his instruments of temptation and persecution. Christians must never forget the statements of Paul in Romans 8:37-39, and similar promises, that we cannot be subjectively snatched from the power of God. Christians must always remember what Jesus said, “*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand*” (Jn 10:27,28).

While under persecution, John reminds these early Christians that the Beast (the Roman state) and False Prophet (state religion) will see their end (See 17:9,18; 18:2). The church will eventually emerge from Rome’s persecution. Though the saints to whom John wrote spiritually reign with Christ, and do so throughout the millennium, they are again headed for a time of persecution when Rome raises it ugly head against Christianity. However, as the three and a half years of the Beast were short (12:12;

13:4), so will Satan's onslaught against the saints be short. And the fact that it will be short is encouragement to the saints in the fact that whatever Satan does against the work of the Lamb will only be temporary.

D. Final judgment and end (vss 11-15):

The vision of Revelation 20 pictured the beginning of the gospel dispensation by the work of Jesus and the preaching of the gospel. John also pictures the end of the gospel dispensation by a vision of final judgment. John revealed what Paul proclaimed in Acts 17:31: "*He has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the Man who He has ordained*" (See also Mt 25:31-46; Jn 5:22). John reveals the last day. It is a day of judgment (See Jn 5:22; 12:48; 2 Co 5:10; 2 Tm 4:1). It is a day of termination of this present world (2 Pt 3:10-13). No one will escape this final judgment (6:14; 16:20; 18:21; 19:20; 2 Co 5:10).

What John pictures in the last few verses of Revelation 20 is a time of finality. It is a time of termination of world events. There is no picture of earthly history after the events of verses 11-15.

A consistent interpretation of Revelation 20:1-6 will not allow time for a supposed one-thousand year

reign of Jesus on earth. The context is discussing what has already occurred in reference to the binding of Satan by the gospel, not what will happen after Jesus comes again. If the one-thousand year reign of the saints in Revelation 20:1-6 is supposed to be a future event, then one would suppose that many future events, particularly those that are assumed by premillennialists, would be mentioned in Revelation 20:1-6. By considering the following list, these are premillennial concepts that are not found in the context of Revelation 20:1-6:

PREMILLENNIAL TEACHINGS NOT FOUND IN REVELATION 20

- **Nothing is said of Jesus on this literal earth.**
- **Nothing is said of Jesus actually reigning on this literal earth.**
- **Nothing is said of the reigning of beheaded saints on earth.**
- **Nothing is said of the bodily resurrection.**
- **Nothing is said of the final coming of Jesus.**
- **Nothing is said of the literal throne of David.**
- **Nothing is said of the city of Jerusalem in Palestine.**
- **Nothing is said of the Jews as a nation of people.**

It would seem that if Revelation

20:1-6 were to be the major proof-text for the premillennial theory, then certainly the above major teachings would be mentioned in this key context. The fact that these major teachings are not in the context of Revelation 20:1-6 indicates that we should look for another answer to the interpretation of the passage that is not prejudiced by premillennial thinking. If these teachings are not in the context with reference to the one-thousand year reign of the saints, then it would be rightly concluded that whatever one's interpretation of the millennium would be, it does not refer to something of the future. Revelation 20 cannot be a proof-text for that which it does not prove. And it cannot prove the teaching of premillennialism simply because the primary concepts of

the doctrine are not in its context.

Because of the figurative nature of Revelation, the Holy Spirit knew there would be those who would interpret the book in order to advocate their own theologies. One can understand, therefore, why John gave the following warning at the close of the book:

*For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: **If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book** (Rv 22:18,19).*

Chapter 4

NATURE OF THE KING'S REIGN

Some suppose that Jesus is not now reigning over all things. He is not now reigning over a kingdom that includes all that exists, both in heaven and on earth. Those who teach this theology affirm that the prophecies concerning Jesus' universal reign that were made in the Old Testament have not yet been fulfilled. It is supposed that these prophecies were not fulfilled when Jesus ascended to the right

hand of God in Acts 1, but will be fulfilled when He comes again to establish His earthly reign.

Some suppose that there are two reigns of Jesus. The first is His reign over the kingdom of God that is referred to as the church. His present reign is limited to this world and the church only. After the conclusion of this reign, Jesus will assume a second reign that will be over a physical

kingdom that will last for one thousand years here on earth. The kingdom reign of Jesus is thus divided into a spiritual reign over the church and a physical reign over this literal earth.

One thing that has led to the belief in the physical millennial view is the failure of interpreters to see the present galactic reign of Jesus over all things. When we consider the prophecies of the Messiah in the Old Testament, the universal reign of the Messiah is clearly pictured. The Messiah, the Christ, would assume a universal reign over all things. When we study those passages of prophecy concerning the reign of the Messiah, this truth is clearly evident. However, the problem comes when interpreters do not see this prophesied universal reign in the present reign of Jesus.

Interpreters have confined Jesus' present reign to a "limited kingdom reign" that is a reign only over the church of His disciples. In limiting the reign of Jesus to the church, physical millennium interpreters have assumed that the prophecies of the Old Testament have thus not yet been completely fulfilled. They are right if Jesus' present reign is limited only to the church. If the universal kingdom reign of Jesus has not been fulfilled in Jesus' present reign, then the Old Testament prophecies concerning His universal reign have not been fulfilled. Premillennialists simply state

that these prophecies will be fulfilled in the one-thousand year earthly reign that is yet to come. Since the prophecies were not fulfilled in the past, then they must be fulfilled in the future.

One common misunderstanding concerning the kingdom in prophecy is to affirm that the kingdom and church are the same thing. This affirmation results in either limiting the reign of Christ's present reign, or it leaves unfulfilled those prophecies that affirm the universal reign of Christ as king and head over all things. In other words, if prophecy pictured the sovereignty of Christ over all things, and He is now reigning only over a kingdom called the church, **then the prophecies have not been fulfilled.** If the church and the kingdom are the same, then this is the logical conclusion. If this conclusion is true, then we would be left to wonder when the totality of the Old Testament prophecies will be fulfilled.

The biblical answer to the relationship of the kingdom reign of Jesus and church is actually simple. The word "kingdom" (*basileia*) refers to God's rule from heaven. But the word "church" (*ekklesia*) refers to man's response on earth to the present kingdom reign of Jesus from heaven. As the will of the Father is done on earth as it is done in heaven (Mt 6:9,10), then kingdom reign is accomplished

within the hearts of the obedient (Lk 17:20,21). **All the church, therefore, is kingdom reign, but not all the kingdom reign of Jesus is church.**

With one passage this point is proved. 1 Peter 3:22 states that Jesus *“has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.”* Angels, authorities and powers are certainly not in the church. However, they are under the present kingdom reign of Jesus. The church is the called

out assembly of people who have submitted to the kingdom reign of Jesus. On the other hand, there are insurrectionists in the kingdom. These are those who have not responded to the gospel. Nevertheless, Jesus is still their King. He is still their Lord (1 Tm 6:15). (More later.)

It is imperative that we restudy the prophecies that speak of the universal reign of Jesus. The following points of this chapter are a brief survey of those prophecies that prepared Israel for the coming universal reign of the Messiah over all things. In order to understand these prophecies and their fulfillments, there is a very important word the Holy Spirit uses that must be clearly understood. This

is the word “kingdom.” This word is used in both the Old and New Testaments to refer to earthly kingdoms that have borders, literal thrones, kings and armies. However, when we use this word to refer to the kingdom of God, it is obviously understood that something beyond a literal meaning must be understood. When the word “kingdom” is used in reference to the authority or reign of God over that now exists, **a metaphorical meaning must be understood.** God’s kingdom reign does not have literal borders. There are no literal armies with guns and grenades to maintain order.

The word “kingdom” is the only word of our language the Holy Spirit could have used to define the reign of God in the affairs of man. Therefore, when we study prophecy and fulfillment in reference to the reign of God, we must understand that God’s kingdom is not of this world. Jesus informed the Roman official Pilate, *“My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here”* (Jn 18:36).

This one statement of Jesus alerts us to think beyond a physical understanding of the word “kingdom” when discussing the reign of God in the affairs of man. Unless we understand that the kingdom of God is spiritual,



we will always misunderstand the prophecies that speak of the kingdom reign of the Messiah.

Several words could possibly be used to partially convey the relationship of God with the created world and its inhabitants. We could use the word “sovereignty” that refers to rule or reign. The phrases “kingdom reign” or “sovereign reign” would also be acceptable translations to convey in some way the governing control of God in reference to creation. Whatever word or phrase we use, we must understand that this is one area where we must allow the Bible to define the meaning. But even in the use of these words and phrases there is some inadequacy in our understanding. Our understanding is always limited by our experiences that are confined to this world. Therefore, we must not allow our earthly experiences to define God’s actions in reference to those things that are beyond our experiences.

What one must understand is the

fact that there are no earthly words that can adequately explain the kingdom reign of Deity. However, at least we can understand that the kingdom reign of God is not something of this world. We cannot compare it with worldly kingdoms.

One of the problems with premillennial interpreters is that they cannot move their theology beyond earthly definitions of those words that the Holy Spirit used to explain the relationship of the Creator with the creation. Every time they hear the word “kingdom,” they think of this world. They thus miss the point of kingdom reign prophecy, for they cannot see within Old Testament prophecy the present kingdom reign of Jesus over all things. And if one cannot see in the present kingdom reign of Jesus the fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecies concerning the reign of Jesus, then he will look to a future physical reign of Jesus only on this planet.

Chapter 5

PROPHECY OF THE KING’S REIGN

We must keep in mind that the kingdom in prophecy was not to be a physical kingdom in which the subjects would use guns and grenades to propagate it throughout the world. Though this theology is sometimes

believed by those of this time who are seeking a military or political solution to the expansion of their religious beliefs, such is entirely foreign to the teachings of the Bible. If we understand that the kingdom is not physi-

cal and of this world, then much of the confusion that has been taught concerning the millennial reign of Jesus is cleared up.

A. The Messiah's kingdom reign would consume the authority of all earthly kingdoms.

The best way the Holy Spirit could explain the comprehensive reign of the Messiah would be to combine all the power of world kingdoms with which his readers would be familiar. When the prophecies were fulfilled, the readers could combine the power of four world kingdoms in order to understand the extent of the authority and power of the Messiah.

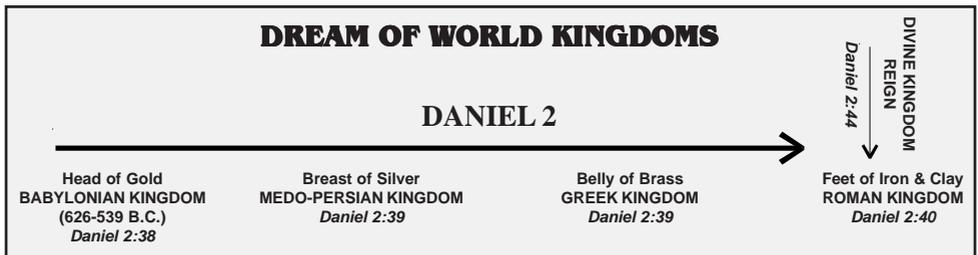
1. Nebuchadnezzar's dream: In Daniel 2 the prophet Daniel interpreted a God-given dream of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Dn 2:36-45). The great image of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar was a prophecy of four earthly kingdom to come in world history. The first was that of Nebuchadnezzar who represented the **Babylonian kingdom** (Dn

2:37,38). After the Babylonian kingdom another, the **Medo-Persian kingdom**, would and did arise on the earth (Dn 2:39). After the Medo-Persian kingdom, another kingdom, the **Greek kingdom**, arose (Dn 2:39). A fourth kingdom also arose after the Greek kingdom. This was the **Roman kingdom** (Dn 2:40).

Daniel interpreted that it would be **in the days of the fourth kingdom, the Roman Empire, that God would set up another kingdom reign**. This kingdom would have authority on earth, however, it would not be a physical kingdom as was characteristic with the earthly Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman kingdoms. It would be a spiritual kingdom that was manifested on earth, but was not of this world.

2. Daniel's interpretation: Daniel interpreted,

And in the days of these kings [the Roman Kingdom] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume



all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever (Dn 2:44).

Herein is the prophecy of a kingdom reign that would assume the totality of authority that was manifested and exercised by the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman kingdom reigns. However, keep in mind that the authority of this kingdom would not be exercised in the manner earthly kingdoms exercise their authority. This kingdom would manifest its authority from heaven through the hearts of submitted subjects.

The kingdom reign of Daniel 2:44 would be universal. It would extend throughout the world. There would be no limits to the extent of its authority. This prophecy, therefore, is speaking of a universal kingdom reign that would come in the days of the Roman kings. Though the prophecy does not explain any individual king in reference to this kingdom, the fact is that the kingdom would be universal. It would not be limited to this world. We would assume, therefore, that the One who would reign over this kingdom would exercise all authority over all things. The universality of the kingdom assumes the existence of the universality of the authority of the King.

Keep in mind that in this prophecy, as well as in many of the Old

Testament prophecies concerning the kingdom, the kingdom reign or sovereignty of the king is emphasized. The prophecies assume the sovereignty of the king over all things because the kingdom reign would extend over all things.

The reason these prophecies emphasize the kingdom is because contrasts were established between the earthly kingdoms that were in power at the time the prophecies were made and the spiritual kingdom to come. A contrast was also established between the limited kingdom of national Israel and the response to kingdom reign that would come from all nations during the time of the Messiah's reign. Universal kingdom assumes universal kingship. This means that universal kingship assumes universal kingdom reign. And if the King is to have universal kingdom reign, then the response to the reign (church) would go throughout all nations.

Daniel 2:44 reveals the establishment of kingdom reign. In verse 45 of Daniel's interpretation, "a stone" was cut out of the mountain. The stone broke in pieces the power of earthly authorities. It did so by breaking the power of the fourth kingdom (Rome) (Dn 2:34,35). Herein is the impact of heavenly sovereignty manifested on earth in the hearts of men. When the will of the Father was done on earth as it was done in heaven (Mt

6:9,10), then the kingdom reign of Deity was manifested. This was done in the days of the Roman kingdom. Herein is the church (the stone) and the influence on earth of heavenly kingdom reign of Jesus. One can only imagine the anticipation that was created in the minds of the Jews as they read this prophecy, for Daniel concluded, “*The great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this*” (Dn 2:45).

B. The Messiah would exercise kingdom reign over all peoples and nations.

1. **Daniel's dream:** In Daniel 7, the prophet Daniel experienced a vision that is parallel in meaning to that of Nebuchadnezzar's vision in Daniel 2. The same four earthly kingdoms were revealed to Daniel, though with different symbols. The earthly kingdoms were the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman governments. The significance of the four kingdoms is the last kingdom. It would be in the days of the fourth, the Roman Empire, that God would do His work in establishing the kingdom reign of Jesus.

2. **Daniel's interpretation:** In the interpretation of the vision, a significant prophecy is made in verses 13 & 14.

*I [Daniel] was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man [Jesus], coming with the clouds of heaven [Jesus' ascension]! He came to the Ancient of Days [God, the Father], and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him [Jesus] was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, **that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.** His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.*

At least one thing is clear from this prophecy. **The One who ascended to the Ancient of Days in the heavens was given a kingdom, or dominion, over all peoples, nations and languages.** In this parallel vision and interpretation of Daniel 2, a king is identified. The Daniel 2 vision and interpretation **reveals the universality of the kingdom reign in contrast to the temporary and limited existence of earthly kingdoms.** The Daniel 7 vision and interpretation **reveals the universality of the authority of the king.** We cannot stress enough the uni-

**DOMINION
GLORY
KINGDOM**



**ALL
PEOPLES
NATIONS
LANGUAGES**

versal picture of kingdom reign that is portrayed in the prophecies of both Daniel 2 and 7. This universal sovereignty is placed in contrast to the limited kingdom reigns of earthly governments. When it comes to fulfillment, therefore, let us not make the mistake of limiting the kingdom reign of the One who would fulfill these prophecies.

In the prophecy of Daniel 7:13,14, the indefinite article “a” is not used in reference to the word “kingdom,” for there was no indefinite article in Hebrew. Therefore, what was given the One who ascended to the Ancient of Days was sovereignty or kingdom reign. Since the word “kingdom” must be understood metaphorically in reference to God’s sovereign relationship with man, then it must refer to kingdom reign in a spiritual sense. Emphasis is on the position and honor of the King. And in reference to His rule, emphasis is on sovereignty. The realm from which sovereignty is manifested is in the realm of the Ancient of Days. This is heaven. Thus Daniel 7:13,14 is a picture of what would take place in and from heaven **and not from this earth.**

The kingdom reign would be manifested on earth only when the will of the Father was done on earth as it was done in heaven. It is this kingdom reign for which Jesus in-

structed His disciples to pray: “***Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven***” (Mt 6:9,10). When men and women submit to the will of the Father on earth, then truly the present kingdom reign of Jesus is within them and the will of the Father is done on earth (Lk 17:20,21). This kingdom reign is manifested through the submission of the church to the will of the Son.

C. The Messiah would exercise kingdom reign over all nations.

1. Kingdom reign of the Father:

In order to understand kingdom reign prophecies concerning Jesus, **it is necessary to understand that Jesus was to assume the kingdom reign of the Father over all things that existed to the time of the ascension.** In the Old Testament, it is affirmed that the Father was king and head over all things. Through prophecy, the Holy Spirit prepared Israel for a coming change in this kingdom reign.

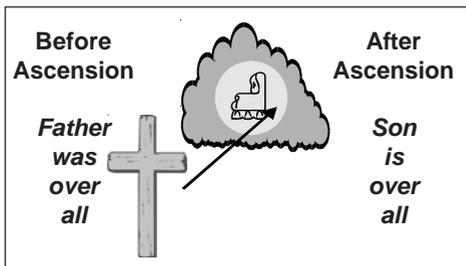
Concerning the kingdom reign of the Father, David stated,

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You

reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all (1 Ch 29:11,12).

In this statement of David, God the Father is pictured as “head over all” and reigning “over all.” This picture is also presented in the Psalms. “*The Lord is King forever and ever*” (Ps 10:16). “*The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory*” (Ps 24:10). “*All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. For the kingdom is the Lord’s, and He rules over the nations*” (Ps 22:27,28). “*The Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom [sovereignty] rules over all*” (Ps 103:19). When reading these statements in reference to the kingship of the Father, we must now, under the kingship of the Son, realize that this is the extent of the sovereignty that the Son has assumed.

At least one thing is clear from the above statements. **The Father ruled over all before the ascension**



of the Son to the right hand of the Father in order to assume this sovereignty. If we understand this point, then it is easy to understand what Jesus meant when He said that all authority was given to Him (Mt 28:18). When the Son was seated at the Father’s right hand in heavenly glory, it is easy to understand the fact that the Son is now King and head over all things because the Father handed over universal kingship to Him.

Daniel revealed that the Son of Man would receive “dominion, glory and kingdom reign” (Dn 7:14). This is the authority that Jesus received when He ascended to the right hand of the Father. He is now reigning with all dominion and glory, with sovereignty from heaven over all things. His universal kingdom reign is not something that will come in the future. It is happening at this present time, for Jesus has ascended to receive this sovereign reign.

2. Prophecy of change in kingdom reign: Isaiah prophesied,

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it (Is 2:2).

Isaiah prophesied that **all nations** would come under the kingdom reign

(“mountain”) that was to come. There would thus be a universal nature of the kingdom reign that would be exalted above all earthly authorities (“mountains”). Isaiah continued that “*many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain [sovereignty] of the Lord’...*” (Is 2:3). Isaiah was saying to Israel that the Messiah to come would “*judge between the nations*” (Is 2:4). When the Messiah came, Isaiah affirmed that peoples from every nation would come unto His authority. They would submit to His kingdom reign that would be greater than all earthly authorities. He would thus judge between the nations by His word. Subjects of the kingdom would judge themselves to be of the kingdom by their voluntary submission to the authority of the word of the King (See Jn 12:48).

The expanse of the kingdom reign that was to come would go beyond the borders of Israel. It would expand to all peoples in all nations of the world (See Mc 4:1-3). If we understand the spiritual nature of the kingdom reign of the Son, then it is not difficult to understand Isaiah’s

prophecy. Jesus now reigns in the hearts of those who have submitted to His kingdom reign (Lk 17:20,21). In this sense, **His kingdom reign is not of this world as a physical kingdom. It is a kingdom reign in all the world in a spiritual sense.** He now reigns over all things as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15).

The prophets prepared Israel for a change in the sovereign reign of Deity. The change in sovereignty would go forth from the Ancient of Days (the Father) to the Son of Man. From the time Isaiah wrote, it would eventually come to pass that the One who would ascend unto the Ancient of Days would be given kingdom reign over all nations. This kingdom reign would be established in the days of the Roman kings. It would be established in the last days of national Israel when God would bring to a conclusion the Jewish state.

The promises were to prepare Israel for the coming King and change in kingship. If we misapply these promises, then we are saying that God did not make specific promises to the children of Israel concerning the coming of the Messiah of Israel.

Chapter 6

GOSPEL REIGN OF KING JESUS

The Old Testament prophets prepared the way for the coming reign of

Jesus over all things. They established within the minds of the Jews

the teaching that the Father was king and head over all things throughout their history as a nation (1 Ch 29:11,12). However, the time was soon to come in the lifetime of Jesus' immediate audience when this kingship and headship would be given over to the Messiah.

As one studies through key New Testament statements concerning the present kingdom reign of Jesus, we must keep in mind the fact that Jesus assumed the universal reign of the Father over all things. Before Jesus' ascension to the right hand of the Father, the Father was king and head over all things, including the nation of Israel. After the ascension, however, Jesus was made head and king over all things, including the church. When Jesus comes again, this sovereign reign over all things will be returned to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Those who advocate the teaching of an earthly reign of Jesus miss the point of the present universal reign of Jesus. In missing this point, they fail to see the totality of the present reign of Jesus over all things and the return of this kingdom reign to God at the end of time. They affirm that Jesus is not now reigning over a universal kingdom. It is affirmed by some that the prophecies of the universal reign of Jesus that were made in the Old Testament have not been

fulfilled completely. And since they have been only partially fulfilled, these prophecies must and will be fulfilled in their entirety when Jesus comes again. The prophesied universal reign of Jesus will be fulfilled in the supposed physical earthly reign of Jesus.

Most people understand that Jesus is presently reigning. It is affirmed that Jesus is presently reigning over what is referred to as the "kingdom of God." But this kingdom is limited to the church. It is thus affirmed that there is another kingdom that is coming. This coming kingdom will be an earthly kingdom over which Jesus will reign on this earth for a period of one thousand years in fulfillment of the entirety of the prophecies of the Old Testament. Throughout this reign, all rebellious subjects will be forcefully subjugated to His earthly rule.

Because there are those who feel that the Old Testament prophecies were only partially fulfilled, there is a limited understanding of those New Testament passages that speak of the present kingdom reign of Jesus. One must understand that there is only one universal kingdom mentioned in the Old and New Testaments in reference to the sovereignty of God over all things. During the time of the Old Testament, the Father was king and head over this universal kingdom (1

Ch 29:11,12). But after His ascension, Jesus assumed this kingship and headship over the universal kingdom (Ep 1:20-23).

Jesus spoke of His coming reign during His ministry. When Matthew and Mark recorded the teachings of Jesus, they used different phrases in reference to Jesus' teachings concerning His kingdom reign. Matthew used the phrase "kingdom of heaven," for he was writing to the Jews (Mt 5:3,19; 8:11; 13:11,19, 24,31,33,34). Mark used the phrase "kingdom of God," for he was writing to disciples in general (Mk 1:14,15; 14:25; 15:43). Because Luke was writing to a Gentile (Theophilus), he also used the phrase "kingdom of God" (Lk 13:18,28,29; 17:20,21).

The use of these phrases does not signify different kingdoms. They refer to the same kingdom reign, the kingdom reign that originates from God and from heaven. This is the kingdom of which Jesus spoke to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world" (Jn 18:36). This is the kingdom about which Paul later wrote, "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Cl 1:13).

The kingdom of God and Christ are the same kingdom. Jesus has assumed the reign of this universal kingdom that existed before His ascension to the right hand of the Father. At the ascension of the Son, the Father gave to Him all authority of kingdom reign. Jesus presently exercises this sovereignty at the right hand of the Father (See Jn 13:3; 17:2; Mt 28:18).

When Jesus came in the flesh, He came in the fullness of time (Gl 4:4) in order to fulfill all prophecy concerning His prophesied reign. "*Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand [near]'*" (Mk 1:14,15). During his ministry, John the Baptist affirmed that the kingdom of God was near unto being established (Mt 3:2). This message was preached by both Jesus and His immediate disciples throughout the earthly ministry of Jesus (Mt 10:7; Lk 10:9,10). During both the ministry of Jesus and John, the way was being prepared for Jesus to ascend to the right hand of the Father in order to assume kingdom reign over all things. Therefore, during His ministry, Jesus said to the disciples, "Assuredly, I say



to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death **until they see the kingdom of God present with power**" (Mk 9:1). Jesus is presently reigning over all things. **He is reigning in the total capacity of kingship that was prophesied in the Old Testament.** He has assumed sovereignty over all things and will reign until He comes again.

The following points are a brief review of key statements in the New Testament that affirm the present universal reign of Jesus. These statements clearly teach that Jesus is presently reigning in the full capacity that was prophesied in the Old Testament.

A. Jesus prophesied of His reign.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus was not unaware of His destiny in reference to His kingdom reign. He knew that the Father had given all things into His hands (Jn 13:3; 17:2). Therefore, throughout His ministry He prepared the hearts of His disciples to accept His heavenly kingship. It was to this reign as the Messiah, therefore, that He directed His disciples concerning their hopes for the future.

1. Jesus was aware of His kingship authority. Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus knew that He was headed toward the right hand of God in heaven. In the context of John

13, John recorded the following statement concerning Jesus' awareness of His coming kingdom reign: "*Jesus, knowing that the Father **had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper***" (Jn 13:3,4). Later, Jesus prayed, "*Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You **have given Him authority over all flesh***" (Jn 17:1,2). Therefore, throughout His ministry Jesus knew that He had all authority, and thus He would exercise such when He ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven.

In knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, Jesus said to the disciples at the conclusion of His earthly ministry, "***All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth ...***" (Mt 28:18). "All authority in heaven and on earth" does not sound like Jesus' kingdom reign was to be limited to a small group of people, the church. The kingdom reign of Jesus was to extend beyond the church, beyond this world, for He now has all authority **in heaven** and on earth. This is precisely what Paul stated in Ephesians 1:22: "*And He [the Father] **put all things under His***

PROPHECY		FULFILLMENT
Daniel 7:13,14		Acts 1:9 (Acts 2:29-36)

[Jesus'] feet, and gave Him to be head over **all things** to the church.” Jesus has been exalted far “*above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth*” (Ph 2:9,10; see 1 Pt 3:22).

2. Jesus prophesied of His exercising kingdom authority. Jesus prophesied,

*For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, **there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see [realize] the Son of Man in His kingdom [sovereignty]** (Mt 16:27,28; see Mk 9:1).*

This statement finds its background in the prophecy of Daniel 7:13,14 where Daniel envisioned the Son of Man ascending to the Ancient of Days (the Father) where He would receive dominion, glory and kingdom reign. In the context of His ministry, Jesus made the above statement to the disciples. He did so in order to bring His immediate audience to His imminent kingdom reign that would occur within their lifetime. The kingdom was near unto being established.

The fulfillment of this prophecy, as well as all Old Testament proph-

cies concerning the reign of Jesus, were soon to take place and did so in Acts 1 & 2. We must, therefore, realize the significance of the events in Acts 1 & 2 as the historical fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the kingdom reign of Jesus.

B. Jesus ascended to the Father.

Luke records the historical event of Jesus' ascension in Acts 1:9: “*Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, **He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.***” Herein is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel 7:13,14. Jesus ascended unto the Ancient of Days (the Father). There was given to him “*dominion and glory and a kingdom*” (Dn 7:14). **When Jesus comes again, He will already have received and exercised His kingdom reign** (Lk 19:11-27).

1. Jesus ascended to exercise kingdom reign (Dn 7:13,14). In Daniel 7, Daniel pictured the Son of Man (Jesus) **coming to the Ancient of Days. He was not coming to this earth.** Since God dwells in heaven (1 Kg 8:27; At 17:24,27,28), then Jesus ascended to the Father **in heaven.** Those who believe that Jesus is coming to this earth to receive a kingdom affirm that He will descend to this earth to receive the “domin-

ion, glory and kingdom” that is pictured in Daniel 7:13,14. The biblical account of what was both prophesied and fulfilled, however, is the reverse of what is taught by those who promote the earthly reign of Jesus.

The prophecy and fulfillment of Daniel 7 was explained by Peter in Acts 2:29-36 where Peter affirmed, “*This Jesus God raised up*” and exalted Him to the right hand of God. Jesus ascended to the Father in heaven. When this occurred, there was given to Jesus dominion, glory and kingdom reign. Since Daniel 7 has been fulfilled, then there can be no other fulfillment yet in the future.

2. Jesus will come after having already received kingdom reign (Lk 19:11-27). In Jesus’ parable of Luke 19:11-27, He explained, “*A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return ...*” (Lk 19:12). In this parable, Jesus pictures Himself as the nobleman. As stated in Daniel 7:13,14, and affirmed by Luke in Acts 1:9, Jesus did “go away” to receive the kingdom. He went away to heaven. In the parable, Jesus also pictured Himself to be present with a kingdom. “*And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him*” (Lk 19:15). Therefore, when the nobleman (Jesus) returned, and in the

announcement of Peter on the day of Pentecost, **he had already received the kingdom**. He was not coming over two thousand years later in order to receive another kingdom reign, for He had already received such.

There is nothing difficult about understanding the above points. Daniel prophesied that Jesus would receive dominion, glory and kingdom reign when He ascended to the Father in heaven (Dn 7:13,14). Peter states that He did ascend (At 2:29-36). When Jesus did ascend, He was seated at the right hand of the Father to reign as king of His kingdom (Ep 1:20-22). Thus, when Jesus comes again at the end of all things, He will have already received His kingdom. He is now reigning with all dominion and glory over the kingdom that was given to Him by the Father when He ascended to the right hand of the Father. If we question that Jesus fulfilled all prophecy in reference to His gospel mission, then we are questioning the part of the gospel that refers to the ascension and assumption of Jesus’ kingdom.

C. The present reign of Jesus:

From the preceding two points, one thing is firmly established by Scripture. **Jesus is now reigning as king and His reign is over all things.**

The point is that if He is now reigning over all things, there is no future kingdom reign that would go be-

Jesus is now over ...

... all **principality**
 ... all **power**
 ... all **might**
 ... all **dominion**
 ... **every name**

yond His present reign. In fact, if He were to descend to the earth in order to establish an earthly reign, He would actually be giving up the totality of His present reign.

1. Jesus is now reigning. When Peter made the first official announcement of the sovereignty of Jesus on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30, he stated, *“For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool’”* (At 2:34,35). This is a quotation from Psalm 110:1. In the statement David said that he did not ascend into the heavens, but the Son of Man did. When He ascended, He was given universal authority over all things at the right hand of the Father, which authority David never received as a king on earth.

The metaphor “right hand” refers to authority. When one was at the right hand of a king, that person had the authority of the king. So it is with Jesus. He is at the right hand of the Father and has the authority of the Father over all things.

Peter affirmed that the prophecy that was made by David in Psalm 110:1 was fulfilled in Christ. It was fulfilled when Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father. Peter continued, *“Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear”* (At 2:33; see Rm 8:34; Cl 3:1). Thus God the Father raised Jesus from the dead and ...

*... seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all **principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church ...*** (Ep 1:20-22).

2. Jesus reigns now over all things. Paul wrote Ephesians 1:19-23 after Jesus had ascended to the right hand of the Father in order to exercise all authority in heaven and on earth. After Acts 1, Jesus was seated at the right hand of the Father in the heavenly places *“far above all **principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named**”* (Ep 1:21). In order not to be misunderstood, Paul clearly stated the all-encompassing present king-

dom authority of Jesus in Ephesians 1:22: “*And He put **all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church.***”

Two things are discussed in Ephesians 1:19-23. The first is the kingdom reign of Jesus. It is a present reign **far above** any earthly reign of authorities on this earth. The purpose of this reign is for the sake of the second point Paul mentions, that is, the church. Jesus reigns over all authorities “**to the church,**” that is, for the benefit of the church. The church and kingdom reign are not the same here. One is for the benefit of the other. **Kingdom reign over all things is for the benefit of the church.**

A parallel context of Ephesians 1:19-23 is Philippians 2:9-11.

*Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee **should bow**, of those in heaven, and those on earth, and those under the earth, and that every tongue **should confess** that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

This statement affirms the present position of Jesus. Paul said that God “has highly exalted” Jesus. This is past tense. **At the time Paul wrote Ephesians and Philippians, Jesus had already been highly exalted.**

There is no period of at least 2,000 years between the cross of verse 8 and the exaltation pictured in verses 9-11. After the cross, Jesus received the crown. He was raised up and seated at the right hand of the Father (Ep 1:19,20). His ascension and reign is that part of the gospel that gives Christians encouragement and hope.

As Daniel also stated, every knee **should bow** and every tongue **should confess** to Jesus’ present reign (Dn 7:13,14). However, there are always disobedient subjects in kingdoms. Both in Daniel 7:13,14 and Philippians 2, the word “should” is subjunctive. It is not “would.” Thus in the prophecy (Dn 7:13,14), as well as in Paul’s affirmation of the fulfillment (Ep 1:19-23; Ph 2:9-11), Jesus was seated on the throne, but not all of the subjects of His kingdom reign would bow to His kingship. They should, but they do not bow and confess their King. Nevertheless, though they are disobedient subjects, they are still under the kingdom reign of Jesus.

Jesus will reign in heavenly places regardless of the submission of the rebellious of His kingdom. He has **all** authority. **All** things have been placed under His feet. He is head over **all** things. How much more kingdom authority could Jesus possibly receive in the future over some earthly reign than what He now has? If we assume that in the future Jesus will come to

the earth in order to reign, then He will have to give up His present universal authority over all things.

D. Jesus reigns over all powers.

Paul wrote that Jesus is “*the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords*” (1 Tm 6:15). Paul is stating in this passage that Jesus is now a king and lord. Kingship and lordship are not something yet in the future in reference to Jesus. Of all the kings of the earth, Jesus is now their King. Of all the lords of the earth, Jesus is now their Lord. John also revealed that Jesus presently is “*Lord of lords and King of kings*” (Rv 17:14; 19:16). All kings and lords of the earth are not in the church. However, Jesus is still their King and Lord. Therefore, Jesus’ authority as King and Lord goes far beyond the boundaries of the church.

Some contend that Jesus is now King and Lord only over the church. But both Paul and John would disagree with this. The kingship and lordship of Jesus extend to all lords and kings of the world. Though the world kings and lords are not obedient subjects to His kingdom reign, this does not mean that they are outside the authority of His kingdom reign.

All the world is under the kingdom reign of Jesus, but not all the world is the church. Jesus is King and

Lord of all the kings and lords of the world, but not all the kings and lords of the world are obedient subjects of King Jesus. The church is the body of the Lord’s people who have been called out of the world through their obedience to the gospel. But we must keep in mind that this submissive group, the church, does not limit the kingdom reign of Jesus exclusively to the church. It does not because Jesus’ authority extends far beyond His disciples.

Those who affirm that the kingdom of Jesus and His church are the same make a fatal mistake here. By affirming that the kingdom and church of Jesus are the same, **one limits the present kingdom reign of Jesus**. All the world is not in the church, but Jesus’ kingdom reign is over all things of this world. If the kingdom and the church are the same thing, then Jesus’ kingdom reign is limited to the church. He is not King of kings and Lord of lords. The kingdom reign of Jesus extends beyond Christians. The boundaries of the kingdom of Jesus extend beyond the hearts of the obedient.

E. Jesus now reigns over the unseen world.

Peter revealed that Jesus “*has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities*

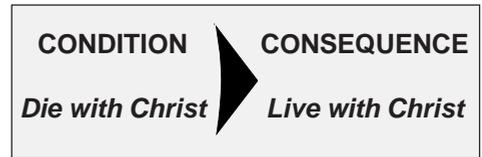
and powers having been made subject to Him” (1 Pt 3:22). This statement certainly affirms that Jesus’ present reign extends far beyond His disciples. Heavenly angels are under the kingdom reign of Jesus, but they are not in the church. Earthly authorities and powers are under the kingdom reign of Jesus, but they also are not in the body of Christ. What is thus pictured here by Peter in one statement is the fact that Jesus’ reign is presently universal. All things have been put under His present kingdom reign (Ep 1:20-22).

If Jesus comes again to establish His supposed earthly reign, then will He give up His present reign over angels? If He does, **then His earthly kingdom reign will no greater than His present reign.** All prophecy and fulfillment emphasize a present universal and total reign of Jesus. But if Jesus returns to reign on this earth, then He will have to forsake much of His present kingdom authority.

F. The saints now reign with Jesus.

Some have affirmed that Paul’s statement in 2 Timothy 2:11,12 and John’s statement in Revelation 2:26-28 refer to a future reign of Jesus. However, the contexts of these two passages do not allow this interpretation.

1. Christians presently live and reign with Jesus. In 2 Timothy 2:11,12 Paul wrote, *“This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with him.”* Some have assumed that if we endure with Jesus during this life, we will in His earthly kingdom in the future, reign with Him on this earth. It is affirmed, therefore, that the total kingdom reign of Jesus is yet in the future.



But notice the **conditions** and **consequences** that Paul states in 2 Timothy 2:11,12. He says that “if we died with Him” (condition), we will also “live with Him” (consequence). The fact is that Christians have died with Christ in their obedience to the gospel (See Rm 6:3-6; Cl 3:3). The New Testament also teaches that we now live with Jesus, for we walk in newness of life (Rm 6:4,5). This new life is as what Paul explained to the Galatians:

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gl 2:20).

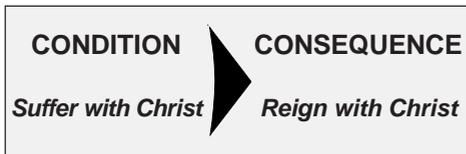
Christians have died with Christ in this life. But they, as Paul, are also now living with Christ.

Because Christians have eaten of the Bread of Life, they have life in Christ (Jn 6:51-58). Jesus made this promise to His disciples during His earthly ministry. *“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly”* (Jn 10:10). Those who have died with Christ, now have life with Christ. They are now reigning in life with Christ with whom they have died. **Since the condition is now true of every Christian, then the consequence is also now true.**

Paul continued to say that “if we endure” (condition), we will also “reign with him” (consequence). Christians are presently enduring with Christ in the sufferings that come with being a disciple of Jesus (See At 14:22; 1 Th 2:14; 2 Th 1:4; 2 Tm 4:5).

The condition of Paul’s statement is now true. The consequence is also true. **Christians are now reigning with Christ because they are now enduring with Him.** This is exactly what Paul said in Romans 5:17.

For if by the one man’s offense death



reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Christians are now reigning in life with Christ. **The enduring (suffering) through which one must go with Christ takes place in this life. The reigning with Christ is also in this life.**

2. Jesus has received kingdom reign authority. Now consider John’s statement in Revelation 2:26,27 in reference to what Paul just revealed in 2 Timothy 2:11,12. John recorded the promise of Jesus that *“he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the potter’s vessels shall be broken to pieces’—as I have received from My Father.”*

Some have affirmed a materialistic interpretation of this passage. It is affirmed that in some way the Christian will receive power over his fellow persecutors in some future earthly kingdom of Jesus. Such desires are certainly earthly and carnal. To become a Christian on the basis of having a promise that we will gain some type of earthly power over others is certainly a worldly motivation for becoming a Christian. It is not a response of thanksgiving for the gos-

pel of Jesus, but a carnal motivation to rule over others. Such a motivation is totally contrary to the gospel. It is also against the servanthood nature that must be characteristic of the life of every Christian (See Mk 10:35-45) and contrary to the gospel mind of Christ (See Ph 2:5-8).

What Jesus stated was that He had already received ruling power from the Father by the time He made this statement through John in Revelation 2:26,27. The tense of the verb is **past tense**. Jesus had already received power over the nations by the time John wrote, which power continues unto this day.

In Revelation 3:21 Jesus said, *“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.**”* The tense that is used here in reference to Jesus’ reign is also **past tense**. In other words, by the time this statement was made and recorded, Jesus had already overcome and sat down at the right hand of the Father. Thus Jesus was already reigning when this statement was made. Those who overcame in their present persecution would also be reigning in life with Jesus.

In the context of both Revelation 2:26,27 and 3:21, Jesus was giving encouragement to those who were suffering persecution from the Roman government. If one was faithful “un-

til the end,” that is, death, then he would have overcome. The Christian’s power is in remaining faithful under persecution. Christians reign over their enemies when they maintain their faith until the end of their lives. In this context, Jesus promised,

Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life (Rv 2:10).

In life, Christians reign in that **persecutors have no power over their destiny**. Their bodies can be killed, but they simply go in the spirit to be in the presence of their King (2 Co 5:8; Ph 1:23). They continue their reign with Jesus since they have overcome. They have received their crown of life by being victorious over those who seek in life to submit them to earthly tyranny.

G. Jesus’ universal reign will end.

Paul’s statements in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 are a brief clarification of events concerning the end of time in relation to the present kingdom reign of Jesus. Paul stated,

“Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father” (1 Co 15:24). Keep in mind that the word “kingdom” is metaphorically used here and in other contexts to refer to the sovereignty of Deity over all things. Jesus presently has this sovereignty that was given to Him by the Father at His ascension (Mt 28:18). However, in the end when He comes again He will return this sovereignty to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The point is that Jesus is now reigning, but when He returns His kingdom reign will cease.

Also keep in mind in the context of 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 that Paul is talking about kingdom reign and not church. He is discussing the position and work of Jesus, not the members of the body. When he mentions the return of “kingdom” to the Father, reference in the context is to sovereign reign, not church (people).

Paul continued, ***“For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet”*** (1 Co 15:25). Paul identified the last enemy as physical death

(1 Co 15:26). In the context of 1 Corinthians 15, Paul was discussing physical death and the final resurrection. Physical death will pass away in the end, at the final coming of Jesus (vss 50-56). Thus the “end” in the context of verses 24-28 is the final coming of Jesus when He comes to resurrect all the dead (Jn 5:28,29). It will be by that time that He will have submitted all things to Himself, including physical death. Jesus must reign until this last enemy is overcome. When the last enemy is overcome, then His reign will cease.

Paul concludes, ***“Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all”*** (1 Co 15:28). Thus Jesus is now reigning over all things and will reign until He comes again. The end will be at His final coming. When physical death is destroyed by the resurrection of all the dead, then He will return kingdom reign to the Father that God may be all in all.

Chapter 7

KING JESUS REIGNS IN HEAVEN

There is a great difference between the spiritual and physical millennialist views of things present and future. Physical millennialists teach that during the supposed future mil-

lennium Jesus will set up an earthly reign on this earth. This view maintains the belief that Jesus will descend from heaven in order to assume rule on David’s throne in Jerusalem of Pal-

estine in order to put down all world conflicts, and then reign from Jerusalem.

It is believed that Jesus originally came to establish an earthly kingdom reign over all the world. However, the Jews rejected Him as their king, and thus, the kingdom was supposedly postponed until He comes again. And when He comes again, He will forcefully set up a physical kingdom and forcefully subject the entire world to His rule. The saints will then rule with Him throughout this physical kingdom reign.

From a materialistic point of view, the above sounds appealing. From the point of view of our desire to rule over one another, it sounds even better. What could appeal more to the carnal side of man than an opportunity to inherit all the treasures of the world while at the same time have a part in literally being assigned to some king over a certain segment of Jesus' earthly reign.

One of the primary problems with the preceding carnal world view is that there is no statement in the Bible that says Jesus will ever set foot on this planet again. In the context of this thought, consider the following points:

A. An earthly kingship of Jesus has no biblical support.

The primary problem with the belief that Jesus will reign on this earth is the fact that there is no biblical statement that teaches such. There is no scripture in the entire Bible that says Jesus will ever set foot on this earth again, must less, reign on it. If the physical millennial view were true, then we would assume that there would be numerous scriptures that would mention this earthly reign of Jesus. But these passages are not there. They are not found in Old Testament prophecy. They are not found in the New Testament. If such a kingdom reign on earth were true, then certainly we would not be wrong to assume that the New Testament would be saturated with such hopes for the future.

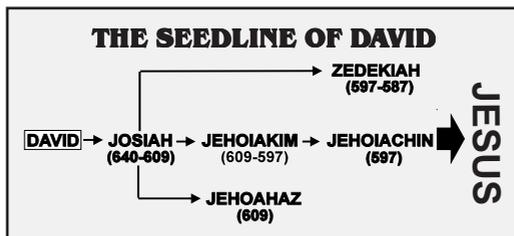
Old Testament prophecy does speak of the coming Messiah who would be born of woman (Is 7:14). The Messiah would be among men (Is 53) and reign on David's throne (2 Sm 7:12,13,16). However, these and related prophecies in the Old Testament were speaking of Jesus' **first coming**, which coming resulted in the establishment of a kingdom that was not of the nature of any earthly kingdom (Jn 18:38; Lk 17:20,21). To twist the prophecies that refer to the first coming of Jesus in order to make them apply to a future millennial reign theology, is to take these prophecies out

of their historical context, and thus, deny their fulfillment when Jesus first came into this world.

The point here is that there are no Old Testament or New Testament prophecies that state Jesus will ever set foot on this earth as a king. The obvious lack of supportive evidence in both the Old and New Testaments in reference to an earthly reign of Jesus is one of the most powerful arguments against an earthly reign of Jesus. If a doctrine is to be considered a biblical doctrine, then certainly it must have clear biblical support. If it has no biblical support, then certainly it cannot be maintained as a Bible teaching. This is especially true concerning the major teachings of the supposed earthly reign of Jesus.

B. Jesus cannot reign on earth.

After the death of Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, Jehoiachin, his son, reigned in his place as king of Judah in 597 B.C. (2 Kg 24:5,6; Jr 22:24-30). Jehoiachin had reigned only three months when Nebuchadnezzar brought his army to Judah and overthrew Jerusalem (2 Kg 24:8-10). Subsequently, Jehoiachin and his family were taken into Babylonian captivity.



In this historical context, Jeremiah made a very significant prophecy in Jeremiah 22:30 in reference to Davidic kings reigning again in Palestine. He wrote,

Thus says the Lord: 'Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not prosper in his days; for none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah.'

There has been much controversy over this statement of Jeremiah, specifically in reference to the kingdom reign of Jesus. If what Jeremiah stated is taken literally, then certainly no descendants of David through Jehoiachin, which would include Jesus, could ever prosper and reign on earth in Judah. Since Jerusalem is in Judah, then what Jeremiah stated is that Jesus, as David's descendant through Jehoiachin, could never reign in the city of Jerusalem.

Lest some be confused on this point, when Matthew, in writing to the Jews, gave the lineage of Jesus, he mentioned "Jeconiah" (Mt 1:11).

This is a variant name for Jehoiachin (1 Ch 3:15,17). Therefore, Jeremiah was speaking specifically of

the lineage of kings from David through Jehoiachin, not some other child of David.

What Jeremiah was also prophesying was that Israel as an independent nation was over forever. Babylon's conquest of national Israel terminated the Jews' right to exist as a God-ordained independent nation with its own land. The Medo-Persians conquered the Babylonians, and thus seized control of Palestine (See Dn 2 & 7). After the Medo-Persians came the Greeks, and then the Romans. All these empires seized control and occupied Palestine. After the Romans came other world powers who controlled Palestine. But Jeremiah wanted to make it clear in His prophecy that God never intended after the conquest of the remaining remnant of Israel in Judah by the Babylonians, that there would ever again be a God-ordained independent nation of Israel in Palestine with its own reigning king.

One must not make the mistake of thinking that the present modern-day Israel that is in Palestine a God-ordained nation as Israel was in Palestine before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. The present nation is simply **a nation that was established by colonial powers after World War I.** At the time England had possession of the land of Palestine. After World War

II, and in 1948, the Jews declared their own nation, not God. After World War I, land was requisitioned from the local residents and given to the Jews. When the Jews declared their own state, they simply took land from the local Palestinians and wrote land deeds for themselves. God had nothing to do with all this, for if He had, then He would have contradicted Himself in speaking the prophecy of Jeremiah 22:30 through His prophet Jeremiah.

Now consider some thoughts in reference to this prophecy. Jehoiachin (or, Jeconiah - Jr 24:1; 1 Ch 3:16; Coniah - Jr 22:24,28; 37:1) was of the seed of David. It was through Jehoiachin that Jesus was born (Mt 1:12). Jehoiachin, however, was not childless, for there is mention of His children in 1 Chronicles 3:17 and Matthew 1:12. However, not one of these sons reigned as king of Judah after he was carried away into Babylonian captivity. In this sense, therefore, Jeremiah's prophecy was correct, for he had said, "*For none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah.*" Jehoiachin was thus childless as far as having a successor to the throne.

This would also mean that Jehoiachin was childless in reference to Jesus ruling on a literal throne in Judah over a national indepen-

dent state of Israel.

In the inspired recorded genealogy of Matthew 1:12, Jehoiachin (Jeconiah) is listed as the anointed heir of David's lineage through whom Jesus came. The point is that God would not have accepted any other son of Josiah (Jehoiachin's grandfather) through whom to maintain the Davidic kings of Judah. Shealtiel is listed in Matthew 1 as the son of Jehoiachin, but he did not reign as a king. The Matthew 1 genealogy is the Holy Spirit accepted genealogy of David's heirs through whom the Messiah would come. **After Jehoiachin, no descendant of Jehoiachin would or did reign as a God-anointed king in Jerusalem.**

After Jehoiachin was taken into Babylonian captivity, Zedekiah, the son of Josiah who was of the lineage of David, assumed the throne in Jerusalem (1 Ch 3:15). However, this appointment was made by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, but he was not sanctioned by God. Therefore, God revealed concerning Zedekiah, ***“Remove the turban [diadem], and take off the crown Overthrown, I will make it overthrown! It shall be no longer, until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him”*** (Ez 21:26,27).

Zedekiah did not have a right to the throne because he was not God-anointed. God had terminated the Da-

vidic kings on earth with the reign of Jehoiachin. Therefore, Zedekiah was commanded to take off the crown and remove himself from the throne. There would be none of Jehoiachin's descendants, including Zedekiah, who would ever again reign and prosper on an earthly throne of David in Jerusalem. The One who would prosper would not reign in Jerusalem on a literal throne, but in heaven where the authority of David's throne has always existed. This is where Jesus presently is, and from where He reigns over all things.

Jeremiah again prophesied of this One who would come. ***“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth”*** (Jr 23:5). This One who would come would be Jesus. However, His reign would not be on this earth, but in heaven at the right hand of the Father. If His reign were on earth, then it would be earthly.

The fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy of 22:30 is in the fact that such historically happened. After Jehoiachin, no rightful heir of the Davidic lineage ever reigned again in Jerusalem as a God-anointed king. Kings reigned, but they were not anointed by God. The only anointed One who would reign on David's throne would be the Messiah, the

Christ. His reign, however, **would not be on earth, but in heaven where He is now seated at the right hand of God.** Jesus is now the anointed one of God who has ascended to the right hand of God in order to reign over all things.

C. Jesus cannot be a priest and king on this earth.

It was prophesied that Jesus would be both a priest and king on His throne. He is now such in heaven. However, if He were to come to this earth, **He would have to give up His priesthood.** The Bible teaches that Jesus cannot be a priest on this earth. Both prophecy and fulfillment affirm this truth.

1. Prophecy of Jesus' priesthood and kingship: Zechariah made a very important prophecy in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah. In this prophecy he stated that the Messiah would be a priest upon His throne. Zechariah prophesied,

Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, and He shall build the temple of the Lord; Yes, He shall build the temple of the Lord. He shall bear the glory and shall sit and rule on His throne; so He shall be a priest on His throne, and the coun-

sel of peace shall be between them both (Zc 6:12,13).

This prophecy was of Jesus who would fulfill it in every detail.

2. Fulfillment of priesthood and kingship prophecies: In Hebrews 4:14, the Hebrew writer stated, “*Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.*” Jesus is our “*priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek*” (Hb 5:6; see 7:17,21-28). The New Testament clearly states that Jesus is now a priest. Therefore, the prophecy of Zechariah 6:12,13 has been fulfilled.

In Hebrews 4:14 above, the verb “has passed” is a perfect participle in the Greek text. It thus expresses **action that was completed in the past, but with emphasis on the continued result of that past action.** Therefore, Jesus became our high priest when He ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven. This event took place about two thousand years ago. Hebrews 8:1 states, “*We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.*” Jesus is still at the right hand of the Father. He is still there today functioning as our high priest. Jesus continues with this “*unchangeable priesthood*” unto this day (See Hb 7:3,23,24).

Zechariah's prophecy was ful-

filled in Christ. When Jesus ascended to the Father, He became our high priest on His heavenly throne. He thus reigns as King and functions as a high priest on David's throne in heaven. If He came to reign on this earth, then He would have to forfeit His high priesthood.

3. Impossibility of priesthood and kingship on earth: In the context of the present priesthood of Jesus on His throne in heaven, Hebrews 8:4 is a very significant statement: "***For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law.***" The point here is obvious. Jesus cannot be a priest on this earth. If He were to return to the earth, He would have to give up His high priesthood. Zechariah prophesied that Jesus would be a priest on His throne (Zc 6:13). The Hebrew writer stated that Jesus cannot be a priest on this earth. The conclusion is without question. **Jesus cannot be our high priest and at the same time rule on His throne on this earth.**

Consider the above teaching of Hebrews 8:4 and Zechariah 6:12,13 from another perspective. Zechariah prophesied that the Branch (Jesus) would be a priest on His throne. The Hebrew writer states that Jesus is now our high priest, and this priesthood is from heaven (See Hb 4:14; 8:1). Therefore, **the throne upon which**

Jesus is our high priest is in heaven.

The ruling of Jesus upon His throne, as was prophesied by Zechariah, is now taking place, but it is taking place in heaven. It was never meant to take place on this earth. Thus in the future, Jesus is not coming in order to become our high priest on this earth. He is coming to take home those for whom He has always function as their high priest.

The prophecy and fulfillment of Jesus' priesthood from heaven and not on earth corresponds perfectly with the nature of the prophecy of Jeremiah 22:30. Jesus, as the descendant of Jehoiachin, would not and cannot prosper on a literal throne in Jerusalem. He can only prosper as our King and Priest from His throne in heaven. Those who contend that Jesus will return to this earth in order to assume a supposed earthly kingdom reign, are actually saying that Jesus will give up His high priesthood, for He cannot be a priest on this earth. They are saying that Jesus will actually be lowered from His present position as King and Priest in order to come and rule over a literal earthly kingdom.

D. Jesus now reigns in and from heaven.

Jesus now has all authority and is presently reigning from heaven (Mt 28:18; Hb 8:1). He "*ascended on*

high. He led captivity captive” (Ep 4:8). He now rules the nations (Rv 3:21). If a future reign of Jesus on earth is taught in the Bible, and is as important as some claim, then we wonder why the Bible places so much emphasis on the present heavenly reign of Jesus in heaven.

The fact is that the Bible does not teach a future physical reign of Jesus on this earth. The prophets proph-

esied the present kingdom reign of Jesus (Dn 7:13,14). Their prophecies have been fulfilled. Therefore, Jesus is presently reigning “*far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named*” (Ep 1:21). God has “*highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow*” (Ph 2:9,10).

Chapter 8

THE THRONE OF DAVID

Several important prophecies were made in the Old Testament concerning Jesus’ reign on David’s throne. Of these prophecies, Gabriel said to Mary, “*He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David*” (Lk 1:32). Those who uphold the spiritual millennial view affirm that Jesus is presently reigning on David’s throne as was prophesied in the Old Testament. This view is here affirmed by Gabriel. However, those of the physical millennial view affirm that Jesus’ reign on David’s throne is something yet to come in the future. It is supposed that Jesus will set up His earthly reign, and this reign will fulfill all prophecies concerning His reign on David’s throne. Premillennialists, therefore, contend that dur-

ing the physical one-thousand year reign of Jesus on earth, Jesus will actually sit on a physical throne of David. No one can deny the fact that it was prophesied that Jesus would sit on David’s throne. Some simply affirm that the throne is literal and that Jesus will literally sit on it on earth for a period of one thousand years.

The fact is that Jesus is now reigning as king on David’s throne. This is a spiritual rule from heaven over the universal kingdom of all things. Prophecies in the Old Testament concerning this reign have already been fulfilled, for Jesus has already ascended to the right hand of the Father in order to reign as king.

The word “throne” in prophecy and fulfillment concerning the reign of Deity, is used in a metaphorical sense. The literal Davidic throne of

Israelite kings on earth in the Old Testament represented something that was greater than the throne itself. When we talk of the “throne of England,” no one supposes that we are discussing the literal chair of the throne that is in the palace of London. When we use the word “throne,” therefore, we refer to the authority of the throne, not the literal chair of the throne. This is the meaning that should be understood when discussing the throne of David, both in the Old Testament, as well as in the fulfillment of prophecy in the New Testament.

In the Old Testament it was prophesied that the Branch would sit on David’s throne. What is meant is that the Branch, Jesus, would assume the authority of reign that is symbolized by the use of the word “throne.”

But we must be clear about whose throne this actually is. David’s throne in the Old Testament was actually God’s throne. When the anointed king of Israel sat upon the throne, it was God’s authority on earth that was manifested. This is what is emphasized in 1 Chronicles 29:23. *“Then Solomon sat on the **throne of the Lord** as king instead of David his*



father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him.” A similar meaning to this statement is made by Paul in Romans 13:1,2.

*Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. **For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.** Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.*

Paul was not talking about governments that are specifically “anointed” by God as was the case with Israel. He was discussing government in general, that government is in the plan of God to maintain order in society. With Israel, however, God specifically selected (anointed) who would sit upon the throne of David in order to govern the society of Israel. This anointed king would thus represent God’s rule (authority) in Israel.

God ruled Israel through His anointed kings who sat on David’s throne. Therefore, the throne was actually the Lord’s throne (1 Ch 29:23; 1 Kg 1:46-48; 2:12). Solomon sat on this throne after the death of David. David said to Solomon that he *“shall come and sit on **my throne**, and he shall be king in my place”* (1 Kg 1:35). Benaiah answered David in

this context by referring to David's throne as Solomon's throne. "As the Lord has been with my



lord the king, even so may He be with Solomon, and make **his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David**" (1 Kg 1:37). And thus, "Solomon sat on the **throne of his father David**" (1 Kg 2:12). But we must not forget 1 Chronicles 29:23. "Then Solomon sat on the **throne of the Lord** as king instead of David his father." **The point is that both the throne of David and Solomon are actually the throne of God.** Solomon sat on David's throne, but this throne was the manifestation of the Lord's authority in Israel.

The throne (authority) of God is from heaven. David proclaimed, "The Lord is in His holy temple, **the Lord's throne is in heaven**" (Ps 11:4). "**Heaven is My throne and earth is My footstool**" (Is 66:1). Jesus said, "But I say to you, do not swear at all; neither by heaven, **for it is God's throne**" (Mt 5:34; see Mt 23:22; At 7:49). The authority that was manifested on earth through the reigning kings of Israel originated from heaven, the throne of God. Therefore, when we discuss the subject of

David's throne, we are discussing the authority of God from heaven as such was manifested on earth through the ruling kings of Israel.

Keep in mind that the meaning here is metaphorical which would emphasize a spiritual meaning. Emphasis is not on a literal chair, but on a spiritual realm of reign that extends from heaven. Jesus ascended to heaven in order to reign with authority in the heavenly realm and on earth. He "sat down at the right hand" of God, figuratively signifying His assumption of heavenly reign as King of kings and Lord of lords (Hb 1:3,13; 2:12; 8:1; 10:12). This is precisely what Peter proclaimed in Acts 2 at the beginning of this dispensation of time on the day of Pentecost.

*Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David ... that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, **He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne**, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ This Jesus God has raised up ... **being exalted to the right hand of God** (At 2:29-33).*

It was to this fulfillment that the prophets prophesied. Consider the following key prophecies:

A. David's seed would reign on David's throne.

Peter's reference in Acts 2 to God's promise to David finds its origin in 2 Samuel 7:12,13,16. God promised David,

When your days are fulfilled ... I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.... And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever (See 1 Ch 17:10-14).

There are five important promises in this prophecy that God made to David:

2 SAMUEL 7 PROMISES

1. God would set up the Davidic seedline of kings.
2. God would establish the kingdom reign of David's seed.
3. David's successor would build a house for God's name.
4. God would establish the kingdom reign of David's seed.
5. David's kingdom reign would be firmly established.

God's prophecy and promises in

2 Samuel 7 were primarily directed toward Solomon's reign after David. God set up the reign of Davidic kings through Solomon. Solomon built the literal temple in Jerusalem. Because this was the work of God, it was sure and certain in the sense that God used the word "eternal" to identify the establishment of the kingdom.

The word "eternal" is not used in this context in the sense that Solomon would reign without end. Solomon would eventually die and his personal reign would come to an end. However, His reign would come about and be established because it was God who was standing behind his reign. It was God's reign that was without end. The word "eternal" was used in the prophecy to refer to God's determination that Solomon's reign would be established and extend without interruption according to the divine plan of God. The authority of his reign from heaven was thus sure and certain because it was based on the authority of God's reign.



There is, however, a secondary significance to God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7. **Peter's reference to this promise in Acts 2:29-36 makes it absolutely clear that God had more in mind when He made**

the promise to David than the reign of Solomon. In Acts 2 Peter makes the final application of the promise to the fulfillment of Jesus and His work. Notice the following fulfillments of the preceding five promises that God made to David, which promises Peter said were fulfilled in Jesus:

PROMISES FULFILLED IN JESUS

1. Jesus was of the Davidic seedline (Mt 1:1-17; Lk 3:23-38).
2. Jesus sat on David's throne and established His kingdom (Lk 1:31-33).
3. Jesus built the Lord's house, the church (Mt 16:18; 1 Tm 3:15).
4. Jesus was established as King by the Father (At 2:29-36; Ep 1:20-23).
5. Jesus assumed the kingdom reign that has always existed from heaven (Mt 28:18; Cl 1:13).

Jesus fulfilled the promises of 2 Samuel 7 that God made to David. David's kingdom reign was established in Jesus in the sense that the authority for David's reign was always from heaven. The "throne" (authority) always originated from God, and thus, when Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven, He assumed the kingdom reign that had previously been manifested on earth through David. The difference be-

tween David's reign and Jesus' reign is that David's presence was limited only to this earth and over national Israel. On the other hand, Jesus' presence is now in heaven and over all things. This is what Peter wanted us to understand when He stated that David "*is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day,*" but Jesus has been "*exalted to the right hand of God*" (At 2:29,33).

We should find the fulfillment of God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7 in what Jesus accomplished. At the time Peter proclaimed the fulfillment of the promise, Jesus had already been exalted to the right hand of God. The exaltation was past, not future. The present kingdom reign of Jesus, therefore, is the fulfillment of the promise that God made to David. Jesus fulfilled the promise when He ascended to the right hand of the Father in order to reign over all things.

B. The authority of reign would come from God's throne.

Isaiah prophesied, "*The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; so he shall open, and no one shall shut; and he shall shut, and no one shall open*" (Is 22:22).

Herein is a prophecy of the authority that would be exercised by Jesus. In Revelation 3:7 John revealed, "*These things says He who is*

holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens.” There is certainly a relationship between Isaiah 22:22 and Revelation 3:7. The Revelation statement affirms that the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled in Jesus. This is a prophecy and fulfillment that speaks of the present position and authority that Jesus has now at the right hand of God.

The word “key” in Isaiah 22:22 is metaphorical of authority. Jesus now has authority over all things (Mt 28:18; Jn 13:3; 17:2). He now rules the nations with a rod of iron (Rv 3:21). He is now far above all principality and power (Ep 1:20-22). In quoting Psalm 45:6,7, the Hebrew writer reaffirmed Jesus’ present position and reign: “*Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom*” (Hb 1:8). The Hebrew writer wanted to make this point clear. He introduced Psalm 45 by saying, “*But to the Son He says ...*” (Hb 1:8). Therefore, the Hebrew writer made it clear that Psalm 45:6,7 was a prophecy of the kingdom reign of Jesus. He quoted Psalm 45 in reference to what Jesus was at the time the letter of Hebrews was written. The point is that Jesus is now reigning in fulfillment of receiving the authority (keys of David) of sovereign rule over all

things. Isaiah 22:22 has been fulfilled in Christ.

C. **The Child would reign on David’s throne.**

Isaiah prophesied,

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever (Is 9:6,7).

Jesus was the child that was born and given to humanity as a sacrificial Lamb. At His ascension, kingdom reign was placed upon His shoulders (Mt 28:18). He is now our Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. He is the King of kings who now rules over all things, “*angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him*” (1 Pt 3:22). The point is that Jesus is presently reigning in the capacity of what was prophesied in Isaiah 9:6,7.

D. **The Branch would reign on David’s throne.**

Jeremiah prophesied,

*Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a **King shall reign and prosper**, and execute judgment and righteousness **in the earth**. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS** (Jr 23:5,6).*

When this prophecy was made, the northern kingdom of Israel had already gone into Assyrian captivity. The southern kingdom, Judah, was headed into Babylonian captivity. This prophecy clearly pictured for all Israel that there would be a new era when Israel would once again enjoy the reign of a king. This would be the reign of the Messiah, King Jesus. As king, Jesus would prosper, though He would not prosper if He were to reign on earth (See Jr 22:30). The prosperity of His reign would be manifested “**in the earth,**” not on the earth. His judgment and righteousness were that which would be in the earth. His judgment and righteousness would be manifested through the power of His word (See Jn 12:48; At 13:46).

David prophesied, “*Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion*” (Ps 2:6). This and many other prophe-

cies picture Jesus to be a king (See Ps 72:1-4; Is 32:1; Jr 33:15; Ez 37:24). He would be a king who would rule by the righteousness of God. In fulfillment of the prophecies, Jesus was set on the “holy hill of Zion” in the sense that the authority of His rule was first preached in Jerusalem, and then, it was announced throughout the world through the preaching of the gospel (Is 2:2,3; Lk 24:47).

In quoting Zechariah 9:9, Matthew recorded concerning Jesus’ final coming to Jerusalem at the end of His ministry, “*Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘**Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey**’*” (Mt 2:4,5). Jesus was the king who came unto Jerusalem. The prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 was fulfilled in Jesus at the time Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

The historical fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah 23 took place in the latter days of national Israel. Hosea had prophesied, “*Afterward [“after the captivities”] the children of Israel shall return, seek the Lord their God and **David their king**, and fear the Lord and His goodness **in the latter days***” (Hs 3:5). It was not that David was going to be resurrected in order that Israel seek him after they returned from captivity. When Jesus came, David was dead and buried (At 2:29). However, Peter affirmed that

Jesus fulfilled this prophecy in reference to His kingship (At 2:29-33). Jesus was the king that Israel was to seek.

Hosea also stated that Israel would seek their king in the latter days. Peter affirmed in Acts 2:16,17 that he and all Israel were in the latter days. It was the last days of national Israel. It was the time in which the prophecy of Joel 2 was fulfilled and the Spirit of God was poured out. It was, therefore, the last days of national Israel in which God established His Son as king over all things.

When considering the prophecies of the Old Testament, one must keep in mind their fulfillment “in time,” not at the “end of time.” This is where most interpreters make a serious mistake concerning the fulfillment of prophecy. Jesus knew that some people would not understand that He fulfilled all prophecy concerning Him “in time.” At the conclusion of His earthly ministry, therefore, He made the following important statement:

*These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, **that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me** (Lk 24:44).*

All prophecy concerning the position and work of Jesus were fulfilled “in time.” **No Old Testament prophecy concerning Jesus’ kingship and reign have been left unfulfilled, and thus are waiting to be fulfilled when He comes again.** This is what Jesus wanted His disciples to understand when He made the statement of Luke 24:44. This is also what He wants us today to understand concerning all Old Testament prophecies in reference to His kingdom reign. If one fails to understand the fact that all prophecies concerning Jesus’ reign were fulfilled when He ascended to the right hand of the Father, then a host of prophecies and fulfillments concerning the reign of Jesus will be misunderstood.

Chapter 9

KING JESUS ON DAVID’S THRONE

Throughout the New Testament one overwhelming fact is established concerning the present position and function of Jesus. That fact is that Jesus is now reigning as King of kings

and Lord of lords over all things (1 Tm 6:15). His function now in heaven is in fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecies that were made concerning His position and work. It was to

these prophecies that Jesus referred when He proclaimed during His ministry that all prophecy in reference to Him were fulfilled. He made this very clear to His disciples in the Luke 24:44 statement.

In 2 Corinthians 5:16 Paul made a very significant statement concerning how we should now know Jesus: ***“Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.”***

We may have known Jesus as the babe in a manger in Bethlehem. We may have known Him in His ministry with the disciples on the Galilean roads. But in 2 Corinthians 5:16 Paul wants us to take our minds beyond Jesus' earthly ministry and work. We must know Him as He now is. And at this time He now has all authority over all things and is ruling in heaven as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Those who are of the physical millennial persuasion are not recognizing fully Jesus as He now is. They have relegated Him to have a small kingdom reign in this present time. Having failed to recognize the totality of His present reign over the universe and all that is within the galaxies of creation, they have limited His reign only to the church of His disciples.

If we understand the totality of Jesus' kingdom authority, we will be driven to submission of His galactic

reign. This is certainly in the context and actions of what took place in Acts 2 when Peter announced to the world the kingship of Jesus: ***“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ”*** (At 2:36).

The Jews knew the meaning of lordship. They knew what authority the Christ (Messiah) would have according to Old Testament prophecy. Therefore, when they came to know Jesus “not according to the flesh,” and as He now is in heaven as “Lord and Christ,” they were cut to the heart (At 2:37). This is precisely what Paul meant when he affirmed that we do not now know Jesus according to the flesh, but according to His gospel reign over all things.

Unless men recognize who Jesus now is, they will not submit to His kingship. Those in Acts 2 who recognized the kingship of Jesus by His fulfillment of all Messianic prophecies, submitted to Him as their Lord. About three thousand submitted that day when the kingship of Jesus was first announced (At 2:41).

A. Jesus assumed God's reign through David's throne.

Gabriel said to Mary in reference to the birth of Jesus,

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and 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 (Lk 1:31-33).

All prophecies concerning the reign of the Son of God on David's throne have been fulfilled in the present reign of Christ. Peter clearly affirmed this in Acts 2:29-35. At the time Peter made the statements of Acts 2, David was still in a tomb (At 2:29). However, before he died, God had sworn to David that He would raise One up to sit on his throne (2 Sm 7:12-25). Peter proclaimed that this prophecy was fulfilled in its finality in Christ. He stated, *“Therefore, [David] being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne”* (At 2:30).

Jesus was raised up in order to sit at the right hand of God on David's throne in fulfillment of the oath that God had made to David (Ep 1:19-23). At the very time Peter was proclaiming the fulfillment of this prophecy in Acts 2, Jesus was on the throne. What

both the prophets and the angel Gabriel had spoken had been fulfilled. Jesus was and is still ruling as King. When the Jews who crucified Jesus heard this, they were cut to the heart. Therefore, any theology that seeks to dethrone Jesus from His present position as universal King and head over all things is attacking the good news (gospel) of Jesus' sovereignty.

B. Jesus was born to be King.

During the final hours of Jesus' work on earth, He was taken before Pilate, the Roman procurator of Palestine. Before Pilate, Jesus affirmed, *“My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here”* (Jn 18:36). Pilate then asked Jesus if He were a king. Jesus responded,

You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice” (Jn 18:37).

The first thing to note from the above reply of Jesus to Pilate is the fact that Jesus said **His kingdom was not of this world**. Anyone who would affirm that Jesus will sometime

in the future set up an earthly kingdom should seriously consider this statement. **Jesus' kingdom is not of this world, and never will be.** Nevertheless, some seek to make the kingdom of Jesus a physical kingdom of this world, and thus, dethrone Him from His present galactic reign when He comes again. But if His kingdom were to be of this world, then it would mean that Jesus' disciples would have to do as He said to Pilate. They would have to fight militarily to defend the kingdom (See Jn 18:36).

In John 18:37 Jesus reaffirmed the correct deduction of Pilate's statement that He was a king. It was for this purpose that Jesus was born. Jesus came into the world to be a king, but not a king of this physical world. In John 18:36 Jesus was talking about a kingdom reign that was not of this world in the sense of a king sitting on a literal throne in the capital of the kingdom.

This same thought must be carried over into John 18:37. Therefore, Jesus was born in order to be the king of a kingdom that was not of this world. This was a kingdom reign that would have its "capital" in heaven at the right hand of God (Ep 1:20-22). From this position, Jesus would reign as King of kings and Lord of lords until He comes again (1 Tm 6:15). The reign of Jesus was never pictured in the Old Testament, nor in the New

Testament, to be a reign from some location here on earth. Jesus' reign was always to be from heaven over all things on earth.

C. Jesus fulfilled the promises concerning reign.

Concerning the gospel going to the Gentiles, and the Messiah's reign over the nations, Paul stated, "*Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers*" (Rm 15:8). Jesus fulfilled the promises that were made to the fathers (See Lk 24:44). The promises included a reign that would extend beyond the Jewish fathers. By referring to Isaiah 11:1,10, Paul quoted, "*There shall be a root of Jesse; and He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in Him the Gentiles shall hope*" (Rm 15:12). Paul's application of Isaiah 11 is to Jesus' present reign over the Gentiles. He is not discussing something that would take place in the future.

All the promises that were made to the fathers have been fulfilled. The promises were fulfilled in Christ. Paul also wrote, "*For all the promises of God in Him [Christ] are Yes, and in Him Amen*" (2 Co 1:20). The New Testament affirms that the promises of God that were made concerning the reign of Jesus over the Gentiles have

been fulfilled. Jesus is the “Yes” and “Amen” concerning all Old Testament prophecies that referred to His kingdom reign as the Messiah. He fulfilled all prophecies concerning His kingdom reign over all things on David's throne.

D. Jesus received the holy and sure blessing of David.

When God took David from being a shepherd in order to make him king of Israel, He established a covenant with him. In 2 Samuel 7 God reviewed this matter with David. God said, “*I took you from the sheep fold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel*” (2 Sm 7:8). The covenant God made with David included the promise to set up his seed after him to be kings over Israel. “*I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever*” (2 Sm 7:12,13). Of this covenant and promise, David revealed in the Psalms, “*My mercy I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall stand firm with him*” (Ps 89:28). This promise that one would reign after David, and upon his throne, is the foundation to the prophecy of Isaiah 55:3: “*Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting cov-*

enant with you—the sure mercies of David.” The significance of this prophecy was not clearly understood until the coming of the Christ, for it was in the Christ that the promise was to be fulfilled in its entirety.

Paul applied the promise of Isaiah 55:3 concerning the “sure mercies of David” to Jesus. In Acts 13:33,34 Paul quoted Isaiah 55:3.

God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: “You are My Son, today I have begotten You.” And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: “I will give you the sure mercies of David.”

The “sure mercies of David” refers to the original promise of God to David, that He would set a reigning king on his throne (2 Sm 7:8,12,13). Paul affirmed that this promise was fulfilled in full in Christ. At the time Paul made the statement, and quotation in Acts 13, Jesus was reigning in heaven. The certainty that His reign would continue was guaranteed by His resurrection from the dead. Jesus would continue to reign because He had conquered death. Present immortality assured His continuing reign.

From the above points there is only one conclusion that can be made.

Jesus is now reigning. He is reigning as King and Priest on David's throne. His kingdom is not of this world. It is not and never will be a physical kingdom of this world.

Chapter 10

RESTORATION OF THE REMNANT

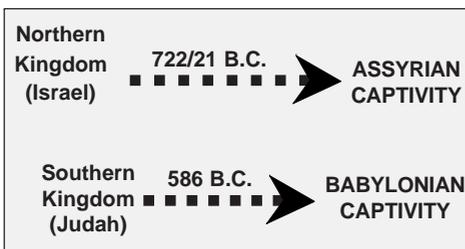
After the death of Solomon in 931 B.C., the twelve tribes of Israel were divided into two nations. The majority of the northern ten tribes of Israel made Samaria their capital and Jeroboam their king. The tribes of Dan, Asher, Nephtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun and Gad composed the northern kingdom of Israel.

Two tribes of Israel composed the southern kingdom that was ruled by Rehoboam, Solomon's son. These were the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Jerusalem was the capital of the southern kingdom. From the time of this division of the twelve tribes, Israel continued as two kingdoms until the restoration of a remnant after the Babylonian captivity in 536 B.C.

In 722/21 B.C., the northern

kingdom was taken into Assyrian captivity (2 Kg 18:9-12). Eventually, the southern kingdom, because of her sins, was also taken into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. (2 Kg 24). During the end of the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel, God spoke through the prophets that both kingdoms would be punished for their apostasy from His will (2 Kg 17:7-23). However, through the prophets **God also promised that a remnant of all twelve tribes of Israel would return to the promised land in order to make the way for the coming Messiah.** God's promises concerning the remnant that would return contain prophecies of the "reconstruction" of the temple.

After serving years in captivity, a remnant of each tribe did return from the land of their captors in 536, 457 and 444 B.C. However, it is affirmed by some that not all the tribes of Israel returned to the land of promise in fulfillment of God's prophecies that they would. Some have affirmed that there are still the "lost ten tribes" of Israel that must return in fulfillment



of the prophecies that God made concerning the return of all Israel. One of the major teachings of premillennial Anglo-Israelites—those who claim that the Anglo-Saxon races today are the lost ten tribes of Israel—is that the “lost ten tribes” will be returned to the land of Palestine and the temple will be rebuilt. This is supposedly to begin at the start of the physical millennial reign of Jesus on earth.

Some today are teaching that in the future there will be a national conversion of the Jews and a national restoration to the land of Palestine. Some have even affirmed that as a nation the Jews were cut off and as a nation they will be nationally restored to their promised land in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies concerning their restoration. It is believed that God will in the future resume His work through the nation of Israel by restoring them to their prominent position and relationship with God among the nations.

There are obviously some tremendous political ramifications to the above belief. Many western religious leaders view the present happenings in Israel today as God’s maneuvering to work out the national settlement of Israel in “their” land. They view that Israel has a right to the land of Palestine because of God’s promise of the land to them and His work to restore

the nation to Israel. However, these are fruitless hopes in reference to biblical prophecy. In this and the following chapters, it is important to understand the conditions that God made for Israel to remain in possession of the land. It is also critical to understand that God fulfilled all prophecies concerning Israel’s return to the land. He fulfilled all Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah in reference to the Jews’ existence in Palestine in the first century in fulfillment of all Messianic prophecies.

Understanding that the fulfillment of promises and prophecies of God in reference to the covenant relationship Israel had with God, **clarifies the fact that there are no prophecies to be fulfilled in the future in reference to the Jews. There are no unfulfilled promises of God in reference to their possession of the land of Palestine.** Therefore, any biblical exegesis by theologians of a future claim of Israel to the land of Palestine are simply a failure to recognize that God’s purpose for His covenant with Israel and their possession of a homeland have already been accomplished. God no longer works through a special nation. He no longer limits Himself in a special work on earth to a specific area of the earth such as Palestine. God’s work is now “to every creature” and “into all the

world” (See Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16). His work extends to all peoples of the world in an effort to bring into eternity those who would submit to the gospel of the present King of all things.

The Bible teaches that the **land promise** that was made to Abraham and his seed has been fulfilled. It was fulfilled when Israel entered and captured the land of Palestine fourteen hundred years before Christ. However, retaining the land was conditioned on Israel’s obedience to the Sinai law and covenant that God made with the nation. God fulfilled the “land promise” when Israel took possession of Palestine under the leadership of Joshua. However, Israel gave up the land when they failed to keep the conditions for possession of the land. Their national possession of the land ended in 586 B.C. when Babylon took the last Jews into Babylonian captivity.

There are four important points to remember concerning the land promise. These points refer (1) to the fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham, (2) maintaining the land upon the condition of Israel’s obedience, (3) reestablishing occupation of the land, but not ownership of the land, after the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, and (4) dissolving the land promise after the coming of the Messiah. All these points were fulfilled over

two thousand years ago.

A. The land promise:

In Genesis 12:1 God promised Abraham, “*Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you.*” Abraham thus departed Ur of the Chaldeas and journeyed to a land he did not know (Hb 11:8). When he arrived in the land of Canaan (Palestine), God said to him, “*All the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever*” (Gn 13:15). “*Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you*” (Gn 13:17). At the time Abraham stood in the land, God was making a promise that He would give the land of Palestine to Abraham and his seed as an inheritance (Gn 15:7,8). The land was to be given to Abraham and his seed after him for an **everlasting possession**. God reaffirmed the promise to Abraham with the following statement:

I give to you [Abraham] and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” (Gn 17:8).

After the above promises were made to Abraham, several events oc-

curred in the history of his descendants. The Israelite nation came into existence through the twelve sons of Jacob. Israel went into Egyptian bondage for four hundred years. Moses arose to lead God's people out of Egypt and through the wilderness for forty years. Moses later died and Joshua took the nation of Israel into the promised land that was promised to Abraham and his descendants over four hundred years before.

Joshua led Israel through a great victory over the Canaanites of the land. The final conquest of the land was made around 1,390 B.C. Concerning the final conquest of the land, Joshua 21:43 stated, "***So the Lord gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it.***" Thus was fulfilled the land promise that God made to Abraham.

At his death, Joshua reaffirmed the fulfillment of God's promises to the fathers that Israel enjoyed at the time.

Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth. And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed (Ja 23:14).

The promise that God had made to Abraham in Genesis 13:15 had been fulfilled. The land was given to Abraham's descendants.

As far as fulfillment of the land promise was concerned, therefore, God fulfilled His promise through the conquests led by Joshua. However, the history of Israel's occupation of the land was a turbulent matter. The following key points should encourage a thorough study of Israel's occupation of the land:

ISRAEL & THE PROMISED LAND

1. The land of Palestine was promised to Abraham and his descendants (Gn 12:1-3; 13:14,15).
2. God made a covenant with Abraham concerning the land and stated that the borders of the land would extend from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates (Gn 15:18; see Ex 23:30,31; Ne 9:7,8).
3. The land was possessed by Israel during the days of Joshua (Dt 1:7,8; Ja 21:43; 23:14).
4. All enemies of Israel were not driven out of the land of Palestine during the days of Joshua (Jg 2:20-23).
5. Portions of the land were taken by Israel's enemies during Israel's history prior to the reign of David, but these portions were retaken during David's reign (2 Sm 8:3; 2 Kg 14:25).

6. During his reign, Solomon reigned over all the land that was promised to Abraham (1 Kg 4:21; 2 Ch 9:26).
7. Because the northern kingdom of Israel forsook the law of God, she was taken into Assyrian captivity in 721 B.C. (2 Kg 8:11,12).
8. Because the southern kingdom forsook the law of God, she was taken into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. (2 Kg 25:21).

B. Conditions for retaining the land:

The condition upon which Israel would retain possession of the land was based on their compliance to the Sinai law and covenant. After their conquest of the land, Joshua warned Israel,

*When you have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God, which He commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed down to them, **then the anger of the Lord will burn against you, and you shall perish quickly from the good land which He has given you** (Js 23:16).*

This is precisely what Moses warned Israel before he departed their presence.

*When you beget children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, and act corruptly and make a carved image in the form of anything, and do evil in the sight of the Lord ... I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, **that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong your days in it, but will be utterly destroyed. And the Lord will scatter you among the peoples ...** (Dt 4:25-27).*

Israel's condition for keeping the land was their obedience to the law of the covenant. If they forsook the law of the Lord, God would drive them from the land.

Israel did disobey God. She forsook the commandments of the Lord. Subsequently, in 721 B.C. the king of Assyria ...

*... carried Israel away captive to Assyria, and put them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, **because they did not obey the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed His covenant and all that Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded; and they would neither hear nor do them** (2 Kg 18:11,12).*

In 586 B.C. the southern kingdom of Israel “*was carried away captive out of his land*” (2 Kg 25:21). **These captivities ended Israel’s national possession of the land of Palestine.** God had fulfilled His promise to give them the land. The condition for retaining

the land was obedience to the commandments of God. Israel forsook the condition, and thus, their right of national possession of the land was terminated. Never again would they have national possession of the land of Palestine.

Chapter 11

RETURN TO THE LAND

Though the children of Israel were taken into captivity because of disobedience, God promised that a remnant would return to the land, but not as an independent nation of people. The purpose for the return of the remnant would be that God needed to fulfill the “blessing” promise that He made to Abraham, for He had promised Abraham, “*And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*” (Gn 12:3).

For this reason, therefore, God promised that a remnant of all Israel would return to the land in order that the Messiah come in fulfillment of His promise to Abraham. The presence of the remnant of national Israel in Palestine at the coming of the Messiah would prove to the world that God kept His promises.

A. Prophecy and fulfillment of the return:

The following prophets of Israel spoke of the return of the remnant of Israel from captivity:

1. Hosea (750 – 725 B.C.): Hosea prophesied that “*the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and appoint for themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the land* [of captivity]” (Hs 1:11). After the captivities, “*The children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days*” (Hs 3:5). Hosea spoke of the latter days of Israel when God would send the Messiah, the Christ.

2. Isaiah (740 – 681 B. C.): Isaiah prophesied, “*Unless the Lord of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah*” (Is 1:9). Therefore, Isaiah continued,

*And it shall come to pass in that day that **the remnant of Israel** ... will depend on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. **The remnant will return** [from captivity].... A remnant of them will return For the Lord God of Hosts will make a determined end in the midst of all the land (Is 10:20-23).*

God would gather the remnant of Israel from the east, west, north and south and restore them to the land (Is 54:4-7; see 19:23,24).

3. Jeremiah (627 – 574 B.C.):
Jeremiah prophesied,

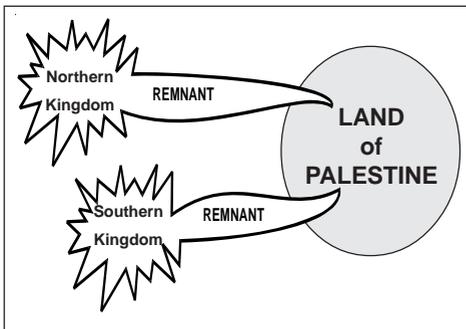
In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given as an inheritance to your fathers (Jr 3:18).

Jeremiah continued, “‘For behold, the days are coming,’ says the Lord. ‘**And I will cause them to return to**

the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it’” (Jr 30:3). God promised through Jeremiah that the Israelites “shall dwell in their own land” (Jr 23:8).

*“Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob,” says the Lord, “Nor be dismayed, O Israel; for behold, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. **Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid”** (See Jr 30:4-17).*

4. Ezekiel (597 – 575 B.C.):
Ezekiel prophesied that Israel would be taken out of the nations to which they had been scattered through the captivities. God would bring the people into their own land. “*For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land*” (Ez 36:24). God promised, “**I will ... bring you into the land of Israel**” (Ez 37:12).



When I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and I am hallowed in them in the sight of many nations, then they shall know that I am the Lord their God ... (Ez 39:27,28).

5. Zechariah (520 – 490 B.C.):

God promised Israel through Zechariah, “*O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you [from your captivity] ...*” (Zc 8:13; see 9:13-16). “*I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph. I will bring them back ...*” (Zc 10:6). “*I will also bring them back from the land of Egypt, and gather them from Assyria. I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon, until no more room is found for them*” (Zc 10:10).

God promised that He would bring Israel once again into the land of Palestine after the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. The promises that God made in prophecy that He would return a remnant of all Israel to the land were fulfilled. They were fulfilled in the first return of captives from Babylonian captivity in 536 B.C. during the reign of Cyrus of Persia. This was the first of three major returns of Jewish captives from the lands to which both the Assyrians and Babylonians had taken them. They returned to dwell in the land of their fathers in fulfillment of all prophecies related to such.

It is important to understand that these returns from captivity were the fulfillment of God’s promise in prophecy that the remnant would return to the land. Ezra recorded **after the returns** that “*all Israel dwelt in their cities*” (Er 2:70). After the rebuild-

ing of the temple, Ezra also recorded that twelve he-goats were offered as a sacrifice “*according to the number of the tribes of Israel*” (Er 6:16,17). Ezra continued, “*The children of those who had been carried away captive, who had come from the captivity, offered burnt offerings to the God of Israel: twelve bulls for all Israel*” (Er 8:35).

The Israelites were as a remnant people restored to the land of Palestine, though they never again could claim national possession of the land. That right remained with the Medo-Persian Empire, the Greeks, and then the Romans.

In 1948 Israel declared themselves a state, but this declaration was not from God. The declaration was not in fulfillment of any prophecies concerning Israel’s restoration to the land. Prophecies in reference to Israel had all been fulfilled over twenty-five hundred years before 1948. The declaration of statehood in 1948 was only an affirmation by Jews in Palestine that they would be a nation as all other nations of the world.

After the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, Israel was restored in order that God could fulfill His final promise to Abraham, that in him all families of the earth would be blessed (Gn 12:3). When this promise was fulfilled, the need for the land promise was consummated. The “land” for

the new Israel of God (the church) is now all the world.

B. Dissolution of the land promise:

The land promise was a part of God's covenant that He made with Abraham. God had said to Abraham, "*As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations*" (Gn 17:9). The sign or token of the covenant was circumcision (Gn 17:11). In Genesis 17 God continued His statements to Abraham concerning this covenant. "*I will establish My covenant with him [Isaac] for an everlasting covenant and with his descendants after him*" (Gn 17:19). In conjunction with God's promises and covenant with Abraham, He said concerning the land, "*... for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever*" (Gn 13:15). It would be theirs as an "everlasting possession" (Gn 17:8).

How long is "everlasting" and "forever"? The answer is that this period of time in reference to Old Testament ordinances is measured by the generations of Abraham. In other words, the covenant and land were to be "everlasting" throughout the generations of Abraham. **When God intended that the generations of Abraham end, so would the "ever-**

lasting" and "forever" land possession come to an end.

The Old Testament use of terms as "forever," "everlasting" and "perpetual" in reference to ordinances and covenants of the Old Testament. Reference is **to a predetermined period of time throughout which God intended that something last.** The Jewish Passover (Ex 12:14), burnt offerings (Ex 29:9; 40:15), and incense (Ex 30:8) were perpetual ordinances of the Sinai law. The sabbath was to be a "forever" observance of the Sinai law (Ex 31:17). However, the Sinai law has ceased (See Cl 2:14; Rm 7:4; Hb 10:9,10). It will certainly not exist in the heavenly realm to which we are going.

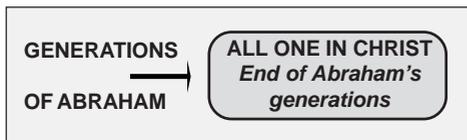
Since the Sinai law and covenant with Israel have ceased, then we must define the words "forever," "everlasting" and "perpetual" in reference to the termination of God's Sinai law and covenant with Israel. The meaning of these words, therefore, must be understood in the context of their use in reference to God's work with Israel. And in reference to the termination of the Sinai covenant and law with the coming of the new covenant and law of Christ, we must define the preceding terms to refer to **a definite and specific period of time.** In other words, God intended that the sabbath, incense, Passover and other "everlasting" ordinances of the Sinai law, **last**

only throughout their intended period of existence. They would not go away until God said that they would go away.

Consider the above definition in reference to the cessation of the generations of Abraham in Christ. Israel's right to the land was to extend throughout the generations of Abraham (Gn 17:9). However, in the eyes of God the generations of Abraham ended in Christ. Paul wrote,

*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. **There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus** (Gl 3:27,28).*

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit (1 Co 12:13; see Cl 3:11).



The generations of Abraham ended in Christ, for in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile. In fact, those who are now sons of Abraham are of his spiritual lineage by faith. Paul wrote,

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit ... (Rm 2:28,29).

Therefore, “*in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love*” (Gl 5:6). We are now the children of Abraham by faith (See Rm 9:6-13). Today, sonship to Abraham is not according to the circumcision of the flesh. It is as Paul wrote to the Colossians,

In Him [Christ] you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism (Cl 2:11,12).

The generations of Abraham, and thus, fleshly Israel, ended in Christ. With the ending of the generations of Israel in Christ came also the cessation of the “forever” and “everlasting” covenant and law that God had established with Israel. **The land promise was to last until the generations of Israel ceased. The generations of Israel ended in Christ. Therefore, Israel’s right to possess the land as a heritage from Abra-**

ham ended when the Messiah came and established the spiritual Israel.

God promised Abraham that He would give to him and his descendants the land in which to prosper. However, this promise was conditioned on the obedience of Israel to the law of God, and the continuation of the physical heritage of Abraham. In order for his descendants to abide in the land, they had to remain faithful to their covenant with God. Israel failed in keeping the conditions of the covenant. They were subsequently taken into captivity.

After Israel's return from captiv-

ity, they were restored to the land as a physical heritage of Abraham's seed in order to await the coming of the Messiah. When the Messiah came, the purpose for which the covenant and law was made with Israel was completed. The purpose for which God gave them the land was completed. The purpose for the existence of the nation of Israel to preserve a portion of humanity for the coming of the Christ was accomplished. Thus ended the land promise that God had made specifically to Abraham and his seed.

Chapter 12

THE SALVATION OF ISRAEL

Romans 9-11, specifically Romans 11:25-27, have been used by some as a proof-text for a supposed national conversion and restoration of Israel in the future. In Romans 11:25-27 Paul wrote,

*For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, **that hardening in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My cov-***

enant with them, when I take away their sins.

This statement by Paul has been used by some in an effort to prove that yet in the future there will be a national conversion of Israel. All tribes of Israel at a point in time will then return to the land of promise in fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham. However, such interpretations as this fail to see the fact that God has already fulfilled the land promise. They also fail to see the fulfillment of the work of the Deliverer (Christ) in Jesus being the Blessing who has blessed all nations for over two thou-

sand years. Though the Jews today are still looking for the Messiah, the fact is that the Messiah has already come. The gospel has been preached to the Jews for over two thousand years.

In order to be clear, it is believed that there will be a national conversion of the last generation of Jews who are living just before the end comes. In other words, forget about those tens of thousands of Jews who lived and died for the past two thousand years when the gospel was preached to them throughout the world. The “national conversion theology” is not concerned about those Jews who lived and died before the supposed rapture that is yet to come. The theology includes only those Jews who will be alive at the time of the end. It is believed that Paul was speaking of these Israelites in the context of Romans 11:25-27.

Consider the following points in reference to what Paul was actually saying in Romans 11 concerning the Deliverer and the conversion of “all Israel”:

1. *The setting of God’s work with the Jews in the first century is in view of consummation of Israel.*

In Matthew 24, Jesus prophesied concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of Israel. At the beginning of His prophecy concerning the coming consummation of national Is-

rael in A.D. 70, Jesus said, “*Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down*” (Mt 24:2).

Jesus came in the flesh to the Jews. However, Israel as a whole rejected Him as their Deliverer. “*He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him*” (Jn 1:11). He was the Deliverer that was prophesied by Isaiah, which prophecy is quoted by Paul in Romans 11:26. But the Jews did not accept Him as their Deliverer.

Because the Jews rejected the Messiahship of Jesus as the Deliverer of Israel who was to deliver them from spiritual death, they would succumb to the physical destruction that Jesus would bring on them in His coming judgment by proxy through the Roman armies in A.D. 70. In reference to redemption, Jesus personally came to do what Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 27:9, and was quoted by Paul, that is, to “*turn away ungodliness from Jacob*” (Rm 11:26). However, Israel as a whole refused to be turned away from ungodliness.

God did not destroy national Israel because of their rejection of Jesus as their Redeemer. He was going to destroy Jerusalem anyway in order to terminate national Israel. Israel’s rejection only manifested their hardness of heart, and subsequently, they allowed themselves to suffer the pre-

determined plan of God to physically terminate national Israel in A.D. 70.

2. Israel's rejection gave opportunity for the Gentile reception of the gospel. In the context of Romans 11, Paul spoke of the “grafting in” of the Gentiles because of Israel’s rejection of the Deliverer. Isaiah had prophesied Israel’s rejection of the Messiah (Deliverer). “*God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day*” (Rm 11:8; Is 29:10). The Jews’ “spirit of stupor” worked toward the plan of God to terminate Israel.

When Israel stumbled, salvation was amplified to the Gentiles (Rm 11:11). Subsequently, the obedient Gentiles were grafted in by faith in the Messiah (Rm 11:17). Also, if individual Israelites would believe, as did the Gentiles, then God was able to graft them in again (Rm 11:23). However, **they must be grafted in by individual faith and obedience to the gospel, not through a national conversion.** There is no other way to be grafted into God’s people other than individual obedience to the gospel (See At 2:41,47).

The Jews of Paul’s day had to be grafted in by the same means the Gentiles were grafted in, that is, by faith in Jesus and obedience to the gospel. They had to believe and obey the gospel just as the Gentiles believed and

obeyed the gospel in order to be grafted into the family of God.

In view of the physical manifestation of God’s termination of national Israel in A.D. 70, it is easy to assume that in the context of Romans 11 Paul was referring to the fact that Israel was no more to be considered God’s special people. When Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70, many Jews certainly realized this. As a result, they turned to Christ as the Deliverer. The “time of the Gentiles” had been fulfilled by A.D. 70, that is, the time when much preaching and converting went out among the Gentiles while the Jews maintained the stubborn attitude that they were still the chosen people of God. However, when Jerusalem fell, it was clear that God no longer had a special relationship with national Israel. **The A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem was thus God’s last sermon to Israel that His special covenant relationship with Israel was over.** It was the last opportunity for them to be convinced that Jesus was their Deliverer, and that the church was the new Israel of God. It was a time when the true Israel of God was revealed to all Jews throughout the world (See Mt 13:43).

Some have assumed that when Paul was talking about the “grafting in” of Israel that he was actually speaking of some national conversion and restoration (Rm 11:17-24). How-

ever, if “grafting in” does mean the national conversion of Israel, then it would also mean the national conversion of the Gentiles because they too were “grafted in.” **The truth is that the Gentiles were grafted in by individual obedience to the gospel** (Rm 11:20). It would also be by this means that the Jews would be grafted in. Their obedience to the gospel would be on an individual basis, not a national, conversion. As the Gentiles were individually grafted into the church of Christ by individual obedience to the gospel of Christ, so were the Jews to be grafted into Christ.

If we suppose that there would be a national conversion of Israel in the future, apart from individual obedience to the gospel, **then we have denied the opportunity of individual Jews to obey the gospel, as has been the case since the first century.**

3. Israel was to turn to Jesus as the Gentiles turned. Paul used the word “mystery” in Romans 11:25 to explain that something new was being revealed. He revealed the salvation of Jews in order to humble the Gentiles who had become puffed up over the casting off of physical (national) Israel. Paul said that the hardening of Israel had happened to Israel **until** the fullness of the Gentiles had come in. The word “until” is used in this text to reveal that Israel was hard-

ened at the time the Gentiles were being grafted in. In verse 12 Paul had written, *“Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness?”*

The “fullness of the Gentiles” is not a reference to a specific number of Gentiles. Reference is to a spiritual state. The hardening of Israel was at its peak at the time they led crucified Jesus. From this hardening, however, the gospel went out to the Gentiles. On more than one occasion, the Jews’ rejection of Jesus spurred the evangelists to go to the Gentiles (See At 13:46; 18:6). Therefore, God used the hardening of Israel to move the gospel to the Gentiles in order to graft them in.

Paul stated, *“... and so all Israel will be saved”* (Rm 11:26). The Greek word from which the word “so” is translated (*houtos*) refers the readers to that which has already been said and understood in the context. In Romans 11:26 it refers us to salvation by individual obedience to the gospel by which the Gentiles were grafted in. Israel was also to be saved by individual obedience to the Deliverer who came out of Zion, just as the Gentiles. They were to be saved in the same manner as the Gentiles, that is, through individual obedience to the gospel.

Paul wrote, *“For you are all sons*

of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Gl 3:26). Since Acts 2, when the kingdom reign of Jesus was first announced, God views His children through Jesus. Therefore, when one obeys the gospel, nationality is lost. It is as what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:16 concerning Jesus. “*Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.*” In Christ “*there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor un-*

circumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all” (Cl 3:11). “*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Gl 3:27,28). God now considers no person today according to nationality. He considers only those who are in Christ, for it is they who are the true sons of Abraham.

Chapter 13

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE

As stated in the previous chapter, there are those who believe that there will be a national conversion of the last generation of Jews when Jesus comes again. Where will be a restoration of Israel to Palestine. So the assumption is that the temple of Israel will be reconstructed in Jerusalem. Anglo-Israelites—those who believe that the Anglo-Saxon races today are the lost ten tribes of Israel—believe that the reconstruction of the temple is a vital part of the restoration of national Israel and the establishment of the earthly millennial reign of Jesus.

It is affirmed that the rebuilding of the temple will take place at the

beginning of the one-thousand year millennial reign of Jesus on this earth. Such will be the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies that speak of the reconstruction of the temple. After its rebuilding, the temple will become the center of Christianity throughout the world. It will again be the focus of assembly as it was in the Old Testament with the nation of Israel.

As stated in previous chapters, the Bible teaches that only a remnant of Israel was to return after the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Prophecies concerning the return of the remnant have already been fulfilled. There are prophecies of the re-

construction of the temple within the prophecies concerning the remnant. However, these prophecies were also fulfilled when the remnant was returned to Palestine.

A. Prophecy of the temple's reconstruction:

The following prophecies of the Old Testament of both Isaiah and Ezekiel speak of the reconstruction of the temple. However, keep in mind that these prophecies have already been fulfilled. They were fulfilled when Israel returned to the promised land after the Babylonian captivity. There will not be another fulfillment of these prophecies when Jesus comes again.

1. Prophecy of Isaiah: Isaiah prophesied that Jerusalem and the temple would be rebuilt after the captivity. He prophesied, "*Who says of Cyrus, He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, 'You shall be built,' and to the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid'*" (Is 44:28). Concerning the prophecy of Cyrus, God said, "*I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways; He shall build My city and let My exiles go free*" (Is 45:13; see 54:11-13). These words concerning Cyrus were uttered approximately two

hundred years before Cyrus lived. They were spoken **before** the existence of the Medo-Persian Empire, over which Cyrus was king.

2. Prophecy of Ezekiel: During the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, Ezekiel gave encouragement to the captives. He prophesied in detail that the temple of God would be rebuilt in Jerusalem (See Ez 40-44). Ezekiel spoke of a new city and a new temple (Ez 40). He spoke of the gateways into the new city, the dimensions of the sanctuary, the design of the temple area, and the chambers for the priests. He reassured Israel that this would be the dwelling place of the Lord. All these prophecies concerning Jerusalem and the temple were given to encourage Israel in captivity that there would be a day when they would return to their homeland.

B. Fulfillment of prophecies concerning the temple's reconstruction:

The saga of the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the reconstruction of the physical temple began with Ezra. The reconstruction transpired in the days when Cyrus was king of Persia. Ezra 1:1 reads that "*in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia ... the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom.*

The proclamation was the following:

Who is there among you of all His people? May his God be with him! Now let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem (Er 1:3; see 2 Ch 36:22,23).

Ezra 3-6 reveal the story of how the Jews returned and rebuilt the temple. Ezra explained the restoration of worship at Jerusalem and the restoration of the temple. Ezra 6:15 records, *“Now the temple was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.”* Prophecies concerning the reconstruction of the temple were fulfilled over a period of about one hundred years, and during the days of Darius, king of Persia.

C. Prophecy and fulfillment concerning the tabernacle:

Amos prophesied, *“On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old”* (Am 9:11). In this prophecy Amos spoke of the rebuilding of the “tabernacle of David.” Amos did not refer to the physical tabernacle of Is-

rael in this prophecy. There was a tabernacle about which he spoke that was beyond the physical tabernacle of Israel. Israel did not know of this tabernacle until this prophecy was fulfilled in the first century A.D.

The historical context of Acts 15 was a meeting of the church in reference to legalistic practices that were being imposed on Gentile disciples by the efforts of those who sought to bind on brethren those things that God had not bound (See At 15:1,2). It was during this meeting that Peter proclaimed how God through him had chosen that *“the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe,”* and thus, become a part of the body of Christ (At 15:7). Paul and Barnabas proclaimed how God on their first missionary journey had worked miracles among the Gentiles in order to bring them into the body of Christ (At 15:12).

In this context, James stood up and said, *“And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written ...”* (At 15:15). He then quoted Amos 9:11. **The tabernacle of David in Amos 9:11 was a reference to the church!** When Amos prophesied of the building of the tabernacle of David, he was speaking of the building of the church (See Mt 16:18,19).

According to James’ argument in Acts 15, the tabernacle of David was raised up so that the Gentiles, the

“residue of men,” could seek the Lord. The testimonies of Peter, Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15 were set forth in order to show that God was working among the Gentiles in order to bring them into the tabernacle of David, the church. James’ quotation of Amos, therefore, affirms that Amos’ prophecy of Amos 9:11 was of the church, not the physical tabernacle of David. James’ quotation of Amos 9:11 also affirms that this prophecy of God in the Old Testament **had been fulfilled.**

Emphasis in the New Testament is not on the physical tabernacle or temple of God as was the case in the Old Testament and with national Israel. Emphasis in the New Testament is on the spiritual temple of God, the church. Paul wrote that the church is *“built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a **holy temple in the Lord**”* (Ep 2:20,21). Of Christians, Paul wrote, *“Do you not know that you are the temple of God **For the temple of God is holy**”* (1 Co 3:16; see 1 Tm 3:15).

In the preceding references to the church, the word “temple” is taken from the literal temple of the Old Testament and metaphorically applied to the body of Christians, the church.

God does not intend to rebuild another physical temple here on earth. The church is far greater than the Old Testament temple that was physically confined to the city of Jerusalem and was made of stone. The temple of the church is far greater. Those who would affirm that God will revert back to a physical temple in Jerusalem are affirming that God is going back to an old system of a stone temple that would be limited to the city of Jerusalem in Palestine.

The very nature of the world view of an earthly reign of Jesus is earthly. Emphasis is on having earthly possessions, earthly power, earthly existence, and earthly worship of a king who sits on an earthly throne. It is only natural that this theology should have an earthly temple.

But we must not miss this fundamental reversal of the gospel world view of the New Testament that emphasizes what is above and beyond this world. Christians are to set their minds on what is above (Cl 3:2). Their citizenship is in heaven (Ep 2:19). They seek a city in heaven whose builder and maker is God (Hb 11:10,16,22). In realizing that the earthly is to be destroyed, they are motivated by heavenly thinking to live gospel lives in response to the grace of God (2 Pt 3:11).

Chapter 14

RESTORING THE "LOST" TEN TRIBES

Many who believe that Jesus will reign on this earth also affirm that at the beginning of the physical millennial reign, all Israelites will be called out of the nations of the world from where they have been scattered and returned to the land of Palestine. This teaching is affirmed because of the supposed "lost ten tribes" of the northern kingdom of Israel who were taken into Assyrian captivity in 722/21 B.C.

A brief review of the history of Israel will help explain the foundation upon which the above assumption is presumed. After 931 B.C., the twelve tribes of Israel were divided. The majority of the tribes of Israel made Samaria their capital and Jeroboam their king. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained faithful to Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, and thus, continued in the south with Jerusalem as their capital. The tribes of Dan, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun and Gad constituted the northern kingdom of Israel after the division of the tribes. In 722/21 B.C. these tribes were carried away into Assyrian captivity (2 Kg 18:9-12). It is believed by some that these tribes of Israel are yet to return from the nations

to which they were scattered. Sometime in the future, therefore, it is supposed that they will return to the land of Palestine in fulfillment of those prophecies of the return of **all** Israel to the land of Palestine.

God made many promises of the return of a remnant of Israel to the land of promise after the captivities. However, physical millennialists fail to see in the return of the remnant after the Babylonian captivity, **the inclusion of representatives of all twelve tribes of Israel**. It is believed by some that the return of the northern tribes will only be fulfilled in the future at the beginning of Jesus' supposed earthly reign. However, this teaching is contrary to the fulfillment of those prophecies that were made concerning the return of all Israel in the three major exoduses out of captivity in 536, 457 and 444 B.C.

A. Portions of all tribes went into captivity in 586 B.C.

We must first understand **that portions of all twelve tribes of Israel were residing in the land of the southern kingdom after the Assyrian captivity of 722/21 B.C.** Therefore, portions of all tribes were taken

into the Babylonian captivity with the southern kingdom in 586 B.C. Though captives of all ten tribes were taken into Babylonian captivity in 586, when the return from captivity came, a remnant came out of all the lands to which captives were taken in both the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. A remnant of all twelve tribes returned to Palestine in the returns of 536, 457 and 444 B.C.

The above thought must be considered when studying the return of the ten northern tribes after the Babylonian captivity. When the majority of the northern tribes withdrew with Jeroboam in the 931 B.C. division of Israel, we would be presumptuous to say that everyone of the northern ten tribes fell away with this apostasy. Immediately after the division, as recorded in 2 Chronicles 10:16-19, Rehoboam set up worship in Jerusalem. *"And from all their territories the priests and the Levites who were in all Israel took their stand with him"* (2 Ch 11:13). 2 Chronicles 11:13 states, *"And after the Levites left, those from all the tribes of Israel, such as set their heart to seek the Lord God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the Lord God of their fathers."*

Portions of all ten tribes did not go into rebellion with Jeroboam. Portions of all twelve tribes of Israel remained faithful to the reign of Reho-

boam, though he was a wicked king. In conjunction with this historical event that left portions of all twelve tribes in Judea and faithful to God after the initial division of the entire kingdom of Israel, consider the return of the faithful in the northern to the southern kingdom throughout the history of the division.

1. Unification occurred during Asa's reform. It was the desire of King Asa to bring reform to Israel. This reform brought many true worshipers out of the northern kingdom of Israel into the south. 2 Chronicles 15:9 states,

Then he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and those who sojourned with them from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon, for they came over to him in great numbers from Israel when they saw that the Lord his God was with him.

Herein is one of the first mentions that portions of the tribes of the northern kingdom restored themselves to Jerusalem and Judea. They manifested their loyalty to God through their return to Judea.

2. Unification occurred during Hezekiah's reform. Hezekiah came to the throne of Judah in 727 B.C. (2 Kg 18:1; 2 Ch 29:1). This was only a few years before the fall of the north-

ern kingdom of Israel in 722/21 B.C. When Hezekiah became king of the southern kingdom, he made it his purpose to reestablish true worship of God (2 Kg 18:3-8; 2 Ch 30-32). In order to accomplish this restoration, he *"sent to all Israel and Judah, and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to the Lord God of Israel"* (2 Ch 30:1). Keep in mind what is stated in this passage. The letter was sent to **all Israel**, which would include the tribes of the northern territory, as well as the area of Judah.

When Hezekiah circulated his letter, it was found that *"a multitude of the people, many from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves"* (2 Ch 30:18). These gathered themselves to Jerusalem in order to be cleansed. When the assembly was made in Jerusalem, *"the whole congregation of Judah rejoiced, also the priests and Levites, all the congregation that came from Israel, the sojourners who came from the land of Israel, and those who dwelt in Judah"* (2 Ch 30:25). When the events of Hezekiah's great restoration were concluded, *"all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah"* in order to destroy idolatrous worship (2 Ch 31:1). Concerning the

destruction of the idols, *"they destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned to their own cities, every man to his possession"* (2 Ch 31:1).

It would not be incorrect to assume that this was God's providential call to the faithful of the northern kingdom to come out of that kingdom before the Assyrian army led the north into captivity in just five years after the Hezekiah restoration. At least, it was Hezekiah's call that all the faithful of the northern kingdom return to the south in order to worship God according to the heritage of a unified nation. One thing is clear from Hezekiah's reform. The invitation went to **all Israel and Judah**. It was a plea that they go to Jerusalem in the south to keep the Passover.

If we combine the reforms of Asa and Hezekiah, which resulted after the division of the Israelite kingdom during the time of Jeroboam and Rehoboam, one cannot escape the conclusion that portions of all tribes either resided in the southern kingdom, or at least, continued to remain loyal to the south until the final captivity of Israel with the coming of Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. Therefore, when Nebuchadnezzar took Judah away into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C., **portions of all twelve tribes of Israel were included in this captivity**. In the returns from Babylonian cap-

tivity in 536, 457 and 444, the greater portion of the remnant that was promised to return to Palestine came out of the Babylonian captivity. This included a remnant of all twelve tribes.

B. God promised that only a remnant would return from captivity.

Through the prophets, God promised that a remnant of all twelve tribes of Israel would return from their captivities. Subsequently, a remnant of the tribes of all Israel returned from their lands of captivity in three different exoduses out of Babylonian territory. In these three returns there were portions of all twelve tribes of Israel. This was something that God had promised through prophets. The faithful of Israel laid hold of this promise, for they were as Abraham, *"fully convinced that what He [God] had promised He was also able to perform"* (Rm 4:21).

Before considering the prophecies of the return of the remnant of all twelve tribes, there must be a clear understanding of the prophets' use of the words "Ephraim," "Israel" and "Judah." After the division of the twelve tribes in 931 B.C., the terms "Ephraim" and "Israel" were used primarily to refer to the northern ten tribes (See "Israel" in Hs 1:4-8; "Ephraim" in Is 7:2-17; Ez 37:16,19; Hs 5:3-14).

The term "Judah" was commonly used by the prophets to refer to the southern kingdom, that included the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (See Hs 1:1; 1 Ch 4:41; 5:17). The context of the words will clearly define the nation to which reference is made.

The prophets clearly pictured the return of a remnant of all Israel from captivity. The remnant was to return in order that God fulfill His promise concerning the Messiah who would come to bless all Israel. Therefore, in fulfillment of the promise of the return of the remnant, portions of all twelve tribes of Israel were in Jerusalem when God sent forth His Son in order to establish a new covenant relationship with the remnant of Judah and Israel. All this took place in order to fulfill God's promise to Abraham that in him all nations of the world would be blessed.

1. Hosea (750 – 725 B.C.): Hosea prophesied a few years before the northern kingdom went into Assyrian captivity. However, he encouraged the people by saying that *"the children of Judah [southern kingdom] and the children of Israel [northern kingdom] shall be gathered together [after the captivity], and appoint for themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the land [of captivity], for great will be the day of Jezreel!"* (Hs 1:11). He explained that

this "gathering together" would take place "afterward," that is, after their captivity. "***Afterward the children of Israel shall return*** [from captivity], *seek the Lord their God and David their king, and fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days*" (Hs 3:5).

Reference in the preceding statement of Hosea 3:5 was specifically to the northern kingdom, for it was those of this kingdom who were about to go into captivity when Hosea prophesied. However, in Hosea 1:11 Hosea sees far into the future from the time he prophesied. He looked to a time when both the northern and southern kingdoms would be united together again as one nation.

2. Isaiah (740 – 681 B.C.): Isaiah also prophesied of the remnant of Israel that would represent both the northern and southern kingdoms.

It shall come to pass in that day [of return] that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left, from Assyria and Egypt, from Pathros and Cush, from Elam and Shinar, from Hamath and the islands of the sea" (Is 11:11; see 19:23,24).

These were the same geographical locations to which the northern kingdom was transported in the Assyrian captivity of 722/21 B.C. (See 2 Kg 18:11,12). In Israel's return from

Babylonian captivity, therefore, captives would come from all the areas to which Israel was taken in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. God would and did bring a remnant of the whole nation of Israel out of captivity and back into the land of Palestine (See Is 54:4-8).

3. Jeremiah (627 – 574 B.C.): While in the land of Palestine before the final Babylonian captivity of 586 B.C., Jeremiah prophesied that God would gather Israel and bring them back into the land.

I will be found by you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back from your captivity, I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you to the place from which I caused you to be carried away captive (Jr 29:14).

God would then bring the Redeemer, and in His days, "**Judah** will be saved, and **Israel** will dwell safely ..." (See Jr 23:5-6). Jeremiah spoke the words of God when he said,

As the Lord lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I have driven them. And they shall dwell in their own land (Jr 23:8).

"In those days," Jeremiah exhorted,

“the house of Judah [southern kingdom] ***shall walk with the house of Israel*** [northern kingdom], ***and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given as an inheritance to your fathers***” (Jr 3:18; see 23:8). God promised, ***“I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it”*** (Jr 30:3). ***“At that time ... I will be the God of all the families of Israel”*** (Jr 31:1).

God would heal Israel’s wounds (Jr 30:17) and save her out of the land of captivity (Jr 30:4-11). God would do such in order that all Israel plant vineyards once again in the promise land (Jr 31:5). Judah and Israel would be built again (Jr 33:7,8) in order to be joined together for an everlasting covenant (Jr 50:4,5).

The time would come after their return that God would ***“make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah”*** (Jr 31:31). In order that this new covenant be made with all Israel, all Israel, both the house of Israel (the northern kingdom) and Judah (the southern kingdom), must be in Jerusalem when this covenant was established.

In Hebrews 8:7-13 the Hebrew writer quoted Jeremiah 31. The new covenant was identified as the new covenant that God established with

man through Jesus. This new covenant was established in Jerusalem in the first century. Therefore, the promise of Jeremiah 31 was fulfilled in the first century. In order for the establishment of the new covenant to take place, all Israel, both the northern kingdom and southern kingdom had to be present in Jerusalem when Jesus established the covenant.

4. Ezekiel (597 – 575 B.C.): Ezekiel prophesied directly to the captives while they were in Babylonian captivity. Ezekiel spoke the encouraging words of God. ***“For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land”*** (Ez 36:24). God was promising that He would take them out of their enemies’ lands (Ez 39:27). All the house of Israel would be multiplied (Ez 36:10).

God told Ezekiel to prophesy to a valley of dry bones (Ez 37). When he did, flesh came upon the bones and wind brought breath to them (Ez 37:7-9). What God was telling Ezekiel through this vision was that these dry bones represented the ***“whole house of Israel”*** (Ez 37:11). God then promised concerning Israel, ***“I will bring you into the land of Israel”*** (Ez 37:12).

In order to illustrate that the nation of Israel would come together again, God also told Ezekiel to take two sticks.

As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: "For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions." Then take another stick and write on it, "For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions." (Ez 37:16).

Ezekiel was to join these two sticks together. The symbolism represented the joining of the two kingdoms of all Israel. The prophecy was that all twelve tribes of Israel after their captivity would join once again to be made one nation (Ez 37:19-22).

Ezekiel closed his prophecy by giving instructions that when Israel returned to the land, they will divide the land for an "*inheritance according to the twelve tribes of Israel*" (Ez 47:13). And in Ezekiel 48:1-7,23-29, Ezekiel named all the twelve tribes that would inherit the land again. We must conclude from the book of Ezekiel that all twelve tribes of the nation of Israel were to return from the land of captivity in order that the land of the fathers again be divided among all twelve tribes.

5. Zechariah (520 – 490 B.C.): Through Zechariah, God promised, "*And it shall come to pass that just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you, and you shall be a blessing*" (Zc 8:13). Ze-

chariah prophesied that Judah and Ephraim would be strengthened again (Zc 9:13-16). God promised that He would bring back the house of Judah and Joseph (Zc 10:6,7). "*I will also bring them back from the land of Egypt, and gather them from Assyria*" (Zc 10:10).

These places from which God would bring the captives were the geographical locations to which the ten northern tribes were taken after the Assyrian conquest of Samaria in 722/21 B.C. Regardless of the locations to which the northern kingdom was taken after the Assyrian captivity, or the time between the captivity and return, God would still accomplish the return of all Israel to the land of Palestine.

C. God brought back to Palestine a remnant of all Israel.

As previously mentioned, there were three returns of Israel from Babylonian captivity that are recorded in the Bible. The first group of captives came in 536 B.C. and were led by Sheshbazzar (Er 1-6). Ezra brought the second group from captivity in 457 B.C. (Er 7-10). The third group was led by Nehemiah in 444 B.C. (Ne 1-13). In these three returns portions of all twelve tribes of Israel made their way to Palestine to settle in the land that was promised to them through Abraham.

RETURN OF A REMNANT OF ALL ISRAEL**1st Return: Sheshbazzar 536 B.C. (Er 1-6)****2nd Return: Ezra 457 B.C. (Er 7-10)****3rd Return: Nehemiah 444 B.C. (Ne 1-13)**

The following points emphasize events that took place during and after the three returns. These events clearly picture a remnant of all twelve tribes residing in Palestine after the Babylonian captivity.

1. Offerings were made for all twelve tribes: When the first group of captives came to the land, they "*dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities*" (Er 2:70). They rebuilt the temple. Afterward, Ezra records, "*And they offered sacrifices at the dedication of this house of God ... a sin offering for all Israel twelve male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel*" (Er 6:17).

When Ezra brought the second group of captives in 457 B.C., Ezra recorded that they "*offered burnt offerings to the God of Israel: twelve bulls for all Israel*" (Er 8:35). In fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the return of the remnant, Ezra recorded that a remnant of all Israel was in Palestine after the Babylonian captivity. As promised by God, the remnant returned to reestablish Israel in the land in order that God's promises to the fathers be fulfilled for the coming of the Messiah.

2. The numbering revealed that

all Israel was present in Palestine:

1 Chronicles 9 contains a list of at least four tribes that returned from captivity. Verses 1-3 state,

All Israel was recorded by genealogies, and indeed, they were inscribed in the book of the kings of Israel. But Judah was carried away captive to Babylon because of their unfaithfulness [This is the captivity of 586 B.C.]. And the first inhabitants who dwelt in their possessions in their cities were Israelites, priests, Levites, and the Nethinim. Now in Jerusalem the children of Judah dwelt, and some of the children of Benjamin, and of the children of Ephraim and Manasseh.

Besides the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, it is specifically stated here that Ephraim and Manasseh of the former northern kingdom of Israel dwelt in Jerusalem. We could certainly assume that portions of the other tribes were at least in the areas of Judea, if not throughout other areas of the land. What the above historical statement mentions is only those who dwelt in Jerusalem.

3. The remnant of all tribes were in Jerusalem in Acts 2: In Jeremiah 31:31-33, God had promised that He would establish a new covenant with the house of Judah and the house of Israel. In Hebrews 8:8-13

and 10:15-18, there is a quotation of Jeremiah 31 is quoted. Application of the promise of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31 is applied to the new covenant that God established with all men through Jesus. In order to fulfill the promise of Jeremiah 31, therefore, God had to have in Jerusalem all twelve tribes in order that He establish the new covenant with all Israel.

Portions of all twelve tribes of Israel were in Palestine in the first century when the new covenant was brought into force by the first official announcement of the kingdom reign of Jesus in Acts 2. We know that Anna, a prophetess, was there. She was of the tribe of Asher (Lk 2:36). Asher was one of the northern ten tribes. But there she was, with representatives from all twelve tribes of Israel.

Consider also the fact that at the time of the events of Acts 2, "*there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven*" (At 2:5). Among these were Jews from the lands of the Parthians and Medes (At 2:9). These lands were some of the locations to which Jews were taken captive in the great captivities of 722/21 and 586 B.C. (2 Kg 17:7; 18:11). There were also Jews in Jerusalem from Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, Cyrene, Egypt and a host of other nations. It would be safe to say that not only were there represen-

tatives of all twelve tribes residing in Palestine at the time of Jesus' ministry, but there were also visiting representatives of sojourning Jews in Jerusalem at the time of Acts 2 and the establishment of the new covenant.

God had fulfilled His promise to return a remnant of all tribes to Palestine after the captivities of both Assyria and Babylonia. He fulfilled His promise that all Israel would be present for the establishment of the new covenant. No promise of God in reference to the restoration of Israel to Palestine and the establishment of the new covenant has been left unfulfilled.

Since the promises were fulfilled with the remnant of Israel, there is no such thing as the lost ten tribes of Israel that must be restored to Palestine in the future. Jews from the Assyrian and Babylonian captives remained in the land of their captors. They gained freedom when their captor kingdoms were overthrown by other kingdoms. However, keep in mind that God's work in Palestine was with the remnant only. In order to fulfill His promises to Israel, God was concerned with the remnant, not all Jews that were scattered throughout the world. God never intended to restore every Jew of the world to the land of Palestine after the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Neither was He concerned

about reestablishing the state of Israel. He was concerned only with the remnant. And that remnant was restored to the land in order that the new covenant be established just as He promised. The remainder of the Jews who stayed in the lands to which they were

taken captive would remain there until and after the coming of the Messiah. It would be through them that the early evangelists of the first century would go in order to preach the gospel to the world.

Chapter 15

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GOSPEL KINGDOM

When Jesus came, John wrote that *“He came to His own”* (Jn 1:11). His “own” were the Jews. However, John also wrote, *“His own **did not receive Him**”* (Jn 1:11). Jesus did come to the nation of Israel. He came to be their king (Jn 18:36,37). However, the Jews as a whole rejected the kingship of Jesus because they did not understand the nature of His kingdom, nor the mystery of the gospel that He revealed.

Though the Jewish leadership rejected Jesus, many of those who were sons of Abraham by faith, did receive Him. John continued, *“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name”* (Jn 1:12). Jesus became the king of those who believed on Him and responded to the gospel. His kingdom reign, therefore, was not of this world (Jn 18:36). It was prophesied that He would reign in the hearts of obedient people, not on a throne in

Jerusalem (Lk 17:20,21).

There are those today, however, who are advocating the teaching that the kingdom that was prophesied in the Old Testament, and by Jesus throughout His earthly ministry, has not been established. John 1:11 is one of the primary passages that is used to teach this doctrine. It is affirmed that because the Jews did not receive Jesus as their Messiah and King, and thus, the gospel and His kingdom reign, the earthly kingdom reign of Jesus was postponed until He comes again. Once the kingdom reign was postponed, it is affirmed that Jesus established the church in its place. The church, therefore, took the place of the earthly kingdom reign of Jesus, which reign Jesus will forcefully impose on the unbelieving world when He comes again.

The assumption of the above teaching is that Jesus’ first coming was for the purpose of establishing an earthly kingdom reign. His kingdom,

it is assumed, was to be as the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman kingdoms. In other words, it was to be a physical earthly kingdom of this world with Jesus as its king who would reign in Jerusalem.

The fact is that the prophets did not prophecy a physical kingdom reign of Jesus. He did not come in fulfillment of prophecy in order to establish a kingdom reign on a physical throne of David in Jerusalem in order to reign over this world. In order to establish the fact that the kingdom was spiritual in the hearts of men, we must understand that the Old Testament kingdom reign prophecies were fulfilled by the time Peter made the announcement of Jesus' reign in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30. We must understand that God can fulfill prophecy regardless of the rejection of men.

In order to understand both prophecy and fulfillment concerning the kingdom reign of Jesus, it is imperative that we understand the difference between "church" and "kingdom." The use of these two words in reference to Jesus' work among men is very important. If one misunderstands the relationship between the church and kingdom, then he will certainly misunderstand the nature of the kingdom reign of Jesus.

A. Kingdom:

The word "kingdom" comes from the Greek word *basileia*. When used in reference to God's relationship with man, emphasis is on kingdom reign from heaven.

The word *basileia* is defined by dictionaries that are of this world, therefore, we must be cautious about tagging on to it an earthly meaning when used in reference to God and His relationship with man. Every interpreter, therefore, must confess that there must be some metaphorical use of the word when we use it to refer to God's work among men. By understanding that there must be a metaphorical meaning in the use of the word in reference to God's work among men, we can better form our understanding of what is meant by the word in a biblical context. We can do this in the context of the Bible where the word is used.

We cannot use earthly definitions to explain heavenly work. Though the word "kingdom" is taken from our earthly dictionary, we cannot limit its meaning in reference to God's work to earthly definitions, and thus, limit God's work to the earthly definition of man's words. We are sure the Holy Spirit assumed that most Bible interpreters would do this. Therefore, we

must go to the Bible in order to determine the meaning of those words that are used in reference to the work of God in His relationship with this world. We must do this lest we use our own definitions, and thus, limit God's work to the dictionaries of man.

The problem is that those who believe in the earthly reign of Jesus have limited their understanding of the kingdom by their own earthly definitions of words the Holy Spirit used to define the work of God in reference to this world. In other words, when the Holy Spirit assumed that we should be thinking metaphorically, we are thinking literally and earthly. In doing this, some cannot move beyond this world in their thinking concerning the kingdom of God. The unfortunate result of this earthly understanding focuses our minds too much on this world. The result is that we limit the work of God to the definitions of our own dictionaries, and thus, we cannot focus on their things that are beyond this world.

Whether intentional or unintentional, the practice of interpreting the promises of God in the New Testament after a materialistic definition of earthly words has led to many twisted interpretations of key scriptures on this subject. Biblical interpreters who cannot get their minds beyond this world have fed the speculative and carnal imaginations of religionists

who seek to cling to this world. But we must not forget that the nature of Bible passages that speak in reference to final things seek to take our minds beyond this material world in order to focus our minds on the spiritual. In understanding the meaning of *basileia*, therefore, we must not fall victim to the earthly interpretations of those who find it difficult to focus on the spiritual.

There are several contexts of Scripture that clearly define the Holy Spirit's use of *basileia* when it is used in reference to Jesus' present reign. One statement by Jesus before His crucifixion clearly explains that Jesus never intended to establish an earthly kingdom. Jesus said to Pilate, "**My kingdom [basileia] is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here**" (Jn 18:36).

Jesus' kingdom reign was never to be of this world because it was prophesied that **the Christ would reign from heaven** (Dn 7:13,14). **Jesus, therefore, affirmed that He would reign from heaven within the hearts of men on earth** (Lk 17:20,21). Though we covered the point in greater detail in a previous chapter, we cannot overemphasize what Jesus meant in His statement to Pilate that His kingdom was not of

this world (Jn 18:36). Before His encounter with Pilate, Jesus had previously said, ***“The kingdom of God does not come with observation, nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you”*** (Lk 17:20,21). Earthly kingdoms can be seen. Every border post indicates the existence of an earthly kingdom. But not so with the kingdom of Jesus.

In the sermon on the Mount, Jesus instructed His disciples concerning prayer: ***“In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”*** (Mt 6:9,10). The Father’s will is done on earth when men submit to His will (1 Pt 5:5-7). Paul reminded the Romans that ***“sin reigned in death”*** (Rm 5:21). When men give themselves to sin, they are spiritually dead (Rm 6:23). So in their state of spiritual death, sin reigns. However, when grace came, things changed. So Paul added, ***“Even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”*** (Rm 5:21). Those



who respond to the grace of God are made righteous before God, and thus, ***“reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ”*** (Rm 5:21). Herein is how the will of the Father is done on earth as it is done in heaven. The kingdom comes when men submit to the kingdom reign of Jesus by their obedience to the gospel.

When the will of the Father is done on earth in the hearts of men, then truly the kingdom of Jesus is manifested on earth (See Mt 5:16). It is “within us” in the sense that we have responded to the grace of God in order to allow God’s will to permeate our lives. In this way, the kingdom reign of Jesus is not of this world. It is not and never was intended to be a physical kingdom of this world.

Pilate could not understand these words of Jesus because his mind was oriented toward power and possessions of this world. For the same reason, thousands of physical millennialists of the world today cannot understand for the same reasons. If one’s mind is on this world, then he or she will not fully understand the nature of the spiritual kingdom reign of Jesus.

B. Church:

The English word “church” is used to translate the Greek word *ekklesia*. The generic meaning of

ekklesia refers to a “called out assembly” for a special purpose. It is used in this manner in the New Testament (At 19:32,39,41). The word was used in Roman culture to refer to those who have been called together for a common purpose. In this sense, therefore, the Holy Spirit used this word to refer directly to those people who have been called out of the world through their obedience to the gospel in response to the grace (cross) of God (2 Th 2:14).

We are the church of Christ because we have responded to the grace of God that was revealed through Jesus on the cross (Ti 2:11). We are thus the body of Christ because of our obedience to the King who is reigning at the right hand of the Father. When we think of church, therefore, we must think of obedient subjects, for the church is the assembly of God’s obedient people.

The church is composed of those on earth who have responded to the kingdom reign of Jesus from heaven. Peter proclaimed, “*Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ*” (At 2:36). When people heard this, that is the heart of God that

is revealed through Jesus, they responded by being cut to the heart with the message of the gospel of the kingdom (At 2:37). Upon their obedience to the gospel, they were subsequently added by God to His church of His people (At 2:38,41,47). In this way, therefore, **the kingdom reign was first revealed on earth in Acts 2 when men first allowed the will of the Father through Jesus to be done on earth as it is done in heaven.** The manifestation of Jesus’ reign from heaven was first seen on earth when men first responded to the kingdom reign of Jesus that was announced in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost.

The word “kingdom,” therefore, refers to the reign of Deity from heaven, whereas the word “church” refers to the response of obedient believers on earth. When the will of the Father is done on earth as it is done in heaven, kingdom reign is established on earth. In this sense, therefore, the kingdom of Jesus will always be a spiritual kingdom. It will not be a kingdom of violence because violent means are used to propagate kingdoms of this world. It will be a kingdom that suffers the violence of men who have given themselves over to serve the kingdom of darkness.

Chapter 16

KINGDOM/CHURCH PROPHECY & FULFILLMENT

There are four principal prophecies in the Old Testament that refer to the subject of this chapter (Dn 2:44; 7:13,14; Is 2:2,3; Jl 2:28). Two of these prophecies (Dn 2:44 & 7:13,14) have already been discussed in another chapter. In this context, it is our purpose to emphasize the time factors of these prophecies in reference to the establishment of the kingdom and church. If it can be shown that these prophecies were fulfilled in the first century, then the belief that these prophecies refer to some physical one-thousand year reign that is yet in the future will be totally refuted.

A. Daniel 2:

As explained in a previous chapter, Daniel interpreted in Daniel 2 a vision of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. The prophecy was of four earthly kingdoms. The series of world kingdoms began with the Babylonian kingdom. Following the Babylonian kingdom came the Medo-Persian kingdom, Greek, and finally, the Roman kingdom. **It is significant that we understand that the prophecy of the four kingdoms in the vision finds its fulfillment in the Roman kingdom.** The series of kingdoms in prophecy ceases with the Roman

kingdom because it was in the days of this kingdom that God would do a marvelous thing. He was going to set up a kingdom reign that would be different than all earthly kingdoms of all history. **After the establishment of this kingdom reign, there would be no more consideration given to earthly kingdom reigns in prophecy.**

The significant prophecy of the vision is in verse 44. The kingdom that was to be set up in the days of the Roman kingdom was of heavenly origin. Daniel interpreted, *“And in the days of these kings [Roman kings] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.”*

The above was the very thing that God did in the fulfillment of the prophecy. During the days of the Roman kings, God established a kingdom. It was during these days that John the Baptist came preaching, *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (Mt 3:2). Jesus came preaching, *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (Mt 4:17; see 10:7). *“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand”* (Mk 1:17). *“The kingdom of God is come near to you”* (Lk 10:9).

The phrase “at hand” refers to

being close or near. When something was “at hand,” it was near unto existing or happening. This is not a phrase that referred to something that was far in the future. In the days of John and Jesus, the kingdom was near; it was close unto being established. It was not something that was going to be postponed at least two thousand years later. If John was inspired by the Holy Spirit to speak His message—and He was—then He would not have deceived people into believing that God was about to do something, and then back out of His promise. Jesus also proclaimed during His ministry the establishment of the kingdom in the days of the Roman kings during which He ministered on earth. But He did not deceive the people into believing something that God knew He would not do for over two thousand years later.

B. Daniel 7:

The kingdom was established at the ascension of Jesus. Daniel’s vision of the four beasts in Daniel 7 is significant in this context, for he also had a vision of the same four earthly kingdoms. It was in the days of the fourth kingdom, the Roman kingdom, that God gave the prophecy of verses 13,14. Daniel saw ...

... *One like the Son of Man, coming*

with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.

It is clear that this prophecy was a prophecy of the ascension of Jesus to the right hand of the Father in order to receive kingdom reign. This prophecy thus speaks of an **ascension** to the Ancient of Days (God). God, the Father, is the Ancient of Days who is in heaven, not on earth. The prophecy thus speaks of the Son of Man **ascending** unto God who is in heaven, not descending to this earth.

The fulfillment of this prophecy took place in Acts 1:8,9. Jesus ascended unto the Father (See Ep 4:8-10). He sat down at the right hand of God (At 2:32,33; see Rm 8:34; Ep 1:20,21; Hb 1:3; 8;1). He did not and will not descend to an earthly throne and reign on this earth in the future.

The prophecy speaks of all peoples, nations and languages that **should** serve King Jesus. It does not say that they would. In other words, the kingdom reign in the prophecy of Daniel 7 **does not speak of a forceful kingship of the One who would forcefully impose His kingdom reign on the world.** So it is with the present kingdom of Jesus. Paul spoke

of the present exaltation of Jesus in Philippians 2. *“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee **should** bow”* (Ph 2:9,10). Jesus’ present reign is as that which was prophesied. Every knee **should** bow and every person **should** serve Him. But the fact is that not everyone does submit to the kingdom reign of Jesus by obedience to the gospel of the kingdom.

Not everyone allows the will of the Father to be done on earth as it is done in heaven (Mt 6:9,10). But because everyone does not submit to Jesus’ present kingdom reign **does not mean that He is not reigning**. It also does not mean that in the first century when the Jews did not accept Jesus as their king, that God postponed the kingdom until a time He would forcefully submit the world to His reign. The kingdom that was prophesied in Daniel 7 has thus been fulfilled in the present kingdom reign of Jesus, for both the prophecy and fulfillment speak of the same nature of the kingdom.

C. Isaiah 2:2,3:

Isaiah also prophesied concerning events that would be fulfilled in the last days of national Israel.

*“Now it shall come to pass in the **latter days** that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; **and all nations shall flow to it**. Many peoples shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the **house of the God of Jacob**; he will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths. **For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem**”* (See Mc 4:1-3).

There are some key thoughts in this prophecy that clearly teach that the house of God has been established already. It was established in Jerusalem over two thousand years ago when those who were of Abraham’s faith first submitted to the first announcement of the kingdom reign of Jesus in Acts 2.

1. Come to pass in the latter days. The events about which Isaiah spoke would come to pass in the latter days, or last days. This would be the last days of national Israel. Peter identified these days in Acts 2 after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1-4. He proclaimed, *“But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass **in the last days** ...’”*

(At 2:16,17). It was **in** the last days that God poured out His Spirit. In other words, **the last days were in existence when the Spirit was poured out in Acts 2:1-4**. It was in the last days that God spoke on earth through His Son (Hb 1:1,2). Therefore, the events about which Isaiah spoke took place in the first century.

2. The Lord's house is established. Isaiah also prophesied that the Lord's house would be established. The fulfillment of this prophecy is in the fact that the Lord's house is the church. And the church was first established as such in Acts 2 by the obedience of about three thousand people to the gospel of the kingdom.

Of the church, Paul wrote, "... *but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the **house of God**, which is the **church** ...*" (1 Tm 3:15). The church is the called out assembly of God's people on earth. In Acts 2, about three thousand were called out of the world through their obedience to the gospel by immersion for the remission of sins. Luke recorded, "*Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them*" (At 2:41). As more people became obedient to the gospel in the years to come, God added more to the church (At 2:47). Therefore, the house of God was established

on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 when the kingdom reign of Jesus was first announced on earth among men wherein people responded to the kingship of Jesus by obedience to the gospel.

Since the church is the group of submitted subjects of the kingdom reign of Jesus, then it can easily be understood that the kingdom reign of Jesus had already been set up when people first submitted to Jesus as Lord and Christ (See At 2:36,37). By the time of the announcement of Peter in Acts 2 that God had seated Jesus at His right hand on David's throne, the kingdom reign of Jesus had already begun. When Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost, Jesus had already been given dominion, glory and kingdom reign (Dn 7:13,14). Peter simply made the announcement. The kingdom reign existed before the establishment of the church.

When men submitted to Jesus' kingdom reign, then the will of the Father was done on earth as it was done in heaven. The kingdom reign came into the hearts of those who submitted to Jesus as Lord and Christ (Lk 17:20,21). Thus the church, the house of God, was established **because the kingdom reign of Jesus had already been established in heaven before the day of Pentecost**.

The church existed in the first century, and does now, because of the

kingdom reign of Jesus exists. **There would be no church if there were no kingdom reign of Jesus from heaven.** The church, therefore, was not established because the kingdom was postponed. **The church came into existence because Jesus began to reign as king, which reign was announced by Peter in Acts 2 almost two thousand years ago.**

Matthew 16:18,19 is an easy passage to understand in reference to the context of the fulfillment of Isaiah 2:2,3. In the context of Matthew 16, Peter had just confessed that Jesus was *“the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (Mt 16:16). Jesus then explained to Peter and the other disciples, *“... on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it”* (Mt 16:18). The church, therefore, would be founded on the fact that the members believed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Those who believed such would respond in obedience to the gospel. They would become the called out people of God. Thus, what Peter confessed would become the foundation

of the church. The church would exist because Jesus was the Christ and Son of God.

In Matthew 16:19, Jesus turned to another subject. He turned to kingdom reign from heaven. *“And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”* Herein is a reference to Matthew 6:9,10, that the will of the Father be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Peter and the other apostles had the privilege of revealing the will of the Father on earth (Mt 18:18). Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they revealed all truth (Jn 14:26; 16:13,14). They bound truth on earth because it had already been bound in heaven. **They loosed on earth because God had already loosed, that is, not bound, in heaven.**

The tense of the Greek verbs “loose” and “bound” in the verse are past participle. In other words, the verb should be translated, “having been bound” and “having been loosed.” What Peter and the apostles bound on earth through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, **had already been bound in heaven.** What they loosed, **had already been loosed in heaven.** The authority behind their revelation of the truth, therefore, rested not with the apostles, but with



God (Jn 14:26; 16:13). This brings us to the next verse of the context.

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus talked about that which would take place on earth. Men and women would respond to the Christ as the Son of God. Those who would respond would be church. But in verse 19, Jesus was talking about that which would come from heaven. Kingdom reign would be manifested from heaven through the binding and loosing of revelation from God. He thus spoke of two different things in the two verses, both of which are intricately related to one another.

3. All nations would flow to the house of God. This is the world mission part of Isaiah 2:2,3. Isaiah said that **all nations** would flow unto the house of God, the church. On the very day the gospel was announced from Jerusalem, this “flowing” began. Luke recorded, “*And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven*” (At 2:5). When Peter preached that the resurrected Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, those of these nations responded (At 2:41).

As opposed to the physical and national nature of the kingdom of Israel, the church of disciples extends to all nations. “*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor*

Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gl 3:27,28). The church is composed of peoples from all nations, not just the nation of Israel. Therefore, the fulfillment of Isaiah 2:2,3 is in the church, the house of God.

4. The word would go from Jerusalem. Isaiah also prophesied that the word of the Lord would go forth from the city of Jerusalem. The mission of the church would be to carry out this mission. Jesus said to the apostles before His ascension, “... *repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*” (Lk 24:47). “*You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth*” (At 1:8). And so, the fulfillment of Isaiah 2:2,3 has been accomplished through the work of the apostles and the early disciples as they took the gospel to all the world in the first century (See Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15).

We have truly come unto the heavenly mount Zion. The Hebrew writer revealed, “*But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn*” (Hb 12:22,23; see Rv 14:1). We are receiving the kingdom

reign of God from heaven as men and women obey the will of the Father that was revealed through the apostles and was recorded as Scripture (Hb 12:28). The kingdom reign of Jesus is coming into all the world as the will of the Father is received, obeyed and carried out in the lives of faithful men and women throughout the world. Isaiah 2:2,3 has been fulfilled in the establishment and growth of the church.

D. Joel 2:29-32:

Joel prophesied, “*And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh*” (Jl 2:28; see vs 29-32). Herein is revealed a very specific prophecy concerning the coming of a new dispensation of God’s work among men. The fulfillment of this prophecy is found in the event that took place on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. In Acts 2:1-4 the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the apostles. When people wondered concerning what had happened in the rushing mighty wind, Peter stood up and proclaimed, “*But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel*” (At 2:16). Peter then quoted Joel 2:28-32. The fulfillment of Joel 2, therefore, was on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

1. “*Afterward*”: In the prophecy of Joel 2, God said through Joel that the outpouring of the Spirit would take place “afterward.” Reference here is to the time after the Israelite captivities and the period between the return of the captives and the coming of the Messiah. After this historical period that occurred over four hundred years, God would begin a new dispensation.

2. “*In the last days*”: In the last days of the Jewish dispensation God would perform the marvelous wonder of Joel 2. Both in the prophecy and in the fulfillment, **the last days are mentioned to be in existence when these events took place.** Therefore, it was **in** the last days of one dispensation of God’s work among men that He would pour forth His Spirit in order to introduce another dispensation. The beginning of this new dispensation would be signaled by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This outpouring would come about in the last days of God’s exclusive work through the nation of Israel to bring the Savior into the world. However, it would be the beginning days of the last dispensation of God’s work among men on earth.

Chapter 17

REALITY OF THE KINGDOM

All of the prophecies concerning the kingdom that were made by Daniel, Isaiah and Joel concerning the kingdom were fulfilled in A.D. 30 when God poured forth His Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. Jesus had already ascended to the right hand of God by the time the outpouring took place. He was seated on the throne of David (At 2:29-35). When Jesus' kingship was announced (At 2:36), men were cut to the heart (At 2:37). They responded to the kingship of Jesus by being baptized for the remission of sins (At 2:38,41). Their response to the kingdom reign of Jesus in their hearts made it possible for them to be added by the Lord to the church of believers (At 2:47). In this way, therefore, the church on earth came into existence. The kingdom reign of Jesus came first, and then came the response of people who accepted such in their hearts. As they allowed the will of the Father to be done on earth as it was done in heaven, then the kingdom reign came to them.

There are two other thoughts that must be brought out in the context of the fulfillment of prophecy concerning the establishment of the church as a result of the exaltation of Jesus to

the right hand of God. One thought refers to eating with Jesus in His kingdom, and the other refers to Jesus' reign among His enemies.

A. Eating at Jesus' table.

Before His death, Jesus said to His disciples,

*And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, **that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom**, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Lk 22:29,30).*

After the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, the disciples were eating at the "Lord's table" (At 2:42; 1 Co 10:12). This table was a memorial that Jesus had instituted during the last days of His ministry (Mt 26:26-29; Mk 14:22-25; Lk 22:17-20). Since the disciples ate at this table in the first century (At 20:7), then it can be assumed that the kingdom about which He spoke in Luke 22 was in existence. It is still in existence today and can be remembered when Christians partake of the Lord's Supper. "*For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you **proclaim the Lord's death until He***

comes” (1 Co 11:26).

B. Reigning among enemies.

Those who believe in the earthly reign of Jesus have always affirmed in reference to the postponement of the kingdom, that the earthly kingdom was postponed because the Jews did not accept Jesus’ as their Messiah and King. Only one verse of scripture is used to support this theory. John 1:11 reads that Jesus came to His own (the Jews), but the Jews rejected Him. He thus supposedly postponed the earthly kingdom reign until He comes again. However, this belief affirms that God’s plans are subject to the will of man. And if God’s will is subject to the will of man, then He cannot fulfill any prophecy concerning His plans unless the prophecies are accepted by man. Therefore, if He chooses to intervene in the affairs of man, He cannot unless His intervention is accepted by men.

The above “postponement theory” in reference to the kingdom of Jesus ignores those prophecies that state that Jesus would reign among His enemies. Psalm 2:1,2 reads,

Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed,

saying, “Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us.”

The Psalmist continued by saying that the Lord would laugh and put them in derision who would set themselves against the Anointed One (Ps 2:3,4). They would be vexed with sore displeasure (Ps 2:5). However, in spite of their rejection of the Anointed One, God would set His King on the holy hill of Zion. “**Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion,**” the Psalmist recorded (Ps 2:6). God would give Him reign over the nations of the world and He would break them with a rod of iron (Ps 2:7-9).

Psalm 2 is quoted in Acts 4:25,26. It is quoted in reference to its fulfillment in the church. Jesus was the Anointed One the Jews set themselves against (At 4:27). He was God’s King whom He set on the holy hill of Zion. God knew that there would be those who would set themselves against His King. Nevertheless, this would have no affect on what He planned to do through Jesus and what He actually accomplished (At 4:28). God foretold His plans concerning the revelation of the gospel, and His plans were not changed or diverted by the rejection of the Jews.

In prophecy, God foretold that many would not accept the Messiah

(See Is 53:1; Jn 12:37,38). However, in spite of the rejection of Jesus by His enemies, God would carry out His plans. Jesus would ascend on high (At 2:22-30; Hb 8:1). Though many would reject the stone, God would make the stone (Jesus) the chief cornerstone (Mt 21:42-45; Ps 118:22). God did not postpone any kingdom because of those who rejected Jesus.

The Hebrew writer wrote, *“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear”* (Hb 12:28). When people allow the will of God to be done in their hearts, they are receiving the kingdom reign of Jesus (Lk 17:20,21). Jesus is now reigning in heaven with authority over all things (Mt 28:12; Ep 2:20,21). His reign is manifested on earth through the obedience of those who have accepted Him as their King.

The postponement theory is a direct attack against the gospel. It is

an attack against the foreordained atonement of the cross. If Jesus were crucified as an afterthought, then the gospel was an afterthought. The cross, resurrection and ascension of Jesus were only afterthoughts of God’s eternal plan of redemption.

Jesus’ present kingdom reign is manifested on earth through the obedience of those who have submitted to His kingship (Rm 5:17). When He comes again, it will not be for the purpose of establishing a kingdom reign on earth, or going to the cross again for our redemption. He will come *“having already received a kingdom.”* In the parable of the nobleman who went to a far country (Jesus), the parable pictures Jesus already having received a kingdom when He returns (Lk 19:12-15). When Jesus comes again, He is coming to terminate this present dispensation and the world (2 Th 1:7-9; 2 Pt 3:10-13). He is coming to terminate in order that He might return kingdom reign to the Father (See 1 Co 15:28).

Chapter 18

THE RESURRECTION OF ALL

Jesus spoke of the time *“in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth”* (Jn 5:28,29). Paul proclaimed that the Lord will descend from heaven with a shout and *“the dead in Christ will*

rise first” (1 Th 4:16). There is coming in the future a time of resurrection. All who are in tombs will be raised from the dead. This is the gospel of hope of all Christians.

There are those who teach that

at the beginning of the supposed physical one-thousand year reign of Jesus on earth the righteous will be raptured out of this world. However, the wicked will be resurrected only at the end of this one-thousand year period. The righteous dead will be raised at the beginning of the millennium, and thus, supposedly participate in a one-thousand year earthly reign with Jesus. The rest of the dead (the wicked) will not be raised until it is time for final judgment and the earthly reign is completed. The resurrection of the righteous and wicked will thus be separated by one thousand years.

When the Bible speaks of the bodily resurrection at the end of time, it speaks of nothing as a one-thousand year separation between the resurrection of the righteous and wicked.

A. All will be raised in the last day.

Both the resurrection of the righteous and the judgment of the wicked will be in the last day. Thus, there will be a last day of all days of time of earth history. This will be a finality of all present earthly events and things. After this last day, the world and heavens as we know them will pass away (2 Pt 3:10). In this last day of earth history, Jesus said of those who believed in Him, “*And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in*

Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day” (Jn 6:40; see vs 40). The resurrection of the righteous and the passing away of all things, therefore, will be in the last day.

Now consider the words of Jesus in John 12:48: “*He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.*” Those who reject Jesus, that is, the wicked, will be judged in the last day. In order for them to be judged, **they must be resurrected**. If the resurrection of the righteous and judgment of the wicked will be in the last day, then we must conclude that both the righteous and wicked will be resurrected and judged **in the same last day**.

B. The righteous and wicked will be resurrected at the same time.

There is coming a day in which both the righteous and wicked will be resurrected at the same time. The time of this resurrection will be when Jesus comes again. When He does come, many things will happen. All these things will happen instantly. Paul indicated such by revealing the resurrection and change of the mortal body “*in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*” (1 Co 15:52).

1. There will be a simultaneous resurrection of all within the same hour. Within the hour of Jesus' coming, both the righteous and wicked will be resurrected. Jesus said of this future event,

Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation (Jn 5:28,29).

The wicked and righteous will not only be resurrected in the same day, in the John 5 context Jesus said that they will be resurrected in the **same hour**. There will be no one-thousand year gap between the resurrection of the righteous and wicked.

Some have affirmed that the “hour” in John 5:28,29 refers to a “dispensational hour.” In other words, it is an “hour” that refers to the one-thousand year earthly reign of Jesus. But such an interpretation cannot be correct for the following reasons:

a. There is no continuous resurrection. Jesus said that the resurrection of both the righteous and unrighteous would take place “in the last hour.” He said nothing about a first resurrection in the context, and then, a period of one thousand years, after

which there would be another second resurrection. He simply stated that the resurrection of both righteous and unrighteous would take place **in the last hour**. If the one-thousand year dispensational theory is correct, and the “last hour” is actually one thousand years in length, **then there would be a continuous resurrection process taking place over a period of one thousand years, for the resurrection is stated to take place in the last hour.**

b. There is no mention of a “three dispensational hour” in the resurrection passages of the New Testament. If the resurrection of the righteous and unrighteous are separated by a supposed one-thousand year millennium, then the millennium would be divided into three dispensational events. First, there would be the resurrection of the righteous at the beginning of the one-thousand year dispensation. Second, there would be the one-thousand year reign of Jesus. And third, there would be the resurrection of the unrighteous at the end of the “last hour.” But Jesus said nothing of these three events that would take place over a one-thousand year dispensation.

c. There is no mention of the millennium. The final point to consider concerning the supposed “dispensational hour” is the simple fact that Jesus said nothing at all concern-

ing such in John 5:28,29. We cannot read a physical millennial reign of Jesus into any biblical passage that speaks of the end of time. One cannot take the millennium that is mentioned in Revelation 20 and read such into every biblical passage that speaks of the end of time and resurrection. This just cannot be done if we are to interpret the Bible correctly concerning end-of-time events that are yet in the future.

2. *There will be a simultaneous judgment when Jesus comes.* In the end when Jesus comes, Paul wrote that Jesus will be ...

... revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (2 Th 1:7-9).

These judgment events explain a judgment that will take place at one time when Jesus comes. This is a judgment that is associated with the final coming of Jesus. Therefore, in the end when Jesus comes again, **there will be judgment for the wicked.** All the wicked will be resurrected in order to receive judgment

and eternal condemnation.

In the first letter Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, he spoke of Jesus' coming and the immediate resurrection of the righteous dead (1 Th 4:16,17). In the second letter to the Thessalonians he spoke of the destruction of the wicked by their separation from the presence of God (2 Th 1:7-9). Now according to those who believe in the one-thousand year reign, these two events are to occur one thousand years apart from one another. The righteous are to be raised at the beginning of the millennium and the unrighteous are to be raised, judged and condemned at the end of the millennium. The physical millennial reign of Jesus is to occur between these two events. However, if such is to be the case, it seems that Paul would have given some indication of the supposed millennial reign of Jesus when he revealed to the Thessalonians information concerning the resurrection of the righteous and the condemnation of the wicked.

So we wonder why Paul did not mention the millennial reign of Jesus that is supposed to occur between the major events of 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17 and 2 Thessalonians 2:7-9. The fact is that there is no such thing as a one-thousand year reign of Christ that is going to occur between the resurrection of the righteous and the condemnation of the wicked.

Consider also the immediate context of 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17.

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven ... the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

When reading this passage one wonders where earthly reign activists find a one-thousand year reign of Jesus after the resurrection of the righteous and their going away with the Lord. Some have affirmed that the resurrection of the righteous will take place at the beginning of the millennial reign of Jesus, but the final destination of all the righteous is to be with the Lord in heaven after one thousand years.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17 Paul actually speaks of the resurrection of the righteous **and their immediate ascension to be with the Lord**. If the millennial reign of the righteous on earth with Jesus is supposed to be such a great happening, then we wonder why Paul did not clearly mention such in reference to the resurrection and ascension of departed saints and the ascension of the living. The truth is that he did not mention such simply because the supposed millennial reign between the resurrection and ascension of the righteous to heaven will

not occur with a one thousand year separation between these two events. The separation will not occur because both will occur in the same day.

Though in the context of the imminent destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, Jude's words of Jude 14,15 are indicative of the final coming of Jesus in reference to Jesus' coming and judgment. Jude stated that Jesus' coming in judgment would be ...

... with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him (Jd 14,15).

At the time of this coming and conviction of the ungodly, Jesus "*will sit on the throne of His glory. All nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another*" (Mt 25:31,32). Men will give account of their deeds (Mt 12:36). Jesus will judge the secrets of men (Rm 2:15). Everyone will give account of himself or herself before God (Rm 14:12). This will be the day God has appointed in which He will judge the world through Jesus (At 17:30,31). Therefore, it is before the throne of Jesus that all will give account. "*For we must all appear be-*

fore the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Co 5:10). Jesus is coming to judge. His coming will be in the last day. All the dead will be resurrected and judged in that last.

Jesus introduced the parable of the judgment in Matthew 25:31-46 by saying,

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats (Mt 25:31,32).

All the nations will be gathered before Jesus for judgment (See Co 5:10; Rm 2:16; 14:10-12). The righteous (the sheep) will be rewarded with life (Mt 25:46), but the unrighteous (the goats) will be condemned to punishment (Mt 25:46; 2 Th 1:7-9). In all the judgment language Jesus used to explain the events that will take place in reference to the righteous and unrighteous, **there is no mention of a one-thousand year period.**

Both the righteous and unrighteous will be resurrected in order that the events of Matthew 25 take place. But where is mention made of a one-

thousand year reign of Jesus? In order for a one-thousand year physical reign of Jesus to be in the judgment event of Matthew 25, earthly-reign theorists simply read such into the context. This is the only way it can be there because Jesus mentions nothing of such in any of His discussions concerning end-of-time events.

The New Testament teaches that Jesus is coming again in the twinkling of an eye with a shout. All things will be terminated and we will go into eternity. The complicated teachings of physical millennialists concerning the events of the end of time are simply out of harmony with the simplicity of the end of the world. The end will come and we will transition into eternity. Notice the following events that will take place at the time of Jesus' coming:

a. The last trump will sound. Jesus will come at the sound of the last trump. (See Jn 6:38,40, 44,45; 11:24; 1 Co 15:52; 1 Th 4:16).

b. It will be the last day. The day of Jesus' coming, the last day, will be a day of "wrath and revelation" (Rm 2:5; Rv 6:17), "judgment" (At 17:31; Rm 2:16; 2 Pt 2:9; 3:7; 1 Jn 4:17), "redemption" (Ep 4:10), and "salvation" for the righteous (1 Co 5:5; 1 Pt 2:12).

c. Jesus' coming will be unexpected. Men have not known the

hour of God's great comings and judgments in the history of man (Mt 24:36). In the same way, Jesus will come as a thief in the night (1 Th 5:2-4). He will come as a thief to those who are not expecting Him. The wicked are not expecting the coming of Jesus, therefore, He will come as a thief in their lives. Christians, however, are looking for and hastening the day of the coming of Jesus (2 Pt 3:10; Rv 3:3; 16:15).

d. All will be raised in the last day. Jesus said that both the righteous and unrighteous will be raised in the last day (Jn 6:40,44,45) and in the same hour (Jn 5:28,29). This hour will occur when the Lord will descend from heaven with His mighty angels (1 Th 4:16; 2 Th 1:7-9). Christians will be resurrected first. Our bodies will be changed in the twinkling of an eye (1 Co 15:50-58).

e. All judgments will be finalized with the final judgment. When one dies, he meets final judgment (Hb 9:27). When Jesus comes, however, there will be a final judgment that will end all judgments. When He comes again, He will gather the living out of **all nations** (Mt 25:32). Final judgment will then occur (Mt 25:31-34,41,46; At 17:31; 2 Th 1:7-9; 2 Tm 4:1).

f. All things will be finalized. The last day of earth history will terminate the events of this present

physical world. Peter wrote,

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away ... both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up ... the heavens will be dissolved ... (2 Pt 3:10-12).

These words of Peter clearly indicate a termination of the present environment. Termination, not continuation, is what will characterize the end of all things in the last day when Jesus comes.

C. Resurrection and ascension will be in the last day.

Much discussion has been carried on in the theological world concerning what is identified as the rapture. The word "rapture" simply means to be taken away. Christians will indeed be taken up from the earth before its final destruction (1 Th 4:13-18). However, the wicked will also be taken into final punishment at the same time, and then the world as we know it will be terminated (2 Pt 3:10,11).

Some assume that when Jesus comes again the righteous will be caught up out of this world in order that they not experience the tribulation that will come in the last days before the earthly millennium. But this

is a presumption that is not found in the Bible. The Bible nowhere teaches that the righteous will be taken and the unrighteous will be left in an environment of turmoil and self-destruction that will precede the physical millennium.

Without going into all the theological postulations of the rapture theory, here are some basic thoughts concerning final events at the end that must be considered:

1. *Lack of a scriptural statement:* The primary problem with the rapture theory is the fact that nothing is said of such in the Bible. There is mention of the ascension of the righteous, but nothing is said of the wicked being left behind in order to endure the turmoil of a supposedly hostile environment that will develop in the supposed last days before the physical millennium is imposed on humanity.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is discussing the resurrection and ascension of the righteous. Though nothing is said of the unrighteous in the context, we must not assume that there is a millennial separation of resurrections outside the resurrection of all the dead in the last. **John 5:28,29 simply states that all the dead will be raised in the last hour.** The context of events in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is discussing an order of events in

reference to dead and living Christians. We would assume that all saints, both the living and the dead, will ascend to be with the Lord. But we cannot assume, according to John 5, that the unrighteous dead will be left in their graves for a thousand years.

2. *Confusion between in-time judgment and end-of-time judgments:* One of the most significant oversights Bible interpreters make is the fact that people give little consideration to the significance to Jesus' coming in time in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. This oversight is a fatal oversight in reference to understanding key passages that discuss the in-time judgment and termination of national Israel.

One of the key passages that is used to uphold the rapture theory is Matthew 24:36-45. The immediate audience, and thus the context of Jesus' statements in Matthew 24, is the consummation of national Israel in A.D. 70. Jesus was talking to a Jewish audience in reference to the end of Israel.

In the context of His revelations concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus said, "*Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left*" (Mt 24:40,41). Jesus had said in the previous verses

that “the day” will be as it was in the days of Noah (Mt 24:38). And then in verse 39 He said that the wicked “*did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*” **It was the wicked that the flood took away, not the righteous.** Therefore, those who will be taken away during the days of the destruction of Jerusalem **will be the wicked.** The righteous will be left. However, at the end of time, **the righteous will be taken away.** The unrighteous will then be sent away into destruction (2 Th 1:6-9). Everyone will be taken from the earth for the earth will be destroyed. Matthew 24, therefore, is not talking about end-of-time events.

When studying through the above major events concerning the

final coming of Jesus in the last day, there is no room for a one-thousand year millennium. When the Bible talks of the final coming of Jesus and the last day, there is no mention of a physical millennium. One must read such a millennium into those New Testament passages that speak of the end of times in order to have it there.

Revelation 20 speaks of a millennium in reference to the work of Jesus among men. However, when end-of-time events are revealed in the New Testament, a millennium is never under discussion. The fact is that when end-of-time events are discussed in the New Testament, the millennium will have been finalized. It will be too late for those who are waiting for another supposed opportunity to obey the gospel.

Chapter 19

THE LAST DAYS OF NATIONAL ISRAEL

In these days there has certainly been a great deal of excitement concerning the last days. Speculations concerning the events surrounding the these days just before the advent of Jesus have stimulated the minds of many with events and happenings that are transpiring throughout the world. It is were not for the international news media, we doubt whether all this talk about the “last days” would be circulating among TV “prophets”

throughout the world. Futuristic religious zealots have pronounced this and that about the “signs of the times” that are supposed to be a signal that the “last days” are upon us. All such theological gymnastics are only mental vapor in reference to Bible teachings concerning the end of time. In all these theological meanderings, there is the inevitable twisting of the Scriptures to meet the needs of those who seek attention through their sup-

posed prophecies of the last days.

The phrase “last days” has been lifted from a host of biblical contexts in order to ignite fear, or at least, anticipation in the hearts of believers. However, we would challenge the use of phrases as “last days” and “last times” to refer to the last times of earth history, or the time immediately before the supposed one-thousand year reign of Jesus.

We must revisit the original biblical contexts of Scripture in reference to the use of the phrase “last days.” In doing this, it is hoped that we can in some way produce a correct view of the last days in which God closed out the Jewish dispensation of time and ushered in His final message of the gospel to all people through Jesus Christ (Hb 1:1).

Contextual interpretations of statements made in reference to the nation of Israel must be made in reference to God’s purpose and work through Israel. The nation of Israel was God’s extension of the seed of Abraham in order to bring about the fulfillment of a promise that God made to Abraham: **“In you all nations of the earth shall be blessed”** (Gn 12:3).

Israel existed for the purpose of preserving a segment of society through which God would bring the Redeemer into the world. **“But when the fullness of time had come, God**

sent forth His Son” (Gl 4:4). When the Son came, He came with a new covenant. **“Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God,”** said the Son. **“He [the Son] takes away the first [covenant] that He may establish the second”** (Hb 10:9; see Jr 31:31).

So in Jesus God’s purpose for calling Abraham and his descendents out of the world was fulfilled. In the eyes of God, and after the revelation of the gospel through Jesus, it is now as Paul wrote that in Christ **“there is neither Jew nor Greek ... for you are all one in Christ Jesus”** (Gl 3:28). By the time Jesus came, national Israel had fulfilled her purpose for existence. Therefore, as one studies through the prophecies of the Old Testament it is easy to understand the prophecies concerning the consummation of national Israel.

Old Testament prophecy must be interpreted in the historical context that it was always God’s intention to terminate national Israel in Christ. When we understand this very important purpose in the revelation of the gospel, we can understand Old Testament prophecy in reference to and use of phrases as “last days,” “latter times,” and “afterward.” All these phrases were used by the prophets to refer to the last times of the physical seed of Abraham to bring the Blessing into the world. Consider the following thoughts in reference to the

last days of Israel, Abraham's seed:

A. Latter days after captivity:

Jeremiah prophesied in order to warn Israel of God's judgment on her because she had forsaken the law of God. He warned of Israel's fall. *"The anger of the Lord will not turn back until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it perfectly"* (Jr 23:20). In other words, sometime after the captivities and return to the land of promise, they would understand why God dealt with them in such a manner.

The "latter days" **refers to the time after the captivities**, a time when God would manifest the purpose for their existence as a nation. The generation that was alive at the time of the latter days would understand. We assume, therefore, that those who would understand would be those who experienced the revelation of the gospel. Only in experiencing the revelation of the gospel would Israel understand why God sent them away into captivity in order to preserve a faithful remnant.

When the Messiah came, the



Jews would do as Jeremiah stated, *"In the latter days you will consider it,"* that is, consider how God had worked through the nation of Israel (Jr 30:24). That consideration would lead to a belief in the Messiah who was the fulfillment of the Sinai law (Mt 5:17,18). They would understand that the Sinai law and covenant were given in order to tutor Israel to the Christ of the cross (See Gl 3:24,25).

In speaking specifically concerning Israel's restoration from captivity, Jeremiah stated, *"Yet I will bring back the captives of Moab in the latter days"* (Jr 48:47). *"But it shall come to pass in the latter days: I will bring back the captives of Elam"* (Jr 49:39). At least in this context, the phrase "latter days" refers to the time after the restoration of Israel from captivity. It would be in these days that God would perform a wonderful work.

B. Last days of Israel:

The phrases "last days" and "latter days" (depending on one's translation) are used many times in the Old Testament **in reference to the history of Israel. These phrases are not used in reference to our present history in connection with the end of the world.**

1. Moses prophesied of the last days. Moses spoke the prophecy,

“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people” (Gn 49:10). Moses’ prophecy was specifically a reference to the Christ. Moses had introduced this context by saying that he would tell Israel what would befall Israel **“in the last days”** (Gn 49:1). **The last days in this context referred to the time when Jesus would first come into the world, not to His second coming.**

2. Balaam prophesied of the latter days. Balaam advised Balak *“what this people will do to your people in the latter days”* (Nm 24:14). In the context of Numbers 24, Balaam spoke of One who would come. *“I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; a Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel”* (Nm 24:17). Balaam was given a prophecy of the future concerning the Scepter, the Star, the Messiah who would rise out of Israel in the last days.

3. Israel would seek God in the latter days. Moses warned Israel that when they turned from God while in the land of promise, *“you will soon utterly perish from the land.”* (Dt 4:25,26). For their disobedience they would be scattered among the nations (Dt 4:27). *“But from there [in captivity] you will seek the Lord your*

God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul” (Dt 4:29). It would be in these times that Israel would turn to God. Moses stated, *“When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the Lord your God and obey His voice ... He will not forsake you ...”* (Dt 4:30,31). In this context, **Moses was discussing the latter days of the Jewish nation**, not the last days of the end of time. In speaking directly to the people of Israel, he was not speaking to us today who live at least 3,500 years after he addressed Israel.

4. Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of the latter days. In Daniel 2 Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had a dream of events that would take place in the latter days. In the context, as discussed previously, Nebuchadnezzar had a vision of four world kingdoms. The last kingdom was the kingdom that had feet part of iron and part of clay (Dn 2:33). This was the Roman kingdom, in the days of which, Daniel interpreted that God would set up a kingdom (Dn 2:44).

In reference to this vision of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel revealed that the king had a dream of what would take place in the latter days. Daniel said, *“But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what*

will be in the latter days” (Dn 2:28). In this context, therefore, the phrase “latter days” **referred to the time of the Roman kingdom**, not the days of the end of the world. The prophecy was of that which God would do during the days of the Roman kings. Daniel thus defined the existence of the “latter days” to be in the days of the Roman kings. These would be the latter days of national Israel, not the latter days of the Roman Empire.

5. Hosea’s prophecy of the latter days. Hosea prophesied that Israel would go into captivity. They would “*abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim*” (Hs 3:4). But Hosea prophesied, “*Afterward [after their captivity] the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days*” (Hs 3:5). It would be in the days of Jesus that they would seek and find David their king in Jesus. Reference in Hosea’s prophecy was not to the end of the world, **but to the end of the dispensation of national Israel when the Messiah would come into the world.** He was the King they would seek.

6. Daniel’s vision of the latter days. In the context of Daniel 10, Daniel was given a revelation concerning things that would happen in

the latter days. In vision “*a certain man clothed in linen*” stood before him and said, “*Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come*” (Dn 10:14).

Daniel was a Jew in exile. This vision referred to **his people**, not the peoples of the world. **The prophecy thus referred to what would happen to the Jews in the latter days of their existence as a nation.** Beginning from chapter 10 of Daniel, there was revealed to Daniel historical events and personalities that would come upon the stage of history until the time of the coming of the Christ. The time of the coming of the Christ would constitute the latter days of the history of Israel.

The context of Daniel 10 through 12 refers to Israel’s history until the coming of the latter days of the Israelite dispensation when the Messiah would eventually come. **The Messiah, the Christ, came in the first century.** His coming in the latter days of Israel was not only for those purpose of terminating national Israel, but also for the purpose of revealing the beginning of the gospel dispensation. His coming signalled both a conclusion and a beginning.

7. Isaiah prophesied of the last days. Isaiah prophesied, “*Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that*

the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains" (Is 2:2). As previously discussed in an earlier chapter, this prophecy referred directly to the establishment of the gospel dispensation. Therefore, Isaiah's reference was not to something that would take place at the end of time, but to the last days of the nation of Israel. It was in the first century that the gospel dispensation was established. Therefore, the latter days existed in the first century.

8. Micah prophesied of the last days. A parallel passage to Isaiah 2 is Micah 4:1. Micah prophesied, "*Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established.*" A correct understanding of this passage that harmonizes with Isaiah 2, would be that Micah 4 refers to the time when the word of the Lord would go from Jerusalem. This would be the time when the word of the gospel was first preached in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30. At the time of the ministry of prophesying these events, both Isaiah and Micah were directing the minds of Israel to the last days of their national existence that would occur about six hundred years later in their history.

9. Joel prophesied of the last days. Joel 2:28-32 is a very important prophecy that aids us in identify-

ing the exact time of the last days. This passage is important, not only because of the marvelous event about which Joel prophesied, but also because of its quotation in Acts 2. Its quotation by Peter on the Pentecost of A.D. 30 identifies precisely when the last days were in existence.

Before considering Peter's quotation, consider what Joel prophesied. "*And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh ...*" (Jl 2:28). When a translation was made of this passage by the Jews who translated the Greek Septuagint, they translated the word "afterward" with the phrase "last days." In Acts 2 Peter quoted from the Septuagint, and thus, he used the phrase "last days."

We must remember all of the preceding uses of the phrase "latter days" (or "last days") and their reference to something that would take place at the end of the history of Israel. In every context of prophecy, emphasis was on what would happen to Israel, **not the world**. The end of the world would have no relevance in giving Israel any hope in their time of turmoil. We must not steal these prophecies of hope away from Israel in order to apply them to ourselves today. There can be no narcissistic interpretations of these prophecies. We must not steal away the beautiful message of hope that was given to the faithful in Israel

who would, after the prophecies were made, nationally transition through many turbulent centuries before the arrival of the Messiah..

Chapter 20

ARRIVAL OF THE LAST DAYS

When we survey the New Testament, there is an unquestionable teaching that Israel as a nation came to her last days in the first century. The Messiah, Jesus, came preaching, *“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand”* (Mk 1:14). In writing specifically to a Jewish audience, Matthew recorded the activities and events of Jesus’ ministry in order that we know that all prophecies concerning Israel and the Messiah were fulfilled (See Mt 1:22; 2:15,17,23; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4).

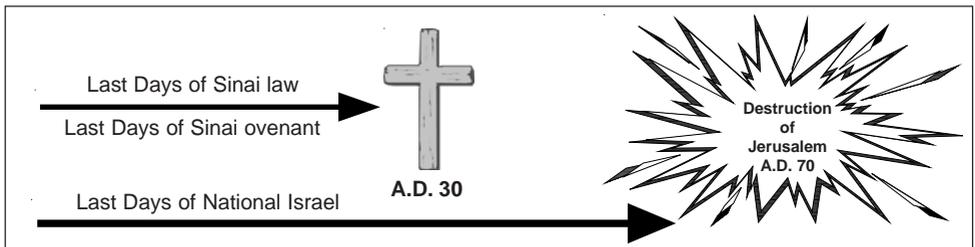
At the conclusion of His earthly ministry, Jesus said to the disciples,

These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me (Lk 24:44).

The Messiah came in the last days of national Israel in order to fulfill all prophecies concerning His coming. In fact, the identity of the last days was signalled by the coming of Jesus and the actual physical termination of national Israel in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

When the fullness of time came—the time designated by God that Old Testament prophecies be fulfilled in reference to Israel—*“God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law”* (Gl 4:4). The first century was a time of fulfillment. It was a time when promises and prophecies concerning Israel came to a conclusion in order to begin a new epic, the new gospel dispensation. It was the last days of national Israel, but the beginning of the preaching of the gospel to all the world.

In order to bring the Old Testa-



ment era to an end, God terminated two things. First, He fulfilled His covenant with Israel, and thus, He brought into force a new covenant. Second, He discontinued the application of the Sinai law that was given to Israel as part of His covenant with the nation. Jesus came to fulfill the law (Mt 5:17,18). In fulfilling the Sinai law, He nailed it to the cross (Rm 7:4). In reference to the promised new covenant (Jr 31:31), He also established a new covenant (Hb 10:9,10). Law and covenant, therefore, were changed at the cross.

At the cross, the Sinai law and covenant were annulled. Christians are now dead to that law by the body of Christ (Rm 7:4). They are now under a new covenant, a covenant with better promises (Hb 8:6).

However, the Jewish nation continued after the cross of Christ until the time that God designated that He would physically terminate Israel. He did this through the proxy of a foreign army as He did through Assyria and Babylon. Therefore, through the Roman army God terminated the Jewish state in A.D. 70. From the time of the cross, to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, God gave Israel forty years to repent and to recognize that the kingdom of God had come through His Son, Jesus Christ (See Mk 1:14,15). The messengers of Jesus went to the Jews first,

and then to the Gentile, in an effort to call out of Israel those who were sons of Abraham by faith (Cl 1:23).

The days before A.D. 70 were the last days of national Israel. They were the days when the Gentiles were grafted into the gospel kingdom of Jesus. They were the days when a nation was coming to an end. Since this is historically true, we would assume that there would be many statements in Scripture concerning the finality of Israel. We would assume that the phrase “last days” and similar phrases, would be found in the New Testament to identify the first century Jews to be in the last days of their national heritage. This is precisely what we find in the New Testament.

A. Pouring out of the Spirit:

In Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30, a marvelous event happened in the city of Jerusalem in Palestine. The Holy Spirit was poured out in the last days in fulfillment of Joel 2. There was the sound of a rushing mighty wind that filled Jerusalem and the house where the apostles had gathered (At 2:1-4). The apostles were subsequently filled with power from the Holy Spirit that was promised by Jesus (Lk 24:49; At 1:8).

In explanation of this event to the people of Jerusalem who had gathered around the preaching of the apostles,

Peter stood up and said, “*But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel*” (At 2:16). He continued by quoting Joel 2:28-32: “*And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh ...*” (At 2:17). **The preposition “in” identifies that Peter and the apostles were already in the last days when this event occurred.** They were not at the beginning of the last days, for the outpouring happened before the preaching of the gospel, and any obedience to the gospel. They were not beginning the last days. The end of Israel had already begun. The ax was laid at the root of the nation of Israel and the final blow would eventually come in A.D. 70 (See Mt 3:10).

It is certain, therefore, that the phrase “last days” in the context of Acts 2 does not refer to a period of time at least two thousand years removed from the time Peter and the apostles stood before the multitudes in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. When they stood up, **they were already in the last days of national Israel.**

B. The gospel through Jesus:

God revealed the gospel of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus in the last days. The Hebrew writer wrote specifically to Jewish Christians who were considering a move back to the Sinai law. Their move would be back

to an inferior law and covenant; it would be a move back to perdition (Hb 10:39). In the context of Jewish nationality and history, therefore, the letter of Hebrews was written. At the very beginning of the epistle, the writer referred his Jewish readers to Jesus who had come in the last days of national Israel in fulfillment of prophecy. The Hebrew writer wrote, “*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son ...*” (Hb 1:1,2).

Hebrews was written after the Pentecost of A.D. 30, but prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. It was written to detour Jewish Christians who had obeyed the gospel from returning to a system that brought no forgiveness of sins (Hb 10:1-4). We must keep in mind that the letter was written to discourage Jewish Christians from giving allegiance to national Israel and the Sinai law, for the writer knew that the prophecy of Jesus in Matthew 24—the destruction of Jerusalem—was about to be fulfilled. The writer thus wrote to save life, the lives of those who were in the process of rendering patriotic allegiance to a nation that was doomed to destruction in only a few years.

It was in the historical context of the end of Israel, therefore, that God sent forth His Son (Gl 4:4). The Son

came to redeem the people who were under the Sinai law (Gl 4:5). In writing in the last days of national Israel, the Hebrew writer said that God “*has in these last days*” spoken through Jesus. Therefore, **the last days were in progress when the letter was written**. Nothing whatsoever in the context of Hebrews refers to the present days of this century or any decade to come as the last days. The last days of national Israel were over when the nation was terminated by the Roman armies in A.D. 70.

C. Relief from exploitation:

Rich Sadducean Jews accumulated great wealth in the last days. James wrote to a Jewish audience, “*to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad*” throughout the Roman Empire (Js 1:1). He wrote around A.D. 63 that was only a few years before the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. In this historical context, therefore, he said to the faithful Jewish Christians of his readers,

Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand (Js 5:7,8).

This was a coming **in time** of God with judgment on Jerusalem. It was the coming in time about which Jesus spoke in Matthew 24. This “coming” was “at hand.” It **was not** something that would happen at least two thousand years after the time James wrote. It was at hand in the sense that only in a few years after James wrote, God, through the Roman army, would bring judgment on a nation that had rejected His Son and followed after their own righteousness and traditional religiosity.

It is in the context of God’s coming in judgment in time that James said of the rich Sadducean Jews, “*Come now, you rich [Sadducean Jews], weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you*” (Js 5:1). These rich elite had “*heaped up treasure in the last days*” (Js 5:3). They were in the last days when James wrote this exhortation. He reminded them that their treasures would be destroyed when God destroyed their city.

The readers of James were in the last days of the nation of Israel. It was a time of judgment, destruction and termination of national Israel. These same things will certainly occur at the end of the world. However, the end of the world will be a time of judgment, destruction and termination for everyone of the world, not just national Israel.

D. Moral signs of the times:

Evil men would exist in the last days of national Israel. In the context of Jesus' prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 24, Jesus said of those in that day that "*many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold*" (Mt 24:11,12). Around A.D. 67, Paul warned Timothy of the same social atmosphere that would exist in the last days of national Israel. He wrote, "*But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come; for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money ...*" (2 Tm 3:1-9). This is in conjunction with the context of James' warnings concerning the behavior of the rich Sadducean Jews at the time of the end of Israel. They were selfish and unloving. They heaped together treasures for themselves (Js 5:3). The love of many grew cold, and thus, it was perilous times when people did not love their neighbors as themselves.

In writing around A.D. 65, Peter also spoke of the evil social atmosphere that immediately preceded the destruction of Jerusalem. He wrote, "*Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts*" (2 Pt 3:3). Jude wrote between A.D. 65 and 67. He too spoke of the evil environment pre-

ceding the destruction of Jerusalem. Jude wrote, "*But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ [in Matthew 24] how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts*" (Jd 18).

It was the last days of Israel when the above inspired writers penned their letters. It was a time when God was coming in judgment on a nation that turned their backs on the Son of God in order to follow after their own religious heritage (Mk 7:1-9).

Those were the worst of times for national Israel. Nevertheless, for those who had turned to the grace of God, they were the best of times, for in such times of national calamity, faith was increased. The Jewish Christian had the hope of going through the end of Israel with faith in Jesus and not with faith in Jewish religiosity or allegiance to Israel's national heritage. By envisioning the destruction of their national heritage, Christian Jews throughout the world were assured that they had followed after the right King.

E. Gospel revelation:

According to the prophets, Jesus was manifested in the last times. Around A.D. 65, Peter also wrote to

a Jewish audience (1 Pt 1:1). He wrote to Jewish Christians only a few years before the event that would cause great mourning among Jews throughout the world (See Mt 24:30). This event would be the destruction of the Jews' national heritage. Therefore, in the context of the times of political tension leading up to the destruction, Peter reassured his Jewish readers that they were in the last times. However, they were blessed because it was in these last times of the Jewish nation that God had sent forth His Son (Gl 4:4). Peter wrote, "*He [Jesus] indeed was foreordained before the foundation [creation] of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you [Jews]*" (1 Pt 1:20). Therefore, Peter and his readers were in the "last times." These were not times that are yet in our future. They were anxious times in which Peter and his readers lived when this epistle was written.

The use of the phrases "last times" and "last days" in the New Testament refers to the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy that speaks of the time of the first coming of Jesus and the termination of national Israel. Peter confirmed this understanding by quoting Joel 2. The establishment of the house of God, the church, confirms that Isaiah 2 was fulfilled in those last times.

The Sinai law and covenant were

terminated at the cross of Christ. The nation of Israel was terminated in A.D. 70. Those were the last days. In fact, it was in those days that John wrote, "*Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour*" (1 Jn 2:18). It was during those days preceding the destruction of Jerusalem that many rose up against Christ.

The last days, therefore, happened almost two thousand years ago. The last hour about which John wrote came about in those last days. The context of these phrases does not allow us to use them to refer to something that is yet in our future.

That which is in our future, however, is the last trump (1 Co 15:52; 1 Th 4:16). There will be a last day of history on earth. In this last day Jesus will come and the dead will be raised (Jn 5:28,29; 6:39,40,45; 11:24; 12:48). In this day Christians will rejoice (Ph 2:16; 2 Th 1:10). In this day the righteous will be rewarded (2 Tm 4:8). It will be a day for which Christians must always be prepared (1 Th 4:2-4; 2 Pt 3:10).

Consider the following events as an outline of what will transpire in the last day of this dispensation of time on earth:

EVENTS OF THE LAST DAY

1. Jesus will come with the clouds

- of heaven (At 1:11; Rv 1:7).
2. Jesus will come at the last trump (1 Co 15:52; 1 Th 4:16).
 3. Jesus will come to raise all the dead (Jn 5:28,29).
 4. Jesus will judge the living and the dead (At 17:31; 2 Tm 4:1).
 5. The saints will meet Jesus in the air (1 Th 4:16,17).
 6. The righteous and wicked will be separated (Mt 24:31-34,41).
 7. Jesus will bring vengeance on the ungodly (2 Th 1:7-9).
 8. The existing earth will be burned up (2 Pt 3:10).
 9. The wicked will be punished (Mt 25:41).
 10. The righteous will go into eternal life (Mt 25:41; 1 Th 4:17).

Chapter 21

UNCOMFORTABLE CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter is about conclusions, that is, necessary conclusions that are produced by skipping over Jesus, the gospel, and the church in the first century in order to make the Old Testament prophecies apply to things in our future. It is true that there is little revelation concerning what will transpire when Jesus comes again. If all that is going to happen when Jesus comes was written in Scripture, then we might conclude that not much is going to happen, for there is little revelation concerning end of time events.

What is stated in reference to the end of the world, however, is stated as “matter of fact” events that we must accept by faith. It has been revealed that Jesus is coming. He is coming to raise the dead, and to execute a final judgment of all. The earth as we know it will be destroyed with fervent heat.

There will be some kind of a “new heavens and new earth.” But this is an insignificant amount of information concerning what will actually transpire when God closes the book on earth history.

We do not need to know everything about what will occur in the end in order to understand that some speculations concerning end-of-time events are erroneous. We need not know the correct interpretation of a particular metaphorical passage that discusses end-of-time events in order to know when some interpretations of various passages are false. **When any theory contradicts fundamental teachings that are clearly revealed in the Bible, then we know that the theory is erroneous.** This is the case with earthly-reign thinking concerning that which is supposedly yet to come. Inherent within the millennial-

reign theology are some major contradictions with clearly understood Bible teachings. The very fundamental aspects of the theory make it unacceptable as a premise upon which to reinterpret prophecy, and the Bible in general. In review of the points that have been stated in previous chapters of this book, it is here necessary to bring together some of the major contradictions of the premillennial theory that contradict the very nature of the present gospel reign of the Son of God. Consider the following attacks against the reign of the Son of God:

A. “Christ is dethroned as King.”

Some teach that Jesus is not now on David’s throne as was prophesied in the Old Testament and proclaimed by Peter in Acts 2. Jesus is not on David’s throne and reigning over a gospel kingdom that includes a reign over all things. It is taught that Jesus will not receive this throne of authority until He returns to this literal earth in order to reign over a literal kingdom. In other words, in the future Jesus will be dethroned from David’s throne in order to reign on His footstool, the earth, during the physical millennium (See Mt 5:35).

But the Bible affirms that Jesus presently has **all authority** over all things. He is reigning at the right hand of the Father with authority over all

that exists. If He is so reigning, **then there is no greater reign for Him that is yet in the future.** In order to exalt Jesus in His present kingdom reign, we must understand Jesus’ present work. Notice the following function of the present reign of Jesus that He now exercises:

JESUS’ PRESENT POSITION AND WORK

1. Jesus has authority over all things (Mt 28:18; Jn 13:3; 17:2).
2. Jesus is now reigning at the right hand of the Father (At 2:30-35; Ep 1:20-23; Hb 8:1).
3. Jesus reigns over things seen and unseen, even angels (Ph 2:9-22; 1 Pt 3:22).
4. Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords (Jn 18:37; 1 Tm 6:15).
5. Jesus will reign until He comes again (1 Co 15:24-28).

How much more kingdom reign authority could Jesus have than what He now exercises? If the theory of an earthly kingdom reign is true, then certainly Jesus would be dethroned from His present heavenly throne of authority over all things when He comes again. He would have to give up galactic reign in order to assume earthly reign.

B. “God’s power is limited to the will of man.”

Earthly reign enthusiasts inherently limit the power of God. Some have affirmed that God could not establish the physical kingdom when Jesus first came to this earth because the Jews rejected Him and His kingship. The physical kingdom was subsequently postponed by God until the time of Jesus' final coming. The church was supposedly established in its place as an afterthought of God. The obvious conclusion is that God cannot fulfill prophecy according to His eternal plan. He cannot do what He promises. His power, therefore, is limited to the will of man.

If the Jews' rejection of the kingship of Jesus forced God to postpone the earthly kingdom until Jesus comes again, then what will God do then if men again reject the kingship of Jesus? If God forcefully imposes on humanity the physical kingdom when Jesus comes again, then why could He not have done such at the first coming of Jesus? God's work in history manifests clearly that what He plans and promises in the affairs of man, **He accomplishes**. His plans are not limited to or controlled by the whims of those who would reject Him. God does not work according to the will of man. Man must work according to the will of God.

If the Jews' rejection of the supposed physical kingdom forced God to postpone it until a later time, then

this would certainly be a change in the work of God in His dealings with the Jews during their deliverance from Egyptian captivity. How could God take Israel out of Egyptian bondage and crush the armies of Egypt, and later not be able to crush the armies of Rome and the opposition of the Jews during the life of Christ, and thus establish an earthly reign? Biblical interpreters must be cautioned on this point. Anytime one says that God could not do something in reference to His eternal redemptive plan because of rebellious hearts, then he is attacking the power of God. If our desire is carnal, and we seek some right to reign over the wicked in a one-thousand year reign, then we need to be cautioned that we are seeking to maintain a theology that attacks the power of God to work in the affairs of this world.

God delivered Israel from Egyptian captivity against the will of Pharaoh, but many centuries later delivered Israel against their own will into Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. The Jews certainly did not want to go into Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. However, regardless of their desires, God was able to work through the Assyrians and Babylonians in order to carry out His prophecies that Israel would go into captivity. If God could have set up Israel as a physical nation in the past, then He certainly

could have set up a physical kingdom reign of His Son among the Jews during the time of Jesus, regardless of the will of the rebellious Jews. Therefore, any theory that assumes that God could not do something because of the rejection of the Jews, is erroneous.

God's will is not limited to the will of man. This is a very important biblical truth. To say differently, is to move our theology of God into the realm of idolatrous thinking concerning God. The idolater creates a god after his own imagination. As the idolatrous Greeks, men can supposedly play games with their imagined gods, and in some cases, outsmart the gods. The concept that God is somehow subservient to the will of sinful and rebellious man is an idolatrous concept of God. Some will object to this logical conclusion, but it is true. If in one's theology there is any concept where the will of God is made subservient to the will of rebellious men, then certainly the conclusion follows that one's concept of God has moved to "god."

The Bible teaches that the will of God is not limited to the will of man. God is able to perform that which He prophesies and promises. Abraham's faith was strong, "***being fully convinced that what He [God] had promised He was also able to perform***" (Rm 4:21). God is able to perform, regardless of the whims of

man. He is able to deliver (Dn 3:15-17). When the angel Gabriel stood before Mary, he was right when he said, "***For with God nothing will be impossible***" (Lk 1:37). Not one word or promise from God goes unfulfilled. If He determines to intervene in the affairs of man, what mortal man is there who is able to withstand Him? What group of mortal men is able to withstand His will? What nation of men can withstand the will of God?

Paul's argument in Romans 3 concerning the faithfulness of God to fulfill His promises is based on the fact that the unbelief of Israel did not deter God's plans concerning the cross. Paul asked, "***For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?***" (Rm 3:3). Paul's answer is, "***Certainly Not!***" (Rm 3:4). Those who believe that the church was established in the place of a postponed earthly reign of Jesus should listen intently to this point. Paul adds concerning God's implementation of His plans, "***Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar***" (Rm 3:4). We would do well, therefore, never to allow ourselves to believe a theology that places God in the position of changing His plans in reference to man's salvation on the basis of the unbelief and rejection. God will carry out His gospel work among men regardless of any discontent on our part.

God's work through the revelation of the gospel has never been controlled or determined by the will of man.

C. **“The gospel and church are made an afterthought of God.”**

Those who promote an earthly reign of Jesus when He comes again need to seriously consider this point. It is assumed that when Jesus first came, the kingdom reign of Jesus was postponed because the Jews did not seek to have Jesus as their king. They had Him crucified instead of submitting to His kingship. This means, therefore, that the gospel of the cross was an afterthought of God. The church of those who have obeyed the gospel was simply the result of those who persisted in believing that Jesus was the Messiah and Savior of the world.

If the church is both a substitute for the earthly kingdom reign, and an afterthought of God, then there are two questions that must be asked and answered:

1. *Did God prolong the fulfillment of prophecy?* In other words, if the supposed physical kingdom reign prophecies of the Old Testament could not be fulfilled in the first century because the Jews rejected Jesus as their king, then did God prolong the fulfillment of those prophecies for at

least two thousand years? And if men of this world could cause the unfulfillment of the prophecies of God in the first century by their rejection, why can they not do the same when Jesus comes again? If God will forcefully establish an earthly kingdom reign in the future regardless of the rejection of man, then why did He not do the same in the first century?

2. *Was the gospel foreplanned?*

If the gospel of the cross and the church were made a substitute for the earthly kingdom reign, then one must take the position that the revelation of the gospel and the church of those who obey the gospel were not foreordained by God. This brings us to an attack against the foreknowledge of God. It is a direct attack against the foreplanned revelation of the cross.

If God foreknew the rejection of the Jews, and the postponement of the physical kingdom, then why did He build the hopes of the Jews throughout their history concerning a coming Messiah and His kingdom? Why did He at the last minute snatch it from them and dash their hopes? It may sound fine to believe that the supposed physical kingdom was taken away from the rebellious Jews, but what about those who were sons of Abraham by faith? Why did Jesus build hope in the minds of Peter, John, James, Matthew and the other the disciples, and then, at the last minute,

frustrate their dreams by taking away from them a supposed kingdom reign here on earth which He supposedly promised?

In reference to the gospel of this dispensation and the church, Paul revealed that God “*chose us in Him [Jesus] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love*” (Ep 1:4). Before the world was created, God foreplanned the revelation of the gospel and establishment of those who would obey the gospel. Paul affirmed that in ...

... the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Ep 3:10,11).

The existence of the church is evidence that God revealed the gospel of the atoning death of His Son. The establishment of the church was not a substitute or afterthought of God. The body of Christ, the church, was foreordained before the creation of the world. God foreplanned to reconcile the world to Himself through the atoning death of His Son. When the fullness of time came in the first century, God sent forth His Son to be crucified for the redemption of man-

kind (Gl 4:4). The gospel of the cross was intended, not accidental.

D. “The death of Jesus on the cross was an accident.”

Any theology that affirms that Jesus came to this world in the first century to establish an earthly reign, and not to die for the sins of mankind, has serious implications in reference to the denial of the foreplanned gospel. Some theologians have affirmed that it was not God’s original intentions to send Jesus into the world for the purpose of the cross. He was only crucified because the rebellious Jews rejected Him and nailed Him to the cross. The crucifixion, therefore, was an accident.

If the above were true, then some serious questions would arise. These are questions that deal with major fundamental teachings of the New Testament. So we ask two questions: First, did God plan a physical kingdom reign for Jesus, but His plans were spoiled when the Jews nailed Jesus to the cross? Second, did God plan a physical kingdom that necessitated the death of Jesus, but later changed His mind, and thus, postponed the physical kingdom and established the spiritual kingdom, the church, in its place?

Both of the preceding questions demand a negative answer. God never

planned to establish Jesus on earth over a physical kingdom. His kingdom was never meant to be of this world (Jn 18:36,37). Also, it was fore-ordained that Jesus would die on the cross (Ps 22; Is 53). His death on the cross was not something unforeseen and unknown by God. God never intended for Jesus to have an earthly rule on an earthly throne. Such was never in His plan. Once He had offered the sacrifice, Jesus did what He intended to do. He ascended to sit and reign over a spiritual kingdom from a throne of authority that was in heaven (Dn 7:13,14; At 2:30-35; Ep 1:20-22; Hb 8:1,4).

Did God intend to establish a kingdom that demanded the crucifixion of Jesus for the sins of men? The answer to this question is that He did. **The kingdom that God intended to establish necessitated the death of its king for the sins of the subjects.** The subjects of this kingdom needed a high priest who offered Himself for their sins once and for all (Hb 7:22-28; 9:23-28). These subjects needed a mediator in heaven with God who would function on their behalf (Rm 8:34; Gl 3:19,20; 1 Tm 2:5; Hb 8:1,4). They needed an advocate to plead their cause (1 Jn 2:1,2). The kingdom that was prophesied and established had all the above spiritual blessings (Ep 1:3).

Was it the intention of God to

send Jesus to be the sacrifice for the sins of men? If it were Jesus' original purpose to come and establish a physical kingdom reign, then it could not have been His purpose to die on the cross. **The point is that Jesus could never have reigned on this earth over a physical kingdom and still be what He is to the Christian today.** If His crucifixion were an accident when He fell into the hands of rebellious Jews, then the following blessings the Christian now has in Christ would also have been accidents. If it were not the original intention of Jesus to die on the cross, then the Christian would not have the following problems in reference to his salvation:

SALVATIONAL BLESSINGS OF THE CROSS

1. If Jesus had not been crucified, but remained on earth, then He could not be our high priest in heaven (Hb 2:17; 8:4).
2. If Jesus had not been crucified, then He could not have offered propitiation for our sins (Rm 3:25; Hb 2:17; 1 Jn 2:1,2; 4:10).
3. If Jesus had not been crucified, then we would have had no one to bear our sins (Is 53:4,11; Hb 8:28; 1 Pt 2:24).
4. If Jesus had not been crucified, then we would have no sanctification, and thus be justified be-

- fore God (Ep 5:26; Hb 2:11; 10:10,14,29; 13:12).
5. If Jesus had not been crucified, then we could not have been purchased by His blood (At 20:28; Ep 5:25).
 6. If Jesus had not been crucified and resurrected, then we would still be in fear of death (Rm 8:15; Hb 2:14,15).
 7. If Jesus had not been crucified and resurrected, then we would have no hope as an anchor to our soul (Hb 3:6; 6:18,19; 7:19).
 8. If Jesus had not been crucified, then we would have no eternal redemption (Rm 3:24; 1 Co 1:30; Ep 1:7; Cl 1:14; Hb 7:27; 9:11-14).

Many other points could be added to this list. The postponement theory is a denial of the atoning death of the cross. If it were not God's original intention to send Jesus to the cross as clearly revealed in prophecy, then the above would never have happened for the salvation of mankind. If there were no cross, then there would have been no Christianity.

E. "The kingdom prophecies were made void."

If the physical kingdom reign of Jesus were postponed because of the rejection of the Jews, then all the Old

Testament prophecies that were supposedly given to proclaim the establishment of the kingdom were made void. They were invalidated because God just could not overthrow the rejection of the Jews and establish the earthly kingdom of His Son.

But the above reasoning concludes with at least four erroneous beliefs. (1) If God prophesied that He would establish a physical kingdom in the days of the Roman kings (Dn 2:44), but did not know that the Jews would reject it, then we must conclude that God could not, or did not foreknow the Jews' rejection.

(2) If God foreknew that the Jews would reject the kingdom, but went ahead and promised in prophecy that He would establish the physical kingdom in the days of the Romans kings, then God is a God of false hopes.

(3) If God foreknew the Jews' rejection, but went ahead with the prophecies that He would establish the physical kingdom, then He is a God who gives false hopes that are built on false promises.

(4) If God is one who promises, while knowing that He cannot keep His promises, then He is impotent in that His fulfillment of prophecy is subject to the will of man.

We must carry the above thinking even into the life and ministry of Jesus. When Jesus said that the supposedly physical kingdom was "at

hand,” did He know that it would be postponed because of the present rejection of the Jews among whom He ministered? If He did know of the rejection and postponement, then He made empty promises to the disciples. Or, did He promise the establishment of His earthly reign while being ignorant of the fact that God was going to postpone it? If such were the case, then the Father was deceiving the Son. One must ask if Jesus promised the physical kingdom reign with no knowledge of God’s postponement plans, or if He did know of the postponement plans, but went ahead and promised it. Either way one goes, he or she attacks both the sovereignty and character of both the Father and Son. Any concept, therefore, of a postponement in reference to the kingdom reign of Jesus must be considered as an attack against God and the gospel.

F. “The New Testament writers were confused.”

In the evolutionary development of the earthly-reign theory, an interesting development in theology has come about in reference to the interpretation of kingdom passages in the New Testament. Earthly-reign theologians in the past affirmed that only one kingdom was in prophecy in reference to the reign of the Messiah. This was the physical reign of the

Messiah on David’s throne in Jerusalem of Palestine. It was taught that this was the only kingdom to which the prophets directed the minds of the people. It was also taught that during the ministry of Jesus, this was the kingdom reign about which Jesus spoke.

However, because of the overwhelming affirmation in the New Testament letters that Jesus was in a present kingdom reign capacity at the time the letters were written, earthly reign theologians had to develop a “split kingdom” theology. This is the belief that there presently exists the “church kingdom,” over which Jesus now reigns, but the physical, earthly kingdom that was postponed when Jesus first came, will be established at the final coming of Jesus. The “church kingdom” was established when the physical kingdom was postponed.

The major problem with the above theology is that the prophets spoke of a kingdom (See Dn 2:44; 7:13,14). It was a singular kingdom reign that was to be established in the last days. When we come to the fulfillment of kingdom prophecies in the New Testament, there is still this singularity of language in reference to the kingdom. Jesus said, “*Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see **the kingdom of God present***”

with power” (Mk 9:1). Paul said, “*He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into **the kingdom of the Son of His love***” (Cl 1:13). Throughout the New Testament there is revelation only of this one kingdom reign in reference to Jesus’ work among men throughout the history of this world (See At 28:31; Rv 1:6-9).

The Holy Spirit inspired the New Testament writers to affirm that Christians in the first century were subjects of the kingdom reign of Jesus. In being subjects, they were assured that their King was “*King of kings and Lord of lords*” (1 Tm 6:15). They were assured that their King was head over **all things** (Mt 28:18; Ep 1:22). They were assured that their King had authority **far above** all principalities and powers (Ep 1:20-21). They were assured that even angels were subjects of His kingdom reign (1 Pt 3:22). All demons were under the realm of the King’s authority (Lk 4:41; 8:28). Except for the Father, there was nothing left outside the authority of the Son who is presently reigning over all things. **If there were yet a kingdom reign on earth in the future for Jesus, then certainly it would be far inferior to the one that Jesus now has in reigning over all things from heaven.**

G. “God is made a respecter of persons.”

When God chose Israel from among the nations, He did not choose them because they were more righteous than other nations. Moses said to the nation of Israel before they entered the promised land,

It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Dt 9:5).

God did not choose them as a nation, therefore, because they deserved something over other nations. He had made a promise to Abraham that through him He would bless all nations. The choosing of Israel was for the purpose of preserving a segment of society in order to bring the Christ, the Redeemer, into the world. Therefore, we must not assume that God was a respecter of persons when He chose Israel from among the nations of the world. And since He was not a respecter of persons at that time, then neither is He now in reference to the Jews.

However, if God is suppose to now choose Israel for the one-thousand year reign on earth by restoring them to the land of Palestine, then

what purpose will this have in God's plan to save the Gentiles? If He is to restore Israel to the promised land solely for the purpose of esteeming them above other peoples, then God is a respecter of persons. He would be respecting the Jews above all other nations of the world. But Peter said, *"In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him"* (At 10:34,35).

Earthly-reign activists affirm that the Jews will again be chosen out of the nations of the world for special attention during the earthly kingdom reign. However, one wonders what consideration God will give to the Gentiles at the time He shows special consideration for the Jews. Will they be second class citizens in the physical kingdom reign? After God broke down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile through Jesus, one wonders why He would reconstruct it during the one-thousand year millennial reign of Jesus on earth (See Ep 2:14,15). If God reconciled both Jew and Gentile into one body in Christ, then why would He seek to separate them during a supposed physical earthly reign (See Ep 2:16-18)?

H. "Earthly-reign theology promotes materialism."

When one surveys the basic concepts of the premillennial theology, one thing is quite clear. The theology is based on the materialistic inclinations of man. Possession of material things is encouraged. Power and authority over one's fellow man is emphasized and believed. It is basically a carnal theology, much like the carnal theology of other religions that focus on the things of this world (See in the Qur'an, surah 56:10-35).

The Jews, even the disciples who walked with Jesus, were victims of a culture that sought for a restoration of glory and possessions of physical kingdom reign as was characteristic of the reign of David and Solomon. Even after the resurrection of Jesus, the disciples said to Jesus, *"Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"* (At 1:6). In asking this question, the disciples were not thinking about an inner spiritual relationship with God through their submission to His will. They were not thinking about forsaking all for Jesus. They were not thinking about bearing the cross of persecution to preach among hostile peoples throughout the world. They were not thinking about possessing only the shirt on their backs in order to be preachers for the cross. They were not thinking about humbling themselves to be slaves of one another in a community of slaves. **They were thinking about power**

and possessions. Even at the time when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, "*there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest*" (Lk 22:24; see Mk 10:35-45). These are the inclinations and aspirations that are promoted by the earthly kingdom theology. **The very nature of the earthly millennial theology is simply earthly millennial aspirations.**

The very nature of Christianity in reference to the world, however, is **detachment** in the sense of keeping one's mind on heavenly things and values. John wrote, "*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him*" (1 Jn 2:15). Jesus said, "*You cannot serve God and mammon*" (Mt 6:24). "*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness ...*" (Mt 6:33). Paul exhorted, "*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth*" (Cl 3:1,2).

Christians must remember that their citizenship is in heaven (Ph 3:19). Therefore, we must heed what Paul warned Timothy concerning the affairs and things of this world. "*No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier*" (2 Tm 2:4). The

very nature of gospel thinking and life is as what Paul wrote, "*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind*" (Rm 12:2).

Though we do not understand the true nature of the "new heavens and new earth" that are yet to come (2 Pt 3:13), we can be assured that the emphasis will not be a reversal of that for which we have trained our thinking after biblical instructions for a lifetime. We have sought to "count the cost" and "pay the cost" all our Christian life in forsaking the things of this world in order to prepare our characters for a dwelling that does not cater to earthly desires. We are sure God will not reward us with that which is against the very character He trained us into being throughout our life of living the gospel (See Ph 2:5-8). The Christian looks forward to a world that is not of this world because he is subservient to a King whose kingdom is not of this world (Jn 18:36; Lk 17:21).

I. "Earthly-reign theology contradicts the servanthood leadership principle of Jesus."

At least until the ascension of Jesus, the disciples had an earthly concept of the reign of Jesus (At 1:6). This misconception prompted them to dispute "*among themselves who*

would be the greatest” (Mk 9:34). At one time during the ministry of Jesus, James and John even came asking, “Grant us that we sit, one on Your right hand and one on Your left, in Your glory” (Mk 10:37). Both James and John were expressing in their carnal desires for position and power in what they believed would be a physical kingdom reign of Jesus.

But this problem was not only with James and John. Even at the time Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper with the disciples on the night of His betrayal “*there was also rivalry among them [the twelve], as to which of them should be considered the greatest*” (Lk 22:24). At least one thing is clear concerning their concept of the reign of Jesus on earth. Such generated in their hearts carnal aspirations of power and position.

This is not the nature of the kingdom of Jesus. The leaders in the kingdom do not aspire to positions of authority as is characteristic with worldly kingdoms. Leadership in the kingdom of Jesus is by humble service. Jesus explained, “**Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever desires to be first shall be the slave of all**” (Mk 10:43,44). Leadership among the disciples of Jesus is by being the servant of all.

Jesus reminded the disciples of the world in which they lived when

He stated, “*You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them*” (Mk 10:42). But when considering the lordship leadership of the world, Jesus stated, “**Yet it shall not be so among you**” (Mk 10:43). When we consider the system of bosses and lords of the world, we must understand that such is not the system of leadership in the kingdom. Jesus was quite clear on this point. Those who are first and great in the kingdom are those who are the servants and slaves of all.

Any theology that promotes the carnal aspirations of men to rule over one another cannot be in harmony with the nature of servanthood leadership that is now present in the church. Carnal teachings that ignite the dreams of those who seek positions and power are contrary to the very nature of the gospel that is taught in the New Testament (See Ph 2:5-8).

As a closing reminder, biblical interpreters must be cautious about weakening the prophecies of the Old Testament in reference to Christ and the power of the gospel. God’s eternal purpose is to bring the obedient into eternal dwelling in His presence. Jesus Christ, as the Savior of the world through the cross, is the central theme of all human history. The supposed millennial reign of Jesus on

earth is not a Bible theme. God worked through Israel to bring the One into the world who would save the world. It is for this reason that interpreters should be very careful about leaping over Christ and the gospel in order to look forward to some earthly reward when Jesus comes

again. The prophecies of the Old Testament were to prepare Israel for the coming Savior of the world, not to prepare us in our time for a supposed physical reward here on earth. We see in the fulfillment of the prophecies, therefore, hope for a better end to come in the new heavens and earth.