

FUNDAMENTALISTS FUNDAMENTALLY

MISUNDERSTANDING: MATTHEW 6:10

By David Lee Burris



OUR FATHER
IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED
BE YOUR NAME.



YOUR KINGDOM COME,
YOUR WILL BE DONE,
ON EARTH AS IN HEAVEN.

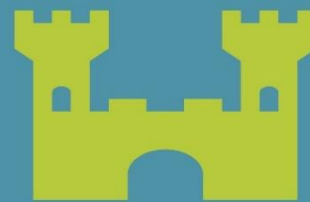


GIVE US THIS DAY OUR
DAILY BREAD.



AND **FORGIVE US**
OUR DEBTS, AS WE ALSO HAVE
FORGIVEN OUR DEBTORS.

LEAD US
NOT INTO
TEMPTATION,
BUT **DELIVER US**
FROM EVIL.



FOR THE KINGDOM,
THE POWER AND
THE **GLORY ARE YOURS.**
NOW AND FOREVER. AMEN

DISCIPLES' PRAYER IN SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Pulpit, Homiletics, 3rd Part Of Sermon: The Danger Of Unreality:

- **Almsgiving & Prayer:** Spiritual Estimate Of Actions Measured By Inward Motive. A Holy Life Has A Persuasive Eloquence. An Earthly Motive Destroys The Beauty Of Good Deeds. Deeds Done For Display Have No Depth – No Reality. Otherwise, Actions That To Other Mortal Men May Seem Magnificent Or Even Heroic Are In Reality Spiritually Worthless.
- **The False Motive:** Unreality Is Hypocrisy; It Is Acting. The Hypocrite Assumes A Character Before Men That Is Not Really His. He Gives Charitably Because He Wishes Recognition. He Does Not In His Heart Pity The Afflicted; He Is Not Merciful; He Does Not Really Care To Do Good. He Forgets The Presence Of The All-Seeing God; He Thinks Only Of The Many Eyes That See His Outward Act. Not Of The One That Sees Its Inward Meaning And Estimates Its True Value. God Sees The Meaning Of All Deeds And Words – Every Secret Thought And Motive Of The Heart. The Prayer Of The Hypocrite Goes No Deeper Than The Lips. God Distinguishes In The Sound Of Many Voices In A Crowded Church Of Those Prayers Using The Sacred Name That Which Are Meant For His Ears Only.
- **The True Motive:** In Giving - The Glory Of God! The Follower Of Christ In Denying Self Gives Out Of Love Of God & Love Of Man. He Gives In Simplicity & Singleness Of Heart. The Christian Lives As God Would Have Him – In Holy Love, In Deep Humility, In Quiet Obedience. In Prayer – First, In Individual Prayer He Is Private. This Is Not Only For Reasons Of True Modesty Or Real Humility But Also So As Not To Be Distracted. Second, Shut Also The Human Heart To The World & Pray To "Thy Father." Third, In Our Praying Volume & Repetition Accomplish Nothing With God. The Translated Term "Vain Repetition" Can Be In The English Language Misleading & Can Be Thus Taken To The Extreme As Well. Actually What Appears To Be Condemned Is The Multitude Of Words Without Thought. Therefore, Proscribed Prayers Have Less Value With God Than Those Done Extemporaneously. Moderate Repeat Cannot Be Forbidden Without Also Finding Fault With The Prayers Of King David & Jesus Christ – They Are Both Recorded As Petitioning On Concerns Three Times. This Would Coincide With The Jewish Practice Of Praying Three Times A Day. In Other Words, In Most Matters, It Would Be Good Advice To Bring It Before The Lord Over The Course Of A Calendar Day & Continue Further Only As Changes Occur.
By Way Of Application - Unanswered Prayer Response: We Are To Be Yielded & Submissive. When God Is Silent It Means No! We Are To Accept It & To Trust Him; Moreover, We Reconcile Our Will To His!

ISSUES OF INTERPRETATION

- *When we speak of "Our", is it only for the initiated or baptized, or is it to be applied to the whole human race?*
- *When we speak of God as "Father", is this as adopted children, or as created, or as both?*
- *When we speak of God's name being "hallowed", is this in our sacrifice of servant living, or part of the called out process of being a separated people, or is it necessary to the acceptable celebration and reverence of worship, or is this actually activity that can only be accomplished in an eschatological sense by God himself?*
- *When we speak of the kingdom, is this the kingdom of the church as experienced currently, or is it the eternal kingdom of final perfection, or is it of dual fulfillment?*
- *When we speak of doing the will, is this God's permissive present or eternal ultimate will, or is it free will graciously guided by God?; Does "on earth as in heaven" refer to this "will" or to the "kingdom" prior or even the "hallowing" before?*
- *Is the bread exclusively that materially consumed or the non-literal element of communion, or again, is it both? What is the meaning of *epiousios*? Does it mean "for the coming (day)," or does it mean the bread we need "to survive"?*
- *When we speak of forgiveness, how strong is the word "as"? Is the causative burden entirely on us? Is the theme of "debt" equal to that of forgiveness?*
- *Temptation Prevention: Is God's Leading – God's Testing?: Or is the meaning in Aramaic of - "don't let us be tempted" - more accurate - in terms of translation?*
- *When we pray to be delivered from evil, is this a personal force as the Church Fathers claimed and early tradition held? Or is it more comprehensive, and therefore impersonal, as Augustine taught? Or is it even a part of the preceding petition against temptation as stated by later scholars?*
- *Ending Doxology – "For thine is the kingdom, & the power, & the glory, forever. Amen.": Is this from fourth century manuscript addition to the Greek text? What of 1 Peter 4:11?*

Links in Rhythm, Sound and Meaning

<p>9 οὕτως οὖν προσεύχεσθε ὑμεῖς· Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς· ἀγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου·</p>	<p>^ ^ ^ ^ 4 ^ ^ ^ 4 ^ ^ 2 ^ ^ ^ 4 ^ ^ 4</p>	<p>9 So pray this way: Our Father in heaven, may your name be honoured,</p>
<p>10 ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου· γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου, ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς·</p>	<p>^ ^ 2 ^ ^ ^ 4 ^ ^ 4</p>	<p>10 may your kingdom come, may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.</p>
<p>11 τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δός ἡμῖν σήμερον·</p>	<p>^^ ^^ ^ ^ ^^</p>	<p>11 Give us today our daily bread,</p>
<p>12 καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν·</p>	<p>^^ ^^ ^ ^ ^ ^</p>	<p>12 and forgive us our debts, as we ourselves have forgiven our debtors.</p>
<p>13 καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκης ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ῥύσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ.</p>	<p>^^ ^ ^ ^ ^</p>	<p>13 And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.</p>

(Matt 6:9-13 BibleWorks Greek NT)

(Matt 6:9-13 [NET Bible](#))



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THY KINGDOM COME

What does it mean?

- ▶ But God's kingdom is both here and now —and yet to come.
- ▶ During Jesus' life on earth, his ministry was “to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, to recover sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor” (Luke 4:18, 19).



THY KINGDOM COME

Application

- ▶ Jesus said that the Kingdom of God was near (Mark 1:15).
- ▶ When asked when the Kingdom of God would come, Jesus said, “The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you.”

Benson Commentary

[Matthew 6:10](#). *Thy kingdom come* — This cannot with propriety be understood of that general kingdom, by which God ruleth over all the world, that being always come, and not capable of any amplification. But the kingdom of God under the Messiah, to be set up, enlarged, and perfected by the preaching of the gospel, and the exercise of Christ's kingly power, is evidently here intended; even that kingdom which the Jews thought *would immediately appear*, [Luke 19:11](#); which the pious among them *expected* and *waited for*, [Luke 2:38](#); [Mark 15:43](#); which both the Baptist and our Lord announced as *at hand*, chap. [Matthew 3:2](#); [Mark 1:15](#); and which Christ, in this chapter, [Matthew 6:33](#), directs his followers *to seek*, in preference to all other things; and here to pray for. **This kingdom of God is twofold, namely, his kingdom of grace and his kingdom of glory; the coming of both which we may be well understood to mean, when we put up this petition;** desiring, 1st, that we and all men may receive the kingdom of divine grace into our hearts, and that God may reign in and over us in such a manner, that we may be his willing and loyal subjects; 2d, that, in order thereto, it would please him to give success to his gospel in all parts of the earth; that he would enlarge the borders of his Church, and bring all nations within the pale of it; and, where it is already established, that he would proceed by his grace more and more to destroy the power of sin, and the dominion of Satan; and to implant his fear and love in the hearts of all his professing people; that thus, 3d, his eternal and glorious kingdom may also be enlarged, the number of his saints be accomplished, and the blessed time come when we shall all be translated into his heavenly kingdom, when, all other powers and dominions being done away, God alone shall be exalted, and rule for ever and ever.

Thy will be done in earth, as it is heaven — It is justly observed by Dr. Whitby, that we do not pray in this petition that *God may do his own will*, nor that the will of his providence may be done upon and respecting us, but that, in consequence of the coming of his kingdom of grace, in the sense above explained, we, and all men, with as much readiness, alacrity, and perfection, as the imperfection of human nature will admit of, may yield obedience to his wise, holy, and good will, however made known to us, whether by revelation, natural conscience, or the dispensations of providence; and may imitate the blessed angels in a sincere, ready, constant, persevering compliance with it: and that, in order to this end, he would vouchsafe us those aids of his Spirit whereby our understanding may be enlightened, rightly to discern what is his good and acceptable will, and our wills and affections powerfully inclined, and all our executive faculties so strengthened, that we may sincerely, readily, and cheerfully perform such obedience.



Kingdom Models	Historical Heritage
FUTURE	TERTULLIAN
INTERIOR	ORIGEN
INSTITUTIONAL	AUGUSTINE
COUNTER-SYSTEM	MONASTIC
THEOCRATIC	CALVIN
UTOPIAN	ANA-BAPTIST

Cultural Context: "Thy Kingdom Come"

- It Is Essential To Keep In Mind That The Hebrew Language Emphasizes The Kind Of Action & Not The Time
- In Later Hebrew, The Time Factor Became More Important, But The Emphasis Of The Petition Is Not Temporal
- It Emphasizes Instead The Dynamic Force Of God's Kingship Being Realized As His Will Is Done
- Jesus' Words Would Have Been In The Imperfect Tense, Which Indicates Incompleted Action – The Idea Is That A Process Is Taking Place
- Thus, This Statement Can Be Connected To The Growth Parables Of The Kingdom
- It Is Linked Similarly To Matthew 12: 28 & Then In Turn To Exodus 8: 19 & 31: 18 – Conveying The Message Of Deliverance
- The Mishnah Links The "Yoke Of The Kingdom" To The Ancient's Affirmation Of Deuteronomy 6: 4
- It Was Put Into Prayer Form & Was Known As The *Shema Yisrael* ("Hear, O Israel") & Everyone Praying It Received As Similar The "Yoke Of The Kingdom"
- Reciting This Prayer Of Acknowledgment Was Considered The First Step In The Spiritual Obedience To The Laws, Ordances, & Commandments Of Ancient Israel

Cultural Context: "Thy Kingdom Come"

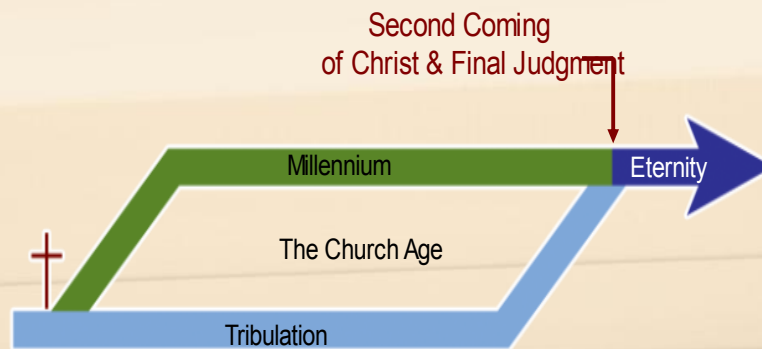
- "Heaven" Was Often Substituted In Meaning For "God" Because Of The Special Sanctity Reserved For His Name. This Was Common In Jesus' Day & Persons Accepting The Authority Of The Kingdom Of Heaven Were Said To Have Entered Into The Reign Of God.
- The *Mekilta*, An Early *Midrash*, Comments On The Beginning Statement Of The Decalogue – "I Am The Lord Thy God" – Conditioning The Ancient's Acceptance Of The Kingdom Of Heaven With The Omnipresent (God) "Doing Good For Us" – These Remarks Link The Liberation Of God's People With The Theme Of The Kingdom
- Therefore, God - In This Sense - Reigns By His Mighty Redemptive Acts Of Liberation!
- Jesus' Challenging Call To Repent Was An Essential Aspect Of His Proclamation Of The Kingdom
- Furthermore, Jesus' Public Ministry Demonstrated Many Acts Of Redemption That Were The Dynamic Realization Of God's Kingdom.
- In The Hebrew Translation Of The Blessing Of Matthew 5: 3 The Last Part Reads "They Make Up The Kingdom." This Proper Translation Indicates As Well How The Kingdom Will Continue To Be Established



Amillennialism

What is Amillennialism?

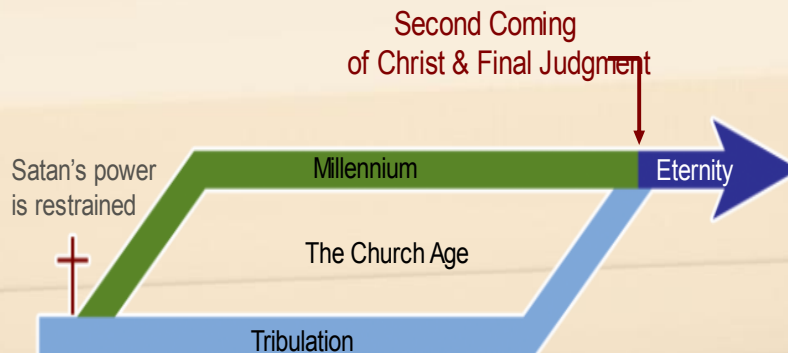
- Rather, the millennium symbolizes Christ's reign in the lives of his people from the beginning of the church until his second coming.



Amillennialism

What is Amillennialism?

- Christ's triumph over Satan through his death and resurrection in AD 30 restrained the power of Satan on the earth.



**“The Meaning Of The Millennium” by Robert Clouse
DOUBLE APPLICATION: “THY KINGDOM COME”**

“Amillennialists believe that the kingdom of God was founded by Christ at the time of his sojourn on earth, is operative in history now and is destined to be revealed in its fullness in the life to come. They understand the kingdom of God to be the reign of God dynamically active in human history through Jesus Christ. Its purpose is to redeem God’s people from sin and from demonic powers, and finally to establish the new heavens and the new earth. The kingdom of God means nothing less than God’s reign in Christ over his entire created universe. The kingdom of God is therefore both a present reality and a future hope.”

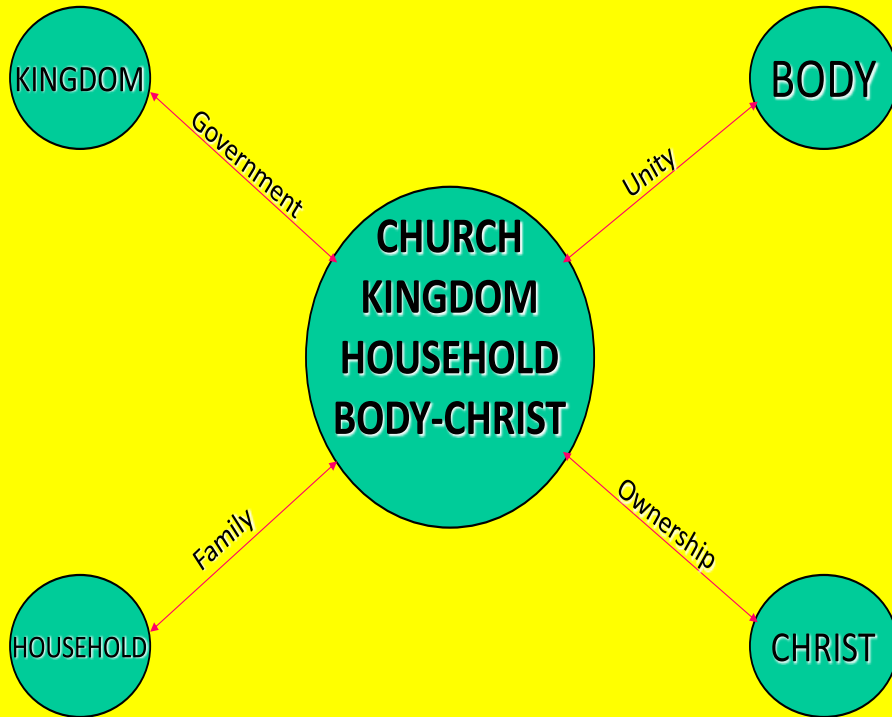
J. M. Piper 1/2005

**“A Case For Amillennialism” by Kim Riddlebarger
DOUBLE APPLICATION: “THY KINGDOM COME”**

“In other words, when the kingdom came in the person of Jesus, the ‘age to come’ also had arrived, at least in some provisional sense. The consummation of that kingdom, when Jesus Christ returns to judge the world, raise the dead, and make all things new, coincides with the arrival of the ‘age to come’ in all its fullness. ...the presence of Jesus’ spiritual kingdom, ‘the rule of Christ,’ is a reality which guarantees the consummation of the kingdom of God yet to come. This is further reflected in the Lord’s Prayer when Jesus exhorted believers to pray for the consummation of that same kingdom which dawned in his own person during his messianic mission (Matthew 6: 9 – 13).” -- PAGES 109 & 110

J. M. Piper 1/2005

CHRIST & THE CHURCH



Kingdom Models	Historical Heritage
FUTURE	TERTULLIAN
INTERIOR	ORIGEN
INSTITUTIONAL COUNTER-SYSTEM	AUGUSTINE MONASTIC
THEOCRATIC	CALVIN
UTOPIAN	ANA-BAPTIST

**EXEGETICAL ERROR:
REVERSING ORDER
TYPE & ANTITYPE**

Jesus Corrects Jews Misunderstanding

The phrase [Kingdom of Heaven or of God] did not originate with our Lord; the corresponding Aramaic phrase is common in the later Jewish writings, and the Old Testament speaks freely of a Kingdom of God as in Ps. 103:19; 145:11; Dan. 2:44; 4:3, 17. The sense is not a territory governed by God, but God's sovereignty, His rule or reign, whether over Israel, as the theocratic people, or over nature and the world by His inherent right. **The later Jews realized this latter sense, and expected a time to come when the reign of God would extend to all the nations of the world. All nations, it was held, would one day submit to the Divine power. But it was far from their desire to concede to the Gentile nations the privileges of the theocracy. The Jew was still to retain his place in the Divine favor and the Gentile was either to submit or be subdued.**

Our Lord, then, found this view of the Divine Sovereignty everywhere accepted by His Jewish contemporaries, and He adopted the phrase and made it the symbol of a conception which was all His own. In the first place, it became in His teaching a spiritual as opposed to an earthly dominion. To the Jew the theocracy meant national prosperity, victory over the enemies of Israel, liberation from alien control, predominance among the nations. Here is an account of the Messianic Kingdom from the Psalms of Solomon, a Pharisaic book written about half a century before the birth of our Lord:

Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them their King, the son of David ... that He may reign over Israel Thy servant; and gird Him with strength that He may break in pieces them that rule unjustly. Purge Jerusalem from the heathen that trample her down to destroy her ... He shall destroy the ungodly nations with the word of His mouth, and He shall gather together a holy people, and shall judge the tribes of the people that hath been sanctified by the Lord His God ... and the sojourner and the stranger (πάροικος καὶ ἀλλογενής) shall dwell with them no more. He shall judge the nations and the people with the wisdom of His righteousness; and He shall possess the nations of the heathen to serve Him beneath His yoke, ... and He shall purge Jerusalem and make it holy, even as it was in the days of old, so that the nations may come from the ends of the earth to see His glory.

That was, in its most spiritual form, the idea which the Pharisees had formed of the Divine Reign on earth; and such was the mission which the people, taught by them, expected the Messiah to fulfil. But it was not the mission upon which our Lord had come; and while accepting the current term, which was good in itself, He set about the task of giving it a new content; He made it the business of His Ministry to teach the true meaning of the Kingdom of God.

And, first, our Lord at once raised the conception of the Divine Kingdom or Sovereignty out of the political sphere into the spiritual and ideal. He spoke of it commonly, according to St. Matthew, and probably also according to the Logia which lie behind St. Matthew's parables, as *the Kingdom of Heaven* rather than *the Kingdom of God*. Now ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν is no doubt equivalent to ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, for the later Jews used *the heavens* for the Holy Name; thus in Daniel *the heavens do rule* means *God rules*, and the Mishnah uses *the Name of the Heavens, the fear of the Heavens for the Name, the fear of God*. But while ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ might be understood in a political sense, of non-subjection to Rome, ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν naturally turns attention to the supra-mundane character of the Kingdom of God, that it belongs to a higher order, is wholly independent of earthly and transitory politics; in fact it asserts positively just what Christ stated negatively when He said to Pilate *My Kingdom is not of this world; not of this world, because of Heaven, belonging to the unseen, eternal order of things*.

I am disposed to think that in St. Matthew's *Kingdom of the Heavens* we have the Greek equivalent of the Aramaic expression which our Lord usually employed when He spoke of the Kingdom of God; He called it מְלִכּוּתָא דְּשָׁמַיָא, 'the Reign,' 'the Sovereignty of the Heavens,' with the express purpose of calling attention to the spiritual, non-political, non-mundane character of that which He came to preach.

And in the earlier parables, those of the Galilean ministry, we find that stress is uniformly laid upon this aspect of the Kingdom. The Lord seems, in all these parables, purposely to avoid any mention of royal state or splendor, even of the life of the upper classes of society, or of courts and capitals. *The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man that sowed good seed, or to a grain of mustard seed, or to leaven which a woman took, or to the laborer finding treasure, or the pearl merchant trading on the highway, or a fisherman casting a net into the sea*. All these similitudes are taken from the daily life of the Galilean, and that is, no doubt, one reason why they are used. But there is another; they all represent the **Kingdom of Heaven as something quite removed from earthly greatness and power**; as analogous not to the magnificence of kings, but to the simple and yet really grander processes of nature and life, as a hidden power working invisibly and with no outward show of strength, and yet working surely to a certain end. Five of these eight parables are borrowed from the vegetable kingdom; they shew the immanent power of God at work in the processes of vegetable growth, where man has hardly any part to play beyond that of sowing and reaping: and they teach us to expect a similar process in the spiritual world, in the inner man.

For, secondly, while Christ thus emphasizes the spiritual character of the Divine Sovereignty, He insists upon its living power and **certain triumph**. Even in these earlier parables this is clearly seen. The mustard seed becomes a tree; the leaven hidden in the meal works on till the whole is leavened; the net gathers of every kind. The Kingdom is no less sure to prevail because it works invisibly, without outward pomp or show of power. In the later parables this factor becomes predominant. Having in His earlier teaching fully established the spirituality of the Divine Reign, the Lord is free to dwell upon the greatness of its operations. Its Head is now represented as a great landowner or a king; He issues His invitations to high and low; He dispenses His wealth in vast sums to His servants; He can wipe out a debt of millions, and be no poorer; He has armies at His command, which can destroy those who murder His representatives, and burn their cities. The power is invisible, it works silently and unseen, but it works effectively; the King of the heavenly kingdom can reward and can punish: can enforce His will at pleasure; and the latest parables suggest that His sphere of influence is wider than that of any earthly empire, extending to all the nations of the world, whom He can summon before Him and control and order as He thinks fit.

And thirdly, the **Kingdom of Heaven, in all its essential powers, is actually at work in this present** time. It was working in Galilee, when Christ sowed the word of the Kingdom there; it has been working, as many of the parables clearly shew, from that time to our own. Its operations are represented by the sowing and growing of the early agricultural parables; by the vineyard and the laborers, the sons, the servants, in the later ones.

These operations are represented as going on in the world, in the Church, but also as having for their seat the individual human spirit. All that in the Epistles of St. Paul is connected with the work of the Holy Spirit, is in the parables assigned to the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of Heaven as represented in the Parables of the Kingdom is to be identified not with the Church on the one hand, nor with individual religion on the other; rather it is the working of the Divine power, the fulfilment of the Divine will, in both. In the Lord's Prayer Christ has taught us to pray, *Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done*,—ἐλθάτω ἡ βασιλεία σου, γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου. That is a much larger and more inclusive prayer than a petition for the spread of the Church or of the Gospel or of the Christian life in individuals would be. It embraces all this, but it embraces also the purpose of it all, *i.e.* the fulfilment of the Will of God. In some ancient authorities instead of *Thy kingdom come* we find a prayer for the Holy Spirit: *May thy Holy Spirit come upon us and purify us*—ἐλθέτω τὸ πνεῦμά σου τὸ ἅγιον ἐφ' ἡμᾶς καὶ καθαρῶσάτω ἡμᾶς.

This is indeed a good prayer, but it falls short of the comprehensiveness of that which Christ taught His disciples. The Holy Spirit comes to establish us in the reign of God; *The kingdom of God*, as St. Paul says, *is ... righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost*. But it is more than this; it is the whole process of the gradual subjection of all things in heaven and earth to the Will of God, of which our sanctification by the Spirit is but a part. This immense work, the reconciliation of all things to God in Christ and by the Spirit, is the work of this age, reaching from the first coming of our Lord to the second; and it is for the accomplishment of it that we pray day by day *Thy kingdom come*, and it is of this that the Parables of the Kingdom speak.

Fourthly, the **Parables of the Kingdom treat quite as clearly of the future** as of the present. Though only two or three parables, spoken at the end of the Ministry, are purely eschatological, and refer to the future only, there is more or less of eschatology in nearly all. All the parables of sowing look forward more or less distinctly to a harvest which has not yet come. The interest of the Parable of the Draw-net is centered in the drawing in and examination of the haul of fishes. The Parables of the Great Supper and the Marriage Feast, of the Laborers and the Husbandmen, of the Pounds and the Talents, all keep the end well in view. It is quite possible to exaggerate the eschatological element in the parables, and just now it is the fashion to do so. I shall come to this point in due course; but I ask you now to note only that the Parables of the Kingdom recognize quite distinctly that the present work of the Kingdom of God is leading to a very definite end, that the existing order of things has a limit, and that towards that limit every day is carrying us forward, though no man, not even the great Son of Man, knows when it will be reached.

These then are the four great facts about the Kingdom of Heaven which these parables teach us. **It is spiritual, invisible, supra-mundane, wholly independent of human governments and politics.** It is nevertheless a power of immense strength and unlimited activity, able to subdue all things to itself, although it works in silence and unseen. Again, it is a power which is actually at work around us and within us, in the heart, in the Church, in the world. And, lastly, all its present work is leading up to a single end, the attainment of an order of things in which the Will of God will be done on earth as it is in heaven.¹

¹ Swete, H. B. (1920). [*The Parables of the Kingdom: A Course of Lectures*](#) (pp. 162–171). London: Macmillan and Co.

GOD'S SPIRITUAL KINGDOM'S BUILT OF UPSIDE-DOWN RELATIONSHIPS?!

THE 7 PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

"Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given" (Matthew 13:11).

THE SOWER AND THE SEED (Mt. 13:3-9, 18-23)

The Illustration:
The Sower scatters good seed upon four different kinds of soil: by the wayside, upon stony ground, among thorns, and into good ground. Only one kind of ground bears fruit.

The Explanation:
The Lord sows His Word into the hearts of men. The Word is the seed, and the heart is the soil. Satan can thwart the work of God in men's hearts. In hearts that are receptive to the "seed," fruit will be borne unto eternal life.

The Emphasis:
This parable is not the character of the Kingdom, but to expose the causes that hinder the growth of the Word.

The Application:
BE DILIGENT. The Lord has called His people to sow with Him. Sow only the Word. Expect results, but not everywhere.



The seven parables of Matthew 13 are divided into two groups. The first four were spoken publicly to the multitude. He "left the house and sat by the seashore." Symbolically the Lord turns from Israel (the house) because they rejected Him, and offers Himself to the nations (the sea). These parables describe how Satan is working to destroy the work of the King in the present age.

THE WHEAT AND THE TARES (Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43)

The Illustration:
Good seed is sown in the field, but while men slept, the enemy sowed tares, and went his way. The master forbade his servants from uprooting the tares until the harvest.

The Explanation:
Here the Lord Jesus does not sow His Word, but Satan sows his Word. Satan is to sow "counterfeits" that would be hard to distinguish from the wheat. The angels will separate and sort them out at the end of the age.

The Application:
BE ALERT. Where there is Christian witness, there will be antagonism. Don't uproot it; just grow on for God. The end is coming!



THE MUSTARD TREE (Mt. 13:31-32)

The Illustration:
A man sows a mustard seed in his field. Though only an herb, it eventually grows into a tree in which the birds of the air lodge.

The Explanation:
Those who give assent to the King have grown from a small seed into a tree of life.

The Emphasis:
Lodging in Christendom are agents of "the ruler of the darkness of this age." The operational program of Satan is to corrupt the true faith of righteous religion, which becomes the habitation of demons and false teachers.

The Application:
BE HUMBLE. Watch out for sensational growth that, like the mustard, tickles the palate but hides false teachers in its branches.



THE LEAVEN (Mt. 13:33)

The Illustration:
A woman hides leaven in three measures of meal, until the whole is affected.

The Explanation:
Leaven represents the corrupting work of evil (Mt. 8:15; Mt. 16:6; 1 Cor. 5:6-8, Gal. 5:9). Introduced into the dough (3 measures = 1 bushel), the leaven corrupts the whole.

The Emphasis:
Satan's imitation of the Bride of Christ. The leaven scheme is to corrupt the Bride of Christ by the darkness of the world in its offices, and work.

The Application:
BE HOLY. Wrong doctrine, especially about Christ, always corrupts morals. "Therefore let us keep the feast...with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:6-8).



THE TREASURE IN THE FIELD (Mt. 13:44)

The Illustration:
A man finds a treasure buried in a field; he hides it again, sells all that he has, and purchases the field with the treasure in it.

The Explanation:
The treasure hidden is Israel (Ec. 1:9-11), and the field is the world. The man who finds Israel is Christ. Satan's plan is to be "hologramized" by the remnant as Israel's true Messiah.

The Emphasis:
The treasure is the Kingdom of God. The man who finds it is Christ. He will return to claim His treasure, Israel, no longer set aside, will be the head of the nations.

The Application:
BE NOT KNOWING. The Lord is right on schedule. His promises to Abram and David will be fulfilled.



THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE (Mt. 13:45-46)

The Illustration:
A merchantman is seeking good pearls. On finding one pearl of great price, he sells all that he has and purchases it.

The Explanation:
The Merchantman from heaven, the Lord Jesus, found a pearl (the Church) in the world's nation. He will purchase it with His blood.

The Emphasis:
We learn of the work of Christ (the Church). He will purchase it with His blood (2 Cor. 8:9).

The Application:
BE THANKFUL. Although the kingdom was offered to Israel and refused, the Lord graciously turned to Jew and Gentile to fashion for Himself a Bride.



THE DRAGNET (Mt. 13:47-50)

The Illustration:
A net cast into the sea drew in various species of fish. When it was full, it was drawn to shore; where the good fish were saved and the bad cast away.

The Explanation:
The "gospel net" is descriptive of the work of the angels in "catching" every man who is obedient to the good from the bad in preparation for the final judgment of God.

The Emphasis:
The net draws in all kinds of fish. The net will draw all men into Him. All thus drawn are not saved. But in the end, He will do right and be seen to do so.

The Application:
BE CONSISTENT. Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.



The last three parables were given privately to His disciples. The Church has been "built upon the foundation of the apostles..." (Eph. 2:20). These parables show the Lord redeeming His people. They show how the operation of the purpose of God will ultimately triumph.

The Premillennial View

The Premillennial (from “pre,” before, and “millennium,” 1,000) sees this text as pertaining to an alleged return of Christ to set up an earthly kingdom over which he will reign from Jerusalem with his apostles as special authority agents (see Scofield, p. 1026). This regime is supposed to continue for a literal 1,000 years.

Louis Barbieri, a millennialist affiliated with the Dallas Theological Seminary, writes:

“Though the nation [of Israel] was then rejecting His offer of the kingdom, the kingdom would come, with its extensive remaking of things spiritual (Isa. 2:3; 4:2-4; 11:9b), political (Isa. 2:4; 11:1-5, 10-11; 32:16-18), and geographical and physical (Isa. 2:2; 4:5-6; 11:6-9; 35:1-2). Christ will **then** [emp. WJ] sit on His glorious throne (cf. Matt. 25:31; Rev. 22:1)” (p. 65).

There is not a solitary text in the quotation above that has to do with a post-Christian-age, **literal reign of Christ upon the earth for a millennium**. It really is incredible that a passage like Isaiah 11:1ff would be so applied, when an inspired apostle gives it a Christian-age application (cf. Romans 15:12). And the prophetic thrust of Isaiah 35:5-6 is adapted by Jesus to his earthly ministry (see Matthew 11:5), not to some earthly regime following his Second Coming.

Jesus, Crown Prince in Exile?

Premillennialism is a system of religious belief wherein the kingdom of Christ does not now exist, but will be established as an earthly nation in the future. Jesus will sit on the literal throne of David in Jerusalem and physically rule the world.

Premillennialism is built on one highly untenable principle: that when Jesus was incarnated, he intended to establish that earthly kingdom, but the Jews would not let him. Premillennialists ironically argue that the Jews were anticipating an earthly kingdom and Jesus came to establish an earthly kingdom and so the Jews prevented him. That doesn't even make for good nonsense. If Jesus were establishing the kind of kingdom they wanted, why would they stop him?

Premillennialists will concede that the prophecy of Daniel 2:36-44 pointed to a kingdom being instituted in the first century A.D., but submit that the fulfillment was postponed until such a time as the Jews could be converted en masse to Christ and allow him to take his throne. But for prophecy to be accurate, it cannot be postponed.

The point is simple & unavoidable: Either the kingdom was established as prophesied or the prophets were false, Jesus was a failure and God is impotent. The postponement theory is an apology for God's supposed downfall.

Look more closely at Daniel 2 and see if it allows for a postponement. Daniel said that four great empires would rule the world until God's kingdom was set up. He identified the first as that of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, to whom he spoke. Tracing Daniel's prophecy from that point, the next empire was the Medo-Persian (539 B.C.), less splendid and unified, but larger and more enduring. The third nation to follow was the Greek of Alexander the Great (330 B.C.). Then came Daniel's fourth empire, the Roman, stronger, brutal and unrefined. "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up his 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" (Dan. 2:44).

There is no way around the conclusion that God's kingdom would be established in the days of the Roman empire, the period in which Jesus lived. Either Daniel's prophecy was fulfilled in that era or it failed. We have shown that postponement of its fulfillment is tantamount to failure.

But did Jesus fail to set up God's kingdom? Or did he set up a kingdom of different quality than the Jews anticipated?

Soon after baptizing Jesus, John the immerser was executed for the lusty whim of Herod. To this, the Lord "began to preach and to say, `Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand(Matt. 4:17). It is undeniable that as Jesus began his ministry, he was under the impression that his messianic mission would succeed. He taught his early disciples to pray in Matthew 6:10 that the kingdom would come and instructed them in its gospel (Matt. 9:35).

In Matthew 10, he gave the twelve apostles supernatural powers and sent them into Judea to preach that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The Lord still thought its establishment was imminent.

Time and the Lord's journeys brought him to Caesarea Philippi where he asked his disciples whom they thought he was. Peter confessed him as the Messiah, the one who was prophesied to institute the kingdom of God, and to him (and the other apostles, Matt. 18:18) was given the keys of the kingdom (Matt. 16:18-19). If the kingdom was not established in Peter's lifetime, he carried those keys in his heart without ever using them. What a futile and pointless day was spent then in Caesarea Philippi!

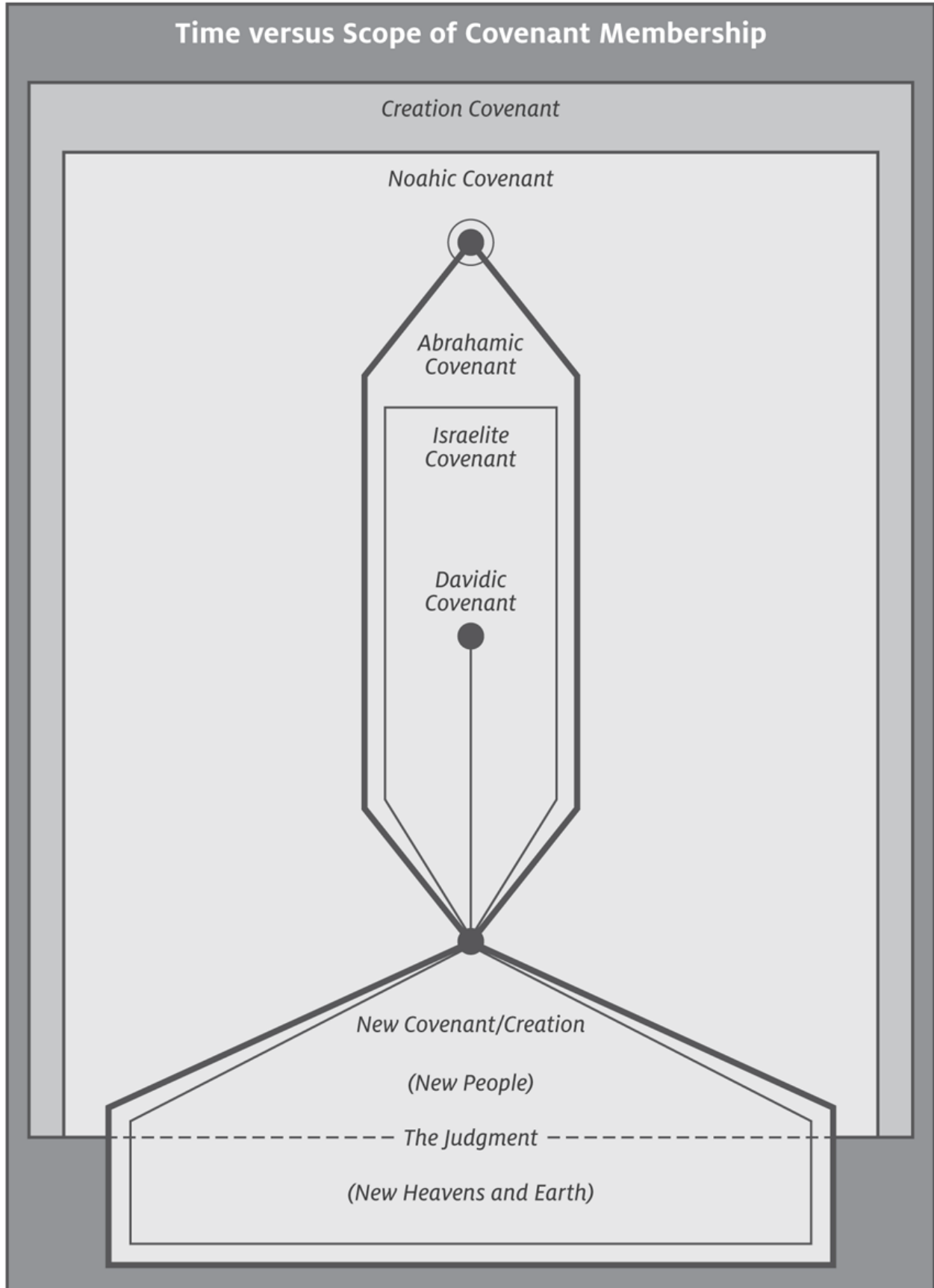
But a short time later came the coup de grace. Matthew 16:21: "From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day."

Please understand it: from the very time that Jesus promised the keys of the kingdom to Peter, he began to sketch his impending crucifixion for them. If he were ever planning to establish an earthly kingdom with himself on its throne, death was sure to cramp those plans. Could it just be that this death would send him to a figurative throne over a spiritual kingdom?

Peter, fresh with the keys in his pocket, rebukes the Lord's prophecy, thinking that death would prevent him from using those keys. Jesus, however, returns the rebuke, accusing Peter of being engrossed in the things of men, rather than God (Matthew 16:23). **The First Century Jewish and modern Premillennialist pre-occupation with putting Jesus on an earthly throne is labeled as self-serving and ungodly.**

You can try to two-step around that promise all day long, but either Jesus knew what he was talking about or he is less than we think. The last of those early disciples would have died by A.D. 125 at the latest. If the kingdom did not come in their lifetimes, your Lord is a failure & only a dishonorable Premillennialist could continue to trust in him. Of course, all Jesus predicted did happen. He entered the city of his demise upon a donkey to the sneers of the gentry and cheers of the commoners. He was tried by the vindictive Jewish and Roman authorities and put to death on the cross. For the Jew, the fulfillment of the kingdom prophecy seemed to be postponed until the real Messiah came along. For the Premillennialist, the kingdom was postponed until the crown prince Jesus thinks it safe to emerge from his exile.

But, Peter, taking the keys of the kingdom out of his pocket and opening the door, teaches us better. "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, 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. Foreseeing, He then spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ" (Acts 2:29-31). Reread the italicized words and keep looking for the kingdom. Christ sits on his throne, ruling a kingdom that transcends the lines of human treaties and boundaries. His kingdom is worldwide, claiming citizens in every corner of the globe, of every race, Jew or Gentile (Acts 10:34). "He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15). His church, promised in the same context as the kingdom in Matthew 16, is not afterthought, only the feeble grasp at power of a failed revolutionary. His church is that kingdom of prophecy, a kingdom "which shall never be destroyed" (Dan. 2:44), and "which the gates of Hades will not prevail against" (Matthew 16:18), and "which cannot be shaken" (Heb. 12:28). Citizens are constantly being conveyed into her (Col. 1:13), and she will be delivered back to God, not born, when the Lord returns (1 Cor. 15:24). – *Guardian of Truth*



God and the Nation of Israel

By Wayne Jackson



Premillennialism is the notion that Jesus will return to this earth before he commences a one thousand-year reign on David's throne in Jerusalem.

Premillennialism, and its theological sister, dispensationalism, argue that in connection with the second coming of Christ, God intends to reestablish a Jewish kingdom in Palestine. The doctrine contends that there is yet a purpose to be served by **physical** Israel.

Dispensationalists allege that in the "seven-year tribulation period," just prior to Christ's "millennial reign," God will restore the Jews to Palestine, and a national conversion of the Hebrew people will occur. It is not claimed that every Jew will be won to Christ; however, such vast multitudes will be saved—numbers proportionate to Israel's tragic fall—that it is appropriate to refer to the phenomenon as a "national" conversion.

One writer describes this so-called "restoration" as follows:

The same prophets who predicted the world-wide exile and persecution of the Jews also predicted their restoration as a nation ... This restoration was to come about in the general time of the climactic seven-year countdown and its finale—the personal appearance of the Messiah to deliver the new state from destruction (Lindsey 1970, 37-38).

The foregoing theory is quite erroneous in that it repudiates numerous fundamental Bible truths. Further, it is exceedingly dangerous in that it offers a false hope to Jews. Walvoord, a millennialist, says that: “This hope of restoration has sustained the Jews through nineteen hundred years of struggle” (1974, 76). This “hope” has been grossly misplaced—thanks, in part at least, to millennialists.

Israel in the Divine plan

A balanced study of the nation of Israel must include at least four elements: the selection, testing, rejection, and replacement of the Jewish people.

Selection

Almost two thousand years before the birth of Christ, Jehovah selected Abraham to be the founder of a new nation. It was declared that through him a seed would come by whom all peoples of the earth would be blessed (cf. Gen. 12:1-3; 22:17-18).

Several centuries later, Abraham’s offspring were delivered from an era of bondage in Egypt. They were given a special law and ritualistic system of worship which were designed to separate them from the other nations of the world (Ex. 19:5-6; cf. Eph. 2:14). All of this, of course, was in view of the coming Messiah (cf. Gal. 3:24-25; Heb. 9:1-10).

Testing

For some fifteen hundred years the Lord God attempted to cultivate the nation of Israel in preparation for the first advent of the Lord Jesus. It was a constant struggle to get the Hebrews to maintain a semblance of fidelity.

They grossly violated the law, frequently went after “strange gods,” and they viciously persecuted the prophets that Jehovah sent to call them to repentance. Jeremiah summarized the history of the Israelite people when he charged that they did “nothing” of all that Jehovah commanded them (Jer. 32:23).

Rejection

Because of the accelerating rebellion of the nation, consummated by the murder of Jesus Christ, God rejected the Hebrew people. Inexcusably, the Jews rejected their own Messiah; accordingly, Jehovah repudiated that nation and determined to scatter them as dust (Matthew 21:44). Thus, in the providence of God, the Roman armies came against Palestine in A.D. 70, and Judaism was destroyed (cf. Mt. 22:7; 24:1-34); the Jewish “vessel” was smashed, and it cannot be put back together (cf. Jer. 19:11).

According to Josephus, some 1.1 million Hebrews were slaughtered, and thousands were taken into slavery. All Jewish records were lost in that holocaust.

Today, there is not a single Jew who knows his tribal ancestry (McClintock and Strong 1969, pg. 771). The physical nation of Israel is dead. The “Jews” that make up the State of Israel today (less than twenty-five percent of the world Jewish population) cannot legitimately be called a “nation.”

Replacement

As a consequence of Israel’s rejection of the Messiah, God has replaced physical Israel with a new nation, **spiritual Israel**. Today, the “Jew” is not one who is so physically, but one who is so inwardly, i.e., spiritually (Rom. 2:28-29).

In this age, those who submit to the gospel plan of redemption—whether Jew or Gentile (Rom. 1:16)—become children of God, and thus are constituted as the true “seed of Abraham” (Gal. 3:26-29).

Errors of the Premillennial View Regarding the Nation of Israel

In view of the foregoing considerations, the following factors clearly indicate that the premillennial view of the nation of Israel is erroneous, and it should be rejected by conscientious students of the Bible.

God is impartial

First, it is a reflection upon the benevolent character of Jehovah to suggest that he intended to **perpetually** favor one nation over all others.

Such a notion is at variance with the multiple Bible affirmations which assert the universal love of God, and his just, impartial disposition with reference to the whole human family (cf. Gen. 12:3; Psa. 145:9; Acts 10:34-35).

Nation of Israel was preparatory

Second, the premillennial dogma ignores the fact that God's initial selection of the Hebrew people, and the acquisition of Canaan, was preparatory to the coming Christ. Jehovah employed the Jewish nation as a medium for the introduction of Christ into the world.

Now that the Messianic mission has been accomplished, the role of "national Israel" no longer exists (cf. Gal. 3:24-25). That "middle wall of partition," designed to isolate Israel from the nations, has been broken down (Eph. 2:14). It was abrogated at the cross (Col. 2:14). From the divine viewpoint, old physical Israel has passed away. It has been superseded by a **new** Israel.

Nation of Israel's favor was conditional

Third, the Old Testament makes it abundantly clear that Israel's favor with Jehovah, even under the Mosaic regime, was **conditional**.

And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of Jehovah thy God, to observe to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that Jehovah thy God will set thee on high above all the nations of the earth (Deut. 28:1).

The Hebrews were constantly warned of the consequences of disobedience (cf. Deut. 28:15ff). They could be disinherited as a nation (Num. 14:12), and disfranchised of their land (Josh. 23:13, 16).

The truth is, there are about as many Old Testament warnings to Israel as there are promises!

No Promise of Israel's restoration after Pentecost

Fourth, there is not a solitary New Testament passage which speaks of the restoration of national Israel and the reinstatement of Judaistic ritualism, etc.

The Old Testament prophecies which predict the **literal** return of the Hebrews to Palestine were fulfilled in the Jews' release from political captivity (cf. Jer. 29:10; Ezr. 1:1).

Other predictions, which speak of a "restoration" of Israel, refer to a **spiritual restoration** (to God, not Palestine—cf. Isa. 49:5) through Jehovah's servant, Christ. Sometimes this spiritual restoration to God, through the redemptive work of Christ, is **symbolically** viewed in terms of the rebuilding of Jerusalem, etc. (cf. Jer. 31:38-40).

This blessing was for Jew and Gentile alike. Study carefully Isa. 49:5ff, and note Paul's use of this context in the New Testament (Acts 13:47; 2 Cor. 6:2).

Tragic future predicted for Israel

Fifth, there are many New Testament passages which portray a tragic future for physical Israel, with no hint of a national restoration. Consider the following dark prophecies.

Prophetic Pronouncements Concerning Israel

When one carefully considers the testimony of the New Testament, it becomes clear that the future of physical Israel is bleak.

The axe lieth at the root ...

Like modern millennialists, there were Jews of old who felt that there was intrinsic virtue in being a physical descendant of Abraham (cf. Jn. 8:39).

John the Baptizer informed them, however, that God was able to use stones in raising up seed to the patriarch. He then warned: "And even now the axe lieth at the root of the trees" (Mt. 3:10).

The context focuses upon a threatened “wrath to come” (Mt. 3:7), which would find its nearest application in the destruction of the Jewish nation by the Romans in A.D. 70.

Now here is a vital point. When a tree is cut down, there is hope that it will sprout again, provided its stump or roots remain (cf. Job 14:7, 8; Isa. 11:1). But when the axe is laid at the **root**, where is the hope of restoration? There simply is none!

The cursed fig tree

Christ once pronounced a curse upon a barren fig tree near Jerusalem. The tree served as an apt illustration of fruitless national Israel. Jesus declared: “Let there be no fruit from thee **henceforth for ever**” (Mt. 21:19). Where is the hope in that?

Later, on that same Tuesday, just prior to Friday’s crucifixion, the Lord announced to the Jews,

“The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof” (Mt. 21:43).

In other words, barren national Israel would be replaced by fruitful **spiritual** Israel, the church (cf. 1 Pet. 2:9; Gal. 6:16).

Parables of destruction

In the parable of the marriage of the king’s son, Jesus spoke concerning those who spurned the royal invitation. It was prophesied that the king (God) would send his armies (the Romans), and destroy those murderers (the Jews), and burn their city (Jerusalem).

Why? They “were [imperfect tense—a **sustained** state] not worthy” (Mt. 22:1-8). Is there any suggestion of restoration there?

Later, in Matthew 23:38, Christ warned: “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” The term “house,” as Bloomfield notes, refers not merely to the temple alone, but to the whole Jewish nation, especially its metropolis (1837, 116). “**Left desolate**” has a note of finality about it.

In the parable of the barren fig tree (Lk. 13:6-9), it is suggested that fruitless Israel would be soon cut down. “This parable gives Israel to know that its life is only a respite, and that this respite is nearing its end” (Godet 1879, 119).

There is no suggestion that the “tree” would spring up again. Strange indeed—if millennialism is true.

In another parable, uttered shortly before his death, Jesus depicted himself as a nobleman who was going into a far country (heaven) to receive for himself a kingdom (the church). Later, he would return (the second coming).

However, while he was in that distant land, his citizens (the Jews) hated him (imperfect tense—an **abiding** hatred) and sent this message to him: “We will not [present tense—a **continued** determination] that [you] reign over us” (Lk. 19:14).

Even millennialists admit that this refers to the Jewish rejection of Christ (Martin 1983, 252). Without the remotest suggestion that there would be an alteration of this hateful Jewish disposition, the nobleman, “when he was come back” (Lk. 19:15), characterized these citizens as his “enemies,” and commanded they be slain (Lk. 19:27).

The language describes “the state of rejection in which [the Jews] are plunged **till the Lord’s return**” (Godet 1879, 223; emphasis added).

In yet another parable, Jesus foretold Israel’s rejection of the gospel, and the subsequent success of the kingdom of heaven among the Gentiles. Of those stubborn Jews, he declared: “[N]one of those men who were bidden shall taste of my supper” (Lk. 14:24).

This refers, of course, to the Jewish majority that refused the gospel (a remnant accepted the invitation—cf. Rom. 11:5). Why did not the Lord give some clue that eventually there would be a massive Jewish acceptance of his invitation?

Christ's predictions

In Luke's account of the Olivet discourse, Christ, alluding to Jerusalem's impending destruction, declared that the city would be "trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Lk. 21:24).

The term "trodden down" is a present tense participle, suggesting prolonged hardships (though not necessarily uninterrupted) for Jerusalem (and what she represented—the nation).

This oppression was to continue until the "times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." The phrase "times of the Gentiles" is an expression for the current age.

It implies a "times of the Jews" (i.e., the Mosaic period). For fifteen centuries the Hebrews were Jehovah's special people—an era which might be appropriately termed "the times of the Jews."

When they rejected the Messiah, that age of prominence (called a "reign"—Mt. 21:43) ended. It was superseded by "the times of the Gentiles"—the Christian age.

It is clear that Israel is to be the recipient of divine retribution throughout the Christian era.

Millennialists argue, however, that Jerusalem was to be trodden down only "until" the times of the Gentiles is fulfilled. After that time, they contend, Jerusalem will be exalted to her former glory.

The key word in their argument is "until" (Greek, **achri**). Premillennialists assume the term has a **temporal** implication in Luke 21:24, thus implying a **reversal** of events after the time specified.

But the assumption is unwarranted. The term **achri** frequently has a **terminal** thrust in the New Testament.

Consider, for example, Revelation 2:25, where Christ sought to encourage the saints at Thyatira:

"[T]hat which ye have, hold fast **till** I come."

Does this suggest that these Christians will relinquish their blessings when he comes? Of course not.

Similarly, just because the Lord declared that Jerusalem would be trodden down **until** the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled, that does not imply that, following “the times of the Gentiles,” the city would be restored to some sort of divine glory. Proof for such a theory will have to be found somewhere other than in the word “until.”

The truth of the matter is, God’s wrath has come upon Israel “to the uttermost” (1 Thessalonians 2:16).

Paul’s commentary on Israel’s hardened heart

In his letter to the Romans, Paul contends that “a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in” (Rom. 11:25).

There are several important matters that need to be noted here.

First, the “hardening” was the Jewish disbelief in Christ.

Second, the “in part” suggests that this lack of faith was characteristic of only a portion of the nation; there was a remnant that did believe (cf. Rom. 9:27; 11:5, 14).

Third, the verb “hath befallen” is a perfect tense form, stressing the **abiding nature** of that hardness—until the fulness of the Gentiles comes in.

Fourth, “fulness of the Gentiles” simply denotes the accomplishment of Jehovah’s purpose among the Gentiles (or the “nations”). In other words, Israel’s hardness will remain until the end of the present dispensation. As B.M. Christiansen comments: “This partial hardening will continue throughout the time of the Gentiles, i.e., until Christ’s return” (cf. Lenski 1961, 174).

Since the hardening of Israel was not total, but only “in part,” there is still hope that many Jews may be saved.

But how will the Jews be saved? They will be saved by their acceptance of the gospel (Rom. 10:12-16), and their surrender to the Deliverer from Zion (Rom. 11:26).

This provides the correct meaning of “so all Israel shall be saved.” The word “so” is an adverb of **manner**, meaning, “in this way.” Hence, it is in this way (the way of obeying Christ) that all Israel (who are saved) shall be saved. This passage does not affirm a nation-wide conversion of the people of Israel.

The theory that Paul expected a mass conversion of Israel is flawed on several accounts:

It contradicts his entire line of argument in Romans 9-11.

It leaves as inexplicable the throbbing anguish for his brethren in the flesh, which saturates this entire section.

For instance, Paul writes: “For I could wish [potential imperfect—]I kept being on point of wishing”] that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren’s sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Rom. 9:3).

Why—if he knew that a national conversion of Israel was an ultimate reality?

Conclusion

The premillennial concept of the nation of Israel is clearly erroneous. There is no promise of a national conversion of Israel in the Bible.

The gospel is still God’s power to save both Jew and Greek (Rom. 1:16), and all who possess hearts that are “honest and good” (Lk. 8:15) will accept it. The only “hope” for Israel is in the cross of Christ (see Acts 26:6-23).

Is the Kingdom Yet to be Established?

by Dave Miller, Ph.D.

The average American is aware of the periodic claim that “the end is near.” When Y2K was approaching, outcries of doom, global disruption, and Armageddon were widespread. Hal Lindsey achieved nationwide attention over thirty years ago with his national bestseller, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970). A more recent repackaging of the dispensational brand of premillennialism is the popular *Left Behind* book series (see “The Official...,” 2003). Every so often, a religious figure captures national attention by announcing the impending return of Jesus—even to the point of setting a date—only to fade into the anonymity and obscurity from which he arose when his claim falls flat, but having achieved his “fifteen minutes of fame” (see Whisenant and Brewer, 1989). The sensationalism sells well, and tweaks the curiosity of large numbers of people. Incredibly, this pattern has been repeating itself—**literally for centuries!**

One feature of the premillennial dispensationalist’s claim is that the kingdom is yet future, and that Jesus is not reigning now, but will commence His reign in His kingdom when He returns in the future to establish it in Jerusalem. However, several passages cannot be harmonized with such a view. First, the Bible teaches that the kingdom exists **now**, and has existed since A.D. 30. While Jesus was on Earth, He went to Galilee, “preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘**The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe in the gospel**’ (Mark 1:14-15, emp. added). He also stated: “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” (Mark 9:1). In fact, Jesus “has delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Colossians 1:13). To insist that the kingdom is yet to be established is to fail to recognize that the Bible plainly declares that the kingdom already exists on Earth.

Second, the words “kingdom,” “Israel,” and “church” all refer to the same group of people—i.e., the saved, Christians, the church of Christ, or **spiritual** Israel. Jesus predicted that He would build His “church” and give to Peter the keys of the “kingdom” (Matthew 16:18-19). Jesus did not build one institution and then give Peter the keys to a different institution. Paul told the Galatian Christians: “Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. ...and if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:7,29; cf. 6:16). He told Christians in Rome: “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart” (Romans 2:28-29). Spiritual Israel is the church of Christ—that is, the kingdom.

Third, Jesus is reigning now in heaven, and has been since His ascension around A.D. 30. Peter explained 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 Peter 3:22). Daniel predicted over four centuries prior to its fulfillment: “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. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13-14). This prophecy was

fulfilled at the ascension of Christ: “while they watched, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9). Jesus returned to heaven where He was given rule over His kingdom (Hebrews 10:12). When He returns a second time, it will not be to reign on Earth. Rather, “[t]hen comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet” (1 Corinthians 15:24-25).

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter announced to the gathered crowd that **Jesus was reigning at that moment over His kingdom**: “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 of the resurrection of the Christ.... This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore, being exalted to the right hand of God...” (Acts 2:30-33). Paul made the same point in his letter to the church of Christ in Ephesus: “He raised Him 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” (Ephesians 1:20-22). I repeat: the Bible repeatedly affirms that **Jesus is reigning and ruling now** over His kingdom.

Fourth, Jesus **completed** His work on Earth and, consequently, has no reason to return to the Earth to do any additional work. He explained to the disciples: “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and **to finish** His work” (John 4:34, emp. added). Shortly before His departure from the Earth, He prayed to the Father: “I have glorified You on the earth. **I have finished** the work which You gave Me to do” (John 17:4).

Dispensationalists say that Jesus came with the intention to be King, and to set up an earthly kingdom, but that the Jews unexpectedly rejected Him. However, this claim is in direct conflict with the facts. On one occasion, after Jesus fed thousands of people with five loaves of bread and two fish—a feat that would constitute a tremendous advantage should war with Rome be forthcoming—John noted that “when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to a mountain by Himself alone” (6:15). Here was the perfect opportunity for Jesus to become the physical king that the dispensationalists insist He intended to become. But He refused! Why? He gave the reason to 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” (John 18:36). The dispensational claim that Jesus is coming back to be a king on Earth on a physical throne is the very thing first-century Jews tried to get Him to do—**but which He refused to do**.

Premillennialists also maintain that the modern nation of Israel is the recipient of various promises made in Scripture, and that it plays a prominent and continuing role in God’s scheme of things. This contention has had a profound impact upon U.S. foreign policy, and in the way people around the world—especially in the Middle East—perceive America. It must surely be a shock for many people to learn that the Bible depicts no such favored status. All people stand on level ground at the foot of the cross of Christ. God is no respecter of persons, and makes no distinctions between people on the basis of ethnicity (Acts 10:34-35; Romans 2:11, 28-29; Galatians 3:28). The promises that were made to physical Israel in the Old Testament were fulfilled long ago.

For example, God announced to Abraham that He would give to his descendents (the Israelites) the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:1; 15:7). This promise was fulfilled when Israel took possession of Palestine in the fifteenth century B.C. (Joshua 21:43-45; 2 Chronicles 9:26). What so many people today fail to recognize is that Israelites’ retaining the land was contingent upon their continued obedience (Leviticus 18:24-28; Joshua 23:14-16; 1 Kings 9:3-7). The complete and final forfeiture of physical Israel took place in A.D. 70. The

reestablishment of national Israel, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple (i.e., the national promises of Deuteronomy 30 and Zechariah 12-14) were **literally** fulfilled in the returning remnant after the Babylonian captivity (Nehemiah 1:8-10; Isaiah 10:22; Jeremiah 23:3; Ezra 3:1-11).

Many of the Old Testament prophecies that predicted the return of the Jews after captivity were laced with predictions of the coming of Christ to the Earth to bring ultimate redemption. Hence, the national promises were **spiritually** fulfilled in the church of Christ, wherein both Jews and Gentiles are one in Christ. For example, premillennialists are fond of calling attention to the concluding prophetic remarks of Amos: “ ‘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; that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name,’ says the Lord who does this thing” (Amos 9:11-12). They insist that the fulfillment of this prophecy is yet future. They say the Temple, which was destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Romans (Matthew 23:37-24:35), will be rebuilt on the Temple platform in Jerusalem (a site currently occupied by the third most holy shrine of Islam—the Dome of the Rock). They say that Jesus will return, set up His millennial kingdom, and reign on a literal throne for a thousand years, incorporating the Gentiles, in addition to the nation of Israel, into His kingdom. On the face of it, this prophecy certainly possesses terminology that fits the millennial interpretation placed upon it.

However, two Bible passages correct this interpretation, and settle the question as to the proper application of Amos’ prophecy. The first is the great messianic prophecy uttered by the prophet Nathan to King David regarding David’s future lineage and royal dynasty (2 Samuel 7:12-16). Nathan declared that God would establish and sustain the Davidic dynasty. Even though he also noted that a permanent form of the Tabernacle (that God refused to allow David to build—2 Samuel 7:1-7) would be built by David’s son (i.e., Solomon), God, Himself, would build David a house (i.e., a dynasty, a kingly lineage). It is this **lineage** to which Amos referred—not a physical temple building.

The second passage that clarifies Amos’ prophecy is the account of the Jerusalem “conference” (Acts 15). Following Peter’s report regarding Gentile inclusion in the kingdom, James offered the following confirmatory comment: “Men and brethren, listen to me: Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written” (Acts 15:13-15). James then quoted Amos 9:11-12. In other words, on that most auspicious occasion, James noted two significant facts that had come to pass precisely as predicted by Amos: (1) after the downfall of the Jewish kingdom, the Davidic dynasty had been reinstated in the person of Christ—the “Son of David” (Matthew 22:42)—Who, at His ascension, had been enthroned in heaven, thereby “rebuilding the tabernacle of David that had fallen down”; and (2) with the conversion of the first Gentiles in Acts 10, as reported on this occasion by Peter, the “residue of men,” or the non-Jewish segment of humanity, was now “seeking the Lord.”

In light of James’ inspired application of it to the integrated church of the first century, the Amos prophecy, like all others in the Old Testament that premillennialists wish to apply to the future, finds ultimate and final climax in the momentous advent of the Christian religion on the planet. The premillennial treatment of prophecy is, in the final analysis, a demeaning and trivializing of the significance of the Gospel, the church of Christ, and the Christian religion as the final revelation from God to mankind. The kingdom is not future; it is here now. All accountable persons would do well to conform themselves to the preconditions that enable Jesus to add them to His kingdom (Acts 2:38,47; 8:12-13,36-38; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:30-34; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16).

Lord's Promise of the Kingdom: Fulfilled at His Second Coming?

In his testimony six days before his transfiguration, Christ clearly stated that some of those who stood there **would not die** until the kingdom came. If that “coming” was the return of Christ at the end of time, the irresistible conclusion would be that some of those folks are living yet today. Skeptics, like Bertrand Russell, assumed that Jesus **was** referring to his second coming and so contended that the Lord was a false prophet! Pre-Millennialists, likewise drawing an erroneous conclusion regarding the coming of the kingdom promise, unintentionally thrust the Son of God into the same mold. Some advocates of millennialism feel the force of this difficulty and, like Carson (1984, 382), squirm mightily in attempting to deal with it.

When the Lord stated that some wouldn't die until the kingdom arrived, he gave a measured determinative that at least marked out a limitation as to when the time of that event would be. If, however, he was speaking of his second coming, such was wholly at variance with his later affirmation that **he did not know** when the time of his return would be. “But of that day and hour knows no one, not even the angels of heaven, **neither the Son**, but the Father only” (Matthew 24:36).

Is Jesus Presently Reigning As King?

By Mike Willis

The doctrine of premillennialism denies that Jesus is presently reigning as king in His kingdom. The doctrine asserts that Jesus will come back to this earth and establish a physical kingdom at some time in the future. He is supposed to reign over this physical kingdom on this literal earth for a literal 1000 years. Is this doctrine true or is Christ presently reigning as king over His kingdom? If it can be shown that Christ is presently reigning as king over His kingdom, the doctrine of premillennialism will be shown to be false.

Did Jesus Fulfill Messianic Prophecy

When one studies the prophecies regarding the coming of the Messiah, he is impressed that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of these prophecies. Consequently, he confesses his belief that Jesus is the Christ Messiah/. If Jesus did not fulfill the Messianic prophecies, He was not the Christ; He was a false Christ who deluded the people. Of course, we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. However, let us notice the prophecies made concerning the Messiah. Isaiah foresaw the glory of Christ and predicted that He would reign as king over God's kingdom. He wrote,

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The Zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this (Isa. 9:6-7).

Others foretold many of the same things. They wrote,

Behold, the days come saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth (Jer. 23:5).

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed (Dan. 7:13-14).

The prophecies which foretold the establishment of God's kingdom and the reign of the Messiah also foretold human opposition to that reign. The psalmist predicted the efforts which would be made to prevent the king from being appointed as king.

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord & against his anointed, saying, Let's break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion (Psa. 2:1-6).

The prophecies which described the reign did not picture it as utopia – an era in which perfect peace would exist upon the earth. Rather, they foretold that Jesus would reign in the midst of His enemies.

The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies (Psa. 110:1-2).

These and many other prophecies were made concerning the reign of the Messiah. Did Jesus fulfill these prophecies?

The Advent Of The Messiah

When Jesus entered this world, the angel announced unto Mary, “Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Lk. 1:32-33). The child born to Mary was to fulfill the Messianic-predictions of a king reigning over His kingdom.

When John labored in his ministry, he announced that the fulfillment of the kingdom prophecies was near at hand; he said, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:2). When Jesus began His ministry, He announced the same thing, saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15; Matthew 4:17). During His ministry, Jesus stated that the fulfillment of the kingdom prophecies was to occur within the lifetime of those who were living then. He said, “Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power” (Mk. 9:1).

When Jesus stood before Pilate, the Roman procurator inquired, “Art thou a king then?” Jesus answered, “Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth” (Jn. 18:37). These statements must be understood in the context of the Messianic prophecies. Jesus, the Son of God, stated that He had come into this world to fulfill the prophecies which had been made centuries earlier by the prophets.

The prophets had plainly stated that nothing mere man could do could thwart God's purpose in establishing the Messiah as king over His kingdom. Hence, these promises were either fulfilled as the prophets predicted and as Jesus planned to do, in which case Jesus is the Messiah, or they were not fulfilled, in which case Jesus is not the Messiah.

Announcement of the Fulfillment

The early church believed that God fulfilled these prophecies when Jesus was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven to sit on the right hand of God. Their preaching contained the announcement of the fulfillment of these prophecies. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached that Jesus was reigning on David's throne. He said,

Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before speaks of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:29-36).

This sermon announced the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies that God would raise up a descendant of David, namely Jesus, who would reign on David's throne. The sermon contained several Messianic prophecies, including Psalm 110:1.

In Acts 4, the saints applied the prophecy in Psalm 2, regarding God establishing the Messiah as king on His throne despite the concerted efforts of the unbelievers to thwart that reign, to the events surrounding the cross. Luke records their prayer,

And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done (Acts 4:24-28).

They understood Psalm 2 to be fulfilled. The efforts to stop the coronation of Jesus on David's throne were those of the Jews, Gentiles, Herod, and Pontius Pilate. These efforts failed because God raised Jesus from the dead and set Him at His own right hand. He is presently reigning in heaven.

Consequently, gospel preaching contained the announcement of the establishment of the kingdom of God. Philip preached "the good news about the kingdom of God" (Acts 8:12, NASB) in Samaria. The good news was that the long awaited kingdom of God had come, not that it had been postponed indefinitely. Paul related that God had "delivered" the Colossians from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13-14). The author of the Hebrews reported that the Hebrew Christians had received a kingdom which cannot be shaken (i.e., an eternal kingdom, Heb. 12:28), the kind of kingdom foretold by Daniel (2:44). John stated that he and the saints in the seven churches of Asia were in the kingdom of God (Rev. 1:9).

In addition of these plain statements that the prophecies were fulfilled and that the kingdom was established, the New Testament authors also stated that Jesus had all authority given to Him after His resurrection. Jesus said, “All power is given unto me in~heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18). God placed everything under Jesus’ authority. Paul told how God had subjected all things to Christ as he stated, “. . . which he (God) wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own 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 world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church” (Eph. 1:20-22; cf. Col. 2:16). Everything, both in heaven and on earth, has been subjected to Christ since He was risen from the dead and was seated at the right hand of God. If everything is already subject to Christ, what more authority could be given to Him at some future date? He already has all authority! Hence, He is presently reigning as the monarch over His kingdom. The period of Christ’s reign is misunderstood. Hence, some believe that it has not yet begun, that it will begin at some future date, and that it will last for a literal thousand years. However, the Scriptures state that the reign of Christ began when He took His seat on the right hand of the throne of God. Notice these Scriptures which teach that the, period of Jesus reign is from His ascension into heaven (Acts 1:9) until His second coming. When Jesus ascended into heaven, He “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:3). He was to sit on the right hand of God until God made His enemies the footstool of the His feet (Heb. 1:13; 10:12-13). Paul wrote on this subject in his discussion of the resurrection of the body. He said,

But every man in his own order: . . . Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (1 Cor. 15:23-26).

Notice these facts gleaned from this passage: (1) Jesus is presently reigning; (2) He will continue to reign until the last enemy is destroyed; (3) The last enemy to be destroyed is death which will be destroyed when the dead are raised; (4) After that occurs, the kingdom will be delivered up (not set up) to God; (5) Finally, Christ will “also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him” (1 Cor. 15:28). At this present time, Jesus should be recognized as “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15). He presently has the key of David (Isa. 22:22; Rev. 3:7) and is reigning as King over His kingdom.

Mistaken Views Based On Misunderstanding of Kingdom

Those who do not believe that Jesus is presently reigning as King over His kingdom hold this conclusion because they misunderstand the nature of the kingdom which He came to establish. They have a physical, literal kingdom in mind. They think that Jesus came to this earth to establish a temporal government in the city of Jerusalem which would gain control of the entire earth. This government would establish a one-thousand year reign of peace in which the physical nature of things in this world would be changed so thoroughly that the wolf would dwell with the lamb and the leopard would lie down with the young goat. Of course, that has never literally occurred. However, these passages were never intended to be understood, literally because Jesus never intended to establish a physical kingdom. The nature of the kingdom which Jesus came to establish was spiritual. When Jesus stood before Pilate, He said, “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence” (Jn. 18:36). Again, He said, “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, to there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you” (Lk. 17:20-21).

When Jesus' disciples tried to make Him an earthly king, He withdrew from their midst (Jn. 6:15), refusing to be an earthly king. The passage is thoroughly unable of explanation from a premillennial perspective. Premillennialists believe that Jesus wanted to be an earthly king. John 6:15 records that the people wanted to make Jesus an earthly king. Why did He refuse to allow them to make Him an earthly king? The premillennialist cannot give an answer, although the answer is quite simple – Jesus did not come to establish a physical kingdom!

As a matter of fact, Jesus could not reign as a king on this earth for several reasons. The prophet Zechariah foresaw that the Messiah would occupy the position of both priest and king; he wrote,

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both (Zech. 6:12-13).

This prophecy was difficult of interpretation to those who lived before Christ. The Messiah had to be a descendant of David (2 Sam. 7:11-14), of the tribe of Judah. Yet, Zechariah said that He would be priest on His throne. The priest had to descend through the tribe of Levi. The Jews, prior to the coming of Christ, did not understand how the Messiah was going to be both priest and king.

Jesus could not be a priest upon this earth. “For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law” (Hebrews 8:4). Consequently, the priesthood of Christ had to be a spiritual priesthood in which Jesus serves in heaven. Inasmuch as Jesus has to serve as a priest-king and he cannot serve as a priest on earth, He cannot serve as a king on earth as well.

This is further confirmed by Jeremiah. Jeremiah predicted no descendant of Jehoiachin (also called Coniah) could occupy the throne of David in Judah. He wrote, “Thus saith the Lord, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah” (Jer. 22:30). Jesus is a descendant of Jechoniah (Matt. 1:11-12). Hence, Jesus could not sit upon the throne of David in Judah. Jesus sits on the throne of David but He sits on that throne in heaven, seated at the right hand of God. He could not reign on this earth in a temporal kingdom.

If Jesus Is Not Reigning

There are some conclusions which follow from taking the position that Jesus is not presently reigning as King in His kingdom which we need to consider. Those who deny that Jesus is presently reigning are unwilling to accept these conclusions. Hence, these become additional evidences that Jesus is reigning as King over His kingdom. If Jesus is not reigning as King over His kingdom:

1. **God broke His promise.** In Psalm 2, Jehovah promised that He would establish His kingdom regardless of man’s attempts to thwart His purpose. Premillennialism teaches that the Jewish rejection of Jesus as an earthly king caused God not to be able to establish the kingdom in the first century. Hence, God’s promise failed. The next conclusion which follows is this: if the rejection of Jesus in the first century had caused God to be unable to fulfill His promise, how can we be sure a similar rejection at a later time would not have the same effect? This destroys confidence in the word of God.

2. **Jesus is a failure.** John 18:37 plainly states that Jesus came to this earth for the purpose of becoming a king. If He did not accomplish that which He set out to do, as premillennialists assert, He failed in His mission.

3. **Dethrones Christ.** Premillennialism dethrones Christ by denying that He is presently reigning as king over His kingdom. If premillennialism is true, we cannot confess that Jesus is Lord (Acts 2:36) or that He is King of kings & Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15). We could only state a conviction that He will become these things at some future date. Presently, Jesus does not have “all authority” if premillennialism is true despite the clear affirmations to the contrary (Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-23).

4. **The Apostles have no authority.** The apostles were given “binding and loosing” authority in the kingdom (Matthew 16:18; 18:18). If the kingdom has not come, they have no binding and loosing authority. The words of the apostles would not then be the authoritative word of God for today. The New Testament loses its authority if premillennialism is true.

5. **No need for a new birth.** The new birth was the condition for one to have admission into the kingdom of heaven (Jn. 3:3, 5). If that kingdom has not come, there is no need for a man to be born again. Why be born again if there is no kingdom in which to enter?

Conclusions

Jesus is reigning! He is reigning in heaven today and will, continue to reign until the second coming at which time He will return to this earth, raise the dead, and judge the world in righteousness. He is presently Lord of lords and King of kings. Each of us needs to voluntarily submit ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ and acknowledge His authority.

Questions:

1. Explain how one can prove that premillennialism is false by proving that Jesus is presently reigning as King over His kingdom.
2. Describe the nature of the reign of the Messiah which was foretold in Psalm 110:1-2.
3. Could man thwart God's purpose to establish the Messiah on the throne of God? Give Scriptures to confirm your answer.
4. Prove that Jesus came to this earth for the purpose of being a king.
5. If Jesus failed in His first effort to be a king, could we be sure that He would succeed in subsequent efforts to become a king?
6. Prove that Jesus taught that the kingdom would be established in the first century.
7. Prove that the early church believed that Jesus was presently reigning in their day.
8. Give the fulfillment of Psalm 2:1-6.
9. Cite Scriptures to prove that the kingdom is presently established.
10. How much authority does Jesus have today? How much more authority could He possibly possess in the future?
11. Give the duration of Jesus' reign.
12. What kind of kingdom do the premillennialists expect and what kind did Jesus establish?
13. Why could Jesus never be an earthly king?

It Minimizes the Church

The premillennial position makes the church a mere accident which is diametrically the opposite of what Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:11. He declared that it was “according to the eternal purpose of God.” A serious consequence of the premillennial doctrine is that it destroys faith in the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

R.H. Boll of Louisville, Kentucky was the leader of the premillennial movement among churches of Christ. He referred to the church as “a new spiritual contingent” (Word and Work, March, 1938). The word “contingent” means “a happening by chance or unforeseen causes” (Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary). According then, to the premillennial theory, had it not been for rejection of the Messiah by the Jews, the old literal kingdom of David would have been re-established and the church would never have been brought into existence. Who can believe that the church, purchased by His Son’s blood and filled with His Spirit, is accidental or by chance?

In the first place, the Old Testament prophets never foretold an earthly king or earthly kingdom. The Jews, including the apostles, were expecting a restoration of the literal kingdom of Israel (Acts 1:6) as are modern-day pre-millennialists; but Lord Jesus did not come to

establish a literal and earthly kingdom. The kingdom He established began on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), the reign of Jesus is spiritual (1 Cor. 15:25, 26) and the very nature of the kingdom is spiritual (John 18: 36; Romans 14:17). The terms “church” and “kingdom” are used as interchangeable in the New Testament (Matt. 16:18, 19), and to be in the kingdom is to be in the church (Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:9). Jesus is the head of the church (Col. 1:18) and rules over His kingdom (1 Cor. 15:25, 26; Revelation 1:6). The idea that the kingdom was postponed because of rejection by the Jews, and the church is an “interruption” (“a parenthesis” as expressed by H.A. Ironside) and was fathered by J.N. Darby in the latter part of the nineteenth century. He insisted that the church is distinctly not a part of God’s initial redemptive plan (Clarence Bass, *Backgrounds of Dispensationalism*, p. 27). This idea is generally believed by modern premillennialists & was promoted in churches of Christ by R.H. Boll (as mentioned), and is popularized by C.I. Scofield in the publication of his Bible with premillennial notes. The church wasn’t only in the mind of God (Eph. 3:11) but is spiritual Israel, fulfilling in Christ the promise to Abraham (Gal. 3). It manifests the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10), is a part of the “mystery” (the divine plan of redemption, vs. 6), and will remain as long as the earth shall endure (vs. 21).

ANSWER: The circumstances of the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) perfectly fit the details of Jesus' prophecy concerning the coming kingdom. This is clear not only on the merits of the case, but by the process of elimination as well (as seen above). Consider the following facts.

(1) Both the Old and New Testaments teach that Christ was to receive his kingdom after he **ascended** to the Father (Acts 1:9-11). Daniel foretold that "one like unto a son of man" would come "even to the Ancient of Days" [God] & there he would be given "dominion, glory, and a kingdom" (Daniel 7:13-14). Similarly, Christ himself, in the parable of the pounds, spoke of a certain "nobleman" who journeyed "into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return" (Luke 19:11ff). The "nobleman" was Christ, the "far country" was heaven, and the nobleman's "return" represented the second coming. The "kingdom" was received by the Lord in **heaven**—before the second coming, not on **earth** afterward.

(2) The collection of kingdom prophecies in the Gospel accounts all point to a regime that was not realized during the days of Jesus' earthly ministry. And, as emphasized earlier, the information in Acts & the Epistles (as well as Revelation 1:6, 9) show the kingdom to have been a present reality from Pentecost onward (with the exception of a few passages that represent "heaven" as the final dimension of the "kingdom"; cf. 2 Timothy 4:18; 2 Peter 1:11).

(3) Just prior to the prophecy of the coming kingdom, as reflected in the testimony of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, there was the exchange between Jesus and his disciples; then more specifically between Christ and Peter. The Lord made it clear that the "church" he was to build is the equivalent of the "kingdom." In a symbolic sense, Peter used the "keys of the kingdom" (i.e., the authority resident in the gospel message) to admit sinners into the church by means of their obedience (Acts 2; 10).

(4) The Savior announced that the kingdom would arrive with "power" (Mark 9:1). The most natural interpretation of that phrase centers on the events of Pentecost. Just before his ascension back into heaven, the apostles questioned the Lord as to when the "kingdom" would be restored (likely reflecting a misconception on their part as to the nature of the regime); Jesus provided a general answer.

The “when” of the coming kingdom would be when the **power** of the Holy Spirit descended upon these men “not many days hence” (Acts 1:5, 8). It is beyond doubt that this was fulfilled ten days later on Pentecost (Acts 2:1ff). “The coming ‘with power’ (Mark 9:1) and ‘seeing the kingdom’ (Luke 9:27) must focus on Pentecost” (Lewis 1976, 43). McGarvey wrote:

They saw the kingdom “come with power,” because such was the power of the Holy Spirit’s demonstrations through the apostles, that three thousand men were that day turned to the Lord. And they saw the Son of man coming in his kingdom, not literally, but by manifesting his invisible presence to the eye of faith. What they saw with their eyes and heard with their ears attested his presence in his kingdom (1875, 315).

In his Gospel record John had quoted the Lord as indicating that by the sending of the Holy Spirit **he**, indirectly, would be coming (John 14:18). Thus, by “seeing” and “hearing” the **effects** of the Spirit’s empowerment on Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:33), the apostles were assured of the Lord’s presence. The term “see” frequently is employed of **spiritual** perception, rather than physical vision (cf. Matthew 24:30; John 3:3; 16:16, 19; especially see Thayer 1958, 451).

(5) As Jesus and his disciples were concluding the Passover supper, the Savior said: “I say unto you, I shall not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until the day when I drink it new with you **in my Father’s kingdom**” (Matthew 26:29). The “drinking,” of course, was not to be a literal drinking of the fruit of the vine, but a **spiritual** communion with Christians in the kingdom as they partake of the Lord’s supper. The language implies that Christ wasn’t “in the kingdom” at that time. On the other hand, the disciples began partaking of the communion on Pentecost (Acts 2:42), and continued after (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 10:16). Without a doubt, the kingdom had arrived!

(6) Some dispensational premillennialists contend that “because the Jews refused [Christ’s] person and work he postponed the establishment of his kingdom until the time of his return.” The church was set up as a sort of “interim measure” (Kevan 1960, 352). If the “kingdom” was postponed, it logically would follow that Christ’s “kingship” was postponed. Contrariwise, however, there is ample evidence of his coronation following the ascension, and of his current reign (Acts 2:30-36; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Ephesians 1:20-23; Hebrews 1:3; 1 Peter 3:22; Revelation 3:21).

Bill Cavender on The Kingdom

The Kingdom Of God and Christ

By Bill Cavender (12/1985)

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of Jehovah’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and word of Jehovah from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:2-3).

“And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed. nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Dan. 2:44).

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh. . . . And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be delivered. for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as Jehovah hath said, and among the remnant whom the Lord shall call” (Joel 2:26-32).

These three prophecies in Isaiah, Daniel and Joel find their fulfillment in Acts 2:1-47. Isaiah said that God's kingdom on earth would begin in the last days; that all nations would flow into it; and the law, the word of Jehovah, would go forth from Jerusalem. Daniel said that God's kingdom would begin in the days of the Roman kings ("those kings") that it would never be destroyed; it would have an unchangeable sovereignty (rulership); it would stand while the kingdoms of the world rise and fall; and it would stand forever. Joel said that in the last days God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh (both Jews and Gentiles), and whosoever would call upon the name of the Lord would be saved.

Jesus, our Savior, was born in the days of Augustus Caesar (Luke 2: 1). He was baptized by John the immerser and began His public ministry in the days of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1, 21-22). Thus, it was in the days of the Roman kings that John the baptizer and Jesus the Savior both announced the fulfillment of the prophecies and coming God's kingdom. John preached, saying, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1: 14-15). Jesus told the multitudes that "there are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, until they see the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9: 1). If the kingdom of God did not begin in the life times of those people, then Jesus either was mistaken or told a falsehood. If He told the truth, speaking God's word to the people, then the kingdom of God either has already come as Jesus said, or some of those people are still living on earth! Jesus told Peter that he (Peter) would be given "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:18-19) and that he, in his life, would bind and loose whatsoever had been bound and loosed in heaven. Those converted would become citizens of the kingdom (Matthew 18:3). Those who would be born again, born of water and of the Spirit, would enter into the kingdom (John 3:3-5; 1 Peter 1:22-25).

Jesus instructed His apostles to “tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, unto ye be endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). Before His ascension to the right hand of the Father, He told them not to depart Jerusalem, that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence; they would receive power after the Holy Spirit came upon them; and then they would be witnesses of Jesus in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth (Luke 24:46-49; John 15:26-27; Acts 1:4-8; Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:18-20).

The Holy Spirit came upon the apostles as Jesus had promised them, on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14). They preached Jesus as crucified and resurrected Lord, beginning that day, in Jerusalem (Acts 2:22-40). The word of Jehovah, His law and testimony, went forth from the apostles as they spoke by the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4, 16-21, 33). Peter used “the keys of the kingdom” that day, telling men and women who heard and believed the gospel what they must do to be saved from their past sins (Acts 2:37-41). Peter, an inspired apostle, declared on that day and occasion that the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and the preaching of the gospel fulfilled Joel 2:28-32 (Acts 2:16-21). About three thousand people believed the good news of the gospel of Christ, repented of their sins, and were immersed for the remission of sins (Acts 2:37-41). They were born again of water and of the Spirit, saved, converted, and entered into the kingdom of God, which is not of this world politically, militarily, or economically (John 18:36-38; 3:3-5; Matt. 18:3; 1 Pet. 1:22-25).

The kingdom of God of which the prophets spoke began in the world that day in reality, in its completeness, perfection and fulfillment. It began in the city of Jerusalem, in the last days, when the word of the Lord went forth, as Isaiah said (2:2-3). It was in the days of the Roman kings, as Daniel had said (2:44). It was when the Spirit was poured out, as Joel said (2:28-32). God “hath in these last days spoken unto us by his son” (Hebrews 1:1-2).

The “last days” began when Jesus came and will end when He comes again “at the last day” (Acts 2:17; 1 Pet. 1:20; 2 Pet. 3:3; 1 Jn. 2:18; Jude 18; Jn. 6:39-40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48; 1 Cor. 15:24-28, 52). The kingdom is the kingdom of God and Christ (Eph. 5:5; Col. 1:13-14).

Jesus is now, at the present, the “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (John 18:33-38; 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 15:3; 17:14; 19:16). He is at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:13; Eph. 1:19-23; 1 Pet. 3:21-22). He is on David’s throne (Acts 2:29-32). He is now an anointed and crowned King, with a scepter of power and a throne of authority, which is forever and ever (Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:19-23; Heb. 1: 8-9).

The kingdom of God and Christ has existed in the world for over nineteen hundred and fifty years. All honest-hearted, God-fearing people in all the world who have heard the word of the truth of the gospel of God revealed through Jesus and His apostles, who believe in Jesus as God’s only begotten Son who is our Savior, who genuinely and truly repented of their sins, and are sincerely immersed for the remission of their sins, enter into the kingdom of God and Christ, the kingdom of heaven (John 3:3-5; Col. 1:13; Acts 2:37-41, 47). They are the children of God through faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:26-27). They are “heirs of the kingdom” (James 2:5; Gal. 3:26-29; 4:1-4). They will be saved eternally in heaven if they will maintain the hope of faith steadfastly unto the end (2 Pet. 1:5-11; Heb. 3:6; 10:39). Heaven is the hope and home of the citizen of the kingdom of God and Christ who serves the Lord from an obedient, true heart of faith (Heb. 5:8-9; 10:19-25; Col. 1:5; Rom. 8:24-25; 1 Pet. 1:3-5). – Guardian of Truth

