

THE REIGN OF CHRIST

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CONTENTS

- Introduction – 3**
- 1 – *Introduction To Millennialism* – 5**
- 2 – *Revelation 20* – 13**
- 3 – *Prophecy Of The King’s Reign* – 21**
- 4 – *The Reign Of Christ* – 28**
- 5 – *Reconsidering Earthly Reign* – 38**
- 6 – *On David’s Throne* – 43**
- 7 – *Jesus On David’s Throne* – 50**
- 8 – *Restoration Of Israel To Palestine* – 54**
- 9 – *Reconstruction Of The Temple And Tabernacle* – 65**
- 10 – *Restoring The “Lost” Ten Tribes* – 68**
- 11 – *Establishment Of The Kingdom* – 75**
- 12 – *The Resurrection* – 87**
- 13 – *The Last Days* – 93**
- 14 – *Unfortunate Conclusions* – 103**



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Cover theme: *POWER* (Beginning of Cedarberg Mountains north of Cape Town, South Africa - R.E.D.)

THE REIGN OF CHRIST

Old Testament prophets excited the minds of those who lived before the cross about the One who was coming to be King over all things. The exciting thing for us today is that these prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus. When He ascended to the right hand of the Father, Jesus assumed kingdom reign over all things. He now reigns with all authority over all things and will so reign until He comes again. When men recognize the present kingdom reign of Jesus over all things, they should submit to His reign. Those who submit are the church which is the manifestation of the kingdom reign of Jesus on earth.

INTRODUCTION

The Bible teaches a millennial reign of Christ. John revealed, *“Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years”* (Rv 20:6). There are those who believe that this one-thousand year reign is a present authority of Jesus over all things, by which authority He exercises power over the kingdom of darkness with the power of the gospel. The church is the group of citizens of the world who have taken up heavenly citizenship by submitting to the present kingdom reign of Jesus. All the church is kingdom. However, all the kingdom of Jesus includes more than the church. This is a **spiritual kingdom reign** of Jesus that is present and active.

There are others who affirm that the one-thousand year reign about which John wrote in Revelation 20 will be a physical. It will be a future literal reign of Jesus on this earth wherein the saints

will have physical power over the unrighteous. In conjunction with this reign, the saints will supposedly take possession of the riches of this world. This is a view that pictures the reign of Jesus to be a **physical kingdom reign**. This view of the millennial reign of Jesus is referred to as **premillennialism**.

The word “premillennialism” is one of those words that can be quite challenging to understanding. It has a meaning that is derived from a combination of several words. The root word “millennium” originated from two Latin words. *Mille* is the Latin word that means “one thousand.” *Annus* is the Latin word that means “year.” Put the two words together and we come up with the meaning, “one thousand years.” Add to this the prefix “pre,” meaning “before,” and we have the word premillennial. Thus the word means, “before one thousand years.” Add to this the suffix “ism,” which denotes a doctrine, philosophy, theology or theory, and in the religious world we have the

teaching of premillennialism. This is the belief that when Jesus comes again, He will come to reign on this earth for a period of one thousand years.

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

One of the most publicized religious teachings in the world today is the supposed future reign of Jesus on this literal earth. In order to promote this physical millennial view, the religious world is constantly bombarded with proclamations as “the signs of the times are here,” “the kingdom of God on earth is about to be established,” and “these are the signs of the end.” People are confused, and rightly so in view of the inconsistent and biblically challenged religious world in which we live. Because of the often hysterical excitement of the religious world that is often stimulated by the modern-day premillennial prophets of these times, many have been led astray into believing manufactured prophecies of the signs of the times and the end of the world. Because of the materialistic urges of religionists and man’s desire to rule over his fellow man, there has come from the religious world the teaching that these earthly inclinations of man It is assumed these inclinations will be fulfilled in a

religious manner by a one-thousand year reign of Jesus on this earth. Misguided religionists are encouraged that the righteous will literally rule over the wicked, and subsequently, lay claim to all the riches of this world. Premillennialism is actually a prematerialism by its proclamation that the saints will inherit the possessions this physical world. What could be further from the very nature of the principles of Jesus’ teachings on self-denial of that which is of this world?

In any study of this subject, the biblical interpreter is challenged to understand biblical prophecy. This is one area of biblical study where we must remind ourselves of some basic biblical principles of interpretation. First of all, we must remember that any passage or group of passages can be easily misinterpreted **if they are interpreted with preconceived ideas**. If we believe that Jesus is going to somehow in the future assume an earthly reign on this earth with all His saints, then certainly we will assume this that this understanding should be read into prophecies of end times. As we study through the array of scriptures that are used to promote the teaching of premillennialism, this principle will be immediately recognized. Premillennial theology is such an all-encompassing teaching that it affects the interpretation of many scriptures. It is not a theology that simply makes no difference whether one believes it or not. The most fundamental beliefs of the teaching affect some very fundamental teachings of the Bible. Because this theology has so affected the thinking of religious people throughout

the world, it is necessary that we examine some principal scriptures that are used to support the belief.

Secondly, scriptures must always be interpreted in the context in which they are given. When examining the teaching of premillennialism, we must force theological premillennialists to stay with the context of their proof texts. In the following material we will examine several key scriptures that are used by premillennialists. It is not necessary to study the doctrine by examining every scripture that is used by the proponents. **If just one scripture is found that contradicts the theory, then the theory is wrong.** In order to understand the key scriptures that are used by premillennialists, however, we will first consider the presumed “proof texts” in their contexts. If the contexts does not support the premillennial theory, then certainly the scriptures cannot be used as proof texts for the teaching.

Some have stated that a future millennial reign of Jesus on earth does not

affect fundamental teachings. We would question this because of the fact that passages that are used to support the theory are passages that are misinterpreted. If a future reign of Christ on earth is true, then certainly such would be clearly affirmed in the Scriptures. If the earthly reign of Jesus is true, then it must be the foundation upon which we should interpret all prophecies that refer to the final coming of Jesus.

We do not know the nature of the new heavens and earth that are to come (2 Pt 3:13). Some have suggested that this will be the millennial reign of Jesus on earth. We think not. We are as Christians headed for this new heavens and earth, but we do not believe that such will be an extension of this present physical environment. As the patriarchs of the Old Testament, our hope is for a heavenly country, a city whose builder and maker is God. The Christian’s hope is not in more of this world, but to enjoy a realm of existence that is free of the hardships of this material world.

Chapter 1

Introduction To Millennialism

One objective of our study of biblical prophecy of the Old Testament is to discover fulfillment of prophecy in the New Testament. We do not believe that the Old Testament prophets’ primary concern in prophecy was directed toward a millennial reign of the Messiah on earth that was centuries removed from both the prophets and the early Christians. The

prophets’ prophecies were fulfilled, but they were fulfilled in the cross and Jesus’ present kingdom reign. If this is true, then there is no room for a physical millennial view of Old Testament prophecy.

Some have said that the future is God’s business for He will work things according to His plan. This is certainly true. We cannot fully understand that

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

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

PREMILLENNIAL TEACHINGS

1. Jesus is not now reigning over all things. When He returns in the future, however, He will establish an earthly reign over all things on this earth.
2. Jesus will reign on this literal earth when He returns.
3. Jesus will reign for a literal period of one thousand years on this literal earth when He returns.

4. Jesus is not at this time reigning on David's throne as prophesied in the Old Testament. However, He will reign on this throne in Jerusalem of Palestine during the one-thousand year reign on this earth.
5. The Jewish temple will be rebuilt in the city of Jerusalem in order to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies concerning its reconstruction.
6. The nation of Israel, that is, the fleshly descendants of Abraham through Jacob, will be nationally converted and restored to the land of Palestine in order to fulfill prophecies concerning the restoration of national Israel to the land of promise.
7. The "lost ten tribes" of the northern kingdom of Israel will be gathered out of the nations of the world and restored to the land of Palestine in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies concerning their restoration to the land.
8. When Jesus came for the first time in the first century, the Jews rejected His earthly kingdom reign that He intended to establish at that time. Because of this rejection, the earthly kingdom reign was postponed until the time of His last coming when He will forcefully establish His earthly kingdom reign.
9. The righteous dead will be raised at the beginning of the one-thousand year reign on earth and the unrighteous dead will be raised at the conclusion of the millennium. These two resurrections will be separated by the millennium.
10. This present age is not the last dispensation of time of God's work with this literal earth. The one-thousand year reign of Jesus on earth will be the conclusion of this environment.

Though the above points are some of the principal concepts of the premillennial teaching, they do not comprise the

entire teaching. There are a host of subsidiary beliefs. In fact, there are so many subsidiary beliefs that the theological world that affirms the doctrine of premillennialism is constantly in debate over the subject. The division of belief concerning specific aspects of the teaching is so great that the only concepts of the teaching on which the premillennial theologians agree are usually the preceding basic beliefs.

It is not our purpose here to examine the totality of the many beliefs of premillennialism. We want to simply place before you some of the key beliefs, and then examine these in view of some fundamental biblical teachings that these beliefs contradict. We will thus confine our study to the above principal teachings. If these principal teachings of the theology are erroneous, then certainly the doctrine is false. It is subsequently the invention of men who have failed to recognize the comprehensive reign of Jesus over all things in these times.

It is our feeling that those who have turned on their calculators and computers in order to determine the signs of the time, have done so in an effort to scare people into submission to the will of God. Certainly, understanding God's work in the affairs of this world, especially in relation to final judgment, should strike fear in the hearts of the unbelieving. However, the prime mover of obedience in Christianity is one's love response to the grace of God as revealed on the cross (1 Jn 4:19). But in an effort to revive lethargic religious movements, contemporary prognosticators have sought to

scare subjects into submission by calculating the "signs of the times" and mapping out some calendar of events that will lead up to the final coming of Jesus. This religious speculation has been going on since Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians. Nevertheless, the predictions of these misguided religious seers continue to fail. Adherents to their zealous predictions seem to be continually captivated by those who have little knowledge of the Scriptures. In order to have their religious inclinations sensitized by twisted Scriptures, too many are being willingly led astray by those who are simply bent on rejecting some simple statements in the Bible.

Premillennialism is not a new doctrine that has been invented by twentieth century theologians. It is simply an old theology that is being revived by modern-day prophets who find it fascinating to count wars and rumors of wars in an effort to captivate a following. These "sign seekers" are only descendants of those in the past who have always tried to produce a following by proclaiming the signs of the end. But because the theory has been affirmed by theologians of years past does not prove it true. In fact, in reference to this particular teaching the opposite is true. Countless predictions of the end of time and the establishment of the physical millennium by past self-proclaimed prophets have all failed to come about. All these past prophets with their failed prophecies prove at least one thing. **Their misinterpretation of prophecy in reference to end of time events prove that God**

gave no clearly discernible “signs of the end” for the establishment of a millennial reign of Jesus on earth.

Modern-day self-proclaimed prophets are making the same theological blunder as those of years past. They are still predicting the end of the world and the establishment of some earthly reign of Jesus. Our children and grand children will look back on their failed predictions and say the same thing we are now saying concerning the failed prophecies of those in our past. When will the self-proclaimed prophets ever learn? But more importantly, when will those who listen to them ever learn?

The Bible is a book of prophecy. It is a book of **fulfilled** prophecy. When Jesus came, He came to fulfill over three hundred Old Testament prophecies concerning Himself and the church. He came into a religious culture of prophecy, for the Old Testament was loaded with prophecies that would prepare the way for Jesus and the church. At the conclusion of His ministry, and prior to His ascension, Jesus said to the disciples, *“These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me”* (Lk 24:44). **Jesus fulfilled all prophecies concerning Himself and the church.** However, since He came into a religious culture that was built on prophecy, He gave warnings to His disciples about those who would miss the fulfillment of prophecy in Him. In missing the fulfillment of prophecy in Jesus, some would

continue to seek fulfillment of those prophecies that Jesus had already fulfilled. Essentially, the premillennialist is ignoring this warning today. He is as the Jew who failed to recognize the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in Jesus and the church. Old Testament prophecies that were fulfilled in the first century were ignored by the Jews, and subsequently, they are also being ignored today by premillennialists in order to place emphasis on speculations concerning the future. In view of this, Jesus placed warnings in His teachings concerning those who would fail to recognize the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in Him and the church.

A. Jesus warned concerning sign seekers.

Jesus warned that there would be those who would proclaim, “Lo, here or there” in reference to the Messiah. In the context of His prophecies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, He warned His disciples, *“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ Do not believe it”* (Mt 24:23). This warning is given in the context of a people who were thirsty for signs of the times. Of His generation, Jesus judged, *“An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign ...”* (Mt 12:39). He knew that the Jews were sign seekers. The irony is in the fact that they could not find Jesus in their seeking. Their prejudices blinded their eyes. Jesus said of these misguided seekers, *“You search the Scriptures, for in them you*

think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me" (Jn 5:39). They thought they could have eternal life through their calculated interpretations of the Scriptures. However, they failed to believe in the One about whom the Scriptures prophesied would bring eternal life. So it is today. There are those who are more interested in sign seeking than the Son of Man. They are more interested in finding some Bible code about the future than in living the life that is guided by the Bible.

Jesus knew that His personal presence must terminate the sign seeking concerning Himself among His disciples (See Lk 24:44). Prophecies were fulfilled in Him. For the church, therefore, Christians must not have their attention diverted to the prophetic fables of men. Even concerning His prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, He warned, "*But of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only*" (Mt 24:36). If only the Father knew of the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, then there would be no sense in trying to calculate when it would happen. **Jesus sought to keep His disciples away from the religious culture of sign seeking concerning the fulfillment of prophecy.** Christians must simply be about their work and let God take care of those things that are yet to happen. In the context of future things, therefore, Jesus wanted His disciples to be prepared. In the context of the future destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, Jesus said, "*Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when*

you do not expect Him" (Mt 24:44).

If Jesus were on the earth today, we are sure there would be those in the religiously misguided world who would ask, "Teacher, we would see a sign from thee." The religious world is full of those who are sign seekers. They are trying to predict those things about which Jesus forewarned the disciples not to be concerned. The Bible teaches that Jesus is certainly coming again. Christians, therefore, must simply be prepared for the end of all things at all times. Their preparedness is a sign that they believe that Jesus will do what He has promised to do, that is, to come again in order to take them home into eternal glory.

B. Jesus warned that we be prepared for His coming.

In preparation for His coming at the end of time, Jesus stated that His disciples must be prepared at all times. There are too many in the religious world today who are seeking to prepare for the coming of Jesus only in the time just before His coming. They thus seek to discover the signs of the times in order to make those last preparations. These religious seers calculate famines, wars and earthquakes in order to make some predictions concerning the exact time when Jesus will come again. However, there have always been wars, famines and earthquakes. If such things were intended by God to be indications of the end of the world, then such warnings have deceptively been given by God for almost two thousand years, for these historical events

have occurred since the first century.

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

Paul wrote, *"But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you"* (1 Th 5:1). Is there something in this statement that should alert the Christian concerning his attitude of those things that are yet to be? We think so. If Paul is saying anything, he is saying that Christians should not worry themselves about those things that are yet in the future. Christians know that God is going to do what He has said He will do. Things concerning salvation have already taken place. Our worry concerning our salvation has been taken care of in Christ (See 2 Tm 1:12). It is not our place, therefore, to worry about those things that are in God's control concerning the end of time. Our prayer is only that God expedite the events. Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:11,12, *"Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God"* Notice

what Peter is saying. Our realization that an end is coming should stimulate godly living (vs 11). Our godly living should so set us apart from this present world that we should desire that the end of this world come soon (vs 12).

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

Regardless of the warnings that we find in the New Testament about being cautious of speculations concerning the future, there are those who are excited about world events in their efforts to predict the future. Their excitement has led to a host of scriptures that have been twisted in an effort to make the Bible predict some specific date in the future for the end of the world. The Bible has thus been twisted in every shape in order to prove and confirm the theological sign-seeking of modern-day speculators. Many precious prophecies of the Bible have been misquoted, misconstrued and misapplied in an effort to confirm the supposed millennial reign of Jesus on this earth. Because we live in such a misguided theological world of speculators who seek to produce sensationalism in religion, one should be cautious in his or her studies of biblical prophecy. We

should be cautious concerning those who preach predictions of the future. The behavior of the Bereans is still a good example to follow. Luke recorded of these people, “*These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so*” (At 17:11).

C. Jesus warned of false prophets.

The New Testament is filled with warnings concerning false prophets. The reason for this is obvious. When it comes to religion, there is an endless line of those who have allowed their imaginations to be fertile soil for the teaching of religious speculators.

The church was based on the fulfillment of prophecy. The Old Testament is a book of prophecy. It would be the natural result of those who know little of either the Old or New Testaments to let their imaginations run wild concerning prophecy. Jesus and the New Testament writers knew this. Therefore, the Holy Spirit placed within both the Old and New Testament Scriptures a host of warnings concerning those who would seek to be recognized as great prophets by their predictions of the future (Dt 13:1-5). The warnings are there to protect the sincere and innocent Bible believer from those who would seek a following by proclaiming themselves to be some prophet.

Those who are premillennial in theology consistently use the Old Testament in a way that bypasses reference to Jesus’

universal present reign in order to focus their attention on the end of times. In doing this, they fail to recognize the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in the first century concerning the present universal reign of Jesus. Such false prophets speak things that are untrue and unsubstantiated concerning the end of time. In so speaking concerning these things, they have led many unsuspecting souls into a deceptive system of religious thought that is simply not true.

The Holy Spirit knew that men would do the preceding in reference to the Bible. Peter thus warned,

Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which those who are untaught and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures (2 Pt 3:14-16).

It is not that the Scriptures cannot be understood. It is that those who are untaught in the Scriptures fail to understand the Scriptures. In their lack of knowledge of the Scriptures they twist and distort in order to speculate concerning those things about which they know nothing.

But the above was nothing new concerning the religious world in which Pe-

ter lived and those before him. Peter wrote, “*But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed*” (2 Pt 2:1,2). The fact that Peter warned that many would follow the speculations of misguided religious teachers should be warning enough to caution every Bible believer not to be led astray by those religionists who have little or no knowledge of the Bible. John warned, “*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world*” (1 Jn 4:1). The only way this test can be made is by referring to the Bible. Therefore, before we believe any speculations of so-called prophets today we must first thoroughly examine the Scriptures.

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

Jesus made this type of statement in the context of prophecy, indicates that Christians should not trouble themselves about those things in the future that the Father has placed within His own knowledge and working. Our minds, therefore, must not be focused on seeking out that which is only within the knowledge of the Father. Christians must concentrate on that which is at hand by putting their trust in God who is working all things according to His purpose.

There are things that God has chosen not to reveal. Moses stated, “*The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever; that we may do all the words of this law*” (Dt 29:29). Christians must focus on what is revealed. They must not trouble themselves about those “secret things” that God has not revealed. When it comes to specifics concerning the end of time, God has not revealed such. He has only revealed that the end is coming. Therefore, we must be prepared for this end.

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

Chapter 2

Revelation 20

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

For many years, inconsistent hermeneutics of this context of scripture has led to a host of celebrated theories that have been used to excite the imaginations of religious people throughout the world. Our challenge is not to sort through the jungle of speculative theories of men in order to interpret Revelation 20:1-6. It is our challenge to go to the text itself in order to understand the message John was trying to convey to his audience.

A. Interpreting Revelation:

The book of Revelation is probably one of the most misunderstood books of the Bible. Bible interpreters misuse this book more than other Bible books simply because of improper Bible study principles that are used to interpret this highly figurative book. Therefore, when we come to a study of any part of Revelation, there are a few principles of interpretation that must be emphasized in order to properly understand this book. If these principles are honored, much of the confusion that has resulted from a mis-

handling of Revelation can be ignored. Therefore, consider the following principles that must be understood in order to interpret the book of Revelation:

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

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

Many of the symbols that John uses are taken from the Old Testament. Others are derived from the historical set-

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

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

The book is also what is classified as **apocalyptic literature**. This was a style of literature that was written to conceal the message of the writer from the unbeliever, but reveal a message of encouragement and hope to the believer. Through the skillful use of figures, the Holy Spirit in revelation conveys an encouraging message to the readers who are headed for times of great persecution.

In reference to numbers that are used by John in the book, John resorts to a figurative use of the numbers. This was a common practice of the Jews. They often used numbers to convey ideas. In order to remain consistent with the figurative tenor of the book, **the careful interpreter will first interpret the numbers of Revelation in a figurative sense.** John uses numbers as three, four, seven, ten, twelve and the multiples thereof

(100, 1,000, 1,200 or 144,000) in a symbolic sense. The number **three** is associated with certain acts of God (See Ex 19:11 Hs 6:2). **Four** signified completion or the whole of creation (See Is 11:12; Jr 49:36; Ez 37:9; Rv 6:1-8; 7:1; 9:13). The number **seven** signified completeness or perfection (See Mt 12:45; 22:25-28). The number **ten** and its multiples (100, 1,000) represented a specific and complete period of time (See Rv 7:4; 20:4-7).

In the symbolism of the book of Revelation, it is vital that the interpreter recognize the symbolic use of numbers that John uses throughout the letter. What has been the fault of many modern-day speculators is the fact that they have turned on their calculators and computers in an effort to compute some literal time period of John's symbolic use of the numbers. Such is an unfortunate practice and one that has led many to be confused concerning the message of the letter.

2. The events of Revelation were to shortly come to pass. John again alerted those who read this book that the historical events about which he spoke in the revelation would soon take place. In chapter 1, verse 1 he wrote "... *that God gave Him to show His servants—things which must **shortly take place***" In 22:6 he concluded the book by saying, "*And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must **shortly take place.***" What could be more clear than this? The events of the book, therefore, must first be interpreted to apply to the historical context of the first readers. John does

talk about the end of things, but his primary emphasis in the book is to reveal to the first readers those things that would bring persecution into their lives, for they were headed into an era of Roman government persecution. **“Shortly take place” does not mean that these events would take place some two thousand years later.** Therefore, any effort on the part of interpreters to twist out of historical context the events about which John prophesied is an unfortunate attempt to make the message comply with some of the present religious speculations that are handed around among modern-day theologians. When John said that they would shortly take place, then he meant that they would take place sometime in the immediate future from which he and the disciples to whom he wrote lived.

3. The Bible does not contradict itself. Another important principle to remember in studying any figurative portion of Scripture is that **one often does not have to understand the figures that are used in order to understand a false interpretation that is made of a particular scripture.** One may not fully understand all the book of Revelation. However, **if someone develops a theology from the book that contradicts other clear statements in the Bible, then we know that the interpretation is false.** It is false simply because the Bible does not contradict itself. Therefore, we must not read Revelation in a manner that would make it contradict itself. If we do, then we have made the Holy Spirit reveal contradictory material to the world.

4. The key message is encouragement. The Christians to whom John wrote were in a state of persecution. However, the persecution would become worse before it got better. The first readers had just passed through the neurotic persecution of Nero in the early 60s. They were headed for the Roman State persecution that would take place during the reign of Domitian. Nero unleashed a personal vendetta against Christians. However, by the time of Domitian, the Roman State made Christianity an illegal religion and the church was thus persecuted to underground existence for many years. John knew that the church was headed in the direction of this great persecution. He thus wrote to encourage. The encouragement of John is revealed in the key verse of 17:14. *“These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.”* From the beginning of the document to the end, John’s assurance is that the believer will overcome. Therefore, the Lamb promises, *“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life”* (Rv 2:10). The saints’ knowledge that the Lamb will overcome is an encouragement to help them endure the suffering that comes in living the life of a disciple.

B. Consistent interpretation of Revelation 20:

The above principles of interpretation bring us to this commonly misinter-

preted chapter of Revelation. Revelation 20 must first be interpreted figuratively, unless there is reason to understand the context literally. This principle of interpretation is in harmony with what John forewarned interpreters in the beginning of the book (1:1).

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

Revelation 20:1-6	
LITERAL	FIGURATIVE
?	?

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

What we want to emphasize is the fact that we must be consistent in our interpretation of this chapter. One problem of the premillennial interpretation of this chapter is that premillennialists cannot be consistent in their interpretation of the language John uses in the chapter. They go

back and forth from literal to figurative, and from figurative to literal. In this confusion of jumping back and forth in interpretation, they confuse their readers.

With the above thoughts in mind, the following is a brief interpretative survey of Revelation 20:

1. Satan is bound (vss 1-3): In the first three verses a messenger of God is pictured with authority (key) to use a means of confinement (chain) to confine Satan to a certain realm (bottomless pit, or abyss). The confinement of Satan began with the ministry of Jesus. Jesus said, *“Or else how can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house”* (Mt 12:29).

Jesus came that *“He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage”* (Hb 2:14,15; see 1 Co 15:20-24). During His ministry, Jesus not only proclaimed that He was the resurrection and the life (Jn 11:25,26), but also that He came to be the sacrificial Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world (See Jn 1:29). He came to manifest His authority over all things that He would exercise when He ascended to the right hand of the Father. He was the strong man who despoiled the house of Satan by dying on the cross.

When Jesus received the seventy disciples He had sent out on a preaching trip, they said to Him, *“Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name”* (Lk 10:17). Jesus then responded, *“I saw*

Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (Lk 10:18,19). It was on the foundation of this authority that the work of Satan was crumbling during the ministry of Jesus. Jesus proclaimed, “***Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast down***” (Jn 12:31). Jesus came to disarm Satan. He came to cast him down, to despoil his kingdom of darkness. Jesus thus “***disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in***” **the cross** (Cl 2:15).

When Jesus died on the cross, the confinement of Satan was sealed. **Within the body of Christ, Satan has no victory.** Satan goes about as a roaring lion in the world (1 Pt 5:8), however, in the among God’s people he is bound by the power of the blood of the Lamb (1 Jn 1:7). He is shut up and sealed. In the church, what Paul said in Romans 8:37-39 is true. “*Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, or any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” **We are in the age of the confinement of Satan.** If Satan is now confined in this time by the power of Jesus’ blood, how can he be more confined in some age to come? The only thing that now awaits Satan and his angels is destruction (Mt 25:41). He is

not headed for more confinement. He is headed for destruction. **This age is, therefore, the designated period of confinement, the one thousand years where the saints reign over the power of Satan by the blood of the Lamb** (Rv 17:14).

2. The resurrection and reign of the saints (vss 4-6): Thrones in this passage are symbolic of authority and royalty. When one is raised from the waters of baptism, he or she is resurrected to walk in newness of life (Rm 6:3-5). Herein is the first resurrection. Those who have participated in this first resurrection with Jesus will also reign in this life with Christ (Rm 5:17). “*For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him*” (2 Tm 2:11). Christians have crucified themselves with Christ (Rm 6:6; Gl 2:20). They have died to themselves and buried the old man of sin. Because they have died with Christ, they also live with him. It is this group about whom John revealed, “*And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years*” (Rv 20:4). Thus the second death, that is, eternal separation from God, has no power over them (Rv 20:6).

Keep in mind that the “reigning” in verse 4 is speaking of the reign of the saints. Simply because the passage says the saints reigned with Christ for a thousand years **does not mean that the reign of Christ is limited to the thousand years.** All that is emphasized is the reign of the saints for the thousand years, not the reign of Christ for a thousand years.

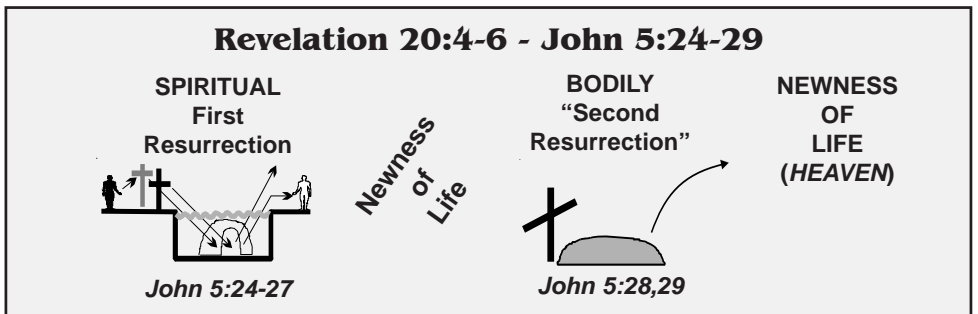
The context of Revelation 20:4-6 speaks of a spiritual resurrection (resur-

rection from the waters of baptism) and the assumption of a second resurrection (the bodily resurrection) at the end of time when Jesus comes again. In the context of John 5:24-29, Jesus also spoke of both a spiritual and physical resurrection. Jesus said in this context that those who believe on Him have “*passed from death to life*” (Jn 5:24). This refers to a spiritual resurrection from a state of being spiritually dead to a state of being saved. Jesus continued, “*I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live*” (Jn 5:25). Those who would live are those who would hear and obey the gospel by immersion for the remission of their sins (At 2:38; Rm 6:3-6). In verses 28 & 29 of John 5, however, Jesus changes from the spiritual resurrection to a physical resurrection that would take place in the future. “*Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.*” Those who have done good and will be resurrected to life will be resurrected at the same time as those who have

done evil but will be resurrected to condemnation. Both resurrections, according to this statement of Jesus, will take place in the same hour.

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

The key passage to understand Revelation 20 is verse 6. Once this verse is understood in the context of the work of Jesus and the obedience of the saints, there is no problem in understanding that the context of the passage refers to the present “one thousand year” era that began with the atonement of Jesus and will conclude with His final coming. The



following would be a narrative commentary of what John reveals in verse 6:

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

3. Satan is crushed (vss 7-10): In the context of the historical situation of the audience to whom John wrote, Christians were suffering the persecution of the Roman government. Satan was using this government to suppress the work of God in the lives of Christians. In the symbolism, Gog and Magog, which are also figures taken from the Old Testament (See Ez 35-40), are shown here to be the enemies of the church (the beloved city). John pictures the deceived at the end of the gospel dispensation as composing the vast majority of the world. However, Satan's release from prison is only for a brief period of time in reference to time. His time is swiftly ended and he and his angels are cast into destruction (Mt 25:41). Keep in mind that Satan's release from prison is symbolic of releasing those earthly influences and earthly government powers that are his instruments of temptation and persecution. Christians must never forget the statements of Paul in Romans 8:37-39 and similar promises that we cannot be subjectively snatched

from the power of God. Christians must always remember what Jesus said, "*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand*" (Jn 10:27,28).

While under persecution, John reminds these early Christians that the Beast (the Roman State) and False Prophet (State religion) will see their end (See 17:9,18; 18:2). The church will eventually emerge from Rome's persecution. Though the saints spiritually reign with Christ, and do so throughout the millennium, they are again headed for a time of persecution. However, as the three and a half years of the Beast were short (12:12; 13:4), so will Satan's onslaught against the saints be short in the end. And the fact that it will be short is encouragement to the saints that whatever Satan does against the work of the Lamb will only be temporary.

4. Final judgment is in the end (vss 11-15): The vision of Revelation 20 pictured the beginning of the gospel dispensation by the work of Jesus and the preaching of the gospel. John also pictures the end of the gospel dispensation by a vision of judgment. John reveals what Paul proclaimed in Acts 17:31. "*He has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the Man who He has ordained*" (See also Mt 25:31-46; Jn 5:22). John reveals the last day. It is a day of judgment (See Jn 5:22; 12:48; 2 Co 5:10; 2 Tm 4:1). It is a day of termination of this present world (2 Pt 3:10-13). No one will escape this final judgment (6:14;

16:20; 18:21; 19:20; 2 Co 5:10).

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

Consistent interpretation of Revelation 20:1-6 will not allow time for a supposed period of a physical one-thousand year reign of Jesus on earth. The context is discussing what has already occurred in reference to the binding of Satan, not what will happen after Jesus comes again. If the one-thousand year reign of the saints in Revelation 20:1-6 is supposed to be a future event, then one would suppose that many future events, particularly those that are assumed by premillennialists, would be mentioned in Revelation 20:1-6. But consider the following list. These are concepts that are not found in the context of Revelation 20:1-6 that premillennialists say surround the physical millennium.

TEACHINGS NOT FOUND IN REVELATION 20

1. **Nothing is said of Jesus on this literal earth.**
2. **Nothing is said of Jesus actually reigning on this literal earth.**
3. **Nothing is said of the reigning of beheaded saints on earth.**
4. **Nothing is said of the bodily resurrection.**
5. **Nothing is said of the final coming of Jesus.**
6. **Nothing is said of the literal throne of David.**
7. **Nothing is said of the city of Jerusalem in Palestine.**
8. **Nothing is said of the Jews as a nation of people.**

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

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

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

Chapter 3

Prophecy Of The King's Reign

There are those today who advocate the teaching that Jesus is not now reigning over all things. He is not now reigning over a kingdom that includes all that exists both in heaven and earth. Those who teach this theology affirm that the prophecies concerning Jesus' universal reign that were made in the Old Testament have not yet been fulfilled. These prophecies were not fulfilled when Jesus ascended to the right hand of God in Acts 1, but will be fulfilled when He comes again to establish His earthly reign.

To make this matter more confusing, there are some of those who believe in the physical millennium who teach that Jesus' kingdom reign refers to two reigns. The first reign is that Jesus is now reigning over the kingdom of God that is referred to as the church. His present reign is limited to this world and the church only. After the conclusion of this reign, Jesus will assume a second reign that will be over a physical kingdom that will last for one thousand years here on earth. It is affirmed, therefore, that there are these two kingdom reigns of Jesus. The kingdom reign of Jesus is thus divided into a spiritual reign over the church and a physical reign over this literal earth.

One thing that has led to the belief in the physical millennial view is the failure of interpreters to see the totality of the present reign of Jesus over all things. When we consider the prophecies of the

Messiah in the Old Testament, the universal reign of the Messiah is clearly pictured. The Messiah, the Christ, would assume a universal reign over all things. When we study those passages of prophecy concerning the reign of the Messiah, this truth is most evident. However, the problem comes when interpreters do not see this prophesied universal reign in the present reign of Jesus. Interpreters have confined Jesus' present reign to a "small kingdom reign" which is a reign only over the church. In limiting the reign of Jesus to the church, physical millennium interpreters have assumed that the prophecies of the Old Testament have thus not been completely fulfilled. They are right if Jesus' present reign is limited only to the church. If the universal kingdom reign of Jesus has not been fulfilled in Jesus' present reign, then the Old Testament prophecies concerning His universal reign have not been fulfilled. Premillennialists simply state that these prophecies will be fulfilled in the one-thousand year earthly reign that is yet to come. Since they were not fulfilled in the past, they must be fulfilled in the future.

One common misunderstanding concerning the kingdom in prophecy is to affirm that the kingdom and church are the same thing. This affirmation results in either limiting the reign of Christ's present reign, or it leaves unfulfilled

those prophecies that affirm the universal reign of Christ as king and head over all things. In other words, if prophecy pictured the sovereignty of Christ over all things, and He is now reigning only over a kingdom called the church, then the prophecies have not been fulfilled. If the church and the kingdom are the same, this is the logical conclusion. If this conclusion is true, then when will Jesus fulfill the universal kingdom reign prophecies of the Old Testament? If He has not fulfilled them in this present age, then He must plan to fulfill them when He comes again.

The biblical answer to the relationship of the kingdom reign of Jesus and church is actually simple. The word “kingdom” (*basileia*) refers to Deity’s rule from heaven, But the word “church” (*ekklesia*) refers to man’s response on earth to the kingdom reign of Jesus from heaven. As the will of the Father is done on earth as it is done in heaven (Mt 6:9,10), then kingdom reign is accomplished within the hearts of the obedient (Lk 17:20,21).



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

However, they are under the present kingdom reign of Jesus. The church is the called out assembly of people who have submitted to the kingdom reign of Jesus. On the other hand, there are insurrectionists in the kingdom. They are the disobedient. Nevertheless, Jesus is still **King of kings**. He is **Lord of lords** (1 Tm 6:15). (Keep this in mind as we later study through prophecy concerning the kingdom reign of Jesus.)

We must thus restudy the prophecies that speak of the universal reign of Jesus. The following points of this chapter are a brief survey of those prophecies that prepared Israel for the coming universal reign of Jesus over all things. In order to understand these prophecies and their fulfillments, there is a very important word the Holy Spirit uses that must be clearly understood. This is the word “kingdom.” This word is used in the Old and New Testaments to refer to earthly kingdoms that have borders, literal thrones, constitutions and armies. However, when we use this word to refer to the kingdom of God, it is obviously understood that something beyond a literal meaning must be interpreted. When the word “kingdom” is used in reference to the authority or reign of God over that which exists, a metaphorical meaning must be understood. God’s kingdom reign does not have literal borders. There are no literal armies with guns and grenades to maintain order.

The word “kingdom” is the only word of our language the Holy Spirit could use to define the reign of God in the affairs of man. Therefore, when we

study prophecy and fulfillment in reference to the reign of God, we must understand that God's kingdom is not of this world. Jesus said, "***My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here***" (Jn 18:36). This one statement of Jesus alerts us to think beyond a physical understanding of the word kingdom when discussing the reign of God in the affairs of man. Unless we understand that the kingdom of God is spiritual, we will misunderstand the prophecies that speak of the kingdom reign of the Messiah.

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

What one must understand is the fact that there is no earthly word that can adequately explain the kingdom reign of Deity. However, at least we can under-

stand that the kingdom reign of God is not something of this world. We cannot compare it with worldly kingdoms. One of the problems with premillennial interpreters is that they cannot get their theology beyond earthly definitions. Every time they hear the word "kingdom," they think of this earth. They thus miss the point of kingdom reign prophecy, for they cannot see within Old Testament prophecy the present kingdom reign of Jesus over all things. And if one cannot see in the present kingdom reign of Jesus the fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecy concerning the reign of Jesus, then he will look somewhere else. People thus look to a future physical reign of Jesus on earth.

We must, therefore, keep in mind that the kingdom in prophecy was not to be a physical kingdom in which the subjects would use guns and grenades to propagate it throughout the world. Though this theology is sometimes believed by those of this time who are seeking a military or political solution to the expansion of their religious beliefs, such is entirely foreign to the teachings of the entire New Testament. If we understand that the kingdom is not physical and of this world, then much of the confusion that has been taught concerning the millennial reign of Jesus is cleared up. Now consider the Old Testament prophecies concerning this universal kingdom reign of Jesus.

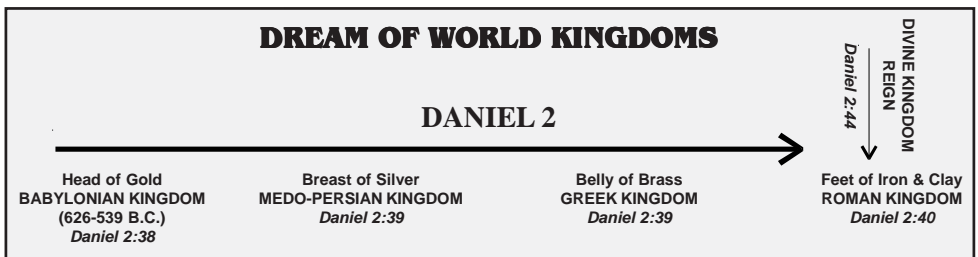
A. The Messiah's kingdom reign would consume the authority of all earthly kingdoms.

1. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream: In Daniel 2 the prophet Daniel interpreted a God-given dream of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (vss 36-45). The great image of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar was a prophecy of four earthly kingdom reigns. The first was that of Nebuchadnezzar who represented the **Babylonian kingdom** (vs 37,38). After the Babylonian kingdom another, the **Medo-Persian kingdom**, would and did arise on the earth (vs 39). After the Medo-Persian kingdom, another kingdom, the **Greek kingdom**, arose (vs 39). A fourth kingdom also arose after the Greek kingdom. This was the **Roman kingdom** (vs 40). Daniel then interpreted that it would be **in the days of the fourth kingdom, the Roman empire, that God would set up another kingdom reign**. This kingdom would have authority on earth, however, it would not be a physical kingdom as was characteristic with the earthly Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman kingdoms. It would be a spiritual kingdom that was manifested on earth but was not of this world.

2. Daniel’s interpretation: Daniel interpreted, *“And in the days of these kings [the Roman Kingdom] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom*

shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (vs 44). Herein is the prophecy of a kingdom reign that would assume the totality of authority that was manifested and exercised by the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman kingdom reigns. However, keep in mind that the authority of this kingdom would not be exercised in the manner earthly kingdoms exercise their authority. In this way the kingdom that would manifest authority from heaven would reign in the hearts of men, not through weapons of war.

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



thority of the King.

Keep in mind that in this prophecy, as well as in many of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the kingdom, the kingdom reign or sovereignty of the king is emphasized. The prophecies assume the sovereignty of the king over all things because the kingdom would extend over all things. The reason these prophecies are emphasizing the kingdom is because contrasts are being established between the earthly kingdoms that were in power at the time the prophecies were made with the spiritual kingdom to come. A contrast is also being established between the limited kingdom of national Israel with the response to kingdom reign that would come from all nations during the time of the Messiah's reign. Universal kingdom assumes universal kingship. This means that universal kingship assumes universal kingdom reign. And if the King is to have universal kingdom reign, then the response to the reign (church) would go throughout all nations.

Verse 44 of Daniel 2 is discussing the establishment of kingdom reign. In verse 45 of Daniel's interpretation, "a stone" was cut out of the mountain. It broke in pieces the power of earthly authorities. It did so by breaking the power of the fourth kingdom (Rome) (Dn 2:34,35). Herein is the impact of heavenly sovereignty manifested on earth in the hearts of men. When the will of the Father was done on earth as it was done in heaven (Mt 6:9,10), then the kingdom reign of Deity was manifested. This was done in the days of the Roman kingdom. Herein is the church (the stone) and the

influence on earth of heavenly kingdom reign. One can only imagine the anticipation that was created in the minds of the Jews as they read this prophecy, for Daniel concluded, "*The great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this*" (Dn 2:45).

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

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

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

*"I [Daniel] was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man [Jesus], coming with the clouds of heaven [Jesus' ascension]! He came to the Ancient of Days [God, the Father], and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him [Jesus] was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, **that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.** His dominion is an ever-*

lasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed."

At least one thing is clear from this prophecy. **The One who ascended to the Ancient of Days in the heavens was given a kingdom, or dominion, over all peoples, nations and languages.** In this parallel vision and interpretation of Daniel 2 a king is identified. The Daniel 2 vision and interpretation reveals the universality of the kingdom reign in contrast to the temporary and limited existence of earthly kingdoms. The Daniel 7 vision and interpretation reveals the universality of the authority of the king. We cannot stress enough the universal picture of kingdom reign that is portrayed in the prophecies of both Daniel 2 and 7. This universal sovereignty is placed in contrast to the limited kingdom reigns of earthly governments. When it comes to fulfillment, therefore, let us not make the mistake of limiting the kingdom reign of the One who would fulfill these prophecies.

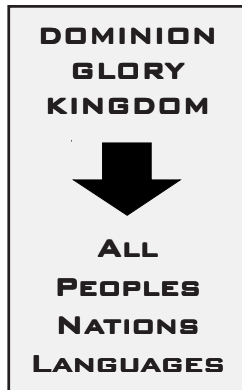
In the prophecy of Daniel 7:13,14, the indefinite article "a" is not used in reference to the word "kingdom." Therefore, what was given the One who ascended to the Ancient of Days was sovereignty or kingdom reign. Since the

word "kingdom" must be understood metaphorically in reference to God's sovereign relationship with man, then it must refer to kingdom reign in a spiritual sense. Emphasis is upon the position and honor of the King. And in reference to His rule, emphasis is on sovereignty. The realm from which sovereignty is manifested is in the realm of the Ancient of Days. This is heaven. Thus Daniel 7:13,14 is a picture of what would take place in and from heaven **and not from this earth.**

The kingdom reign would be manifested on earth only when the will of the Father is done on earth as it is done in heaven. It is this kingdom reign for which Jesus instructed His disciples to pray. *"In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"* (Mt 6:9,10). When men and women submit to the will of the Father on earth, then truly the present kingdom reign of Jesus is within them and the will of the Father is done on earth (Lk 17:20,21). This kingdom reign would be manifested through the submission of the church to the will of the Son.

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

1. Kingdom reign of the Father: In order to understand kingdom reign prophecies concerning Jesus, **it is necessary to understand that Jesus was to assume the kingdom reign of the Father over all things.** In the Old Testa-



ment it is affirmed that the Father was king and head over all things. Through prophecy, the Holy Spirit prepared Israel for a coming change in this kingdom reign.

Concerning the kingdom reign of the Father, David stated, *“Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all”* (1 Ch 29:11,12).

In this statement of David, the Father is pictured as “head over all” and reigning “over all.” This picture is also given in the Psalms. *“The Lord is King forever and ever ...”* (Ps 10:16). *“The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory”* (Ps 24:10). *“All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. For the kingdom is the Lord’s, and He rules over the nations”* (Ps 22:27,28). *“The Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom [sovereignty] rules over all”* (Ps 103:19).

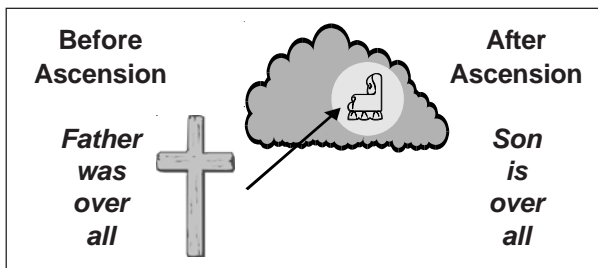
At least one thing is clear from the above statements. **The Father ruled over all before the as-**

cension of Jesus to the right hand of the Father to assume this sovereignty.

If we understand this point, then it is easy to understand what Jesus meant when He said that all authority was given to Him (Mt 28:18). It is easy to understand the fact that Jesus is now King and head over all things when we understand that the Father handed over universal kingship to Him when He was seated at the Father’s right hand in heavenly glory. Daniel revealed that the Son of Man would receive “dominion, glory and kingdom reign” (Dn 7:14). This is the authority that Jesus received when He ascended to the right hand of the Father. He is now reigning with all dominion and glory with sovereignty from heaven over all things. Thus His universal kingdom reign is not something that will come in the future. It is happening at this present time, for Jesus has ascended to the right hand of God.

2. Prophecy of change in kingdom reign: Isaiah prophesied, *“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it”* (Is 2:2). Isaiah prophesied that **all nations** would come under the kingdom reign that was to come. There would thus be a univer-

sal nature of the kingdom reign that would be exalted above all earthly authorities. Isaiah contin-



ued that “*many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord’...*” (Is 2:3). Isaiah was saying to Israel that the Messiah to come would “*judge between the nations ...*” (Is 2:4). When the Messiah comes, Isaiah affirmed that peoples from every nation would come unto His authority. They would submit to His kingdom reign that would be greater than all earthly kingdoms. He would thus judge between the nations by His word, to which subjects would judge themselves to be of the kingdom by their voluntary submission to the word of God.

The expanse of the kingdom reign that was to come would go beyond the borders of Israel. It would expand to all peoples in all nations of the world (See Mc 4:1-3). If we understand the spiritual nature of the kingdom reign of God in the affairs of man, then it is not difficult to understand Isaiah’s prophecy. Jesus now reigns in the hearts of those who have submitted to His kingdom reign (Lk 17:20,21). In this sense, **His kingdom reign is not of this world as**

a physical kingdom. It is a kingdom reign in all the world in a spiritual sense. He now reigns over all things as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15).

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

As students of the Old Testament, we must not miss this point. The promises were to prepare Israel for the coming King. If we misapply these promises, then we are saying that God did not make specific promises to the children of Israel concerning the coming of the Messiah of Israel.

Chapter 4

The Reign Of Christ

The Old Testament prophets prepared the way for the coming reign of Jesus over all things. They established within the minds of the Jews the teaching that the Father was king and head over all things throughout their history as a nation (1 Ch 29:11,12). However, the time would come when this kingship and

headship would be given over to the Messiah.

As one studies through key New Testament statements concerning the present kingdom reign of Jesus, we must keep in mind the fact that Jesus assumed the universal reign of the Father over all things. Before Jesus’ ascension to the right hand

of the Father, the Father was king and head over all things, including the nation of Israel. After the ascension, Jesus was made head and king over all things, including the church. When Jesus comes again, this sovereign reign over all things will be returned to the Father.

Those who advocate the teaching of an earthly reign of Jesus miss the point of the present universal reign of Jesus. In missing this point, they fail to see the present reign of Jesus over all things and the return of this kingdom reign to the Father at the end of time. They affirm that Jesus is not now reigning over a universal kingdom. It is affirmed by some that the prophecies of the universal reign of Jesus that were made in the Old Testament have not been fulfilled. And since they have not been fulfilled, these prophecies must and will be fulfilled when Jesus comes again. The prophesied universal reign of Jesus will be fulfilled in the supposed physical earthly reign of Jesus.

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

These premillennial teachings are partly upheld because of a misunder-

standing of certain phrases in the New Testament that are used in reference to the present kingdom reign of Jesus. One must understand that there is only one universal kingdom spoken of in the Bible in reference to the sovereignty of God over all things. During the time of the Old Testament, the Father was king and head over this universal kingdom (1 Ch 29:11,12). But after His ascension, Jesus assumed this kingship and headship over the universal kingdom (Ep 1:20-23).

Jesus spoke of His reign during His ministry. When Matthew and Mark recorded the teachings of Jesus, they used different phrases in reference to Jesus' teachings concerning His kingdom reign. Matthew used the phrase "kingdom of heaven," for he was writing to the Jews (Mt 5:3,19; 8:11; 13:11,19, 24,31,33,34). Mark used the phrase "kingdom of God," for he was writing to disciples in general (Mk 1:14,15; 14:25; 15:43). Because Luke was writing to a Gentile, he also used the phrase "kingdom of God" (Lk 13:18,28,29; 17:20,21). The use of these phrases does not signify different kingdoms. They refer to the same kingdom reign, the kingdom reign that originates from God, and thus, originates from heaven. This is the kingdom of which Jesus spoke to Pilate, "*My kingdom is not of this world*" (Jn 18:36). This is the kingdom about which Paul later wrote, "*He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love*" (Cl 1:13).

The kingdom of God and Christ are the same kingdom. Jesus has assumed the reign of this universal kingdom that

existed before His ascension to the right hand of the Father. The Father has now given to Him all authority of kingdom reign. Jesus presently exercises this sovereignty at the right hand of the Father (See Jn 13:3; 17:2; Mt 28:18).

When Jesus came in the flesh, He came in the fullness of time (Gl 4:4) in order to fulfill all prophecy concerning His prophesied reign. *“Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand’”* (Mk 1:14,15). During his ministry, John the Baptist affirmed that the kingdom of God was near unto being established (Mt 3:2). This message was preached by both Jesus and His immediate disciples throughout the earthly ministry of Jesus (Mt 10:7; Lk 10:9,10). During both the ministry of Jesus and John, the way was being prepared for Jesus to ascend to the right hand of the Father in order to assume kingdom reign over all things. Therefore, during His ministry, Jesus said to the disciples, *“Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God present with power”* (Mk 9:1). Jesus came to fulfill prophecy. He stated that prophecy would be fulfilled. And, He fulfilled all kingdom reign prophecies when He ascended to the Father.

Jesus is presently reigning over all

things. **He is reigning in the total capacity of kingship that was prophesied in the Old Testament.** He has assumed sovereignty over all things and will reign until He comes again. The following points are a brief review of key statements in the New Testament that affirm the present universal reign of Jesus. These statements clearly teach that Jesus is presently reigning in the full capacity that was prophesied in the Old Testament.

A. Jesus prophesied of His reign.

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

1. Jesus was aware of His kingship authority. Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus knew that He was headed toward the right hand of God in heaven. In the context of John 13, John recorded the following statement concerning Jesus’ awareness of His coming kingdom reign, *“... Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to*



*God, rose from supper ...” (Jn 13:3,4). Later, Jesus prayed, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You **have given Him authority over all flesh ...”** (Jn 17:1,2). Therefore, throughout His ministry Jesus knew that He had all authority, and thus He would exercise such when He ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven.*


In knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, Jesus stated to the disciples at the conclusion of His earthly ministry, “**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth ...”** (Mt 28:18). “All authority in heaven and earth” does not sound like Jesus’ kingdom reign was to be limited to a small group of people, the church. The kingdom reign of Jesus extends beyond the church, beyond this world, for He has all authority **in heaven** and earth. This is precisely what Paul stated in Ephesians 1:22. “*And He [the Father] put all things under His [Jesus’] feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church.*” Jesus has been exalted “*above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those **in heaven**, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth*” (Ph 2:9,10).

2. Jesus prophesied of His exercising kingdom authority. Jesus prophesied, “*For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man in His kingdom*” (Mt 16:27,28; see

Mk 9:1). This statement finds its background in the prophecy of Daniel 7:13,14 where Daniel envisioned the Son of Man ascending to the Ancient of Days (the Father) where He would receive dominion, glory and kingdom reign. In the context of His ministry, Jesus made the above statement to the disciples. He did so in order to bring His immediate audience to His imminent kingdom reign that would occur within their lifetime **at hand**. The kingdom was near unto being established. The fulfillment of this prophecy, as well as, all Old Testament prophecies concerning the reign of Jesus, were soon to take place and did in Acts 1 & 2. We must, therefore, realize the significance of the events in Acts 1 & 2 as the historical fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the kingdom reign of Jesus.

B. Jesus ascended to the Father.

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

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

ceived and exercised His kingdom reign (Lk 19:11-27).

1. Jesus ascended to exercise kingdom reign (Dn 7:13,14). In Daniel 7, Daniel pictured the Son of Man (Jesus) **coming to the Ancient of Days.** He was not coming to this earth. Since God dwells in heaven (1 Kg 8:27; At 17:24,27,28), then Jesus ascended to the Father **in heaven.** Those who believe that Jesus is coming to this earth to receive a kingdom affirm that He will descend to this earth to receive the “dominion, glory and kingdom” that is pictured in Daniel 7:13,14. The biblical account of what was both prophesied and fulfilled, however, is different than the premillennial view.

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

2. Jesus will come having received kingdom reign (Lk 19:11-27). In Jesus’ parable of Luke 19:11-27, He explained, “*A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return ...*” (vs 12). In this parable, Jesus pictures Himself as the nobleman. As stated in Daniel 7:13,14, and affirmed by Luke in Acts 1:9, Jesus did “go away” to receive the kingdom reign. He went away to heaven. In the parable,

Jesus also pictured Himself as coming again. “*And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him ...*” (vs 15). Therefore, when the nobleman (Jesus) returned, **he had already received the kingdom.** He was not coming in order to receive kingdom reign, for He had already received such.

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

C. The present reign of Jesus:

From the preceding two points, one thing is firmly established by Scripture. **Jesus is now reigning as king and His reign is over all things. The point is that if He is now reigning over all things, there is no future kingdom reign that would excel His present reign.** In fact, if He were to descend to the earth in order to establish an earthly reign He would actually be giving up the

totality of His present reign.

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

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

Peter is affirming that the prophecy that was made by David in Psalm 110:1 was fulfilled in Christ. It was fulfilled when Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father. Peter stated, “*Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear*” (At 2:33; see Rm 8:34; Cl 3:1). Thus God raised Jesus from the dead and “*seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet,*

and gave Him to be head over all things to the church ...” (Ep 1:20-22).

2. **Jesus reigns now over all things.** Paul wrote Ephesians 1:19-23 after Jesus had ascended to the right hand of the Father in order to exercise all authority in heaven and earth. After Acts 1, Jesus was seated at the right hand of the Father in the heavenly places “*far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named ...*” (vs 21). Just in case this is not simple enough, or might be misunderstood, Paul clearly stated the all-encompassing present kingdom authority of Jesus in verse 22. “*And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church.*”

Jesus is now over ...

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

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

A parallel context of Ephesians 1:19-23 is Philippians 2:9-11. “*Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every*

name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and those on earth, and those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." This statement affirms the present position of Jesus. Paul said that God "has highly exalted" Jesus. This is past tense. **At the time Paul wrote, Jesus had already been highly exalted.** There is no period of at least 2,000 years between the cross of verse 8 and the exaltation pictured in verses 9-11. After the cross, Jesus received the crown. He was raised up and seated at the right hand of the Father (Ep 1:19,20).

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

Jesus is now reigning in the heavenly places. He has **all** authority. **All** things have been placed under His feet. He is head over **all** things. How much more kingdom authority could Jesus possibly receive in the future over some earthly

reign than what He now has? It is evident that those who profess a future earthly reign of Jesus are saying that Jesus will have to give up His present universal authority when He comes again in order to reign on this earth.

D. Jesus reigns over all powers.

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

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

kings and lords of the world are in the church. The church is the called out group of people of the world who have submitted to the kingdom reign of Jesus. But keep in mind that this submissive group, the church, does not limit the kingdom reign of Jesus over all things. It does not because Jesus' authority extends far beyond His disciples.

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

E. Jesus now reigns over the unseen world.

Peter revealed that Jesus *“has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him”* (1 Pt 3:22). This statement certainly affirms that Jesus' present reign extends far beyond His disciples. Heavenly angels are under the kingdom reign of Jesus, but they are not in the church. Earthly au-

thorities and powers are under the kingdom reign of Jesus, but they are not in the body of Christ. What is thus pictured here by Peter in one statement is the fact that Jesus' reign is presently universal. All things have been put under His present kingdom reign (Ep 1:20-22). All things that have been created are under His control.

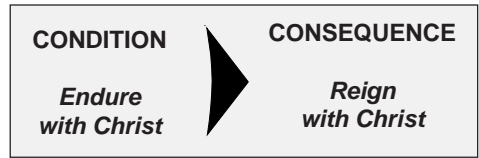
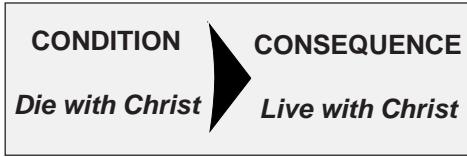
So we ask, When Jesus comes again to establish His supposed earthly reign, will He give up His present reign over angels? If He does, **then His earthly kingdom reign will be inferior to His present reign.** Premillennialists have to deal with this point. All prophecy and fulfillment emphasize a present universal and total reign of Jesus. But if Jesus returns to reign on this earth, then He will have to forsake much of His present kingdom authority.

F. The saints now reign with Jesus.

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

1. Christians presently live and reign with Jesus. In 2 Timothy 2:11,12 Paul wrote, *“This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.”* Premillennialists have contended that if we endure with Jesus during this life, we will in His earthly

kingdom in the future, reign with Him on this earth. It is affirmed, therefore, that the reign of Jesus will be in the future.



But notice the **conditions** and **consequences** that Paul states in 2 Timothy 2:11,12. He says that “if we died with Him” (condition), we will also “live with Him” (consequence). The fact is that Christians have died with Christ in obedience to the gospel (Rm 6:3-6; Cl 3:3). The New Testament also teaches that we now live with Jesus, for we walk in newness of life (Rm 6:4,5). This new life is as what Paul explained to the Galatians. *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me”* (Gl 2:20). So Christians have died with Christ in this life. But they are also now living with Christ.

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

Paul continued to say that “if we en-

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

The condition of Paul’s statement is now true. The consequence is also true. **Christians are now reigning with Christ because they are now enduring with Him.** This is exactly what Paul said in Romans 5:17. *“For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.”* Christians are now reigning in life with Christ. **The enduring (suffering) through which one must go with Christ takes place in this life. The reigning with Christ is also in this life.**

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

ceive power over his fellow persecutors in some future earthly kingdom of Jesus. Such desires are certainly earthly and carnal. To become a Christian on the basis of having a promise and realization that we will gain some type of earthly power over others is certainly a worldly motivation for becoming a Christian. It is also against the servanthood nature that must be characteristic of the life of every Christian (See Mk 10:35-45). We do not think this is what Jesus is stating in Revelation 2:26,27.

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

In Revelation 3:21 Jesus said, *“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”* The tense that is used here in reference to Jesus’ reign is also **past tense**. In other words, by the time this statement was made and recorded, Jesus had already overcome and sat down on the right hand of the Father. Thus Jesus was already reigning when this statement was made.

In the context of both Revelation 2:26,27 and 3:21, Jesus is giving encouragement to those who were suffering persecution from the Roman government. If one was faithful “until the end,” that is, death, he would have overcome. The Christian’s power is in remaining faith-

ful under persecution. Christians reign over their enemies when they maintain their faith until the end of their lives. In this context, Jesus promised, *“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life”* (Rv 2:10). In life, Christians reign in that persecutors have no power over their destiny. Their bodies can be killed, but they simply go in the spirit to be in the presence of their King (2 Co 5:8; Ph 1:23). They continue their reign with Jesus since they have overcome. They have received their crown of life by being victorious over those who sought in life to submit them to earthly tyranny.

G. Jesus’ universal reign will end.

Paul’s statements in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 are a brief and simple affirmation of facts concerning end of time events in relation to the present kingdom reign of Jesus. Paul stated, *“Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father ...”* (vs 24). Keep in mind that the word “kingdom” is metaphorically used here and in other contexts refers to the sovereignty of Deity over all things. Jesus presently has this reign that was given to Him by the Father (Mt 28:18). However, in the end when He comes again He will return this kingdom reign to the Father. The point is that Jesus is now reigning, but when He returns kingdom reign to the Father at His final

coming, His reigning will cease.

Also keep in mind in the context of 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 that Paul is talking about kingdom reign and not church. He is discussing the position and work of Jesus, not the members of the body. When he mentions the return of “kingdom” to the Father, his reference in the context is to sovereign reign, not church (people). This is clearly seen in the next statement of Paul in verse 25.

Paul continued, “***For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet***” (vs 25). Paul identifies the last enemy as physical death (vs 26). In the context of 1 Corinthians 15, Paul is discussing physical death and the final resurrection. Physical death will pass away in the end, at the final coming of Jesus (vss 50-56). Thus the “end” in the context of verses 24-28 is the final coming of Jesus when He comes to resurrect all the dead (Jn 5:28,29). It will be at that time that He will have submitted all things to Himself, including physical death. Jesus must reign until this last enemy is overcome. When the last enemy is overcome, then His reign will cease.

This is what verse 24 is stating.

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

Though the world refuses to recognize Jesus’ authority over all things, this does not mean that He does not reign over all. Every earthly kingdom has insubordinate subjects. So it is with the kingdom of Jesus. Insubordinate subjects are those who refuse to submit to His sovereignty. However, there are those who do submit. The submitted are His disciples, the church. The church of the kingdom reign of Jesus are the subjects of Jesus’ reign. The members of the church allow Jesus to reign in their hearts (Lk 17:20,21). It is for these that Jesus is coming to receive them to Himself.

Chapter 5

Reconsidering Earthly Reign

There is a great difference between the spiritual and physical millennialist views of thing present and future. Physical millennialists teach that during the supposed future millennium Jesus will set up an earthly reign on this earth. This view maintains the belief that Jesus will descend from heaven in order to assume

rule on David’s throne in Jerusalem of Palestine in order to reign over an earthly kingdom.

It is believed that Jesus originally came to establish an earthly kingdom reign. However, the Jews rejected Him as their king, and thus, the kingdom was supposedly postponed until He comes

again. And when He comes again, He will forcefully set up a physical kingdom and forcefully subject the entire world to His rule. The saints will then rule with Him throughout this physical kingdom reign.

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

But will Jesus ever set foot on this physical world again? This is the question that must be answered. And it must be answered from a biblical perspective in relation to the spiritual nature of God's work among men. The following points must be considered when discussing the reign of Jesus in relation to this world:

A. Earthly kingship has no biblical support.

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

prophecy. They are not found in the New Testament. If such a kingdom reign on earth were true, then certainly we would not be wrong to assume that the New Testament would contain numerous prophecies of such.

Old Testament prophecy does speak of the coming Messiah who would be born of woman (Is 7:14). The Messiah would be among men (Is 53) and reign on David's throne (2 Sm 7:12,13,16). However, these and related prophecies in the Old Testament were speaking of Jesus' **first coming**, which coming resulted in the establishment of a kingdom that was not of the nature of earthly kingdoms (Jn 18:38; Lk 17:20,21). To twist the prophecies that refer to the first coming of Jesus in order to make them fit a future millennial reign theology, is to take these prophecies out of their historical context, and thus, deny their fulfillment in Jesus. **The point here is that there are no Old Testament or New Testament prophecies that state Jesus will ever set foot on this earth as a king.**

The obvious lack of supportive evidence in both the Old and New Testaments to an earthly reign of Jesus is the most powerful argument against the premillennial view of an earthly reign of Jesus. If a doctrine is to be considered a biblical doctrine, then certainly it must have clear biblical support. If it has no biblical support, then certainly it cannot be maintained as a Bible teaching. This is especially true concerning the major teachings concerning a supposed earthly reign of Jesus. There are no clear statements of such in the Bible.

B. Jesus cannot reign on earth.

After the death of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, Jehoiachin, his son, reigned in his place as king of Judah in 597 B.C. (2 Kg 24:5,6; Jr 22:24-30). Jehoiachin had reigned only three months when Nebuchadnezzar brought his army to Judah and overthrew Jerusalem (2 Kg 24:8-10). Subsequently, Jehoiachin and his family were taken into Babylonian captivity. In this historical context, Jeremiah made a most significant prophecy in Jeremiah 22:30. He wrote, *“Thus says the Lord: ‘Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not prosper in his days; for none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah.’”*

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

What Jeremiah was prophesying was that Israel as an independent nation was over forever. Babylon’s conquest of national Israel terminated the Jews’ right to exist as a God-ordained independent nation with its own land. The Medo-Persian Empire conquered the Babylonians, and thus seized control of Palestine (See Dn 2 & 7). After the Medo-Persians came

the Greeks, and then the Romans. All these empires seized control of Palestine. After the Romans came other world powers who controlled Palestine. But Jeremiah wanted to make it clear in His prophecy that God never intended after the conquest of the remaining remnant of Israel in Judah, that there would ever again be an independent nation of Israel in Palestine.

(Do not make the mistake of thinking that the present modern-day Israel that is in Palestine is the Israel of God that was in Palestine before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. The present nation is simply a nation that was established by colonial powers after World War I. At the time England had possession of the land. After World War II, and in 1948, the Jews declared their own nation, not God. After World War I, land was requisitioned from the local residents and given to the Jews. When the Jews declared their own statehood, they simply took land from the local Palestinians and wrote land deeds for themselves. God had nothing to do with all this, for if He had, then He would have contradicted Himself in speaking the prophecy of Jeremiah 22:30 through His prophet Jeremiah.)

Now consider some thoughts in reference to this prophecy. Jehoiachin (or, Jeconiah - Jr 24:1; 1 Ch 3:16; Coniah - Jr 22:24,28; 37:1) was of the seed of David. It was through Jehoiachin that Jesus was born (Mt 1:12). Jehoiachin, however, was not childless, for there is mention of His children in 1 Chronicles 3:17 and Matthew 1:12. However, not

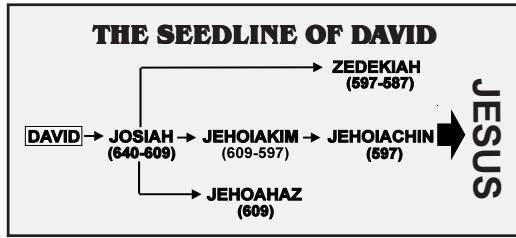
one of these sons reigned as king of Judah. In this sense, therefore, Jeremiah's prophecy was correct, for he had said,

"For none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah." Jehoiachin was thus childless as far as having a successor to the throne.

This would also mean that Jehoiachin was childless in reference to Jesus ruling on a literal throne in Judah over a national independent state of Israel.

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

After Jehoiachin was taken into Babylonian captivity, Zedekiah, the son of Josiah who was of the lineage of David, assumed the throne in Jerusalem (1 Ch 3:15). However, this appointment was made by Nebuchadnezzar and was not sanctioned by God. Therefore, God



revealed concerning Zedekiah, *"Remove the turban [diadem], and take off the crown Overthrown, I will*

make it overthrown! It shall be no longer, until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him" (Ez 21:26,27). Zedekiah did not have a right to the throne. God had terminated the Davidic kings on earth with the reign of Jehoiachin, therefore, Zedekiah was commanded to take off the crown and remove himself from the throne. There would be none of Jehoiachin's descendants, including Zedekiah, who would ever again reign and prosper on an earthly throne of David in Jerusalem. The One who would prosper would not reign in Jerusalem on a literal throne, but in heaven where the authority of David's throne has always existed. This is where Jesus presently is, and from heaven He reigns over all things.

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

The fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy of 22:30 is in the fact that such his-

torically happened. After Jehoiachin, no rightful heir of the Davidic lineage ever reigned again in Jerusalem as a God-anointed king. Kings reigned, but they were not anointed by God. The only anointed One that would reign on David's throne would be the Messiah, the Christ. His reign, however, **would not be on earth, but in heaven where He is now seated at the right hand of God.** Jesus is now the anointed one of God who has ascended to the right hand of God in order to reign over all things. He is there now, reigning as King of kings.

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

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

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

Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, and He shall build the temple of the Lord; Yes, He shall build the temple of the Lord. He shall bear the glory and

shall sit and rule on His throne; so He shall be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both (Zc 6:12,13).

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

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

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

Zechariah's prophecy was fulfilled in Christ. When Jesus ascended to the Father, He became our High Priest on His

heavenly throne. He thus reigns as King and functions as a High Priest on David's throne in heaven. If He came to reign on this earth, then He would have to forfeit His high priesthood.

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

Consider the above teaching of Hebrews 8:4 and Zechariah 6:12,13 from another perspective. Zechariah prophesied that the Branch (Jesus) would be a priest on His throne. The Hebrew writer states that Jesus is now our High Priest, and this priesthood is from heaven (See Hb 4:14; 8:1). Therefore, **the throne upon which Jesus is our High Priest is in heaven.** The ruling of Jesus upon His throne, as was prophesied by Zechariah, is now taking place, but it is taking place in heaven. It was never meant to take place on this earth. Thus in the future Jesus is not coming in order to become our High Priest on this earth. He is com-

ing to take home those for whom He has always function as their High Priest.

The prophecy and fulfillment of Jesus' priesthood from heaven and not on earth corresponds perfectly with the nature of the prophecy of Jeremiah 22:30. Jesus, as the descendant of Jehoiachin, would not and cannot prosper on a literal throne in Judah. He can only prosper as our King and Priest from His throne in heaven. Those who contend that Jesus will return to this earth in order to assume a supposed earthly kingdom reign, are actually saying that Jesus will give up His high priesthood, for He cannot be a priest on this earth. They are saying that Jesus will actually be lowered from His present position as King and Priest in order to come and rule over a literal earthly kingdom. This very thought, however, is against the nature of the reign of Jesus, which is within the hearts of men. The reign of Christ has always been spiritual on earth in the hearts of men. It is for this reason that we exalt His reign in our hearts.

D. Jesus now reigns in and from heaven.

Jesus now has all authority and is presently reigning from heaven (Mt 28:18; Hb 8:1). He *“ascended on high. He led captivity captive ...”* (Ep 4:8). He now rules the nations (Rv 3:21). If a future reign of Jesus on earth is taught in the Bible, and is as important as some claim, then we wonder why the Bible places so much emphasis on the present heavenly reign of Jesus in heaven. If the

physical millennial reign of Jesus on earth is to be as great as some contend, why does not the Bible clearly and openly teach such?

The fact is that the Bible does not teach a future physical reign of Jesus on this earth. The prophets prophesied the present kingdom reign of Jesus (Dn 7:13,14). Their prophecies have been fulfilled. Therefore, Jesus is presently

reigning “*far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named ...*” (Ep 1:21). God has “*highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ...*” (Ph 2:9,10). They should bow now, for it is now that Jesus reigns over all things in heaven and on earth.

Chapter 6

On David's Throne

Several important prophecies were made in the Old Testament concerning Jesus' His reign on David's throne. Of these prophecies, Gabriel said to Mary, “*He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David*” (Lk 1:32). Those who uphold the spiritual millennial view affirm that Jesus is presently reigning on David's throne as was prophesied in the Old Testament. This view is here affirmed by Gabriel. However, those of the physical millennial view affirm that Jesus' reign on David's throne is something yet to come in the future. It is supposed that Jesus will set up His earthly reign, and this reign will fulfill all prophecies concerning His reign on David's throne. Premillennialists, therefore, contend that during the physical one-thousand year reign of Jesus on earth, Jesus will actually sit on a physical throne of David. Premillennialists do not deny the fact that it was prophesied that Jesus would sit on

David's throne. They simply affirm that the throne is literal and that He will literally sit on it on earth for a period of one thousand years.

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

The word “throne” in prophecy and fulfillment concerning the reign of Deity, is used in a metaphorical sense. The literal Davidic throne of Israelite kings on earth in the Old Testament represented something that was greater than the throne itself. When we talk of



the “throne of England,” no one supposes that we are discussing the literal chair of the throne that is in the palace of London. When we use the word “throne,” therefore, the meaning is in reference to the authority of the throne, not the literal chair of the throne. This is the meaning that should be understood when talking about the throne of David, both in the Old Testament, as well as in fulfillment of prophecy in the New Testament.

In the Old Testament it was prophesied that the Branch would sit on David's throne. Remember, this is not David's literal throne. What is taught is that the Branch, Jesus, would assume the authority of reign that is symbolized by the use of the word “throne.”

But we must be clear about whose throne this actually is. David's throne in the Old Testament was actually God's throne. When the anointed king of Israel sat upon the throne, it was God's authority on earth that was manifested. This is what is emphasized in 1 Chronicles 29:23. *“Then Solomon sat on the **throne of the Lord** as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him.”* The meaning of this statement of Paul is brought out in Romans 13:1,2. *“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. **For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.** Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.”* Paul is not talking about governments that are specifically “anointed” by God as was the case with Israel. He

is discussing government in general, that government is in the plan of God to maintain order in society. With Israel, however, God specifically selected (anointed) who would sit upon the throne of David in order to maintain society. This anointed king would thus represent God's rule (authority) in Israel.

God ruled Israel through His anointed kings who sat on David's throne. Therefore, the throne was actually the Lord's throne (1 Ch 29:23; 1 Kg 1:46-48; 2:12). Solomon sat on this throne after the death of David. David said to Solomon that he *“shall come and sit on **my throne**, and he shall be king in my place”* (1 Kg 1:35). Benaiah answered David in this context by referring to David's throne as Solomon's throne. *“As the Lord has been with my lord the king, even so may He be with Solomon, and make **his throne** greater than the throne of my lord King David”* (1 Kg 1:37). And thus, *“Solomon sat on the **throne of his father***

David; and his kingdom was firmly established” (1 Kg 2:12). But remember 1 Chronicles 29:23. *“Then Solomon sat on the **throne of the Lord** as king instead of David his father”* **The point is that both the throne of David and Solomon are actually the throne of God.** Solomon sat on David's throne, but this throne was the manifestation of the Lord's authority in Israel.



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

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

*Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that 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**, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the res-*

urrection of the Christ This Jesus God has raised up ... being exalted to the right hand of God ... (At 2:29-33).

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

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

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

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

From this prophecy of God, there are five important promises that are made to David.

FULFILLMENT OF 2 SAMUEL 7

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

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

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



There is, however, a secondary significance to God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7. **Peter's reference to this promise in Acts 2:29-36 makes it absolutely clear that God had more in mind when He made the promise to David than the reign of Solomon.** In Acts 2 Peter makes the final application of the promise to the fulfillment of Jesus and His work. Notice the following fulfillments in Jesus of the preceding five promises that God made to David:

FULFILLMENT OF 2 SM 7 IN JESUS

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

Jesus fulfilled the promises of 2 Samuel 7 that God made to David. David's kingdom reign was established in Jesus in the sense that the authority for David's reign was always in or out of heaven. The "throne" (authority) always originated from God, and thus, when Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven, He assumed the kingdom reign that had previously been manifested on earth through David. The difference between David's reign and Jesus' reign is that David's presence was limited only to this earth and over national Israel. However, Jesus' presence is now in heaven and over all things. This is what Peter wanted us to understand when He stated that David "*is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day,*" but Jesus has been "*exalted to the right hand of God*" (At 2:29,33). Therefore, we should find the fulfillment of God's promise to David in what Jesus accomplished. At the time Peter proclaimed the fulfillment of the promise, Jesus had already been exalted to the right hand of God. The exaltation was past, not future. The present kingdom reign

of Jesus, therefore, is the fulfillment of the promise that God made to David. Jesus fulfilled the promise when He ascended to the right hand of the Father in order to reign over all things.

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

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

Herein is a prophecy of the authority that would be exercised by Jesus. In Revelation 3:7 John revealed, "*These things says He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens.*" There is certainly a relationship between Isaiah 22:22 and Revelation 3:7 that affirms a prophecy and fulfillment concerning Jesus. There is a prophecy and fulfillment that speaks of the present position and authority that Jesus has now at the right hand of God.

The word "key" in Isaiah 22:22 is metaphorical of authority. Jesus now has authority over all things (Mt 28:18; Jn 13:3; 17:2). He now rules the nations with a rod of iron (Rv 3:21). He is now far above all principality and power (Ep 1:20-22). In quoting Psalm 45:6,7, the Hebrew writer reaffirmed Jesus' present position and reign: "*Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom*" (Hb 1:8). The Hebrew writer wanted to make this point clear. He introduced

Psalm 45 by saying, "*But to the Son He says ...*" (Hb 1:8). Therefore, the Hebrew writer made it clear that Psalm 45:6,7 was a prophecy of the kingdom reign of Jesus. He quoted Psalm 45 in reference to what Jesus was at the time the letter of Hebrews was written. The point is that Jesus is now reigning in fulfillment of receiving the authority (keys of David) of sovereign rule over all things. Isaiah 22:22 has been fulfilled in Christ.

C. The Child would reign on David's throne.

Isaiah prophesied,

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

Jesus was the child that was born and given to humanity as a sacrificial Lamb. Kingdom reign was placed upon His shoulders (Mt 28:18). He is our Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. He is the King of kings who now rules over all things, "*angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him*"

(1 Pt 3:22). The point is that Jesus is presently reigning in the capacity of what was prophesied by Isaiah in Isaiah 9:6,7.

D. The Branch would reign on David's throne.

Jeremiah prophesied,

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

This prophecy clearly pictures to Israel that the coming Messiah would be a king. As king, He would prosper, though He would not prosper if He were to reign on earth (See Jr 22:30). The prosperity of His reign would be manifested “**in the earth,**” not on the earth. His judgment and righteousness were that which would be in the earth. His judgment and righteousness would be manifested through the power of His word (See Jn 12:48; At 13:46).

David prophesied, “*Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion*” (Ps 2:6). This and many other prophecies picture Jesus to be a king (See Ps 72:1-4; Is 32:1; Jr 33:15; Ez 37:24). He would be a king who would rule by the righteousness of God. He was set on the “holy hill of Zion” in the sense that the authority of His rule was first preached in Jerusalem,

and then, it was announced throughout the world through the preaching of the gospel (Is 2:2,3; Lk 24:47).

In quoting Zechariah 9:9, Matthew recorded concerning Jesus' final coming to Jerusalem at the end of His ministry, “*Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey’*” (Mt 2:4,5). Jesus was the king who came unto Jerusalem. The prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 was fulfilled in Jesus at the time Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The historical happening of the prophecy took place in the latter days of national Israel. Hosea had prophesied, “*Afterward the children of Israel shall return, seek the Lord their God and **David their king,** and fear the Lord and His goodness **in the latter days**” (Hs 3:5). It was not that David was going to be resurrected in order that Israel seek after him. When Jesus came, David was dead and buried (At 2:29). However, Peter affirmed that Jesus fulfilled this prophecy and filled this position (At 2:29-33). Jesus was the king that Israel was to seek. Hosea also stated that Israel would seek their king in the latter days. Peter affirmed in Acts 2:16,17 that he and all Israel were in the latter days. It was the last days of national Israel. It was the time in which the prophecy of Joel 2 was fulfilled and the Spirit of God was poured out. It was, therefore, the last days in which God established Jesus as king.*

Jesus is still king and all the world must now seek Him. He is now reigning over all things and exercising the sovereignty of Deity over things seen and not

seen. The total capacity of His kingship that was prophesied in the Old Testament has now been fulfilled in His present reign. When considering the prophecies of the Old Testament, one must think about their fulfillment “in time,” not at the “end of time.” This is where most interpreters make a serious mistake concerning the fulfillment of prophecy. Jesus knew that some people would not understand that He fulfilled all prophecy concerning Him “in time.” At the conclusion of His earthly ministry, therefore, He made the following statement, “*These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.*” (Lk 24:44). All

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

Chapter 7

Jesus On David's Throne

Throughout the New Testament one overwhelming fact is established concerning the present position and work of Jesus. That fact is that Jesus is now reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords over all things (1 Tm 6:15). Such is in fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecies that were made concerning Jesus’ position and work. It is concerning these prophecies that Jesus had reference when He proclaimed their fulfillment by His ministry on earth. He made this very clear to His disciples in Luke 24:44.

In 2 Corinthians 5:16 Paul made a very significant statement concerning how we should now know Jesus. He said,

“Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.”

We may know Jesus as the babe in a manger in Bethlehem. We may know Him in His ministry with the disciples on the Galilean roads. We are reminded of His sacrifice on the cross every Lord’s Day when we eat of the Lord’s Supper. But in 2 Corinthians 5:16 Paul wants us to take our minds beyond Jesus’ earthly ministry and work. We must know Him as He now is. And at this time He has all authority over all things and is ruling in

heaven as King of kings and Lord of lords. This is how we must know Jesus.

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

If we understand the totality of Jesus' kingdom authority, we will be driven to submission of His reign. This is certainly in the context and actions of what took place in Acts 2 when Peter announced the kingship of Jesus to the Jews who had crucified Him. *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both **Lord and Christ**"* (At 2:36). The Jews knew the meaning of lordship. They knew what authority the Christ (Messiah) would have according to Old Testament prophecy. Therefore, when they came to know Jesus "not according to the flesh," and as He is in heaven as "Lord and Christ," they were cut to the heart (At 2:37). This is precisely what Paul meant when he affirmed that we do not now know Jesus according to the flesh.

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

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

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

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end (Lk 1:31-33).

All prophecies concerning the reign of the Son on David's throne have been fulfilled in the present reign of Christ. Peter clearly affirmed this in Acts 2:29-35. At the time Peter made the statements of Acts 2, David was in the tomb (vs 29). However, before he died, God had sworn to David that He would raise One up to sit on his throne (2 Sm 7:12-25). Peter proclaimed that this prophecy was fulfilled in Christ. He stated, *"Therefore, [David] being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne"* (vs 30). Thus Jesus was raised up in order to sit at the right hand of God on David's throne in fulfillment of the oath that God had made to David (Ep 1:19-23). At the very time Peter was proclaiming the fulfillment of this prophecy in Acts 2, Jesus was on the throne. What both the prophets and Gabriel had spoken had been ful-

filled. Jesus was and is still ruling as King. When the Jews who crucified Jesus heard this, they were cut to the heart. So should we be today. Therefore, any theology that seeks to dethrone Jesus from His present position as universal King and head over all things cannot be true.

B. Jesus was born to be King.

During the final hours of Jesus' work on earth, He was taken before Pilate, the Roman procurator of Palestine. Before Pilate, Jesus affirmed, "***My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here***" (Jn 18:36). Pilate then asked Jesus if He were a king. Jesus responded, "***You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice***" (Jn 18:37).

The first thing to note from the above reply of Jesus to Pilate is the fact that Jesus said **His kingdom was not of this world**. Anyone who would affirm that Jesus will sometime in the future set up an earthly kingdom should seriously consider this statement. **Jesus' kingdom is not of this world**. Why would we want to make His kingdom of this world? Some seek to make the kingdom of Jesus a physical kingdom of this world, and thus, dethrone Him from His present galactic reign when He comes again. But if His kingdom were to be of this world,

then it would mean that Jesus' disciples would have to do as He said to Pilate. They would have to fight militarily to defend the kingdom (See Jn 18:36).

In John 18:37 Jesus reaffirmed the correct deduction of Pilate's statement that He was a king. It was for this purpose that Jesus was born. Jesus came into the world to be a king, but not a king on this world. In John 18:36 Jesus was talking about a kingdom reign that was not of this world in the sense of a king sitting on a literal throne in the capital of the kingdom. The kingdom would be ruled from heaven. This same thought must be carried over into verse 37 of John 18. Therefore, Jesus was born in order to be the king of a kingdom that was not of this world. This was a kingdom reign that would have its "capital" in heaven from the right hand of God (Ep 1:20-22). From this position, Jesus would reign as King of kings and Lord of lords until He comes again (1 Tm 6:15). The reign of Jesus was never pictured in the Old Testament, nor in the New Testament, to be a reign from some location here on earth. Jesus' reign was always to be from heaven over all things on earth.

C. Jesus fulfilled the promises concerning reign.

Concerning the gospel going to the Gentiles, and the Messiah's reign over the nations, Paul stated, "***Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers***" (Rm 15:8). Jesus fulfilled the promises

that were made to the fathers (See Lk 24:44). The promises included a reign that would extend beyond the Jewish fathers. By referring to Isaiah 11:1,10, Paul quoted, *“There shall be a root of Jesse; and He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in Him the Gentiles shall hope”* (Rm 15:12). Paul’s application of Isaiah 11 is to Jesus’ present reign over the Gentiles. He is not discussing something that would take place in the future. The fulfillment of the promises has been accomplished. In Christ were the promises fulfilled. Paul also wrote, *“For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen”* (2 Co 1:20). The New Testament affirms that the promises of God that were made concerning the reign of Jesus over the Gentiles have been fulfilled. Jesus is the “Yes” and “Amen” concerning all Old Testament prophecies that referred to the kingdom reign of the Messiah. He fulfilled all prophecies concerning His kingdom reign over all things on David’s throne.

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

When God took David from being a shepherd in order to make him king of Israel, He established a covenant with him. In 2 Samuel 7 God reviewed this matter with David. God said, *“I took you from the sheep fold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel”* (vs 8). The covenant God made with David included the promise to set up his seed after him to be kings over Israel. *“I will set up your seed after you,*

who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (vs 12,13). Of this covenant and promise, David revealed in the Psalms, *“My mercy I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall stand firm with him”* (Ps 89:28). This promise that one would reign after David, and upon his throne, is the foundation to the prophecy of Isaiah 55:3. *“Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you—the sure mercies of David.”* The significance of this prophecy was not clearly understood until the coming of the Christ, for it was in the Christ that the promise was to be fulfilled.

Paul applied the promise of Isaiah 55:3 concerning the “sure mercies of David” to Jesus. In Acts 13:33,34 Paul quotes Isaiah 55:3. *“God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You.’ And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: ‘I will give you the sure mercies of David’.”* The “sure mercies of David” refers to the original promise of God to David, that He would set One on his throne who would reign (2 Sm 7:8,12,13). Paul affirms that this promise was fulfilled in Christ. At the time Paul made the statement, and quotation in Acts 13, Jesus was reigning in heaven. The certainty that His reign would continue was guaranteed by His resurrection from the dead. Jesus would continue to reign be-

cause He had conquered death. Present immortality assured His continuing reign.

From the above points there is only one conclusion that can be made. Jesus is now reigning. He is reigning as King and Priest on David’s throne. His king-

dom is not of this world. It is not and never will be a physical kingdom of this world. All prophecies concerning both the King and the kingdom have been fulfilled in Christ (Lk 24:44).

Chapter 8

Restoration Of Israel To Palestine

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

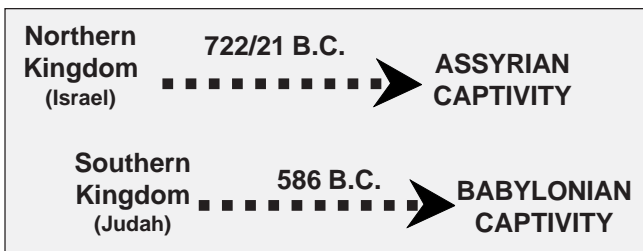
Two tribes of Israel made up the southern kingdom that was ruled first by Rehoboam, Solomon’s son. These were the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Jerusalem was the capital of the southern kingdom. From the time of this division of the twelve tribes, Israel continued as two kingdoms until the restoration after the Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C.

In 722/21 B.C., the northern kingdom was taken into Assyrian captivity (2 Kg 18:9-12). Eventually, the southern kingdom, because of her sins, was also taken into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. (2 Kg

24). During the end of both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel, God spoke through the prophets that both kingdoms would be punished for their apostasy from His will (2 Kg 17:7-23). However, through the prophets **God also promised that a remnant of all twelve tribes of Israel would return to the promised land in order to make the way for the coming Messiah.** God’s promises concerning the remnant that would return contain prophecies of the “reconstruction” of the temple. There are promises that a remnant of every tribe would also return and be present in Jerusalem for the coming of the Messiah.

After serving years in captivity, a remnant of each tribe did return from the land of their captors in 536, 457 and 444 B.C. However, it is affirmed by some that not all the tribes of Israel returned to

the land of promise in fulfillment of God’s prophecies that they would. Some have



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

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

There are obviously some tremendous political ramifications to the above belief. Many western religious leaders view the present happenings in Israel today as God’s maneuvering to work out the national settlement of Israel in “their” land. They view that Israel has the right to the land of Palestine because of God’s promise of the land to them and His work to restore the nation to the land. However, these are fruitless hopes in reference to biblical prophecy. In this and the following chapters, it is important to un-

derstand the conditions that God made for Israel to remain in possession of the land. It is also critical to understand that God fulfilled all prophecies concerning Israel’s return to the land. He fulfilled all Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah in reference to the Jews being in Palestine in the first century in fulfillment of all Messianic prophecies.

Understanding that the fulfillment of promises and prophecies of God in reference to the covenant relationship Israel had with God, clarifies the fact that there are no prophecies to be fulfilled in the future in reference to the Jews. There are no unfulfilled promises of God in reference to their possession of the land of Palestine. Therefore, any biblical exegesis by modern-day theologians of a future claim of Israel to the land of Palestine are simply a failure to recognize that God’s purpose for His covenant with Israel and their possession of a homeland have been accomplished. God no longer works through a special called out physical nation. He no longer limits Himself in a special work on earth to a specific area of the earth such as Palestine. God’s work now is “to every creature” and “into all the world” (See Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16). His work extends to all peoples of the world in an effort to bring into eternity those who would submit to the present kingdom reign of the Son of God.

The Bible teaches that the **land promise** that was made to Abraham and his seed has been fulfilled. It was fulfilled when Israel entered and captured

the land of Palestine fourteen hundred years before Christ. However, retaining the land was conditioned on Israel's obedience to the law of the covenant God had made with the nation. God fulfilled the "land promise" when Israel took possession of Palestine under the leadership of Joshua. However, Israel gave up the land when they failed to keep the conditions for possession of the land. Their national possession of the land ended in 586 B.C. when Babylon took the last Jews into Babylonian captivity.

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

A. **Promise and fulfillment of the land promise:**

In Genesis 12:1 God promised Abraham, "*Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you.*" Abraham thus departed Ur of the Chaldeas and journeyed to a land he did not know (Hb 11:8). When he arrived in the land of Canaan (Palestine), God said to him, "... *for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever*" (Gn

13:15). "*Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you*" (Gn 13:17). At the time Abraham stood in the land, God was making a promise that He would give the land of Palestine to Abraham and his seed as an inheritance (Gn 15:7,8). The land was to be given to Abraham and his seed after him for an **everlasting possession**. God promised Abraham that He would give him a land. "*I give to you [Abraham] and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God*" (Gn 17:8).

After the above promises were made to Abraham, several events occurred in the history of his descendants. The Israelite nation was born through the twelve sons of Jacob. Israel went into Egyptian bondage for four hundred years. Moses arose to lead God's people out of Egypt and through the wilderness for forty years. Moses later died and Joshua took the nation of Israel into the promised land that was promised to Abraham and his descendants.

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

At his death, Joshua reaffirmed the fulfillment of God's promises to the fathers that Israel enjoyed at the time. "*Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth. And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that **not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed***" (Ja 23:14). The promise that God had made to Abraham in Genesis 13:15 had been fulfilled. The land was given to Abraham's descendants.

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

ISRAEL AND THE PROMISED LAND

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

over all the land that was promised to Abraham (1 Kg 4:21; 2 Ch 9:26).

7. Because the northern kingdom of Israel forsook the law of God, she was taken into Assyrian captivity in 721 B.C. (2 Kg 8:11,12).
8. Because the southern kingdom forsook the law of God, she was taken into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. (2 Kg 25:21).

B. Conditions for retaining the land:

In order for Israel to retain the land, God gave them the condition of maintaining the law of the covenant of God. Joshua warned, "*When you have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God, which He commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed down to them, **then the anger of the Lord will burn against you, and you shall perish quickly from the good land which He has given you***" (Js 23:16). This is precisely what Moses warned Israel before he departed their presence.

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

Israel's condition for keeping the land was their obedience to the law of the covenant.

If they forsook the law of the Lord, God would drive them from the land.

Israel did disobey God. She forsook the commandments of the Lord. Subsequently, in 721 B.C. the king of Assyria “*carried Israel away captive to Assyria, and put them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, because they did not obey the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed His covenant and all that Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded; and they would neither hear nor do them*” (2 Kg 18:11,12). In 586 B.C. the southern kingdom of Israel, “*was carried away captive out of his land*” (2 Kg 25:21). **These captivities ended Israel’s national possession of the land of Palestine.** God had fulfilled His promise to give them the land. The condition for retaining the land was obedience to the commandments of God. Israel forsook the condition, and thus, their right of national possession of the land was terminated. Never again would they have national possession of the land of Palestine.

C. Return of Israel to the land:

Though the children of Israel were taken into captivity because of disobedience, God promised that a remnant would return to the land. The purpose for the return of the remnant would be that God needed to fulfill the “blessing” promise that He made to Abraham, for He had promised Abraham, “*And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*” (Gn 12:3). For this reason, therefore,

God promised that a remnant of all Israel would return to the land in order that the Messiah come in fulfillment of His promise to Abraham. The presence of the a remnant of national Israel in Palestine at the coming of the Messiah would prove to the world that God could keep His promises.

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

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

2. Isaiah (740 - 681 B. C.): Isaiah prophesied, “*Unless the Lord of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah*” (Is 1:9). Therefore, Isaiah continued, “*And it shall come to pass in that day that the remnant of Israel ... will depend on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant will return.... A remnant of them will return For the Lord God of Hosts will make a determined end in the midst of all the land*” (Is 10:20-23). God would gather the remnant of Israel from the east, west, north and south (Is

54:4-7; see 19:23,24).

3. Jeremiah (627 - 574 B.C.): Jeremiah prophesied, ***“In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given as an inheritance to your fathers”*** (Jr 3:18). Jeremiah continued, ***“For behold, the days are coming, says the Lord. And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it”*** (Jr 30:3). Through Jeremiah God promised that the Israelites ***“shall dwell in their own land”*** (Jr 23:8). ***“therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob, says the Lord, Nor be dismayed, O Israel; for behold, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid”*** (See Jr 30:4-17).

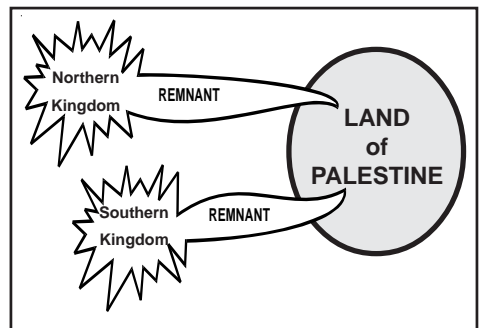
4. Ezekiel (597 - 575 B.C.): Ezekiel prophesied that Israel would be taken out of the nations and that God would bring her into her own land. ***“For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land”*** (Ez 36:24). God promised, ***“... I will ... bring you into the land of Israel”*** (Ez 37:12). ***“When I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them out of their enemies’ lands, and I am hallowed in them in the sight of many nations, then they shall know that I am the Lord their God ...”*** (Ez 39:27,28).

5. Zechariah (520 - 490 B.C.): God promised Israel through Zechariah, ***“O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I***

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

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

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



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

God of Israel: twelve bulls for all Israel ...”

(Er 8:35). This ended Israel’s turbulent history throughout the centuries that had been brought on by their disobedience to the commandments of God. They were as a remnant people restored to the land of Palestine, though they never again could claim national possession of the land. That right remained with the Medo-Persian Empire, then the Greeks, the Romans, and a host of other nations until a national stated was declared in 1948. But declaration was not in fulfillment of prophecy. It was only a declaration of state wherein Jews from all the world could find a homeland, for all the salvational purposes for the land had been fulfill over nineteen hundred years before.

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

D. Dissolution of the land promise:

The land promise was a part of God’s

covenant that He made with Abraham. God had said to Abraham, *“As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations”* (Gn 17:9). The sign or token of the covenant was circumcision (Gn 17:11). In Genesis 17 God continued His

RETURN OF A REMNANT OF ALL ISRAEL

1st Return:	Sheshbazzar	536 B.C.	(Er 1-6)
2nd Return:	Ezra	457 B.C.	(Er 7-10)
3rd Return:	Nehemiah	444 B.C.	(Ne 1-13)

statements to Abraham concerning this covenant. *“I*

will establish My covenant with him [Isaac] for an everlasting covenant and with his descendants after him” (Gn 17:19). In conjunction with God’s promises and covenant with Abraham, He said concerning the land, *“... for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever”* (Gn 13:15). It would be theirs as an “everlasting possession” (Gn 17:8).

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

The Old Testament use of terms as “forever,” “everlasting” and “perpetual” in reference to ordinances and covenants of the Old Testament **refers to a predetermined period of time throughout which God intended that something last.** The Jewish Passover (Ex 12:14),

burnt offerings (Ex 29:9; 40:15) and incense (Ex 30:8) were perpetual ordinances of the law. The sabbath was to be a “forever” observance of the Old Testament law (Ex 31:17). However, the Old Testament law has ceased (See Cl 2:14; Rm 7:4; Hb 10:9,10). Since the Old Testament law and covenant with Israel have ceased, then we have to define the words “forever,” “everlasting” and “perpetual” in reference to the termination of God’s law and covenant with Israel. The meaning of these words, therefore, must be understood in the context of their use in reference to God’s work with Israel. And in reference to the termination of the covenant and law with the coming of the new covenant and law, we would have to define the preceding terms to refer to a **definite and specific period of time**. In other words, God intended that the sabbath, incense, Passover and other “everlasting” ordinances **last only throughout their intended period of existence**. They would not go away until God said that they would go away.

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

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

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



The generations of Abraham ended in Christ, for in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile. In fact, those who are now sons of Abraham are of his spiritual lineage by faith. Paul wrote, *“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; **but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God**” (Rm 2:28,29).* Therefore, *“in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, **but faith working through love**” (Gl 5:6).* We are now the children of Abraham by faith (See Rm 9:6-13). Today, sonship to Abraham is not according to circumcision of the flesh. It is as Paul wrote to the Colossians, *“In Him [Christ] you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism ...” (Cl 2:11,12).*

The generations of Abraham, and thus, fleshly Israel, ended in Christ. With the ending of the generations of Israel in Christ came also the cessation of the “forever” and “everlasting” covenant and law

that God had established with Israel. **The land promise was to last until the generations of Israel ceased. The generations of Israel ended in Christ. Therefore, Israel's right to possess the land ended when the Messiah came and established the spiritual Israel.**

God promised Abraham that He would give to him and his descendants the land in which to prosper. However, this promise was conditioned on the obedience of Israel to the law of God. In order for his descendants to abide in the land they had to remain faithful to their covenant with God. Israel failed in keeping the conditions of the covenant. They were subsequently taken into captivity. In fulfillment of God's promise to return a remnant of Israel to the land of promise, portions of every tribe of Israel returned to Palestine after the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities.

After Israel's return from captivity, they were restored to the land in order to await the coming of the Messiah. When the Messiah came, the purpose for which the covenant and law was made with Israel was completed. The purpose for which God gave them the land was completed. The purpose for the existence of the nation of Israel to preserve a portion of humanity for the coming of the Christ was accomplished. Thus ended the land promise which God had made specifically with the nation of Israel.

E. The salvation of Israel.

Romans 11, specifically verses 25 & 26, have been used by some as a proof-text

for the national conversion and restoration of Israel that is supposed to be yet in the future. In the verses Paul wrote,

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

This statement by Paul has been used by some in an effort to prove that yet in the future there will be a national conversion of Israel. All tribes of Israel will then return to the land of promise in fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham. However, such interpretations as this fail to see the fact that God has already fulfilled the land promise. Secondly, interpretations as this also fail to see the fulfillment of the work of the Deliverer (Christ) in Jesus being the Blessing who would bless all nations. Though the Jews today are still looking for the Deliverer, the fact is that the Deliverer has already come. Consider the following points in reference to what Paul was saying in Romans 11 concerning the Deliverer.

1. The setting of God's work with the Jews in the first century is in view of the destruction of Jerusalem. In Matthew 24, Jesus' prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem was recorded.

At the beginning of His prophecy concerning the coming termination of national Israel in A.D. 70, Jesus said, “*Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down*” (Mt 24:2). Jesus came in the flesh, and to national Israel. However, Israel as a whole rejected Him as their Deliverer. “*He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him*” (Jn 1:11). He was the Deliverer that was prophesied by Isaiah, which prophecy is quoted by Paul in Romans 11:26. But the Jews did not accept Him as their Deliverer.

Because Jews rejected the person of Jesus as the Deliverer of Israel who was to deliver them from spiritual death, they would succumb to the physical destruction that Jesus would bring on them in His coming by proxy through the Roman armies in A.D. 70. In reference to redemption, Jesus personally came to do what Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 27:9, and was quoted by Paul, that is, to “*turn away ungodliness from Jacob*” (Rm 11:26). However, Israel rejected Jesus. God did not destroy national Israel because of their rejection of Jesus as their Redeemer. He was going to destroy Jerusalem anyway in order to terminate national Israel. Israel’s rejection only manifested their hardness of heart, and subsequently, they allowed themselves to suffer the predetermined plan of God to physically terminate national Israel in A.D. 70.

2. Israel’s rejection gave opportunity for Gentile reception of the gospel: In the context of Romans 11, Paul speaks

of the “grafting in” of the Gentiles because of Israel’s rejection of the Deliverer. Isaiah had prophesied of Israel’s rejection of the Messiah (Deliverer). “*God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day*” (Rm 11:8; Is 29:10). When Israel stumbled, salvation was offered to the Gentiles (Rm 11:11). Salvation offered to the Gentiles through the preaching of the gospel. Subsequently, the obedient Gentiles were grafted in by faith in the Messiah (Rm 11:17). Also, if Israel would believe, God is able to graft them in again (Rm 11:23). And God can. However, **they must be grafted in by individual faith, not national conversion.** The Jews of Paul’s day had to be grafted in by the same means the Gentiles were grafted in, that is, by belief in Jesus. They had to believe and obey the gospel just as the Gentiles believed and obeyed the gospel in order to be saved.

In view of the physical manifestation of God’s termination of national Israel in A.D. 70, it is easy to assume that in the context of Romans 11 Paul is referring to the fact that Israel was no more to be considered God’s special people. When Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70, it is certain that many Jews finally realized this, and subsequently, turned to Christ. The “time of the Gentiles” had been fulfilled, that is, the time when much preaching and converting went out among the Gentiles while the Jews maintained the stubborn attitude that they were still the chosen of God. However, when Jerusalem fell, it was clear that God no

longer had a special relationship with national Israel. A.D. 70 was thus God's last sermon to Israel that that His special covenant relationship with them was over. It was His last offer to them that they turn to Jesus, the Deliverer.

Some have assumed that when Paul was talking about the "grafting in" of Israel that he was actually speaking concerning their national conversion and restoration (Rm 11:17-24). However, if "grafting in" does mean the national conversion of Israel, then it also means the national conversion of the Gentiles because they too were also "grafted in." The truth is that the Gentiles were grafted in by individual obedience to the gospel (Rm 11:20). It would also be by this means that the Jews would be grafted in. Their conversion would be on an individual, not national, basis. As the Gentiles were individually grafted into the church of Christ by individual obedience to the gospel of Christ, so were the Jews to be grafted into Christ.

3. Israel was to turn to Jesus as the Gentiles turned. Paul used the word "mystery" in Romans 11:25 to explain that something new was being revealed. He reveals the salvation of Jews in order to humble the Gentiles who had become puffed up over the casting off of physical (national) Israel. Paul said that the hardening of Israel had happened to Israel **until** the fullness of the Gentiles had come in. The word "until" is used in the sense that we must recognize the fact that Israel was hardened at the time the Gentiles were being converted. The hardening of Israel had and was taking place.

In verse 12 Paul had written, "*Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness.*"

The "fullness of the Gentiles" is not a reference to a specific number of Gentiles. Reference is to a spiritual state. The hardening of Israel was at its peak at the time of their crucifixion of Jesus. From this hardening, however, the gospel went out to the Gentiles. The Jews' rejection of Jesus more than once led to evangelists going to the Gentiles (See At 13:46; 18:6). Therefore, God used the hardening of Israel to get the gospel to the Gentiles in order to graft them in.

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

Paul wrote, "*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus*" (Gl 3:26). Since Acts 2, when the kingdom reign of Jesus was first announced, God views His children through Jesus. Therefore, when one obeys the gospel, nationality is lost. It is as what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:16 concerning Jesus. "*Therefore, from now on, we regard no*

one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.” In Christ “there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all” (Cl 3:11). “**For as many of you as were baptized into**

Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gl 3:27,28). God considers no man today according to nationality. He considers only those who are in Christ, for it is they who will dwell in eternity.

Chapter 9

Reconstruction Of The Temple And Tabernacle

Some today assume that national Israel will in the future be nationally converted and restored to the land of Palestine. With the restoration of national Israel to Palestine, there is the assumption that the temple of Israel will be reconstructed in Palestine. Anglo-Israelites, those who believe that the Anglo-Saxon races today are the lost ten tribes of Israel, believe that the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem is a vital part of the restoration of national Israel and the establishment of the earthly millennial reign of Christ.

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

As stated in previous chapters, the Bible teaches that only a remnant of Israel was to return after the Assyrian and

Babylonian captivities. Prophecies concerning this return of a remnant have already been fulfilled. There are prophecies of the reconstruction of the temple within the prophecies concerning the remnant. However, these prophecies too were fulfilled when the remnant was returned to Palestine.

A. Prophecy of the temple's reconstruction:

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

1. Prophecy of Isaiah: Isaiah prophesied that Jerusalem and the temple would be rebuilt. He prophesied, “*Who says of Cyrus, He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, even*

saying to Jerusalem, **'You shall be built, and to the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid''** (Is 44:28). Concerning this prophecy of Cyrus, Isaiah prophesied the words of God, *"I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways; He shall build My city and let My exiles go free ..."* (Is 45:13; see 54:11-13). These words concerning Cyrus were uttered approximately two hundred years before Cyrus lived. They were spoken before the existence of the Medo-Persian Empire, over which Cyrus was king.

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

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

The story of the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the reconstruction of the physical temple began with Ezra and in the days when Cyrus was king of Persia. Ezra 1:1 reads, *"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the*

word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing" The proclamation was, *"Who is there among you of all His people? May his God be with him! Now let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem"* (Er 1:3; see 2 Ch 36:22,23).

Chapters 3 through 6 of Ezra tell of the story of how the Jews returned and rebuilt the temple. They tell of the restoration of worship at Jerusalem and the restoration of the temple. Ezra 6:15 records, *"Now the temple was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius."* The temple was finished. Prophecies concerning its reconstruction were fulfilled. Therefore, the prophecies of the prophets concerning the reconstruction of the temple were fulfilled over years ago during the days of Darius, king of Persia.

C. Prophecy and fulfillment concerning the tabernacle:

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

this until this prophecy is applied, and thus, interpreted in Acts 15.

The historical situation of Acts 15 is a meeting of the church in reference to legalistic practices that were being imposed on Gentile churches by the efforts of those who sought to bind on brethren those things that God had not bound (See At 15:1,2). It was during this meeting that Peter proclaimed how God through him had chosen that *“the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe,”* and thus, become a part of the body of Christ (At 15:7). Paul and Barnabas proclaimed how God had worked miracles among the Gentiles in order to bring them into the church (At 15:12). In this context, James stood up and said, *“And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written ...”* (At 15:15). He then quoted Amos 9:11. **The tabernacle of David in Amos 9:11 was a reference to the church!** When Amos prophesied of the building of the tabernacle of David, he was speaking of the building of the church (See Mt 16:18,19).

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

the Old Testament **has been fulfilled.**

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

In the preceding references to the church, the word “temple” is taken from the literal temple of the Old Testament and metaphorically used to refer to the body of Christians, the church. God does not intend to rebuild another physical temple here on earth. The church is far greater than the Old Testament temple which was physically confined to the city of Jerusalem and was made of stone. The temple of the church is far greater. Those who would affirm that God will revert back to a physical temple in Jerusalem are affirming that God is going back to an old system of a stone temple that would be limited to the city of Jerusalem in Palestine.

The very nature of the world view of an earthly reign of Jesus is earthly. Emphasis is on having earthly possessions, earthly power, earthly existence, and earthly worship of a king who sits on an

earthly throne. It is only natural that this theology should have an earthly temple.

But do not miss this fundamental reversal of the world view of the New Testament that emphasizes what is above this earth. Christians are to set their minds on what is above (Cl 3:2). Their citizenship is in heaven (Ep 2:19). They seek a city in heaven whose builder and maker

is God (Hb 11:10,16,22). In realizing that the earthly is to be destroyed, they are motivated by heavenly thinking to live morally good lives (2 Pt 3:11). Such is a great contrast to the world view that is propagated by the physical millennial view the God will set up something earthly.

Chapter 10

Restoring The “Lost” Ten Tribes

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

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

some that these tribes of Israel are yet to returned to the land of Palestine in fulfillment of prophecies concerning the return of **all** Israel to the promised land.

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

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

The Bible teaches that portions of all twelve tribes of Israel were residing in the land of the southern kingdom after the Assyrian captivity of 722/21

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

The above thought must be considered when studying the return of the ten tribes after the Babylonian captivity. When the majority of the northern tribes withdrew into the Jeroboam apostasy after 931 B.C., we would be presumptuous to say that everyone of the northern ten tribes fell away with this apostasy. Immediately after the division, as recorded in 2 Chronicles 10:16-19, Rehoboam set up worship in Jerusalem. *“And from all their territories the priests and the Levites who were in all Israel took their stand with him”* (2 Ch 11:13). 2 Chronicles 11:13 states, *“And after the Levites left, those from all the tribes of Israel, such as set their heart to seek the Lord God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the Lord God of their fathers.”* Portions of all tribes did not go into rebellion with Jeroboam. Portions of all twelve tribes of Israel remained faithful to the reign of Rehoboam, though he was a wicked king. In conjunction with this historical event that left portions of all twelve tribes either in Judea or at least faithful to God after the initial division of the entire kingdom of Israel, consider the return of the faithful in the north to the southern kingdom throughout the

history of the existence of the division.

1. Unification occurred during Asa’s reform. It was the desire of King Asa to bring reform to Israel. This reform brought many true worshipers out of the northern kingdom of Israel into the south. 2 Chronicles 15:9 states, *“Then he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and those who sojourned with them from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon, for they came over to him in great numbers from Israel when they saw that the Lord his God was with him.”* Herein is one of the first mentions that portions of the tribes of the northern kingdom restored themselves to Jerusalem and Judea. They manifested their loyalty to God through their return to Judah.

2. Unification occurred during Hezekiah’s reform. Hezekiah came to the throne of Judah in 727 B.C. (2 Kg 18:1; 2 Ch 29:1). This was only a few years before the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722/21 B.C. When Hezekiah became king of the southern kingdom he made it his purpose to reestablish true worship to God (2 Kg 18:3-8; 2 Ch 30-32). In order to accomplish this restoration, he *“sent to all Israel and Judah, and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to the Lord God of Israel”* (2 Ch 30:1). Keep in mind what is stated in this passage. The letter was sent to **all Israel**, which would include the tribes of the northern territory, as well as the area of Judah.

When Hezekiah circulated his letter,

it was found that “*a multitude of the people, many from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves ...*” (2 Ch 30:18). These gathered themselves to Jerusalem. When the assembly was made in Jerusalem, “*the whole congregation of Judah rejoiced, also the priests and Levites, all the congregation that came from Israel, the sojourners who came from the land of Israel, and those who dwelt in Judah*” (2 Ch 30:25). When the events of Hezekiah’s great restoration were concluded, “*all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah*” in order to destroy idolatrous worship (2 Ch 31:1). Concerning the destruction of the idols, “*they destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned to their own cities, every man to his possession*” (2 Ch 31:1).

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

If we combine the reforms of Asa and Hezekiah, which resulted after the division of the Israelite kingdom during the time of Jeroboam and Rehoboam, one cannot escape the conclusion that por-

tions of all tribes either resided in the southern kingdom, or at least, continued to remain loyal to the south until the final captivity of Israel with the coming of Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. Therefore, when Nebuchadnezzar took Judah away into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C., portions of all twelve tribes of Israel were included in this captivity. In the returns from Babylonian captivity in 536, 457 and 444, the greater portion of the remnant that was promised to return to Palestine came out of the Babylonian captivity. This included a remnant of all twelve tribes.

B. God promised a remnant would return from captivity.

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

Before considering the prophecies of the return of the remnant of all twelve tribes, there must be a clear understanding of the prophets’ use of the words “Ephraim,” “Israel” and “Judah.” After the division of the twelve tribes in 931 B.C., the terms “Ephraim” and “Israel”

were used primarily to refer to the northern ten tribes of the nation of Israel (See “Israel” in Hs 1:4-8; “Ephraim” in Is 7:2-17; Ez 37:16,19; Hs 5:3-14). The term “Judah” was commonly used by the prophets to refer to the southern kingdom of Israel, which included the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (See Hs 1:1; 1 Ch 4:41; 5:17). The context of the words will clearly define the nation to which reference is made.

The following prophets clearly pictured the return of a remnant of all Israel from captivity. The remnant was to return in order that God fulfill His promise concerning the Messiah who would come to bless all Israel. Therefore, in fulfillment of the promise of the return of the remnant, portions of all twelve tribes of Israel were in Jerusalem when God sent forth the Holy Spirit in order to establish a new covenant relationship with Judah and Israel. The Holy Spirit was sent forth to fulfill God’s promise to Abraham that in him all nations of the world would be blessed. There were no tribes left out of the fulfillment of this promise.

1. Hosea (750 - 725 B.C.): Hosea prophesied a few years before the northern kingdom went into Assyrian captivity. However, he prophesied that *“the children of Judah [southern kingdom] and the children of Israel [northern kingdom] shall be gathered together, and appoint for themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel!”* (Hs 1:11). He explained that this “gathering together” would take place “afterward,”

that is, after their captivity. *“Afterward the children of Israel shall return, seek the Lord their God and David their king, and fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days”* (Hs 3:5). Reference in Hosea 3:5 is specifically to the northern kingdom, for it is they who were about to go into captivity when Hosea prophesied. However, in Hosea 1:11 Hosea sees far into the future from the time he prophesied to a time when both the northern and southern kingdoms would be united together again as one nation.

2. Isaiah (740 - 681 B.C.): Isaiah also prophesied of the remnant of Israel that would represent both the northern and southern kingdoms. *“It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left, from Assyria and Egypt, from Pathros and Cush, from Elam and Shinar, from Hamath and the islands of the sea”* (Is 11:11; see 19:23,24). These are the same geographical locations to which the northern kingdom was transported in the Assyrian captivity of 722/21 B.C. (See 2 Kg 18:11,12). In Israel’s return from Babylonian captivity, therefore, captives would come from all the areas to which Israel was taken in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. God would and did bring the whole nation of Israel out of captivity and back into the land of Palestine (See Is 54:4-8).

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

“I will be found by you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back from your captivity, I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you to the place from which I caused you to be carried away captive” (Jr 29:14). God would then bring the Redeemer and in His days, *“Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely ...”* (See Jr 23:5-6). Jeremiah spoke the words of God, *“As the Lord lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I have driven them. And they shall dwell in their own land”* (Jr 23:8). *“In those days, “Jeremiah exhorted, “the house of Judah [southern kingdom] shall walk with the house of Israel [northern kingdom], and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given as an inheritance to your fathers”* (Jr 3:18; see 23:8). God promised, *“I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it”* (Jr 30:3). *“At that time ... I will be the God of all the families of Israel ...”* (Jr 31:1). God thus would heal Israel’s wounds (30:17) and save her out of the land of captivity (30:4-11). God would do such in order that all Israel plant vineyards once again in the promised land (31:5). Judah and Israel would be built again (33:7,8) in order to be joined together for an everlasting covenant (50:4,5).

The time would come after their re-

turn that God would *“make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah”* (Jr 31:31). In order that this new covenant be made with all Israel, all Israel, both the house of Israel (the northern kingdom) and Judah (the southern kingdom), would have to be in Jerusalem when this covenant was established. In Hebrews 8:7-13 the Hebrew writer quotes Jeremiah 31. The new covenant is identified as the new covenant that God established with man through Jesus. This new covenant was established in Jerusalem in the first century, therefore, the promise of Jeremiah 31 was fulfilled in the first century. In order for the establishment of the new covenant to take place, all Israel, both the northern kingdom and southern kingdom had to be present in Jerusalem when Jesus established the covenant.

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

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

into the land of Israel" (Ez 37:12).

In order to illustrate that the nation of Israel would come together again, God also told Ezekiel to take two sticks. "As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: '**For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions.**' Then take another stick and write on it, '**For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions.**'" (Ez 37:16). Ezekiel was to join these two sticks together. The symbolism represented the joining of the two kingdoms of all Israel. The prophecy was that all twelve tribes of Israel would join once again to be made one nation (Ez 37:19-22). They would be one nation again after the captivity.

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

5. Zechariah (520 - 490 B.C.): Through Zechariah, God promised, "*And it shall come to pass that just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you, and you shall be a blessing ...*" (Zc 8:13). Zechariah prophesied that Judah and Ephraim would be strengthened again (Zc 9:13-16). God promised that

He would bring back the house of Judah and Joseph (Zc 10:6,7). "*I will also bring them back from the land of Egypt, and gather them from Assyria*" (Zc 10:10). These places from which God would bring the captives were the geographical locations to which the ten northern tribes were taken after the Assyrian conquest of Samaria in 722/21 B.C. Regardless of the locations to which the northern kingdom was taken after the Assyrian captivity, or the time between the captivity and return, God would still accomplish the return of all Israel to the land of Palestine.

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

There were three returns of Israel from Babylonian captivity that are recorded in the Bible. The first group of captives came in 536 B.C. and were led by Sheshbazzar (Er 1-6). Ezra brought the second group from captivity in 457 B.C. (Er 7-10). The third group was led by Nehemiah in 444 B.C. (Ne 1-13). In these three returns portions of all twelve tribes of Israel made their way to Palestine to settle in the land that was promised to them through Abraham. The following points emphasize events that took place during and after the three returns. These events clearly picture a return of a portion of all twelve tribes.

1. Offerings were made for all twelve tribes: When the first group of captives came to the land, they "*dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities*"

(Er 2:70). They rebuilt the temple. Afterward, Ezra records, “*And they offered sacrifices at the dedication of this house of God ... a sin offering for all Israel twelve male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel*” (Er 6:17).

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

2. The numbering revealed that all Israel was present in Palestine: 1 Chronicles 9 contains a list of at least four tribes that returned from captivity. Verses 1-3 state, “... **All Israel** was recorded by genealogies, and indeed, they were inscribed in the book of the kings of Israel. But Judah was carried away captive to Babylon because of their unfaithfulness [This is the captivity of 586 B.C.]. And the first inhabitants who dwelt in their possessions in their cities were Israelites, priests, Levites, and the Nethinim. Now in Jerusalem the children of **Judah** dwelt, and some of the children of **Benjamin**, and of the children of **Ephraim** and **Manasseh**.” Besides the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, it is specifically stated here that Ephraim and Manasseh of the former northern kingdom of Israel dwelt in Jerusalem. We could surely assume that portions of the other tribes were at

least in the areas of Judea, if not throughout other areas of the possessed land. What the above historical statements mention is that only those who dwelt in Jerusalem.

3. The remnant of all tribes were in Jerusalem in Acts 2: In Jeremiah 31:31-33, God had promised that He would establish a new covenant with the house of Judah and the house of Israel. In Hebrews 8:8-13 and 10:15-18, there is a quotation of Jeremiah 31, making application of the promise of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31 to the new covenant that God established with all men through Jesus. In order to fulfill the promise of Jeremiah 31, therefore, God had to have in Jerusalem all twelve tribes in order that He establish the new covenant with Israel.

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

Consider also the fact that at the time of the events of Acts 2, “*there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven*” (At 2:5). Among these were Jews from the lands of the Parthians and Medes (At 2:9). These lands were some of the locations to which Jews were taken captive in the great captivities of 722/21 and 586 B.C. (2 Kg 17:7; 18:11). There were also Jews

in Jerusalem from Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, Cyrene, Egypt and a host of other nations. It would be safe to say that not only were there representatives of all twelve tribes residing in Palestine at the time of Jesus' ministry, but there were also visiting representatives of sojourning Jews in Jerusalem at the time of Acts 2 and the establishment of the new covenant. God had fulfilled His promise to return a remnant to Palestine after the captivities of both Assyria and Babylonia. He fulfilled His promise that all Israel would be present for the establishment of the new covenant. No promise of God in reference to the restoration of Israel to Palestine and the establishment of the new covenant has been left unfulfilled.

Since the promises have been fulfilled with the remnant of Israel, there is no such thing as the lost ten tribes of Israel that must be restored to Palestine in the future. Certainly, Jews from the Assyrian and Babylonian captives remained in the land of their captors. They gained

freedom when their captor kingdoms were overthrown by other kingdoms. However, keep in mind that God's work in Palestine was with the remnant only. In order to fulfill His promises to Israel, God was concerned only with the remnant, not all Jews that were scattered throughout the world. God never intended to restore every Jew of the world to the land of Palestine after the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Neither was He concerned about reestablishing the state of Israel. He was concerned only with the remnant. And that remnant was restored to the land in order that the new covenant be established just as He promised. The remainder of the Jews who stayed in the lands to which they were taken captive would remain there until the coming of the Messiah. It would be through them that the early evangelists of the first century would go in order to proclaim that the Messiah had come. Therefore, even through the Jews of the Dispersion the gospel would go into all the world.

Chapter 11

Establishment Of The Kingdom

When Jesus came, John wrote that "*He came to His own*" (Jn 1:11). His "own" were the Jews. However, John also states, "... *and His own **did not receive Him***" (Jn 1:11). Jesus did come to the nation of Israel. He came to be their king (Jn 18:36,37). However, the Jews as a whole rejected the kingship of Jesus because they did not understand the nature of His kingdom.

Though the Jewish hierarchy of leadership rejected Jesus, those who were sons of Abraham by faith, did receive Him. John continued, "*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name*" (Jn 1:12). Jesus became the king of those who believed on Him. His kingdom reign, therefore, was not of this world (Jn 18:36). It was

prophesied that He would reign in the hearts of men, not on a throne in Jerusalem (Lk 17:20,21).

There are those today, however, who are advocating the teaching that the kingdom that was prophesied in the Old Testament, and by Jesus in the gospel records, has not been established. When Jesus came to His own, the Jews rejected Him. John 1:11 above is one of the primary passages that is used to teach such. It is affirmed that because the Jews did not receive Jesus as their Messiah and King, and thus, His kingdom, the earthly kingdom reign of Jesus was postponed until He comes again.

When the physical kingdom reign of Jesus was postponed, it is affirmed that Jesus established the church in its place. The church, therefore, took the place of the kingdom reign of Jesus, which reign Jesus will establish when He comes again to forcefully establish His reign in order to rule over the world from Jerusalem.

The assumption of the above teaching is that Jesus' first coming was for the purpose of establishing an earthly kingdom reign. His kingdom, it is assumed, was to be as the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman kingdoms. In other words, it was to be a physical kingdom of this world with Jesus as a king reigning in Jerusalem. But such was not the case then nor now.

The fact is that the prophets did not prophecy a physical kingdom reign of Jesus. He did not come in fulfillment of prophecy in order to establish a kingdom reign on a physical throne of David in Jerusalem in order to reign over a king-

dom of this world. In order to establish the fact that the kingdom was spiritual in the hearts of men, we must understand that the Old Testament kingdom reign prophecies were fulfilled by the time Peter made the announcement of Jesus' reign in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30. We must understand that God can fulfill prophecy though man often rejects its fulfillment. We must understand that Jesus could reign among His enemies. We must understand that God's power is not limited to the will of man.

A. The church and the kingdom:

In order to understand both prophecy and fulfillment concerning the kingdom reign of Jesus, one must understand the difference between church and kingdom (See chapter 3). The use of these two words in reference to Jesus' work among men is most important. If one misunderstands the relationship between the church and kingdom, he will certainly misunderstand the nature of the kingdom reign of Jesus.

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

The word *basileia* is defined by dictionaries that are of this world, therefore, we must be cautious about tagging on to it a completely earthly meaning when used in reference to God and His relationship with man. Every interpreter, therefore, must confess that there has to

be some metaphorical use of the word when we use it to refer to God's work among men. By understanding that there has to be some metaphorical meaning of the word in reference to God's work among men, we can form our understanding of what is meant by the word in a biblical context by the context of the Bible where it is used. We cannot use earthly definitions to explain heavenly work. Though the word is taken from our earthly dictionary, we cannot limit its meaning in reference to God's work to earthly definitions, and thus, limit God's work to the earthly definition of man's words. We are sure the Holy Spirit assumed that we would not do this. Therefore, we must go to the Bible in order to determine the meaning of those words that are used in reference to the work of God, lest we use our own definitions, and thus, limit God's work to the dictionaries of man.

The problem is that those who believe in the earthly reign of Jesus have limited their understanding of the kingdom by their own earthly definitions of words the Holy Spirit used to define the kingdom. When the Holy Spirit assumed that we would think metaphorical, we are thinking literal and earthly. In doing this, some cannot get beyond this world. The tragedy of this earthly mentality of interpretation is that it makes the Bible solely a book of this world that has no implications beyond the empirical perceptions of man. We thus have a book with words that limit God to the definitions of our own dictionaries.

Whether intentional or unintentional,

the practice of interpreting the promises of God in the New Testament after a materialistic motivation has led to many twisted interpretations of many scriptures. Biblical interpreters who cannot get their minds beyond this world have fed the speculative and carnal imaginations of religionists who seek to cling to this world. The nature of Bible passages that speak in reference to final things seek to take our minds off the material in order to focus on the spiritual.

In understanding the meaning of *basileia*, therefore, we must not fall victim to the earthly interpretations of physical millennialists. There are numerous contexts of Scripture to clearly define the Holy Spirit's use of *basileia* as He uses it to refer to Jesus' present reign over those who have come to Him on the basis of faith. One statement by Jesus before his crucifixion clearly explains that Jesus never intended to establish an earthly kingdom. Jesus said to Pilate, "**My kingdom [basileia] is not of this world.** If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; **but now My kingdom is not from here**" (Jn 18:36). But how could His kingdom reign (*basileia*) not be from this world?

The answer to the above question is simple. First, it was prophesied that **the Christ would reign from heaven** (Dn 7:13,14), and secondly, **Jesus affirmed that He would reign within the hearts of men** (Lk 17:20,21). Though we covered the first point in greater detail in a previous chapter, consider the second. Jesus said, "*The kingdom of God does*

not come with observation, nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you" (Lk 17:20,21). So how is the kingdom reign of God within us?

In the sermon on the Mount, Jesus instructed His disciples concerning prayer, "*In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven ...*" (Mt 6:9,10). The Father's will is done on earth when men submit to His will (1 Pt 5:5-7). Paul reminded the Romans that "*sin reigned in death*" (Rm 5:21). When men gave themselves to sin, they were spiritually dead (Rm 6:23). So in their state of spiritual death, sin reigned. However, when grace came, things changed. So Paul adds, "*... even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Rm 5:21). Those who respond to the grace of God are made righteous before God, and thus, "*reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ*" (Rm 5:21). Herein is the will of the Father done on earth as it is carried out in heaven. Therefore, the kingdom comes when men submit to the kingdom reign of Jesus.

When the will of the Father is done on earth in the hearts of men, then truly the kingdom of Jesus is manifested on earth. It is "within us" in the sense that we have responded to the grace of God in order to allow God's will to permeate our lives. In this way, the kingdom reign of Jesus is not of this world. It is not and never was intended to be a physical kingdom as those that are of this world. Pilate

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

2. Church: The English word "church" is used to translate the Greek word *ekklesia*. The generic meaning of *ekklesia* refers to a "called out assembly." It is used in this manner in the New Testament (At 19:32,39,41). The word does not refer to kingdom concepts, but simply to people who have been called together for or by a common purpose. In this sense, therefore, the Holy Spirit used this word to refer directly to those people who have been called out of the world through their obedience to the gospel in response to the grace (cross) of God (2 Th 2:14). We are the church of Christ because we have responded to the grace of God that was revealed through Jesus on the cross (Ti 2:11). We are thus the church of Christ because of our obedience to the King who is reigning at the right hand of the Father. When one thinks of church, therefore, he must think of obedient subjects, for the church is the assembly of the obedient.

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

people heard this, that is the lordship of Jesus, they responded by being cut to the heart (At 2:37). They were subsequently added to God's people, having responded to Jesus by being baptized for remission of sins (At 2:38,41,47). In this way, therefore, **the kingdom reign was first established on earth in Acts 2 when men first allowed the will of the Father through Jesus to be done on earth as it is done in heaven.** The manifestation of Jesus' reign from heaven was first seen on earth when men first responded to the kingdom reign of Jesus which was announced in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost.

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

B. Kingdom and church prophecies:

There are four principal prophecies in the Old Testament that refer to the subject of this chapter (Dn 2:44; 7:13,14; Is 2:2,3; Jl 2:28). Two of these prophecies (Dn 2:44 & 7:13,14) have already been discussed in another context of this book. In this context, it is our purpose to em-

phasize the time factors of these prophecies in reference to the establishment of the kingdom and church. If it can be shown that these prophecies were fulfilled in the first century, then the belief that these prophecies refer to some physical 1000 reign that is yet in the future is totally refuted.

1. Daniel 2: As previously explained in chapter 3, Daniel interpreted in Daniel 2 a vision of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. The prophecy was of four earthly kingdoms. The series of kingdoms began with the Babylonian kingdom. Following the Babylonian kingdom came the Medo-Persian kingdom, Greek, and finally, the Roman kingdom. **It is significant that the prophecy of kingdoms in the vision ceases with the Roman kingdom.** The series of kingdoms in prophecy ceases with the Roman kingdom because it was in the days of this kingdom that God was going to do a marvelous thing. He was going to set up a kingdom reign that would be different than all earthly kingdoms. **After the establishment of this kingdom reign, there would be no more consideration given to earthly kingdom reigns in prophecy in the eyes of God.**

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

The above was the very thing that

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

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

2. Daniel 7: The kingdom was established at the ascension of Jesus. Daniel’s vision of the four beasts in Daniel 7 is significant in this context, for he also had a vision of four earthly kingdoms. It was in the days of the fourth kingdom, the Roman kingdom, that he made the prophecy of verses 13,14. Daniel saw “*One like the Son of Man,*

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

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

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

The prophecy speaks of all peoples, nations and languages that **should** serve Him. It does not say that they would. In other words, the kingdom reign in the prophecy of Daniel 7 **does not speak of a forceful kingship of the One who would set up the kingdom**. So it is with the present kingdom of Jesus. Paul spoke of the present exaltation of Jesus in Philippians 2. “*Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ...*” (Ph 2:9,10). Jesus’ present reign is as that which was prophesied. Every knee **should** bow, every person **should** serve Him. But the fact is that not every-

one does submit to the kingdom reign of Jesus.

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

3. Isaiah 2:2,3: Another significant prophecy of the work of Jesus among men is found in **Isaiah 2:2,3**. We today find ourselves in this prophecy.

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

There are some key thoughts in this prophecy that clearly teach that the house of God has been established already. It was established in Jerusalem when the

kingdom reign of Jesus was first announced on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

a. The latter days: The things about which Isaiah spoke would come to pass in the latter days, or last days. This would be the last days of the Jewish state, the last days of national Israel. (More on this in chapter 13.) Peter identified these days in Acts 2 after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1-4. He proclaimed, *“But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days ...’”* (At 2:16,17). It was **in** the last days that God poured out His Spirit. In other words, **the last days were in existence when the Spirit was poured out in Acts 2:1-4**. It was in the last days that God spoke on earth through His Son (Hb 1:1,2). Therefore, the events about which Isaiah spoke took place in the first century, not some time yet in the future.

b. The Lord’s house: Isaiah also prophesied that the Lord’s house would be established. The fulfillment of this prophecy is in the fact that the Lord’s house is the church. And the church was first established as such in Acts 2. Of the church, Paul wrote, *“... but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the **house of God, which is the***



church ..." (1 Tm 3:15). The church is the called out assembly of God's people on earth. In Acts 2, about three thousand were called out of the world through their obedience to the gospel by immersion for the remission of sins. Luke recorded, "*Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them*" (At 2:41). As more people became obedient to the gospel, God added more to the church (At 2:47). Therefore, the house of God was established on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 when the kingdom reign of Jesus was first announced on earth among men wherein people responded to the kingship of Jesus by obedience to the gospel.

Since the church is the group of submitted subjects of the kingdom reign of Jesus, then it can easily be understood that the kingdom reign of Jesus had already been set up when people first submitted to Jesus as Lord and Christ (See At 2:36,37). By the time of the announcement of Peter in Acts 2 that God had seated Jesus at His right hand on David's throne, the kingdom reign of Jesus had already begun. When Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost, Jesus had already been given dominion, glory and kingdom reign (Dn 7:13,14). Peter simply made the announcement. When men submitted to this kingdom reign, then the will of the Father was then done on earth as it was done in heaven. The kingdom reign came into the hearts of those who submitted to Jesus as Lord and Christ (Lk 17:20,21). Thus the church, the house of God, was established **because the**

kingdom reign of Jesus had already been established in heaven by day of Pentecost.

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

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

In Matthew 16:19, Jesus turned to another subject. He turned to kingdom reign from heaven. "*And I will give you*

the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be

CHURCH
(Those who believe in Christ, the Son of God)

CHRIST
(Fulfilled Prophecy)

SON OF GOD
(Miraculous Confirmation)

that which would come from heaven. Kingdom reign would be manifested

bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Herein is a reference to Matthew 6:9,10, that the will of the Father be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Peter and the other apostles had the privilege of revealing the will of the Father on earth (Mt 18:18). Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they revealed all truth (Jn 14:26; 16:13,14). They bound truth on earth because it had already been bound in heaven. **They loosed on earth because God had already loosed, that is, not bound, in heaven.**

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

In verse 18 of Matthew 16, Jesus talked about that which would take place on earth. Men and women would respond to the Christ as the Son of God. Those who would respond would be church. But in verse 19, Jesus was talking about

through the binding and loosing of revelation from God. He thus spoke of two different things in the two verses, both of which are intricately related to one another.

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

As opposed to the physical and national nature of the kingdom of Israel, the church extends to all nations. *“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus”* (Gl 3:27,28). The church is composed of peoples from all nations, not just the nation of Israel. Therefore, the fulfillment of Isaiah 2:2,3 is in the church, the house of God.

d. The word would go from Jerusalem. Isaiah also prophesied that the word of the Lord would go forth from

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

We have truly come unto the heavenly mount Zion. The Hebrew writer revealed, “*But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn ...*” (Hb 12:22,23; see Rv 14:1). We are receiving the kingdom reign of God from heaven as men and women obey the will of the Father that has been revealed through the apostles and is recorded as Scripture (Hb 12:28). The kingdom is coming to all the world as the will of the Father is received, obeyed and carried out in the lives of faithful men and women throughout the world. Isaiah 2:2,3 has been fulfilled in the establishment and growth of the church.

4. Joel 2:28: Joel prophesied, “*And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your*

old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions ...” (Jl 2:28; see vs 29-32). Herein is revealed a very specific prophecy concerning the coming of a new dispensation of God’s work among men.

The specific fulfillment of this prophecy is found in the event on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. In Acts 2:1-4 the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the apostles. When people wondered concerning what had happened in the rushing mighty wind, Peter stood up and proclaimed, “*But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel*” (At 2:16). Peter then quotes Joel 2:28-32. The fulfillment of Joel 2, therefore, was on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

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

b. “In the last days”: In the last days of the Jewish dispensation God would perform this marvelous event. Both in the prophecy and in the fulfillment, **the last days are mentioned as being in existence when these events took place.** Therefore, it was **in** the last days of one dispensation of God’s work among men that He would pour forth His Spirit to begin another dispensation. The beginning of this new dispensation would

be signaled by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This outpouring would come about in the last days after the period of inspirational silence between the Old and New Testaments.

C. Kingdom and church prophecies fulfilled:

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

There are two other thoughts that must be brought out in the context of the fulfillment of prophecy concerning the establishment of the church as a result of the exaltation of Jesus to the right hand of God. One thought refers to eating with

Jesus in His kingdom, and the other refers to Jesus' reign among His enemies.

1. Eating at Jesus' table: Before His death, Jesus said to His disciples, "*And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel*" (Lk 22:29,30).

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

2. Reign among enemies: Those who believe in the earthly reign of Jesus have always affirmed in reference to the postponement of the kingdom, that the earthly kingdom was postponed because the Jews did not accept Jesus' supposed earthly kingship. Only one verse of scripture is used to support this theory. John 1:11 reads that Jesus came to His own (the Jews), but the Jews rejected Him. He thus supposedly postponed the earthly kingdom reign until He comes again. However, this belief affirms that God's plans are subject to the will of man. And if God's will is subject to the will of man,

He cannot fulfill any prophecy concerning His plans unless the prophecies are accepted by man. If He chooses to intervene in the affairs of man, He cannot, unless His intervention is accepted by men.

The above “postponement theory” in reference to the kingdom of Jesus ignores those prophecies that state that Jesus would reign among His enemies. Psalm 2:1,2 reads, “*Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, ‘Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us’.*” The Psalmist continued by saying that the Lord would laugh and put them in derision who would set themselves against the Anointed One (vss 3,4). They would be vexed with sore displeasure (vs 5). However, in spite of their rejection of the Anointed One, God would set His King on the holy hill of Zion. “***Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion,***” the Psalmist recorded (vs 6). God would give Him reign over the nations of the world and He would break them with a rod of iron (vss 7-9).

Psalm 2 is quoted in Acts 4:25,26. It is quoted in reference to its fulfillment in the church. Jesus was the Anointed One the Jews set themselves against (At 4:27). He was God’s King that He set on the holy hill of Zion. God knew that there would be those who would set themselves against His King. Nevertheless, this would have no affect on what He planned to do through Jesus

and what He actually accomplished (At 4:28). God foretold His plans and His plans were not changed or diverted by the rejection of the Jews.

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

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

Jesus’ present kingdom reign is manifested on earth through the obedience of those who have submitted to His kingship (Rm 5:17). When He comes again, it will not be for the purpose of establishing a kingdom reign on earth. He will come “having already received a kingdom.” In the parable of the nobleman who went to a far country (Jesus), the parable pictures Jesus as already having received a kingdom when He returns (Lk

19:12-15). When Jesus comes again, He is coming to terminate this present dispensation and destroy the world (2 Th 1:7-9; 2 Pt 3:10-13). He is coming to

terminate in order that He might return kingdom reign to the Father (See 1 Co 15:28). It is the hope of the disciple that Jesus puts an end to this present world.

Chapter 12

The Resurrection

Jesus spoke of the time *“in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth”* (Jn 5:28,29). Paul proclaimed that the Lord will descend from heaven with a shout and *“the dead in Christ will rise first”* (1 Th 4:16). There is coming in the future a time of resurrection. All who are in tombs will be raised from the dead. This is a glorious hope of all Christians.

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

When the Bible speaks of the bodily resurrection at the end of time, it speaks of nothing as a one-thousand year separation between the resurrection of the righteous and wicked. The Bible teaches that all the dead, both righteous and un-

righteous, will be raised in the same hour when Jesus comes again.

A. All shall be raised in the last day.

The Bible teaches that both the resurrection of the righteous and the judgment of the wicked will be in the last day. Thus, there will be a last day of all days of time of earth history. This will be a finality of all present earthly events and things. After the last day, *“the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up”* (2 Pt 3:10).

In this last day of earth history, Jesus said of those who believed in Him, *“And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day”* (Jn 6:40; see vs 40). The resurrection of the righteous, therefore, will be at the last day.

Now consider the words of Jesus in John 12:48. *“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.”* Those who reject Jesus, that is, the

wicked, will be judged in the last day. In order for them to be judged, **they must be resurrected**. If the resurrection of the righteous and judgment of the wicked will be on the last day, then it is correctly assumed that both the righteous and wicked will be resurrected and judged **in the same last day**.

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

The Bible teaches that both the righteous and wicked will be resurrected at the same time. The time of this resurrection will be when Jesus comes again. When He does come, many things will happen. These things will happen instantly. Paul indicates such by talking of the resurrection and change of the mortal body *“in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye”* (1 Co 15:52). God’s comings in judgment in time and at the end of time are unexpected by those who do not believe. Jesus’ coming in judgment on the wicked, therefore, will be *“as labor pains upon a pregnant woman”* (1 Th 5:3). When He does come, all the dead will be resurrected. They will be resurrected to meet Him in the clouds.

1. There will be a simultaneous resurrection of all within the same hour. Within the hour of Jesus’ coming both the righteous and wicked will be resurrected. Jesus said of this future event, *“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the*

resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (Jn 5:28,29). The wicked and righteous will not only be resurrected in the same day, in this context, Jesus says that they will be resurrected in the **same hour**. There will be no one-thousand year gap between the resurrection of the wicked and righteous.

Some have affirmed that the “hour” in John 5:28,29 refers to a “dispensational hour.” In other words, it is affirmed that this hour refers to, or contains, the one-thousand year earthly reign of Jesus. But such an interpretation is false because of the following reasons:

a. There is no continuous resurrection. Jesus said that the resurrection of both the righteous and unrighteous would take place “in the last hour.” He said nothing about a first resurrection in the context, and then, a period of one thousand years, after which there would be another second resurrection. He simply stated that the resurrection of both righteous and unrighteous would take place in the last hour. If the one-thousand year dispensational theory is correct, and the “last hour” is actually one thousand years in length, **then there would be a continuous resurrection process taking place over a period of one thousand years, for the resurrection is stated as taking place in the last hour.**

b. There is no mention of a three dispensational hour. If the resurrection of the righteous and unrighteous are separated by a supposed one-thou-

sand year millennium, then the millennium would be divided into three dispensational events. First, there would be the resurrection of the righteous at the beginning of the one-thousand year dispensation. Secondly, there would be the one-thousand year reign of Jesus. And thirdly, there would be the resurrection of the unrighteous. But Jesus said nothing of the one-thousand year millennium in the last hour.

c. There is no mention of the millennium. The final point to consider concerning the supposed dispensational hour of one thousand years is the simple fact that Jesus said nothing at all concerning such in John 5:28,29. We cannot read a physical millennial reign of Jesus into any biblical passage that speaks of the end of time. One cannot take the millennium that is mentioned in Revelation 20 and read such into every biblical passage that speaks of the end of time. This just cannot be done if we are to interpret the Bible correctly concerning end-of-time events that are yet in the future.

2. There will be a simultaneous judgment when Jesus comes. In the end **when Jesus comes**, Paul writes that Jesus will be “*revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power*” (2 Th 1:7-9). This is judgment language that explains a judgment that will take place when

Jesus comes. This is a judgment that is associated with the final coming of Jesus. Therefore, in the end there will be the final coming of Jesus, **but there will also be the judgment, and judgment is for the wicked.** When Jesus comes, all the wicked will be resurrected in order to receive the judgment that Paul discusses in the above context of Jesus’ final coming.

In the first letter Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, he spoke of Jesus’ coming and the immediate resurrection of the righteous dead (1 Th 4:16,17). In the second letter to the Thessalonians he spoke of the destruction of the wicked by their separation from the presence of God (2 Th 1:7-9). Now according to those who believe in the one-thousand year reign, these two events are to occur one thousand years apart from one another. The righteous are to be raised at the beginning of the millennium and the unrighteous are to be raised, judged and condemned at the end of the millennium. The physical millennial reign of Jesus is to occur between these two events. However, if such is to be the case, it seems that Paul would have given some indication of the supposed millennial reign of Jesus when he revealed information concerning the resurrection of the righteous and the condemnation of the wicked. Why did he make no mention of the supposed fantastic event of the millennial reign of Jesus that is to occur between the major events of 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17 and 2 Thessalonians 2:7-9? The simple answer to the question is that there simply is no such thing as a one-thou-

sand year reign of Christ that is going to occur between the resurrection of the righteous and the condemnation of the wicked.

Consider also the immediate context of 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17. *“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven ... the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”* When reading this passage one wonders where earthly reign activists find a one-thousand year reign of Jesus between the resurrection of the righteous and the final going away of all righteous into eternal heaven with the Lord. Some have affirmed that the resurrection of the righteous will take place at the beginning of the millennial reign of Jesus, but the final destination of all the righteous is to be with the Lord in heaven. But is Paul speaking of a resurrection to reign on earth? In 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17 Paul actually speaks of the resurrection of the righteous **and their immediate ascension to heaven to be with the Lord**. Where is the mention of the supposed one-thousand year reign of the righteous here on earth? If the millennial reign of the righteous on earth with Jesus is supposed to be such a great happening, we wonder why Paul did not clearly mention such in reference to two events that are supposed to take place one thousand years apart from one another. The truth is that he did not mention such simply because the supposed millennial reign between the resurrection and ascension of the righteous to heaven will not occur. It will not occur because

it will not happen.

Though in the context of the imminent destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, Jude’s words of Jude 14,15 are indicative of the final coming of Jesus. Jude stated that Jesus’ coming in judgment would be *“with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him”* (Jd 14,15). At the time of this coming and conviction of the ungodly, Jesus *“will sit on the throne of His glory. All nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another ...”* (Mt 25:31,32). Men will give account of their deeds (Mt 12:36). Jesus will judge the secrets of men (Rm 2:15). Everyone will give account of himself before God (Rm 14:12). This will be the day God has appointed in which He will judge the world through Jesus (At 17:30,31). Therefore, it is before the throne of Jesus that all will give account. *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad”* (2 Co 5:10). Jesus is coming to judge. His coming will be in the last day. All the dead will be resurrected in the last hour. So where is the one-thousand year reign mentioned in all these final events?

Jesus introduced the parable of the judgment in Matthew 25:31-46 by saying, *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him,*

then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats” (Mt 25:31,32). All the nations will be gathered before Jesus for judgment (See Co 5:10; Rm 2:16; 14:10-12). The righteous (the sheep) will be rewarded with life (Mt 25:46) but the unrighteous (the goats) will be condemned to punishment (Mt 25:46; 2 Th 1:7-9). In all the judgment language Jesus uses to explain the events that will take place with reference to the righteous and unrighteous, **there is no mention of a one-thousand year period.** Both the righteous and unrighteous will be resurrected in order that the events of Matthew 25 take place. But where is mention made of a one-thousand year reign of Jesus? In order for a one-thousand year physical reign of Jesus to be in the judgment event of Matthew 25, earthly-reign theorists simply read such into the context. This is the only way it can be there because Jesus mentions nothing of such in any His discussions concerning end-of-time events. In fact, the simple teachings concerning the final coming of Jesus refute any one-thousand year concepts surrounding His coming. The New Testament teaches that He is coming again with a shout in the twinkling of an eye. All things will be terminated and we will go into eternity. The complicated teachings of physical millennialists concerning the events of the end of time are simply out of harmony with the simplicity of the end of the world. The end will come and we will transition into eternity.

When Jesus comes again several events will take place. All of these events will occur in the last day. There will be no time for a one-thousand year gap between the resurrection and judgment of the righteous and the resurrection and judgment of the wicked. Notice the following events that will take place at the time of Jesus’ coming:

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

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

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

d. All will be raised in the last day. Jesus said that both the righteous and unrighteous will be raised in the last day (Jn 6:40,44,45), in the same hour (Jn 5:28,29). This hour will occur when the Lord will descend from heaven with His mighty angels (1 Th 4:16; 2 Th 1:7-9).

Christians will be resurrected first and our bodies will be changed in the twinkling of an eye (1 Co 15:50-58).

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

f. All things will be finalized. The last day of earth history will terminate the events of this present physical world. Peter wrote, *“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away ... both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up ... the heavens will be dissolved ...”* (2 Pt 3:10-12). These words of Peter clearly indicate a termination of the present environment. Termination, not continuation, is what will characterize the end of things on the last day when Jesus comes.

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

Much discussion has been carried on in the theological world concerning what is identified as the rapture. The word “rapture” simply means to be taken away. Christians will indeed be taken up from the earth before its final destruction (1 Th 4:13-18). However, the wicked will also be taken into final punishment and the world will be destroyed (2 Pt

3:10,11). The premillennial belief that when Jesus comes again the righteous will be caught up out of this world in order that they not experience the turmoil that will come in the last days before the earthly millennium. But this is a presumption that is not found in the Bible. The Bible nowhere teaches that the righteous will be taken and the unrighteous will be left in an environment of turmoil and self-destruction that will precede the physical millennium.

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

1. Lack of scriptural statement: The primary problem with the rapture theory is the fact that nothing is said of such in the Bible. There is mention of the ascension of the righteous, but nothing is said of the wicked being left to endure turmoil of a supposedly hostile environment that will develop in the supposed last days before the physical millennium. **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is discussing the resurrection and ascension of the righteous.** Though nothing is said of the unrighteous in the context, we must not assume that there is an order of events in reference to the righteous and unrighteous in reference to the final resurrection. **John 5:28,29 simply states that both will be raised in the last hour.** The context of events in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is discussing an order of events in reference to dead and living Christians.

2. Confusion of in-time judgment

with end-of-time judgments: One of the greatest oversights Bible interpreters make is the fact that people give little consideration to the significance of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. This oversight is a fatal oversight in reference to understanding key passages that discuss the in-time judgment and termination of national Israel.

One of the key passages that is used to uphold the rapture theory is Matthew 24:36-45. The immediate audience, and thus the context of Jesus' statements in Matthew 24, is the consummation of national Israel. Jesus was talking to a Jewish audience in reference to the end of Israel. The proof of this is in what Jesus actually said. In the context of discussion concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus said, "*Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left*" (Mt 24:40,41). Jesus had said in the previous verses that "the day" will be as it was in the days of Noah (Mt 24:38). And then in verse 39 He said, "... and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be." **It was the wicked that the flood took away,**

not the righteous. Therefore, those who will be taken away during the days of the destruction of Jerusalem **will be the wicked.** The righteous will be left. However, at the end of time, **the righteous will be taken.** Everyone will be taken from the earth for the earth will be destroyed. Matthew 24, therefore, is not talking about end-of-time events.

When studying through the above major events concerning the final coming of Jesus in the last day, there is no room for a one-thousand year millennium. When the Bible talks of the final coming of Jesus and the last day, there is no mention of a physical millennium. One must read such a millennium into those New Testament passages that speak of the end of times in order to have it there. Revelation 20 speaks of a millennium in reference to the work of Jesus among men. However, when end-of-time events are revealed in the New Testament, a millennium is never under discussion. The fact is that when end-of-time events are discussed in the New Testament, the millennium will have been finalized. It will be too late for those who are waiting for another supposed millennium.

Chapter 13

The Last Days

There has been much talk among modern-day seers concerning the coming of the last days. Speculations concerning the events of these coming days just before the advent of Jesus have

stimulated in the minds of men numerous fantasies concerning events and happenings of the last times. Futuristic religious zealots have pronounced this and that about the "signs of the times" that

are supposed to signal that the “last days” are upon us. All such theological gymnastics are only mental vapor in reference to Bible teachings concerning the end of time. In all this mental meandering, there is the inevitable twisting of scriptures to meet the needs of fanciful prophets who seek attention through their supposed prophecies of the last days. The phrase “last days,” therefore, has been lifted from a host of biblical contexts in order to ignite fear in the hearts of believers. However, we would challenge the use of phrases as “last days” and “last times” to refer to the last times of earth history or the time before the supposed one-thousand year reign of Jesus.

The over abundance of “last-day” prophets must us to revisit the original biblical contexts of Scripture in reference to the use of the phrase “last days.” In doing this, it is hoped that we can in some way produce a correct view of the last days in which God closed out the Jewish dispensation of time and ushered in His final message to man through Jesus Christ in these last times (Hb 1:1).

A. Old Testament prophecy and the last days:

Contextual interpretations of statements made in reference to the nation of

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

Israel existed for the purpose of preserving a segment of society through which God would bring into the world the Redeemer. *“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son ...”* (Gl 4:4). When the Son came, He came with a new covenant. *“Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God,”* said the Son. *“He [the Son] takes away the first [covenant] that He may establish the second”* (Hb 10:9; see Jr 31:31). So in Jesus, Israel’s purpose was fulfilled. Today, in the eyes of God, it is as Paul wrote, *“... there is neither Jew nor Greek ... for you are all one in Christ Jesus”* (Gl 3:28). By the time Jesus came, national Israel had fulfilled her purpose for existence. Therefore, as we study through the prophecies of the Old Testament it is easy to discover prophecy concerning the end of national Israel.

Old Testament prophecy must be interpreted in the historical context that God was going to terminate national Israel in Christ. When we understand this most important fact, then we can under-



stand Old Testament prophecy in reference to and use of phrases as “last days,” “latter times,” and “afterward.” All these phrases were used by the prophets to refer to the last times of the history of the Jewish nation. Consider some of the following thoughts in reference to the last days of national Israel:

1. *Latter days after the captivity:* Jeremiah prophesied to warn Israel of God’s judgment upon her because she had forsaken the law of God. He warned of Israel’s fall. “*The anger of the Lord will not turn back until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it perfectly*” (Jr 23:20). In other words, after the captivities and return, they would understand why God dealt with them in such a manner. The “latter days,” therefore, **refers to the time after the captivities**, a time when One would actually manifest the purpose for their existence as a nation.

After the restoration of Israel, the world understood God’s work. When the Messiah came, they would do as Jeremiah stated, “*In the latter days you will consider it,*” that is, consider how God had worked through the nation of Israel (Jr 30:24). That consideration would lead to a belief in the Messiah who was the fulfillment of the law (Mt 5:17,18).

In speaking specifically concerning Israel’s restoration from captivity, Jeremiah stated, “*Yet I will bring back the captives of Moab in the latter days*” (Jr 48:47). “*But it shall come to pass in the latter days: I will bring back the captives*

of Elam” (Jr 49:39). At least in this context, the phrase “latter days” refers to the time after the restoration of Israel from captivity. It would be in these days that God would perform a wonderful work.

2. *The last days of Israel:* The phrases “last days” and “latter days” (depending on your translation) are used many times in the Old Testament **with reference to the history of Israel**. These phrases are not used in reference to our present history in connection with the end of time.

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

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

c. Israel would seek God in the latter days. Moses warned Israel that when they turned from God while in the land of promise, “*you will soon utterly perish from the land ...*” (Dt 4:25,26). For their disobedience they would be scattered among the nations (Dt 4:27). “*But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul*” (Dt 4:29). It would be in these times that Israel would turn to God. Moses stated, “*When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the Lord your God and obey His voice ... He will not forsake you ...*” (Dt 4:30,31). In this context, **Moses is discussing the latter days of the Jewish nation**, not the last days of the end of time on earth. It would be in the latter days that Israel would turn to the Messiah.

d. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the latter days. In Daniel 2 Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of events that would take place in the latter days. In the context, as discussed previously, Nebuchadnezzar had a vision of four world kingdoms. The last kingdom was the kingdom that had feet part of iron and part of clay (Dn 2:33). This was the Roman kingdom, in the days of which, Daniel interpreted that God would set up a kingdom (Dn 2:44). In reference to this vision of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel revealed that the king had a dream of what would take place in the latter days. Daniel said, “*But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in*

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

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

f. Daniel’s vision of the latter days. In the context of Daniel 10, Daniel is given revelation concerning things that would happen in the latter days. In vision “*a certain man clothed in linen*” stood before him and said, “*Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come*” (Dn 10:14). Daniel was a Jew in exile. This vision referred to **his people**,

not the peoples of the world. **The prophecy thus referred to what would happen to the Jews in the latter days of their existence.** Beginning from chapter 10 of Daniel, there was revealed to Daniel historical events and personalities that would happen and live until the time of the coming of the Christ. The time of the coming of the Christ would constitute the latter days of the history of Israel. The context of Daniel 10 through 12, therefore, refers to Israel's history until the coming of the latter days when the Messiah would eventually come. **The Messiah, the Christ, came in the first century.** He was coming in Israel's future for the purpose of termination, not the continuation of the present things.

g. Isaiah prophesied of the last days. Isaiah prophesied, "*Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains ...*" (Is 2:2). As previously discussed in an earlier chapter, this prophecy had direct reference to the establishment of the church. Therefore, Isaiah's reference is not to something that would take place at the end of time, but during the last days of the nation of Israel. It was in the first century that the church was established, therefore, the latter days existed in the first century.

h. Micah prophesied of the last days. A parallel passage to Isaiah 2 is Micah 4:1. Micah prophesied, "*Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established*" Correct interpretation of this passage, in harmony with

Isaiah 2, is in reference to the time when the word of the Lord would go from Jerusalem. The time when this event began in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30. Both Isaiah and Micah were directing the minds of Israel to the last days of Israel that occurred in the first century.

i. Joel prophesied of the last days. Joel 2:28-32 is a very important prophecy that aids us in identifying the time of the last days. This passage is important, not only because of the marvelous event about which Joel prophesied, but also because of its quotation in the New Testament. Its quotation by Peter on the day of Pentecost in the last days, identifies precisely when the last days were in existence. Before considering Peter's quotation, consider what Joel prophesied. "*And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh ...*" (Jl 2:28). When translation was made of this passage by the Jews who translated the Greek Septuagint, they translated the word "afterward" with the phrase "last days." In Acts 2 Peter quotes from the Septuagint, and thus, uses the phrase "last days." Now hold this thought.

All of the preceding uses of the phrase "latter days" (or "last days") refer to something that would take place at the end of the nation of Israel. In every context emphasis is on what would happen to Israel, not the world. The end of the world would have no relevance in giving Israel any hope in their time of turmoil. Millennialists want to steal these

passages of hope away from Israel in order to apply them to themselves. They want to degrade the fulfillment of the beautiful message of hope in reference to the coming of Jesus in time, in order to speculate the coming of Jesus at the end of time.

B. New Testament fulfillment and the last days:

When the biblical interpreter surveys the New Testament, there is an unquestionable teaching that Israel as a nation came to her last days in the first century. The Messiah, Jesus, came preaching, *“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand”* (Mk 1:14). In writing specifically to a Jewish audience, Matthew recorded the activities and events of Jesus’ ministry in order that we know that all prophecies concerning Jesus were fulfilled (Mt 1:22; 2:15,17,23; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4). At the conclusion of His earthly ministry, Jesus said to the disciples, *“These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me”* (Lk 24:44). The Messiah came in the last days of national Israel in order to fulfill prophecy. In fact, the identity of the last days was signalled by the coming of Jesus.

When the fullness of time came—the time designated by God that Old Testament prophecies be fulfilled in reference to Israel—*“God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law”* (Gl

4:4). The first century was a time of fulfillment. It was a time when promises and prophecies concerning Israel came to a conclusion in order to begin a new epic, a new dispensation. It was the last days of national Israel, but the beginning of a new era of God’s people.

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

At the cross, old law and covenant were annulled. Christians are dead to the law by the body of Christ (Rm 7:4). They are now under a new covenant, a covenant with better promises (Hb 8:6). However, the Jewish nation continued after the cross of Christ until the time that God designated that He would terminate national Israel. He did this as before, through the proxy of a foreign army as Assyria and Babylon. Therefore, through the Roman army God terminated the Jewish State in A.D. 70. From the time of the cross, to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, God gave Israel forty years to repent and to recognize that the kingdom of God had come (See Mk 1:14,15). The messengers of Jesus went to the Jew first and then to the Gentile in

an effort to call out of Israel those who were sons of Abraham by faith (Cl 1:23).

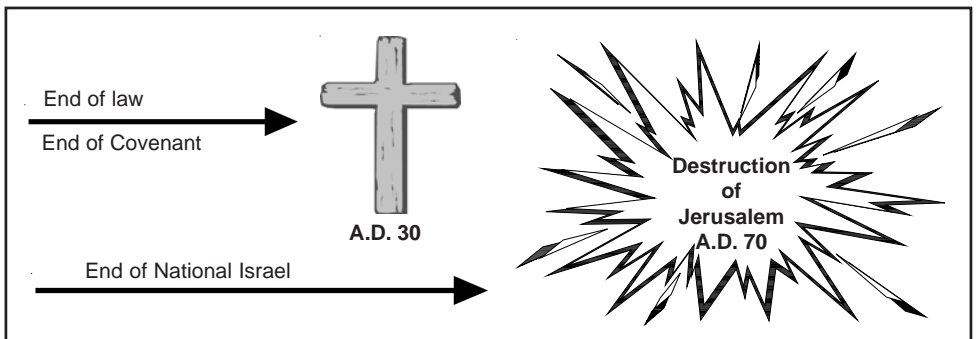
The days before A.D. 70 were the last days of national Israel. They were the days when a nation was coming to an end. Since this is historically true, we would assume that there would be many statements in Scripture concerning the finality of Israel. We would assume that the phrase “last days,” and similar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

1. *The Spirit was poured out in the last days.* In Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30, a marvelous event happened in the city of Jerusalem in Palestine. There came the sound of a rushing mighty wind that filled the house where the apostles were (At 2:1-4). The apostles were filled with power from the Holy Spirit that was promised by Jesus (Lk 24:49; At 1:8). In explanation of this event to the people of Jerusalem who had gathered at the preaching of the apostles, Peter stood up and said, “*But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel*” (At

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

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

2. *God spoke through Jesus in the last days.* The Hebrew writer was writing specifically to Jewish Christians who were considering a move back to the Old Testament law. Their move would be back to an inferior law and covenant; it would be a move back to perdition (Hb 10:39). In the context of Jewish nation-



ality and history, therefore, the letter is written. At the very beginning of the epistle, the writer refers the Jewish audience's thinking to Jesus who had come in the last days of national Israel in fulfillment of prophecy. The Hebrew writer wrote, "*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son ...*" (Hb 1:1,2).

Hebrews was written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. It was written to detour Jewish Christians from returning to a system that brought no forgiveness of sins (Hb 10:1-4). Keep in mind also, that the letter was written to stop Jewish Christians from giving allegiance to national Israel, for the writer knew that the prophecy of Jesus in Matthew 24—the destruction of Jerusalem—was about to happen. The writer thus writes to save life, the lives of those who were in the process of giving patriotic allegiance to a nation that was doomed to destruction.

It was in the context of the end of Israel, therefore, that God sent forth His Son (Gl 4:4). He came to redeem them that were under law (Gl 4:5). In writing in the last days of national Israel, the Hebrew writer says that God "*has in these last days*" spoken through Jesus. Therefore, the last days were in progress when the letter was written. Nothing whatsoever in the context makes reference to the present days of this century or any decade to come as the last days. The last days of national Israel were over when the nation was terminated by the Roman

armies in A.D. 70.

3. Sadducean Jews accumulated wealth in the last days. James wrote to a Jewish audience, "*to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad*" (Js 1:1). He wrote around A.D. 63 which was only a few years before the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. In this historical context, therefore, he said to the faithful of his readers, "*Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand*" (Js 5:7,8). This was a coming **in time** of God with judgment on Jerusalem. This "coming" was "at hand." It was not something that would happen at least two thousand years after the time James wrote. It was at hand in the sense that only in a few years after James wrote, God, through the Roman army, would rain down judgment on a nation that had rejected the Son and followed after their own righteousness.

It is in the context of God's coming in judgment in time that James said of the rich Sadducean Jews, "*Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you*" (Js 5:1). These rich had "*heaped up treasure in the last days*" (Js 5:3). However, their treasure would be destroyed when God destroyed their city. The readers of James were in the last days of the nation of Israel. It was a time of judgment, destruction and termination of national Israel. The same will occur at the end of time, however, it will be a time of judgment,

destruction and termination for everyone of the world, not just national Israel.

4. *Evil men would exist in the last days.* In the context of Jesus' prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus said of those of that day that "*many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold*" (Mt 24:11,12). Around A.D. 67, Paul warned Timothy of the same social atmosphere that would exist in the last days of national Israel. He wrote, "*But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come; for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money ...*" (2 Tm 3:1-9). This is in conjunction with the context of James' warnings concerning the nature of the rich Sadducean Jews at the time of the end of Israel. They were selfish and unloving. They heaped together treasures for themselves (Js 5:3). The love of many grew cold, and thus, it was perilous times.

In writing around A.D. 65, Peter also spoke of the evil social atmosphere that immediately preceded the destruction of Jerusalem. He wrote, "*Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts ...*" (2 Pt 3:3). Jude wrote between A.D. 65 and 67. He also spoke of the evil environment preceding the destruction of Jerusalem. Jude wrote, "*But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts ...*" (Jd 18).

It was the last days of Israel when the above inspired writers penned their letters. It was a time when God was coming in judgment on a nation that turned from the commandments of God in order to follow after their own traditions (Mk 7:1-9). Those were the worst of times for national Israel, but for those who had turned to the grace of God, they were the best of times, for in such times of calamity, faith was increased. The Jewish Christian had the hope of going through the end of Israel by faith in Jesus and not in the national structure of Israel. In seeing the destruction of Jerusalem, Christian Jews throughout the world were assured that they had believed in the right Messiah.

5. *Jesus was manifested in the last times.* Around A.D. 65, Peter also wrote to a Jewish audience (1 Pt 1:1). He wrote to Jewish Christians only a few years before the event that would cause mourning among Jews throughout the world (See Mt 24:30). This event would be the destruction of Jerusalem. Therefore, in the context of the times of political tension leading up to the destruction, Peter reassured his readers that they were in the last times. However, they were blessed because it was in those last times of the Jewish nation that God sent forth His Son (Gl 4:4). Peter wrote, "*He [Jesus] indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you ...*" (1 Pt 1:20). Therefore, Peter and his readers were in the "last times." These were not times that are yet in our future. They were anxious times in which Peter and

his readers lived when this epistle was written.

The use of the phrases “last times” and “last days” in the New Testament refers to the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy that speaks of the time of the coming of Jesus and the termination of national Israel. Peter confirms this understanding by quoting Joel 2. The establishment of the house of God, the church, confirms that Isaiah 2 was fulfilled in those last times.

The Old Testament law and covenant were terminated at the cross of Christ. The nation of Israel was terminated in A.D. 70. Those were the last days. In fact, it was in those days that John wrote at that time, “*Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour*” (1 Jn 2:18). It was during those days preceding the destruction of Jerusalem that many rose up against Christ.

The last days, therefore, happened almost two thousand years ago. The last hour about which John wrote came about in those last days. The context of these phrases does not allow us to use them to refer to something that is yet in our future.

That which is in our future, however, is the last trump (1 Co 15:52; 1 Th 4:16). There will be a last day of history on earth. In that day Jesus will come and the dead will be raised (Jn 5:28,29; 6:39,40,45; 11:24; 12:48). In that day Christians will rejoice (Ph 2:16; 2 Th 1:10). In that day the righteous will be

rewarded (2 Tm 4:8). It will be a day for which Christians must always be prepared (1 Th 4:2-4; 2 Pt 3:10).

When reading in the New Testament concerning the events of the last day, one wonders where one-year-reign theologians come up with the one-thousand year period of time between the coming of the Lord and the final destination of the righteous in heaven. Consider the following events as an outline of what will happen in the last day of this dispensation of time on earth:

EVENTS OF THE LAST DAY

1. Jesus will come with the clouds of heaven (At 1:11; Rv 1:7).
2. Jesus will come at the last trump (1 Co 15:52; 1 th 4:16).
3. Jesus will come to raise all the dead (Jn 5:28,29).
4. Jesus will judge (At 17:31; 2 Tm 4:1).
5. The saints will meet Jesus in the air (1 Th 4:16,17).
6. The righteous and wicked will be separated (Mt 24:31-34,41).
7. Jesus will bring vengeance on the ungodly (2 Th 1:7-9).
8. The existing earth will be burned up (2 Pt 3:10).
9. The wicked will be punished (Mt 25:41).
10. The righteous shall go into eternal life (Mt 25:41; 1 Th 4:17).

We ask the physical millennialist where he finds a one-thousand year reign of Jesus in the above events. The fact is that there is no one-thousand year period of time that will exist after the final coming of Jesus. The last day will be precisely that, **the last day**. Our hope is in a heavenly home, not in an earthly reign.

Chapter 14

Unfortunate Conclusions

This final chapter is about conclusions, illogical conclusions that are produced by skipping over Jesus and the church in the first century in reference to Old Testament prophecy. It is true that we do not know much about the many things that will transpire when Jesus comes again. If all that is going to happen when Jesus comes was written in Scripture, then we might conclude that not much is going to happen, for there is little revelation concerning end of time events. What is stated, however, is stated as “matter of fact” events that we must accept on faith. It has been revealed that Jesus is coming. He is coming to raise the dead, to execute a final judgment of all. The earth as we know it will be destroyed with fervent heat. There will be some kind of a “new heavens and new earth.” But this is an insignificant amount of information concerning what will evidently be a spectacular happening as God closes the book on earth history.

We do not need to know everything about what will occur in the end in order to understand that some speculations concerning end-of-time events are erroneous. We do not have to know the correct interpretation of a particular metaphorical passage that discusses end-of-time events in order to know when some interpretations of a particular passage is false. **When any theory contradicts fundamental teachings that are clearly re-**

vealed in the Bible, then we know that the theory is wrong. This is the case with earthly-reign thinking concerning that which is supposedly yet to be. Inherent within the millennial-reign theology are some major contradictions with clearly understood biblical teachings. The very fundamental aspects of the theory make it unacceptable as a premise upon which to reinterpret prophecy, and the Bible in general, concerning end-of-time events. In review of the points that have been stated in previous chapters of this book, it is here necessary to bring together some of the major contradictions of the premillennial theory with fundamental biblical teachings concerning prophecy and the end of time.

A. “Christ is dethroned as our King.”

Some teach that Jesus is not now on David’s throne as was prophesied in the Old Testament and proclaimed by Peter in Acts 2. Jesus is not on David’s throne and reigning over a kingdom that includes all things. It is taught that Jesus will not receive this throne of authority until He returns to this literal earth in order to reign over a literal kingdom. In other words, Jesus is presently dethroned from David’s throne in order that in the future He can reign on His footstool, the earth, during the physical millennium (See Mt 5:35).

But the Bible affirms that Jesus pres-

ently has **all authority** over all things. He is reigning at the right hand of the Father with authority over all that exists. And if He is so reigning, **then there is no greater reign for Him yet in the future**. In order to exalt Jesus in His present kingdom reign, we must understand Jesus' present work. Notice the following function of the present reign of Jesus that He now exercises:

JESUS' PRESENT POSITION AND WORK

1. Jesus has authority over all things (Mt 28:18; Jn 13:3; 17:2).
2. Jesus is now reigning at the right hand of the Father (At 2:30-35; Ep 1:20-23; Hb 8:1).
3. Jesus reigns over things seen and unseen, even angels (Ph 2:9-22; 1 Pt 3:22).
4. Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords (Jn 18:37; 1 Tm 6:15).
5. Jesus will reign until He comes again (1 Co 15:24-28).

How much more kingdom reign authority could Jesus have than what He now has? If the theory of an earthly kingdom reign is true, then certainly Jesus would be dethroned from His present heavenly throne of authority over all things in order to reign on this earth from a physical throne in Jerusalem. He would have to give up galactic reign in order to assume earthly reign.

B. "God's power is limited to the will of man."

The theory of premillennialism has within its theology a limitation of the power of God. Some have affirmed that

God could not establish the physical kingdom when Jesus first came to this earth because the Jews rejected Him and His kingship. The physical kingdom was subsequently postponed by God until the time of Jesus' final coming. The church was supposedly established in its place as an afterthought of God. The obvious conclusion is that God cannot fulfill prophecy. He cannot do what He promises. His power, therefore, is limited to the will of man.

If the Jews' rejection of the physical kingdom reign of Jesus forced God to postpone the earthly kingdom until Jesus comes again, then what will God do then if men again reject the physical kingdom when Jesus comes again? If God forcefully establishes the physical kingdom in the end, then why could it not be forcefully established in such a manner when Jesus first came? One says, "The kingdom that Jesus wanted to establish was earthly, but the kingdom that He did establish, over which He now reigns, is spiritual. The physical kingdom can be rejected, but a spiritual kingdom is spiritual and voluntary." It is true that the present kingdom of Jesus is spiritual and manifested within the hearts of men (Lk 17:20,21). One becomes a subject by voluntarily submitting to the kingdom reign of Jesus. However, God's work in history manifests clearly that what He plans and promises in the affairs of man, **He can and does do**. His plans are not limited to or controlled by the will of man. God does not work according to the will of man. Man must work according to the will of God.

If the Jews' rejection of the supposed physical kingdom forced God to postpone it until a later time, then this would certainly be a change in the work of God in His dealings with the Jews during their deliverance from Egyptian captivity. How could God take Israel out of Egyptian bondage and crush the armies of Egypt, and later not be able to crush the armies of Rome and the opposition of the Jews during the life of Christ and establish an earthly reign? Biblical interpreters must be cautioned on this point. Anytime one says that God could not do something in reference to His eternal redemptive plan, then he is attacking the power of God. If our desire is carnal, and we seek some right to reign over the wicked in a one-thousand year reign, then we need to be cautioned that we are treading on dangerous theology.

God delivered Israel from Egyptian captivity against the will of Pharaoh, but many centuries later delivered them against their own will into Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. The Jews certainly did not want to go into Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. However, regardless of their desires, God was able to work through the Assyrians and Babylonians in order to carry out His prophecies that Israel would go into captivity. If God could have set up Israel as a physical nation in the past, then He certainly could have set up a physical kingdom reign of His Son among the Jews during the time of Jesus, regardless of the will of the rebellious Jews. Therefore, any theory that God could not do something because of the rejection of the Jews, is certainly er-

roneous teaching.

God's will is not limited to the will of man. This is a very important biblical truth. To say differently, is to move our theology of God into the realm of idolatrous thinking concerning God. The idolater creates a god after his own imagination. As the idolatrous Greeks, men can play games with their imagined gods, and in some cases, outsmart the gods. The concept that God is somehow subservient to the will of sinful and rebellious man is an idolatrous concept of God. Some will object to this logical conclusion, but it is true. If in one's theology there is any concept where the will of God is made subservient to the will of rebellious men, then certainly there is the conclusion that one's concept of God has moved to "god."

The Bible teaches that the will of God is not limited to the will of man. God is able to perform that which He prophesies and promises. Abraham's faith was valid, *"being fully convinced that what He [God] had promised He was also able to perform"* (Rm 4:21). God is able to perform, regardless of the whims of man. He is able to deliver (Dn 3:15-17). When the angel Gabriel stood before Mary, he was right when he said, *"For with God nothing will be impossible"* (Lk 1:37). Not one word or promise from God goes unfulfilled. If He determines to intervene in the affairs of man, what mortal man is able to withstand Him? What group of mortal men is able to withstand His will? What nation of men can withstand the will of God?

Paul's argument concerning the faith-

fulness of God to fulfill His promises in Romans 3 is based on the fact that the unbelief of Israel did not deter God's plans concerning the cross. Paul asked, "For what if some did not believe? **Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?**" (Rm 3:3). Paul's answer is, "**Certainly Not!**" (Rm 3:4). Those who believe that the church was established in the place of a postponed earthly reign of Jesus should listen intently to this point. Paul adds concerning God's implementation of His plans, "**Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar**" (Rm 3:4). One would do well, therefore, to never formulate a theology that places God in the position of changing His plans in reference to man's salvation, either on the basis of the rejection or unbelief of man. God will carry out His work among men regardless of any discontent on the part of man. God's work is not controlled by the will of man.

C. "The church is made an afterthought of God."

Some earthly-reign proponents affirm that when the physical kingdom was postponed, God established the church or "church kingdom" in its place. But if the church were established as a result of the postponement of the earthly kingdom reign, then the church is both a substitute and an afterthought of God.

If the church is both a substitute and afterthought of God, then there are two questions that must be asked and answered:

1. "**Does God prolong the fulfillment of prophecy?**" In other words, if the supposed physical kingdom reign prophecies of the Old Testament could not be fulfilled in the first century because the Jews rejected Jesus as their king, then did God prolong the fulfillment of those prophecies for at least two thousand years later? And if men of this world could cause the postponement of the work of God in the first century by rejecting the fulfillment of prophecy, why can they not cause the same postponement of the supposed earthly-reign prophecies again? Turn this around. If God will forcefully establish an earthly kingdom reign in the future regardless of the will of man, then why could He not do the same in the first century?

2. "**Was the church foreplanned?**" If the church were made a substitute for the earthly kingdom reign, and the earthly kingdom postponed, then one must take the position that the church was not foreordained by God. This brings us to an attack against the foreknowledge of God. Did God know that the supposed earthly kingdom was going to be rejected by the Jews? If He did not, then the church was certainly an afterthought, a substitute for the earthly kingdom. If God did foreknow the rejection of the Jews, and the postponement of the physical kingdom, then why did He build the hopes of the Jews concerning a coming kingdom, and at the last minute, snatch it away from them? It may sound fine to believe that the supposed physical kingdom was taken away from the rebellious Jews, but

what about those who were sons of Abraham by faith? Why did Jesus build hope in the minds of Peter, John, James, Matthew and the other disciples, and then, at the last minute, frustrate their dreams by taking away from them a supposed kingdom reign here on earth which He had promised? Is this the way God works among men? If so, then we can never trust what God promises He will do.

One must not take the establishment of the church lightly. In reference to the church, Paul revealed that God “*chose us in Him [Jesus] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love*” (Ep 1:4). Before the world was created, God foreplanned the establishment of the church. Paul continued, “... *to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Ep 3:10,11).

The establishment of the church was not a substitute or afterthought of God. The body of Christ, the church, was foreordained before the creation of the world. God had in His mind to reconcile the world to Himself through Christ. And when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son to be crucified for the redemption of mankind (Gl 4:4).

D. “The death of Jesus on the cross was an accident.”

Any concept of theology that affirms that Jesus came to this world in the first

century to establish an earthly reign, and not to die for the sins of mankind, has serious implications. Some theologians have affirmed that it was not God’s original intentions to send Jesus into the world for the purpose of the cross. He was only crucified because the rebellious Jews rejected Him and nailed Him to the cross. The crucifixion, therefore, was an “accident.”

If the above were true, then some serious questions would arise. These are questions that deal with major fundamental teachings of the New Testament. So we ask two questions: First, did God plan a physical kingdom reign for Jesus, but His plans were spoiled when the Jews nailed Jesus to the cross? Secondly, did God plan a physical kingdom that necessitated the death of Jesus, but later changed His mind, and thus, postponed the physical kingdom and established the spiritual kingdom, the church, in its place?

Both of the above questions demand a negative answer. God never planned to set up Jesus on earth over a physical kingdom. His kingdom was never meant to be of this world (Jn 18:36,37). Also, it was foreordained that Jesus die on the cross (Ps 22; Is 53). His death on the cross was not something unforeseen and unknown by God. God never intended for Jesus to have an earthly rule on an earthly throne. Such was never in His plan. Once He had offered the sacrifice, Jesus did what He intended to do. He ascended to sit and reign over a spiritual kingdom from a throne of authority that was in heaven (Dn 7:13,14; At 2:30-35;

Ep 1:20-22; Hb 8:1,4).

Did God intend to establish a kingdom that demanded the crucifixion of Jesus for the sins of men? The answer to this question is yes. The kingdom that God intended to establish necessitated the death of its king for the sins of the subjects. The subjects of this kingdom needed a high priest who offered Himself for their sins once and for all (Hb 7:22-28; 9:23-28). These subjects needed a mediator in heaven with God who would function on their behalf (Rm 8:34; Gl 3:19,20; 1 Tm 2:5; Hb 8:1,4). They needed an advocate to plead their cause (1 Jn 2:1,2). The kingdom that was prophesied and established had all the above spiritual blessings (Ep 1:3).

Was it the intention of God to send Jesus to be the sacrifice for the sins of men? If it were Jesus' original purpose to come and establish a physical kingdom reign, then it could not have been His purpose to die on the cross. The point is that Jesus could never have reigned on this earth over a physical kingdom and still be what He is to the Christian today. If His crucifixion were an accident when He fell into the hands of rebellious Jews, then the following blessings the Christian now has in Christ would also have been accidents. If it were not the original intention of Jesus to die on the cross, then the Christian would not have the following problems in reference to his salvation:

SALVATIONAL BLESSINGS OF THE CROSS

1. If Jesus had not been crucified, but re-

2. If Jesus had not been crucified, then He could not have offered propitiation for our sins (Rm 3:25; Hb 2:17; 1 Jn 2:1,2; 4:10).
3. If Jesus had not been crucified, then we would have had no one to bear our sins (Is 53:4,11; Hb 8:28; 1 Pt 2:24).
4. If Jesus had not been crucified, then we would have no sanctification (Ep 5:26; Hb 2:11; 10:10,14,29; 13:12).
5. If Jesus had not been crucified, then we could not have been purchased by His blood (At 20:28; Ep 5:25).
6. If Jesus had not been crucified and resurrected, then we would still be in the fear of death (Rm 8:15; Hb 2:14,15).
7. If Jesus had not been crucified and resurrected, then we would have no hope as an anchor to our soul (Hb 3:6; 6:18,19; 7:19).
8. If Jesus had not been crucified, then we would have no eternal redemption (Rm 3:24; 1 Co 1:30; Ep 1:7; Cl 1:14; Hb 7:27; 9:11-14).

Many other points could be added to this list. The postponement theory has some serious implications concerning the fundamental teachings of the cross. If it were not God's original intention to send Jesus to the cross as clearly laid out in prophecy, then the above would never have happened for the Christian. If there were no cross, there would have been no Christianity.

E. "The kingdom prophecies were made void."

If the physical kingdom reign of Jesus were postponed because of the rejection

of the Jews, then all Old Testament prophecies that were supposedly given to proclaim the establishment of the kingdom were made void. They were made void because God just could not overthrow the rejection of the Jews and establish His earthly kingdom through Jesus.

But the above reasoning concludes in at least four erroneous beliefs. First, if God prophesied that He would establish a physical kingdom in the days of the Roman kings (Dn 2:44), but did not know that the Jews would reject it, then we must conclude that God could not, or did not foreknow the Jews' rejection.

Secondly, if God foreknew that the Jews would reject the kingdom, but went ahead and promised in prophecy that He would establish the physical kingdom in the days of the Romans, then God is a God of false hopes.

Thirdly, if God foreknew the Jews' rejection, but went ahead with the prophecies that He would establish the physical kingdom, then He is a God who gives false hopes that are built on false promises.

Fourthly, if God is one who promises, while knowing that He cannot keep His promises, then He is impotent in that His fulfillment of prophecy is subject to the will of man.

We must carry the above thinking even into the life and ministry of Jesus. When Jesus said that the supposedly physical kingdom was "at hand," did He know that it would be postponed because of the present rejection of the Jews among whom He ministered? If He did

know of the rejection and postponement, then He made empty promises to the disciples. Or, did He promise the establishment of His earthly reign while being ignorant of the fact that God was going to postpone it? If such were the case, then the Father was deceiving the Son. One must ask if Jesus promised the physical kingdom reign with no knowledge of God's postponement plans, or if He did know of the postponement plans, went ahead and promised it. Either way one goes, he or she attacks both the sovereignty and character of both the Father and Son. Any concept, therefore, of a postponement in reference to the kingdom reign of Jesus must be considered as an attack against God.

F. "The New Testament writers were confused."

In the evolutionary development of the earthly-reign theory, an interesting development in theology has come about in reference to the interpretation of kingdom passages in the New Testament. Premillennial theology of years past affirmed that only one kingdom was in prophecy in reference to the reign of the Messiah. This was the physical reign of the Messiah on David's throne in Jerusalem of Palestine. It was taught that this was the only kingdom to which the prophets pointed. It was also taught that during the ministry of Jesus, this was the kingdom reign about which Jesus spoke. However, because of the overwhelming affirmation in the New Testament letters that Jesus was in a present kingdom reign

capacity at the time the letters were written, premillennial thinking had to develop a “split kingdom” theology. This is the belief that there presently exists the “church kingdom,” over which Jesus now reigns, but the physical, earthly kingdom which was postponed when Jesus first came, will be established at the final coming of Jesus. The “church kingdom” was established when the physical kingdom was postponed.

The major problem with the above theology is that the prophets spoke of a kingdom (See Dn 2:44; 7:13,14). It was a singular kingdom reign that was to be established. As stated throughout this book in discussions of kingdom prophecies, there is no prophecy of a plurality of kingdoms that would be established. When we come to the fulfillment of kingdom prophecies in the New Testament, there is still this singularity of language in reference to the kingdom. Jesus said, “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see **the kingdom of God present with power**” (Mk 9:1). Paul said, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into **the kingdom of the Son of His love**” (Cl 1:13). Throughout the New Testament there is revelation only of this one kingdom reign in reference to Jesus’ work among men throughout the history of this world (See At 28:31; Rv 1:6-9).

The Holy Spirit inspired the New Testament writers to affirm that Christians in the first century were subjects of the kingdom reign of Jesus. In being subjects, they were assured that their King

was “*King of kings and Lord of lords*” (1 Tm 6:15). They were assured that their King was head over **all things** (Mt 28:18; Ep 1:22). They were assured that their King had authority **far above** all principalities and powers (Ep 1:20-21). They were assured that even angels were subjects of His kingdom reign (1 Pt 3:22). All demons were under the realm of the King’s authority (Lk 4:41; 8:28). Except the Father, there was nothing left outside the authority of the Son who is presently reigning over all things. **If there were yet a kingdom reign on earth in the future for Jesus, then certainly it would be far inferior to the one which Jesus now has in reigning over all things from heaven.**

G. “God is made a respecter of persons.”

When God chose Israel from among the nations, He did not choose them because they were more righteous than other nations. Moses said to the nation of Israel before they entered the promised land, “***It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob***” (Dt 9:5). God did not choose them as a nation, therefore, because they deserved something over other nations. He had made a promise to Abraham that through Him He would bless

all nations. The choosing of Israel was for the purpose of preserving a segment of society in order to bring the Christ, the Redeemer, into the world. Therefore, it must not be understood that God was a respecter of persons when He chose Israel from among the nations of the world. And since He was not a respecter of persons then, neither is He now in reference to the Jews.

However, if God is to choose Israel for the one-thousand year reign on earth by restoring them to the land of Palestine, then what purpose will this have in God's plan to save man? If He is to restore Israel to the promised land solely for the purpose of esteeming them above other peoples, then God is a respecter of persons. He would be respecting the Jews above all other nations of the world. But Peter said, *"In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him"* (At 10:34,35).

Earthly-reign activists affirm that the Jews will again be chosen out of the nations of the world for special attention during the earthly kingdom reign. However, one wonders how God will consider the Gentiles. Will they be second rate citizens in the physical kingdom reign? After God broke down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile through Jesus, one wonders why He will reconstruct it during the one-thousand year millennial reign of Jesus on earth (See Ep 2:14,15). If God reconciled both Jew and Gentile into one body in Christ, then why would He seek to separate them

during a supposed physical earthly reign (See Ep 2:16-18)?

H. "Earthly-reign theology promotes materialism."

When one surveys the basic concepts of the premillennial theology, one thing is quite clear. The theology is based on the materialistic inclinations of man. Possession of material things is encouraged. Power and authority over one's fellow man is emphasized and believed. It is basically a carnal theology, much like the carnal theology of Islam (See in the Qur'an, surah 56:10-35).

The Jews, even the disciples who walked with Jesus, were victims of a culture that sought for a restoration of glory and possessions of physical kingdom reign as was characteristic of the reign of David and Solomon. Even after the resurrection of Jesus, the disciples said to Jesus, *"Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"* (At 1:6). In asking this question, the disciples were not thinking about an inner spiritual relationship with God through their submission to His will. They were not thinking about forsaking all for Jesus. They were not thinking about bearing the cross of persecution to preach among hostile peoples throughout the world. They were not thinking about possessing only the shirt on their backs in order to be preachers for the cross. They were not thinking about humbling themselves to be slaves of one another in a community of slaves. **They were thinking about power and possessions.** Even at the time when Jesus

instituted the Lord's Supper, *"there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest"* (Lk 22:24; see Mk 10:35-45). These are the inclinations and aspirations that are promoted by the earthly kingdom theology. Do not misunderstand this point. **The very nature of earthly millennial theology is simply earthly millennial aspirations.**

The very nature of Christianity in reference to the world, however, is **detachment** in the sense of keeping one's mind on heavenly things and values. John wrote, *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him"* (1 Jn 2:15). Jesus said, *"You cannot serve God and mammon"* (Mt 6:24). *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness ..."* (Mt 6:33). Paul exhorted, *"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth"* (Cl 3:1,2). Christians must remember that their citizenship is in heaven (Ph 3:19). Therefore, we must heed what Paul warned Timothy concerning the affairs and things of this world. *"No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier"* (2 Tm 2:4). The very nature of Christian thinking and life is as what Paul wrote, *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God"* (Rm 12:2). How can one do this if he earthly

kingdom aspirations?

Though we do not understand the true nature of the "new heavens and new earth" that are yet to come (2 Pt 3:13), we can be assured that the emphasis will not be a reversal of that for which we have trained our thinking after biblical instructions for a lifetime. We have sought to "count the cost" and "pay the cost" all our Christian life in forsaking the things of this world in order to prepare our characters for a dwelling that does not cater to earthly desires. We are sure God will not reward us with that which is against the very character He trained us into being throughout our Christian life. The Christian looks forward to a world that is not of this world because he is subservient to a King whose kingdom is not of this world (Jn 18:36; Lk 17:21).

I. "Earthly-reign theology contradicts the servanthood leadership principle of Jesus."

At least until the ascension of Jesus, the disciples had an earthly concept of the reign of Jesus (At 1:6). This misconception of the reign of Jesus prompted them to dispute *"among themselves who would be the greatest"* (Mk 9:34). At one time during the ministry of Jesus, James and John came asking, *"Grant us that we sit, one on Your right hand and one on Your left, in Your glory"* (Mk 10:37). Both James and John were expressing in their request a carnal desire for position and power in what they believed would be a physical kingdom reign

of Jesus. But this problem was not only with James and John. Even at the time Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper with the disciples on the night of His betrayal "*there was also rivalry among them [the twelve], as to which of them should be considered the greatest*" (Lk 22:24). At least one thing is clear concerning their concept of the reign of Jesus on earth. Such generated in their hearts carnal aspirations of power and position. But such is not the nature of the kingdom of Jesus. The leaders in the kingdom do not aspire to positions of authority as is characteristic of worldly kingdoms.

Leadership in the kingdom of Jesus is by humble service. Jesus explained, "*Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever desires to be first shall be the slave of all*" (Mk 10:43,44). Leadership among the disciples of Jesus is by being the servant of all.

Jesus reminded the disciples of the world in which they lived when He stated, "*You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them*" (Mk 10:42). But when considering the lordship leadership of the world, Jesus stated, "***Yet it shall not be so among you***" (Mk 10:43). When we consider the system of bosses and lords of the world, we must understand that such is not the system of leadership in the kingdom. Jesus was quite

clear on this point. Those who are first and great in the kingdom are those who are the servants and slaves of all.

Any theology that promotes the carnal aspirations of men to rule over one another cannot be in harmony with the nature of servanthood leadership that is now present in the church. Carnal teachings that ignite the dreams of those who seek positions and power are contrary to the very nature of servanthood that is taught in the New Testament.

As a closing reminder, biblical interpreters must be cautious about weakening the prophecies of the Old Testament in reference to Christ and the church. God's eternal purpose is to bring the obedient into eternal dwelling in His presence. Jesus Christ, as the Savior of the world through the cross, is the central theme of all human history. The supposed millennial reign of Jesus on earth is not the central theme of the Bible. God worked through Israel to bring the One into the world who would save the world. It is for this reason that interpreters should be very careful about leaping over Christ and His body of believers in order to look forward to some earthly reward when Jesus comes again. The prophecies of the Old Testament were to prepare Israel for the coming Messiah, not to prepare us for a supposed physical reward here on earth. We see in the fulfillment of the prophecies, therefore, hope for now of a better end to come.