

Let Your Kingdom Come, Part 2

Ezekiel 40:1-48:35.

40.

1In the twenty-fifth year of our captivity, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was captured, on the very same day the hand of the Lord was upon me; and He took me there. 2In the visions of God He took me into the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain; on it toward the south was something like the structure of a city. 3He took me there, and behold, there was a man whose appearance was like the appearance of bronze. He had a line of flax and a measuring rod in his hand, and he stood in the gateway.

4And the man said to me, "Son of man, look with your eyes and hear with your ears, and fix your mind on everything I show you; for you were brought here so that I might show them to you. Declare to the house of Israel everything you see." 5Now there was a wall all around the outside of the temple. In the man's hand was a measuring rod six cubits long, each being a cubit and a handbreadth; and he measured the width of the wall structure, one rod; and the height, one rod.

Chapter 40 tells us that Ezekiel is brought to a high mountain, where stood a temple. Well, that is nothing more than Isaiah. An angel begins measuring the temple. That fits with Revelation 11. Nothing unusual here. There are gateways and courts. And then those sacrifices... (40:38-43). I've commented on those, above.

In chapters to come there is a priesthood, Levites, an altar of sacrifice. Much of this is reminiscent of the specifications found in Moses.

The gateways:

6Then he went to the gateway which faced east; and he went up its stairs and measured the threshold of the gateway, which was one rod wide, and the other threshold was one rod wide. 7Each gate chamber was one rod long and one rod wide; between the gate chambers was a space of five cubits; and the threshold of the gateway by the vestibule of the inside gate was

one rod. 8He also measured the vestibule of the inside gate, one rod. 9Then he measured the vestibule of the gateway, eight cubits; and the gateposts, two cubits. The vestibule of the gate was on the inside. 10In the eastern gateway were three gate chambers on one side and three on the other; the three were all the same size; also the gateposts were of the same size on this side and that side.

Scholars will tell you that the specifications of the Ezekiel Temple in no way match what Haggai and Zechariah and Ezra dealt with in their day, which was an attempted rebuilding of the original. Ezekiel has seen something different, something that is still in our future. Many wild imaginings have been applied to this structure by intelligent men.

I have decided to ignore their intelligence and just believe what God gave to Ezekiel. Again, why not?

Measurements:

11He measured the width of the entrance to the gateway, ten cubits; and the length of the gate, thirteen cubits. 12There was a space in front of the gate chambers, one cubit on this side and one cubit on that side; the gate chambers were six cubits on this side and six cubits on that side. 13Then he measured the gateway from the roof of one gate chamber to the roof of the other; the width was twenty-five cubits, as door faces door. 14He measured the gateposts, sixty cubits high, and the court all around the gateway extended to the gatepost. 15From the front of the entrance gate to the front of the vestibule of the inner gate was fifty cubits. 16There were beveled window frames in the gate chambers and in their intervening archways on the inside of the gateway all around, and likewise in the vestibules. There were windows all around on the inside. And on each gatepost were palm trees.

Rooms, measurements, inner and outer court:

17Then he brought me into the outer court; and there were chambers and a pavement made all around the court; thirty chambers faced the pavement. 18The pavement was by the side of the gateways, corresponding to the length of the gateways; this was the lower pavement. 19Then he measured the width from the front of the lower gateway to the front of the inner court exterior, one hundred cubits toward the east and the north.

20On the outer court was also a gateway facing north, and he measured its length and its width. 21Its gate chambers, three on this side and three on that side, its gateposts and its archways, had the same measurements as the first gate; its length was fifty cubits and its width twenty-five cubits. 22Its windows and those of its archways, and also its palm trees, had the

same measurements as the gateway facing east; it was ascended by seven steps, and its archway was in front of it. 23A gate of the inner court was opposite the northern gateway, just as the eastern gateway; and he measured from gateway to gateway, one hundred cubits.

24After that he brought me toward the south, and there a gateway was facing south; and he measured its gateposts and archways according to these same measurements. 25There were windows in it and in its archways all around like those windows; its length was fifty cubits and its width twenty-five cubits. 26Seven steps led up to it, and its archway was in front of them; and it had palm trees on its gateposts, one on this side and one on that side. 27There was also a gateway on the inner court, facing south; and he measured from gateway to gateway toward the south, one hundred cubits.

28Then he brought me to the inner court through the southern gateway; he measured the southern gateway according to these same measurements. 29Also its gate chambers, its gateposts, and its archways were according to these same measurements; there were windows in it and in its archways all around; it was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide. 30There were archways all around, twenty-five cubits long and five cubits wide. 31Its archways faced the outer court, palm trees were on its gateposts, and going up to it were eight steps.

32And he brought me into the inner court facing east; he measured the gateway according to these same measurements. 33Also its gate chambers, its gateposts, and its archways were according to these same measurements; and there were windows in it and in its archways all around; it was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide. 34Its archways faced the outer court, and palm trees were on its gateposts on this side and on that side; and going up to it were eight steps.

35Then he brought me to the north gateway and measured it according to these same measurements— 36also its gate chambers, its gateposts, and its archways. It had windows all around; its length was fifty cubits and its width twenty-five cubits. 37Its gateposts faced the outer court, palm trees were on its gateposts on this side and on that side, and going up to it were eight steps.

38There was a chamber and its entrance by the gateposts of the gateway, where they washed the burnt offering. 39In the vestibule of the gateway were two tables on this side and two tables on that side, on which to slay the burnt offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering.

Tables:

40At the outer side of the vestibule, as one goes up to the entrance of the northern gateway, were two tables; and on the other side of the vestibule of the gateway were two tables. 41Four tables were on this side and four tables on that side, by the side of the gateway, eight tables on

which they slaughtered the sacrifices. 42There were also four tables of hewn stone for the burnt offering, one cubit and a half long, one cubit and a half wide, and one cubit high; on these they laid the instruments with which they slaughtered the burnt offering and the sacrifice. 43Inside were hooks, a handbreadth wide, fastened all around; and the flesh of the sacrifices was on the tables.

More rooms:

44Outside the inner gate were the chambers for the singers in the inner court, one facing south at the side of the northern gateway, and the other facing north at the side of the southern gateway. 45Then he said to me, "This chamber which faces south is for the priests who have charge of the temple. 46The chamber which faces north is for the priests who have charge of the altar; these are the sons of Zadok, from the sons of Levi, who come near the Lord to minister to Him."

Vestibule, measurements:

47And he measured the court, one hundred cubits long and one hundred cubits wide, foursquare. The altar was in front of the temple. 48Then he brought me to the vestibule of the temple and measured the doorposts of the vestibule, five cubits on this side and five cubits on that side; and the width of the gateway was three cubits on this side and three cubits on that side. 49The length of the vestibule was twenty cubits, and the width eleven cubits; and by the steps which led up to it there were pillars by the doorposts, one on this side and another on that side.

41.

Sanctuary and doorposts, measurements:

1Then he brought me into the sanctuary and measured the doorposts, six cubits wide on one side and six cubits wide on the other side—the width of the tabernacle. 2The width of the entryway was ten cubits, and the side walls of the entrance were five cubits on this side and five cubits on the other side; and he measured its length, forty cubits, and its width, twenty cubits.

3Also he went inside and measured the doorposts, two cubits; and the entrance, six cubits high; and the width of the entrance, seven cubits. 4He measured the length, twenty cubits; and the width, twenty cubits, beyond the sanctuary; and he said to me, "This is the Most Holy Place."

Temple wall, more rooms, measurements:

5Next, he measured the wall of the temple, six cubits. The width of each side chamber all around the temple was four cubits on every side. 6The side chambers were in three stories, one

above the other, thirty chambers in each story; they rested on ledges which were for the side chambers all around, that they might be supported, but not fastened to the wall of the temple. 7As one went up from story to story, the side chambers became wider all around, because their supporting ledges in the wall of the temple ascended like steps; therefore the width of the structure increased as one went up from the lowest story to the highest by way of the middle one. 8I also saw an elevation all around the temple; it was the foundation of the side chambers, a full rod, that is, six cubits high. 9The thickness of the outer wall of the side chambers was five cubits, and so also the remaining terrace by the place of the side chambers of the temple. 10And between it and the wall chambers was a width of twenty cubits all around the temple on every side. 11The doors of the side chambers opened on the terrace, one door toward the north and another toward the south; and the width of the terrace was five cubits all around.

A Separate building:

12The building that faced the separating courtyard at its western end was seventy cubits wide; the wall of the building was five cubits thick all around, and its length ninety cubits.

Temple measurements

13So he measured the temple, one hundred cubits long; and the separating courtyard with the building and its walls was one hundred cubits long; 14also the width of the eastern face of the temple, including the separating courtyard, was one hundred cubits. 15He measured the length of the building behind it, facing the separating courtyard, with its galleries on the one side and on the other side, one hundred cubits, as well as the inner temple and the porches of the court, 16their doorposts and the beveled window frames. And the galleries all around their three stories opposite the threshold were paneled with wood from the ground to the windows—the windows were covered— 17from the space above the door, even to the inner room, as well as outside, and on every wall all around, inside and outside, by measure.

Decorative details:

18And it was made with cherubim and palm trees, a palm tree between cherub and cherub. Each cherub had two faces, 19so that the face of a man was toward a palm tree on one side, and the face of a young lion toward a palm tree on the other side; thus it was made throughout the temple all around. 20From the floor to the space above the door, and on the wall of the sanctuary, cherubim and palm trees were carved.

Doorposts and altar and table:

21The doorposts of the temple were square, as was the front of the sanctuary; their appearance was similar. 22The altar was of wood, three cubits high, and its length two cubits. Its corners, its length, and its sides were of wood; and he said to me, "This is the table that is before the Lord."

Doors:

23The temple and the sanctuary had two doors. 24The doors had two panels apiece, two folding panels: two panels for one door and two panels for the other door. 25Cherubim and palm trees were carved on the doors of the temple just as they were carved on the walls. A wooden canopy was on the front of the vestibule outside. 26There were beveled window frames and palm trees on one side and on the other, on the sides of the vestibule—also on the side chambers of the temple and on the canopies.

42.

Galleries and rooms, outer court:

1Then he brought me out into the outer court, by the way toward the north; and he brought me into the chamber which was opposite the separating courtyard, and which was opposite the building toward the north. 2Facing the length, which was one hundred cubits (the width was fifty cubits), was the north door. 3Opposite the inner court of twenty cubits, and opposite the pavement of the outer court, was gallery against gallery in three stories. 4In front of the chambers, toward the inside, was a walk ten cubits wide, at a distance of one cubit; and their doors faced north. 5Now the upper chambers were shorter, because the galleries took away space from them more than from the lower and middle stories of the building. 6For they were in three stories and did not have pillars like the pillars of the courts; therefore the upper level was shortened more than the lower and middle levels from the ground up. 7And a wall which was outside ran parallel to the chambers, at the front of the chambers, toward the outer court; its length was fifty cubits. 8The length of the chambers toward the outer court was fifty cubits, whereas that facing the temple was one hundred cubits. 9At the lower chambers was the entrance on the east side, as one goes into them from the outer court.

Rooms in the wall:

10Also there were chambers in the thickness of the wall of the court toward the east, opposite the separating courtyard and opposite the building. 11There was a walk in front of them also, and their appearance was like the chambers which were toward the north; they were as long and as wide as the others, and all their exits and entrances were according to plan. 12And corresponding to the doors of the chambers that were facing south, as one enters them, there was a door in front of the walk, the way directly in front of the wall toward the east.

Rooms for priests:

13Then he said to me, "The north chambers and the south chambers, which are opposite the separating courtyard, are the holy chambers where the priests who approach the Lord shall eat the most holy offerings. There they shall lay the most holy offerings—the grain offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering—for the place is holy. 14When the priests enter them, they shall not go out of the holy chamber into the outer court; but there they shall leave their garments in which they minister, for they are holy. They shall put on other garments; then they may approach that which is for the people."

Final outer measurements:

15Now when he had finished measuring the inner temple, he brought me out through the gateway that faces toward the east, and measured it all around. 16He measured the east side with the measuring rod, five hundred rods by the measuring rod all around. 17He measured the north side, five hundred rods by the measuring rod all around. 18He measured the south side, five hundred rods by the measuring rod. 19He came around to the west side and measured five hundred rods by the measuring rod. 20He measured it on the four sides; it had a wall all around, five hundred cubits long and five hundred wide, to separate the holy areas from the common.

Next we will see that the glory that has left the Temple of God earlier in the book *now returns to the Ezekiel Temple*. This is not the rebuilt work of Ezra's day. The second Temple never received such a manifestation. It is this latter-day Temple that is so honored.

A very significant passage:

43.

1Afterward he brought me to the gate, the gate that faces toward the east. **2And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east.** His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory. 3It was like the appearance of the vision which I saw—like the vision which I saw when I came to destroy the city. The visions were like the vision which I saw by the River Chebar; and I fell on my face. **4And the glory of the Lord came into the temple by way of the gate which faces toward the east.** **5The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the temple.**

God now promises to stay in this Temple forever. It is obviously not the Temple of Zerubbabel, the second temple, which was destroyed in 70 A.D.

Look at these awesome promises:

6Then I heard Him speaking to me from the temple, while a man stood beside me. 7And He said to me, "Son of man, **this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where**

I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever. No more shall the house of Israel defile My holy name, they nor their kings, by their harlotry or with the carcasses of their kings on their high places. 8When they set their threshold by My threshold, and their doorpost by My doorpost, with a wall between them and Me, they defiled My holy name by the abominations which they committed; therefore I have consumed them in My anger. 9Now let them put their harlotry and the carcasses of their kings far away from Me, and I will dwell in their midst forever.

Ezekiel is to tell God's people of this coming temple.

*10"Son of man, **describe the temple to the house of Israel**, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the pattern. 11And if they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the design of the temple and its arrangement, its exits and its entrances, its entire design and all its ordinances, all its forms and all its laws. **Write it down in their sight**, so that they may keep its whole design and all its ordinances, and perform them. 12This is the law of the temple: The whole area surrounding the mountaintop is most holy. Behold, this is the law of the temple.*

The altar measured:

13"These are the measurements of the altar in cubits (the cubit is one cubit and a handbreadth): the base one cubit high and one cubit wide, with a rim all around its edge of one span. This is the height of the altar: 14from the base on the ground to the lower ledge, two cubits; the width of the ledge, one cubit; from the smaller ledge to the larger ledge, four cubits; and the width of the ledge, one cubit. 15The altar hearth is four cubits high, with four horns extending upward from the hearth. 16The altar hearth is twelve cubits long, twelve wide, square at its four corners; 17the ledge, fourteen cubits long and fourteen wide on its four sides, with a rim of half a cubit around it; its base, one cubit all around; and its steps face toward the east."

Sacrifices described:

18And He said to me, "Son of man, thus says the Lord God: 'These are the ordinances for the altar on the day when it is made, for sacrificing burnt offerings on it, and for sprinkling blood on it. 19You shall give a young bull for a sin offering to the priests, the Levites, who are of the seed of Zadok, who approach Me to minister to Me,' says the Lord God. 20'You shall take some of its blood and put it on the four horns of the altar, on the four corners of the ledge, and on the rim around it; thus you shall cleanse it and make atonement for it. 21Then you shall also take the bull of the sin offering, and burn it in the appointed place of the temple, outside the sanctuary. 22On the second day you shall offer a kid of the goats without blemish for a sin offering; and they shall cleanse the altar, as they cleansed it with the bull. 23When you have finished cleansing it, you shall offer a young bull without blemish, and a ram from the flock without

blemish. 24When you offer them before the Lord, the priests shall throw salt on them, and they will offer them up as a burnt offering to the Lord. 25Every day for seven days you shall prepare a goat for a sin offering; they shall also prepare a young bull and a ram from the flock, both without blemish. 26Seven days they shall make atonement for the altar and purify it, and so consecrate it. 27When these days are over it shall be, on the eighth day and thereafter, that the priests shall offer your burnt offerings and your peace offerings on the altar; and I will accept you,' says the Lord God."

A "prince" becomes prominent in the coming chapters, 44 and 45. Though some want to identify David with Jesus, the fact that he is offering sin offerings for his family lets us know that it is someone else. And that someone seems to be identified as the *resurrected David* in Jeremiah 30:9, and here in Ezekiel: 34:23-24, 37:24-25. Also, in Hosea 3:5, David is said to be ruler next to the Lord God. In other words, David is not Jesus, for *Jesus is the Lord God*.

With that many references to David, what else can we believe but that he indeed will be serving under Jesus in the City on the Hill of Zion? Read it again for yourself:

44.

*1Then He brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary which faces toward the east, but it was shut. 2And the Lord said to me, "This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the Lord God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut. 3As **for the prince, because he is the prince, he may sit in it to eat bread before the Lord; he shall enter by way of the vestibule of the gateway, and go out the same way."***

If this man is eating bread before the Lord, he is not the Lord. Right?

*4Also He brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple; so I looked, and behold, **the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord;** and I fell on my face. 5And the Lord said to me, "Son of man, mark well, see with your eyes and hear with your ears, all that I say to you concerning all the ordinances of the house of the Lord and all its laws. Mark well who may enter the house and all who go out from the sanctuary.*

Yes, this House of God, the one Isaiah and all the others saw, is not Zerubbabel's temple!

A holy place is coming:

6"Now say to the rebellious, to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God: "O house of Israel, let Us have no more of all your abominations. 7When you brought in foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in My sanctuary to defile it—My house—and when you offered My food, the fat and the blood, then they broke My covenant because of all your

abominations. 8And you have not kept charge of My holy things, but you have set others to keep charge of My sanctuary for you.” 9Thus says the Lord God: “No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart or uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter My sanctuary, including any foreigner who is among the children of Israel.

Priests and Levites will minister in this new temple:

10“**And the Levites** who went far from Me, when Israel went astray, who strayed away from Me after their idols, they shall bear their iniquity. 11Yet they **shall be ministers in My sanctuary**, as gatekeepers of the house and ministers of the house; they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister to them. 12Because they ministered to them before their idols and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity, therefore I have raised My hand in an oath against them,” says the Lord God, “that they shall bear their iniquity. 13And they shall not come near Me to minister to Me as priest, nor come near any of My holy things, nor into the Most Holy Place; but they shall bear their shame and their abominations which they have committed. 14Nevertheless I will make them keep charge of the temple, for all its work, and for all that has to be done in it.

15“**But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer to Me the fat and the blood,**” says the Lord God. 16“**They shall enter My sanctuary, and they shall come near My table to minister to Me, and they shall keep My charge.** 17And it shall be, whenever they enter the gates of the inner court, that they shall put on linen garments; no wool shall come upon them while they minister within the gates of the inner court or within the house. 18They shall have linen turbans on their heads and linen trousers on their bodies; they shall not clothe themselves with anything that causes sweat. 19When they go out to the outer court, to the outer court to the people, they shall take off their garments in which they have ministered, leave them in the holy chambers, and put on other garments; and in their holy garments they shall not sanctify the people.

Rules for the priests:

20“**They shall neither shave their heads nor let their hair grow long, but they shall keep their hair well-trimmed.** 21No priest shall drink wine when he enters the inner court. 22They shall not take as wife a widow or a divorced woman, but take virgins of the descendants of the house of Israel, or widows of priests.

23“**And they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.** 24In controversy they shall stand as judges, and judge it according to My judgments. They shall keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed meetings, and they shall hallow My Sabbaths.

25*"They shall not defile themselves by coming near a dead person. Only for father or mother, for son or daughter, for brother or unmarried sister may they defile themselves. 26After he is cleansed, they shall count seven days for him. 27And on the day that he goes to the sanctuary to minister in the sanctuary, he must offer his sin offering in the inner court,"* says the Lord God.

28*"It shall be, in regard to their inheritance, that I am their inheritance. You shall give them no possession in Israel, for I am their possession. 29They shall eat the grain offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering; every dedicated thing in Israel shall be theirs. 30The best of all firstfruits of any kind, and every sacrifice of any kind from all your sacrifices, shall be the priest's; also you shall give to the priest the first of your ground meal, to cause a blessing to rest on your house. 31The priests shall not eat anything, bird or beast, that died naturally or was torn by wild beasts.*

Next is a closer look at the division of land in the new Israel.

45.

A district for the Lord.

1*"Moreover, when you divide the land by lot into inheritance, you shall set apart a district for the Lord, a holy section of the land; its length shall be twenty-five thousand cubits, and the width ten thousand. It shall be holy throughout its territory all around. 2Of this there shall be a square plot for the sanctuary, five hundred by five hundred rods, with fifty cubits around it for an open space. 3So this is the district you shall measure: twenty-five thousand cubits long and ten thousand wide; in it shall be the sanctuary, the Most Holy Place. 4It shall be a holy section of the land, belonging to the priests, the ministers of the sanctuary, who come near to minister to the Lord; it shall be a place for their houses and a holy place for the sanctuary. 5An area twenty-five thousand cubits long and ten thousand wide shall belong to the Levites, the ministers of the temple; they shall have twenty chambers as a possession.*

For the people and the prince:

6*"You shall appoint as the property of the city an area five thousand cubits wide and twenty-five thousand long, adjacent to the district of the holy section; it shall belong to the whole house of Israel.*

7*"The prince shall have a section on one side and the other of the holy district and the city's property; and bordering on the holy district and the city's property, extending westward on the west side and eastward on the east side, the length shall be side by side with one of the tribal portions, from the west border to the east border. 8The land shall be his possession in Israel;*

and My princes shall no more oppress My people, but they shall give the rest of the land to the house of Israel, according to their tribes.”

Here the Lord corrects the abuses of former priests and Levites:

9Thus says the Lord God: “Enough, O princes of Israel! Remove violence and plundering, execute justice and righteousness, and stop dispossessing My people,” says the Lord God. 10“You shall have honest scales, an honest ephah, and an honest bath. 11The ephah and the bath shall be of the same measure, so that the bath contains one-tenth of a homer, and the ephah one-tenth of a homer; their measure shall be according to the homer. 12The shekel shall be twenty gerahs; twenty shekels, twenty-five shekels, and fifteen shekels shall be your mina.

13This is the offering which you shall offer: you shall give one-sixth of an ephah from a homer of wheat, and one-sixth of an ephah from a homer of barley. 14The ordinance concerning oil, the bath of oil, is one-tenth of a bath from a kor. A kor is a homer or ten baths, for ten baths are a homer. 15And one lamb shall be given from a flock of two hundred, from the rich pastures of Israel. These shall be for grain offerings, burnt offerings, and peace offerings, to make atonement for them,” says the Lord God. 16“All the people of the land shall give this offering for the prince in Israel. 17Then it shall be the prince’s part to give burnt offerings, grain offerings, and drink offerings, at the feasts, the New Moons, the Sabbaths, and at all the appointed seasons of the house of Israel. He shall prepare the sin offering, the grain offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offerings to make atonement for the house of Israel.”

For unintentional sin:

18Thus says the Lord God: “In the first month, on the first day of the month, you shall take a young bull without blemish and cleanse the sanctuary. 19The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering and put it on the doorposts of the temple, on the four corners of the ledge of the altar, and on the gateposts of the gate of the inner court. 20And so you shall do on the seventh day of the month for everyone who has sinned unintentionally or in ignorance. Thus you shall make atonement for the temple.

The Passover will be observed:

21In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall observe the Passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten. 22And on that day the prince shall prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bull for a sin offering. 23On the seven days of the feast he shall prepare a burnt offering to the Lord, seven bulls and seven rams without blemish, daily for seven days, and a kid of the goats daily for a sin offering. 24And he shall prepare a grain offering of one ephah for each bull and one ephah for each ram, together with a hin of oil for each ephah.

25*"In the seventh month, on the fifteenth day of the month, at the feast, he shall do likewise for seven days, according to the sin offering, the burnt offering, the grain offering, and the oil."*

Other worship regulations are now covered, along with the movements of the prince:

46.

The prince's offerings:

1Thus says the Lord God: "The gateway of the inner court that faces toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the Sabbath it shall be opened, and on the day of the New Moon it shall be opened. 2The prince shall enter by way of the vestibule of the gateway from the outside, and stand by the gatepost. The priests shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings. He shall worship at the threshold of the gate. Then he shall go out, but the gate shall not be shut until evening. 3Likewise the people of the land shall worship at the entrance to this gateway before the Lord on the Sabbaths and the New Moons. 4The burnt offering that the prince offers to the Lord on the Sabbath day shall be six lambs without blemish, and a ram without blemish; 5and the grain offering shall be one ephah for a ram, and the grain offering for the lambs, as much as he wants to give, as well as a hin of oil with every ephah. 6On the day of the New Moon it shall be a young bull without blemish, six lambs, and a ram; they shall be without blemish. 7He shall prepare a grain offering of an ephah for a bull, an ephah for a ram, as much as he wants to give for the lambs, and a hin of oil with every ephah. 8When the prince enters, he shall go in by way of the vestibule of the gateway, and go out the same way.

9"But when the people of the land come before the Lord on the appointed feast days, whoever enters by way of the north gate to worship shall go out by way of the south gate; and whoever enters by way of the south gate shall go out by way of the north gate. He shall not return by way of the gate through which he came, but shall go out through the opposite gate. 10The prince shall then be in their midst. When they go in, he shall go in; and when they go out, he shall go out. 11At the festivals and the appointed feast days the grain offering shall be an ephah for a bull, an ephah for a ram, as much as he wants to give for the lambs, and a hin of oil with every ephah.

12"Now when the prince makes a voluntary burnt offering or voluntary peace offering to the Lord, the gate that faces toward the east shall then be opened for him; and he shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings as he did on the Sabbath day. Then he shall go out, and after he goes out the gate shall be shut.

Burnt offerings:

13*"You shall daily make a burnt offering to the Lord of a lamb of the first year without blemish; you shall prepare it every morning. 14And you shall prepare a grain offering with it every morning, a sixth of an ephah, and a third of a hin of oil to moisten the fine flour. This grain offering is a perpetual ordinance, to be made regularly to the Lord. 15Thus they shall prepare the lamb, the grain offering, and the oil, as a regular burnt offering every morning."*

The prince's offerings:

16*'Thus says the Lord God: "If the prince gives a gift of some of his inheritance to any of his sons, it shall belong to his sons; it is their possession by inheritance. 17But if he gives a gift of some of his inheritance to one of his servants, it shall be his until the year of liberty, after which it shall return to the prince. But his inheritance shall belong to his sons; it shall become theirs. 18Moreover the prince shall not take any of the people's inheritance by evicting them from their property; he shall provide an inheritance for his sons from his own property, so that none of My people may be scattered from his property." ' "*

Offering preparations:

19*Now he brought me through the entrance, which was at the side of the gate, into the holy chambers of the priests which face toward the north; and there a place was situated at their extreme western end. 20And he said to me, "This is the place where the priests shall boil the trespass offering and the sin offering, and where they shall bake the grain offering, so that they do not bring them out into the outer court to sanctify the people."*

21*Then he brought me out into the outer court and caused me to pass by the four corners of the court; and in fact, in every corner of the court there was another court. 22In the four corners of the court were enclosed courts, forty cubits long and thirty wide; all four corners were the same size. 23There was a row of building stones all around in them, all around the four of them; and cooking hearths were made under the rows of stones all around. 24And he said to me, "These are the kitchens where the ministers of the temple shall boil the sacrifices of the people."*

Chapter 47 now informs us that literally healing waters will bring back to full life that which has caused death in the previous age. Ezekiel, like Isaiah, may have slipped into eternal visions here as he begins painting a picture of trees on either side of a river that actually bear fruit every month. That fruit will be used for food and medicine. I say this is the eternal kingdom because Revelation 22:2, which speaks of that era, reads,

22:2*In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

Now another unique vision:

47.

Here also, men have wanted to allegorize. It does make a good sermon illustration of the depths we can or cannot enter in the Spirit of God. But this is not the only passage in Scripture that speaks of a special flow of cleansing water issuing from the Temple in those days. It would seem that this water is being sent out to purify the poisoned waters of a nuclear age.

1Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the front of the temple faced east; the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar. 2He brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me around on the outside to the outer gateway that faces east; and there was water, running out on the right side.

3And when the man went out to the east with the line in his hand, he measured one thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the water came up to my ankles. 4Again he measured one thousand and brought me through the waters; the water came up to my knees. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through; the water came up to my waist. 5Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep, water in which one must swim, a river that could not be crossed. 6He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen this?" Then he brought me and returned me to the bank of the river.

The following explanation of the waters seems to verify a literal interpretation here, as throughout the book of Ezekiel.

7When I returned, there, along the bank of the river, were very many trees on one side and the other. 8Then he said to me: "This water flows toward the eastern region, goes down into the valley, and enters the sea. When it reaches the sea, its waters are healed. 9And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes. 10It shall be that fishermen will stand by it from En Gedi to En Eglaim; they will be places for spreading their nets. Their fish will be of the same kinds as the fish of the Great Sea, exceedingly many. 11But its swamps and marshes will not be healed; they will be given over to salt. 12Along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all kinds of trees used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine."

The actual physical borders of the new Israel are spelled out here. Very difficult to allegorize, yes?

13Thus says the Lord God: "These are the borders by which you shall divide the land as an inheritance among the twelve tribes of Israel. Joseph shall have two portions. 14You shall inherit it equally with one another; for I raised My hand in an oath to give it to your fathers, and this land shall fall to you as your inheritance.

15"This shall be the border of the land on the north: from the Great Sea, by the road to Hethlon, as one goes to Zedad, 16Hamath, Berothah, Sibraim (which is between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath), to Hazar Hatticon (which is on the border of Hauran). 17Thus the boundary shall be from the Sea to Hazar Enan, the border of Damascus; and as for the north, northward, it is the border of Hamath. This is the north side.

18"On the east side you shall mark out the border from between Hauran and Damascus, and between Gilead and the land of Israel, along the Jordan, and along the eastern side of the sea. This is the east side.

19"The south side, toward the South, shall be from Tamar to the waters of Meribah by Kadesh, along the brook to the Great Sea. This is the south side, toward the South.

20"The west side shall be the Great Sea, from the southern boundary until one comes to a point opposite Hamath. This is the west side.

21"Thus you shall divide this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel. 22It shall be that you will divide it by lot as an inheritance for yourselves, and for the strangers who dwell among you and who bear children among you. They shall be to you as native-born among the children of Israel; they shall have an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. 23And it shall be that in whatever tribe the stranger dwells, there you shall give him his inheritance," says the Lord God.

And so the book closes out with geographical borders of the tribes of Israel, divisions, and the naming of the city from Millennial Days and/or beyond as: **The Lord Is There.**

48.

1"Now these are the names of the tribes: From the northern border along the road to Hethlon at the entrance of Hamath, to Hazar Enan, the border of Damascus northward, in the direction of Hamath, there shall be one section for Dan from its east to its west side; 2by the border of Dan, from the east side to the west, one section for Asher; 3by the border of Asher, from the east side to the west, one section for Naphtali; 4by the border of Naphtali, from the east side to the west, one section for Manasseh; 5by the border of Manasseh, from the east side to the west, one section for Ephraim; 6by the border of Ephraim, from the east side to the west, one section for Reuben; 7by the border of Reuben, from the east side to the west, one section for Judah; 8by the border of Judah, from the east side to the west, shall be the district which you shall set apart,

twenty-five thousand cubits in width, and in length the same as one of the other portions, from the east side to the west, with the sanctuary in the center.

9“The district that you shall set apart for the Lord shall be twenty-five thousand cubits in length and ten thousand in width. 10To these—to the priests—the holy district shall belong: on the north twenty-five thousand cubits in length, on the west ten thousand in width, on the east ten thousand in width, and on the south twenty-five thousand in length. The sanctuary of the Lord shall be in the center. 11It shall be for the priests of the sons of Zadok, who are sanctified, who have kept My charge, who did not go astray when the children of Israel went astray, as the Levites went astray. 12And this district of land that is set apart shall be to them a thing most holy by the border of the Levites.

13“Opposite the border of the priests, the Levites shall have an area twenty-five thousand cubits in length and ten thousand in width; its entire length shall be twenty-five thousand and its width ten thousand. 14And they shall not sell or exchange any of it; they may not alienate this best part of the land, for it is holy to the Lord.

15“The five thousand cubits in width that remain, along the edge of the twenty-five thousand, shall be for general use by the city, for dwellings and common-land; and the city shall be in the center. 16These shall be its measurements: the north side four thousand five hundred cubits, the south side four thousand five hundred, the east side four thousand five hundred, and the west side four thousand five hundred. 17The common-land of the city shall be: to the north two hundred and fifty cubits, to the south two hundred and fifty, to the east two hundred and fifty, and to the west two hundred and fifty. 18The rest of the length, alongside the district of the holy section, shall be ten thousand cubits to the east and ten thousand to the west. It shall be adjacent to the district of the holy section, and its produce shall be food for the workers of the city. 19The workers of the city, from all the tribes of Israel, shall cultivate it. 20The entire district shall be twenty-five thousand cubits by twenty-five thousand cubits, foursquare. You shall set apart the holy district with the property of the city.

21“The rest shall belong to the prince, on one side and on the other of the holy district and of the city’s property, next to the twenty-five thousand cubits of the holy district as far as the eastern border, and westward next to the twenty-five thousand as far as the western border, adjacent to the tribal portions; it shall belong to the prince. It shall be the holy district, and the sanctuary of the temple shall be in the center. 22Moreover, apart from the possession of the Levites and the possession of the city which are in the midst of what belongs to the prince, the area between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin shall belong to the prince.

23“As for the rest of the tribes, from the east side to the west, Benjamin shall have one section; 24by the border of Benjamin, from the east side to the west, Simeon shall have one section; 25by the border of Simeon, from the east side to the west, Issachar shall have one section; 26by

the border of Issachar, from the east side to the west, Zebulun shall have one section; 27by the border of Zebulun, from the east side to the west, Gad shall have one section; 28by the border of Gad, on the south side, toward the South, the border shall be from Tamar to the waters of Meribah by Kadesh, along the brook to the Great Sea. 29This is the land which you shall divide by lot as an inheritance among the tribes of Israel, and these are their portions,” says the Lord God.

30“These are the exits of the city. On the north side, measuring four thousand five hundred cubits 31(the gates of the city shall be named after the tribes of Israel), the three gates northward: one gate for Reuben, one gate for Judah, and one gate for Levi; 32on the east side, four thousand five hundred cubits, three gates: one gate for Joseph, one gate for Benjamin, and one gate for Dan; 33on the south side, measuring four thousand five hundred cubits, three gates: one gate for Simeon, one gate for Issachar, and one gate for Zebulun; 34on the west side, four thousand five hundred cubits with their three gates: one gate for Gad, one gate for Asher, and one gate for Naphtali. 35All the way around shall be eighteen thousand cubits; and the name of the city from that day shall be: THE LORD IS THERE.”

And once more I must say to all of this, Why not? Why can't we believe exactly what God has said? A new world is coming. Definitely not like anything we have now. Something to look forward to. Something to delight in when the days here grow dark.

A challenge:

I challenge anyone to take the words of the prophets I have quoted thus far and make them fit into the history of our present or past world. People who attempt this are the Kingdom now/Millennium now folks. A sad and difficult task is theirs, yet there is no need for their efforts. Or to those who take all these words and make them into some figurative meaning that fits with our everyday life. Good luck with that too! So much easier just to read and believe and rejoice. Join me.

16. 600 B.C., The Kingdom and Daniel.

Daniel's visions of the Kingdom.

The first vision in the book of Daniel is actually not Daniel's, but the Babylonian emperor Nebuchadnezzar's. The interpretation of the great image he sees is, amazingly, a list of the great powers of the earth from his own day to ours.

The fourth kingdom he and Daniel see has been largely understood to be the Roman Empire that morphs in the last days into a ten-nation confederation. It is that empire that is believed to be the antichrist's domain.

But of concern to us as we seek information about a coming kingdom, is what follows:

Daniel 2:35, 40-45.

*35Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became **a great mountain and filled the whole earth.***

*40And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, **that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others.** 41Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. 42And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so*

the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. 43As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay.

44And in the days of these [ten] kings 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. 45Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.

Verse 35, at the end of the description of the dream itself, lets us know that the coming kingdom is a great mountain that fills the whole earth. Here again we are drawn back to Isaiah who saw such a mountain, and a House upon it from which the entire world was governed.

The prophecies are still a unity. Following the merely human governments of this world comes a government from God, but still on the planet. No new heaven and earth yet. Simply a take-over of earth by a Power from outside it, Who has chosen to come and live in it.

And Jesus shall reign...

Chapter 7 tells the same story but with a different vision. Here a series of animals tell the succession of nations, nations that come to the same end as before, a final challenge from above. Read carefully the vision and interpretation of that final kingdom again

*9“I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire; 10A fiery stream issued And came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. **The court was seated,** And the books were opened.*

*11“I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame. 12As for the rest of the beasts, **they had their dominion taken away,** yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.*

*13“I was watching in the night visions, And behold, 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. **14Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.***

*26'But the court shall be seated, And they shall take away his dominion, To consume and destroy it forever. 27Then the kingdom and dominion, **And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.'***

The animals that portray the nations, have their dominion taken away, but not their lives (verse 12). That is, Jesus does not return to destroy the entire earth, and every nation in it, only to take control of certain nations. Same picture as in chapter 2.

Notice that the kingdom is the Lord's but that it is shared with His people, who rule and reign with Him. Again we say, *this is not the new heavens and the new earth*, but that transitional kingdom that shall have earthly dominion until all enemies are destroyed and eternity proper can begin. We will hear Paul speak of this later.

Daniel 12:2-3.

*2And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, **Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt.** 3Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.*

Here are the very same concepts spoken of by Jesus and by John in Revelation. A resurrection of life and a resurrection of damnation.

Daniel is truly on board regarding the coming kingdom. Let's look at Obadiah, who prophesied shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem.

17. 586 B.C., The Kingdom and Obadiah.

Even in one-chapter Obadiah which is a judgment on Edom, the Spirit finds a place to tell of the coming worldwide kingdom:

Obadiah 1:17-21.

17“*But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, And there shall be holiness; The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. 18The house of Jacob shall be a fire, And the house of Joseph a flame; But the house of Esau shall be stubble; They shall kindle them and devour them, And no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau,” For the Lord has spoken. 19The South shall possess the mountains of Esau, And the Lowland shall possess Philistia. They shall possess the fields of Ephraim And the fields of Samaria. Benjamin shall possess Gilead. 20And the captives of this host of the children of Israel Shall possess the land of the Canaanites As far as Zarephath. The captives of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad Shall possess the cities of the South.21Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion To judge the mountains of Esau, And the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.*

The planet is taken over by the rule of Christ and His people. The long-awaited *manifest sons of God* appear and bring holiness and total control.

Next, Haggai and Zechariah appear at about the same time, during the rebuilding of the Temple out of the ruins at Jerusalem. Surely some believed this new temple was the fulfillment of prophecies, but it becomes clear that what happened around 500 B.C. was not the promised restoration of Israel.

18. 500 B.C., The Kingdom and Haggai.

Haggai has a bit to add to the growing mound of evidence for a coming literal kingdom on earth.

Haggai 2:5-9, 23

5‘According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!’ *6*For thus says the Lord of hosts: Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; **7and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory, says the Lord of hosts.** *8*The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, says the Lord of hosts. **9The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts.** And in this place I will give peace, says the Lord of hosts.

Haggai is lifted in the Spirit to see the temple before him as though it were that temple which shall exist in the Millennial days. This is the temple, “this latter temple,” that shall be present when all men come to worship the Desire of All Nations, a title that can only refer to the coming Messiah of Israel.

And Haggai sees a person in that end time.

23 'In that day,' says the Lord of hosts, 'I will take you, Zerubbabel My servant, the son of Shealtiel,' says the Lord, 'and will make you like a signet ring; for I have chosen you,' says the Lord of hosts."

Again it looks like a local prophecy with a local fulfillment. Zerubbabel was the grandson of Jehoiachin. Though he would have been in line for the throne, recall that the Solomonic line will not be allowed to have that honor now. The next King to sit on the throne of David will be Jesus Himself.

Still, Zerubbabel, in supervising and finishing this second temple, was a type of the temple and king that shall come and is given great honor here and in Zechariah's prophecy. In spite of all of this, no mention is made of God's glory filling this Temple as was the case in Solomon's and will be the case in Ezekiel's Millennial structure.

19. 500 B.C., The Kingdom and Zechariah.

Ministering simultaneously with Haggai is the prophet Zechariah. Zechariah begins early on predicting that the Lord will once more choose Jerusalem and comfort Zion. His prophecy is simply loaded from that point on with hope and comfort for a forgiven nation.

Zechariah 1:12-17

*12Then the Angel of the Lord answered and said, "O Lord of hosts, **how long will You not have mercy on Jerusalem** and on the cities of Judah, against which You were angry these seventy years?"*

13And the Lord answered the angel who talked to me, with good and comforting words. 14So the angel who spoke with me said to me, "Proclaim, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts:

"I am zealous for Jerusalem And for Zion with great zeal. 15I am exceedingly angry with the nations at ease; For I was a little angry, And they helped—but with evil intent."

*16Therefore thus says the Lord: **"I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy; My house shall be built in it,"** says the Lord of hosts, "And a surveyor's line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem." "*

*17"Again proclaim, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: "My cities shall again spread out through prosperity; **The Lord will again comfort Zion, And will again choose Jerusalem.**" ' "*

2:1-5, 10-12

*1Then I raised my eyes and looked, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand. 2So I said, "Where are you going?" And he said to me, **"To measure Jerusalem,** to see what is its width and what is its length."*

Familiar talk, yes? Ezekiel. John. Measuring the same city.

*3And there was the angel who talked with me, going out; and another angel was coming out to meet him, 4who said to him, "Run, speak to this young man, saying: 'Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, because of the multitude of men and livestock in it. **5For I,' says the Lord, 'will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.'** "*

Normal life will resume for Israel.

*10"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," says the Lord. **11"Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and they shall become***

My people. And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me to you. **12**And the Lord will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land, and will again choose Jerusalem.

A clear description of a literal kingdom coming to earth.

Zechariah 6:10, 12-13

*12*Then speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, saying: **"Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, And He shall build the temple of the Lord; 13**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."'

For one hundred fifty years the words of Jeremiah have been available. Zechariah is merely echoing the weeping prophet here. A man code-named the "Branch" shall come bearing the glory of God, ruling on the throne, being a priest... of course this is Jesus during the Golden Age.

And Zechariah goes on...

Zechariah 8:1-8, 11-15, 19-23

*1*Again the word of the Lord of hosts came, saying, *2*"Thus says the Lord of hosts: **'I am zealous for Zion with great zeal; With great fervor I am zealous for her.'**

All is forgiven. See God's intense love shining through now.

3"Thus says the Lord: **'I will return to Zion, And dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, The Mountain of the Lord of hosts, The Holy Mountain.'**

Not happening today for sure.

4"Thus says the Lord of hosts: **'Old men and old women shall again sit In the streets of Jerusalem, Each one with his staff in his hand Because of great age. 5**The streets of the city Shall be full of boys and girls Playing in its streets.'

Not the eternal state yet. The Millennium is normal life, enhanced by Messiah's rule.

6“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘If it is marvelous in the eyes of the **remnant** of this people in these days, Will it also be marvelous in My eyes?’ Says the Lord of hosts.

Note the word “remnant”. This is a key to understanding the entire future of Israel.

7“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Behold, I will save My people from the land of the east And from the land of the west; **8I will bring them back, And they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be My people And I will be their God, In truth and righteousness.**’

How many prophets have now concurred?

11But now I will not treat **the remnant** of this people as in the former days,’ says the Lord of hosts.

12‘For the seed shall be prosperous, The vine shall give its fruit, The ground shall give her increase, And the heavens shall give their dew— I will cause the remnant of this people To possess all these. 13And 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. **Do not fear, Let your hands be strong.**’

Indeed. Today she is a curse. Think of all the difficulties this one small nation endures and passes on to the world.

14“For thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Just as I determined to punish you When your fathers provoked Me to wrath,’ Says the Lord of hosts, ‘And I would not relent, 15So again **in these days I am determined to do good To Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.** Do not fear.

“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘**The fast** of the fourth month, The fast of the fifth, The fast of the seventh, And the fast of the tenth, **Shall be joy and gladness and cheerful feasts For the house of Judah.** Therefore love truth and peace.’

20“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Peoples shall yet come, Inhabitants of many cities; 21The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, “**Let us continue to go and pray before the Lord, And seek the Lord of hosts. I myself will go also.**” 22Yes, many peoples and strong nations Shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, And to pray before the Lord.’

What a graphic snapshot of life on earth during the Millennium!

23“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, “Let us go with you, **for we have heard that God is with you.**” ’ ”

And indeed He is!

Typical human life, but guarded by the King and His people. Old people. Young people. Laughter. And there is that Mountain again! Perfect agreement with the other prophecies. This thing is coming!

Zechariah 9:9-10

*9“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! **Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.***

*10I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off. **He shall speak peace to the nations;** His dominion shall be ‘from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.’*

The prophet sees the first and second comings of Jesus in one vision. He does not see the two thousand plus years in between the comings. We have seen Jesus coming into Jerusalem, then rejected. One day we will see Him coming to Jerusalem as conquering King!

Zechariah 10:6-8

*6“I will strengthen the house of Judah, And I will save the house of Joseph. I will bring them back, Because I have mercy on them. **They shall be as though I had not cast them aside;** For I am the Lord their God, And I will hear them. 7Those of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, And their heart shall rejoice as if with wine. Yes, their children shall see it and be glad; Their heart shall rejoice in the Lord. 8I will whistle for them and gather them, For I will redeem them; And they shall increase as they once increased.*

Who would have thought that Israel had a future like the one described by Zechariah and all the others?

Zechariah 12:7-14

*7“The Lord will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall not become greater than that of Judah. **8In that day the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem;** the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of the Lord before them. 9It shall be in that day that **I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.***

The “final solution” once planned for Israel will be turned around on that day. There will be an end instead to Israel’s enemies.

*10“And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; **then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.***

Yes, the Gospel writer saw a bit of this fulfillment when Jesus was crucified. But on that day a huge sorrow will overtake Israel as they realize that the One they killed loved them with an everlasting love.

11In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. 12And the land shall mourn, every family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; 13the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of Shimei by itself, and their wives by themselves; 14all the families that remain, every family by itself, and their wives by themselves.

This is how the Millennial age begins. A nation-wide mourning for the treatment of the Son of God by Israel.

Zechariah 14:8-21

*8And in that day it shall be That **living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, Half of them toward the eastern sea And half of them toward the western sea;** In both summer and winter it shall occur. 9And the Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be— “The Lord is one,” And His name one.*

There it is. King over all the earth. He is here. With us.

As for those living waters, which we saw in Ezekiel and elsewhere, could it be that a medicinal supernatural element will be added to the water to cleanse the rivers and other bodies of water from the contamination that shall surely be present in the wars that precede the Millennium? Yes, Jesus gives us “living waters” in our spirit, but let us never avoid the literal when it is possible.

10All the land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be raised up and inhabited in her place from Benjamin’s Gate to the place of the First Gate and the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king’s winepresses.

Again, specific names such as these let us know we are on the present earth, not in a new earth.

*11The people shall dwell in it; And no longer shall there be utter destruction, But **Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.***

12And this shall be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, Their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, And their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths.

Nuclear war a part of the Tribulation? Serious problems to begin with.

13It shall come to pass in that day That a great panic from the Lord will be among them. Everyone will seize the hand of his neighbor, And raise his hand against his neighbor's hand; 14Judah also will fight at Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the surrounding nations Shall be gathered together: Gold, silver, and apparel in great abundance. 15Such also shall be the plague On the horse and the mule, On the camel and the donkey, And on all the cattle that will be in those camps. So shall this plague be.

Only at the beginning will these things be suffered. If the Lord would not return when He does, no flesh could be saved.

*16And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem **shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.***

Some nations will be sent to perdition, others will remain, according to Matthew 25. Notice here also the confirmation of a very Jewish culture that will be worldwide.

*17And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth **do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, on them there will be no rain.** 18If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the Lord strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. 19This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.*

*20In that day "**HOLINESS TO THE LORD**" shall be engraved on the bells of the horses. The pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. 21Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the Lord of hosts. Everyone who sacrifices shall come and take them and cook in them. In that day there shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts.*

A new world! Clear enough? The feast of “tents” is in our future. Not just for Jews. All people on earth will be invited. And worship of the King will be *required* in that day. Punishment is in store for the still-rebellious of the earth who do not want to cooperate.

20. 450 B.C., The Kingdom and Nehemiah

The kingdom will continue. But not before even Judah, with its special Mt. Zion, Jerusalem, the Temple, is brought to ruin. The curses for disobedience are on the people of Israel and all seems lost.

But it isn't. God made a promise. He will keep it. Listen to some Levites assembled by Nehemiah, the governor of the returned Israelites after their seventy-year captivity by Babylon:

Nehemiah 9:7-8.

*7“You are the Lord God, **Who chose Abram**, And brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans, And gave him the name Abraham; 8You found his heart faithful before You, **And made a covenant with him To give the land** of the Canaanites, The Hittites, the Amorites, The Perizzites, the Jebusites, And the Girgashites—To give it to his descendants. You have performed Your words, For You are righteous.*

If *they* have not forgotten about a promise after all this trouble, they can be assured that *God* has not forgotten. The land is theirs. This will not change. The kingdom is a real entity in the heart of God. History declares it, the people keep believing it.

21. 430 B.C., The Kingdom and Malachi.

Malachi has the final Old Covenant word in this long stream of predictions of the last days.

Chapter 3 tells of a messenger that is coming to prepare the way for the Lord. We have believed this as referring to John the Baptist, and so it does. But careful reading of the outcome of the Messenger's ministry points to a second fulfillment of this passage, as well as the Elijah prediction in chapter 4.

The book of Revelation tells us of two prophets whose ministries sound very much like this "Elijah" and "messenger." They are unnamed, and never died in historic time, evidenced by the fact that they do indeed die in that Revelation story. Elijah fits the description of one of them for sure.

The Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah, and was certainly a type of Elijah, as the Lord brings out in his explanation to the apostles.

But Malachi wants us to think of the man Elijah himself, sent into the earth just before closing time to attempt once more to bring a fallen world to repentance.

Perhaps it helps to think that since there are two comings of Jesus, there will be two forerunners also. One in the power and spirit of Elijah, and one, Elijah himself.

The upshot of his ministry is that he will purify the sons of Levi, a group of men who according to the prophet Ezekiel, will soon be serving in Jerusalem, offering to the Lord an offering in righteousness. It does not seem to me that John the Baptist performed anything quite like this.

Malachi leaves us with the promise that after the great destruction, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings.

So be it. Even so come Lord Jesus! Rise among us and reign! Your Kingdom come! Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven! How our hearts should jump every time we say that prayer from the heart!

Here are Malachi's words, which will be the last words of a prophet of God for four hundred years.

Malachi 3:1-5. 11-12

*1"Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. **And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple,** Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," Says the Lord of hosts.*

2“But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire And like launderers’ soap. **3**He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the Lord An offering in righteousness.

4“Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem Will be pleasant to the Lord, As in the days of old, As in former years. **5**And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness Against sorcerers, Against adulterers, Against perjurers, Against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, And against those who turn away an alien— Because they do not fear Me,” Says the Lord of hosts.

11“And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,” Says the Lord of hosts; **12**“And all nations will call you blessed, For you will be a delightful land,” Says the Lord of hosts.

Malachi 4:1-3.

1“For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,” Says the Lord of hosts, “That will leave them neither root nor branch.**2**But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves. **3**You shall trample the wicked, For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet On the day that I do this,” Says the Lord of hosts.

THE KINGDOM BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS

400 B.C., to 0. The Kingdom and Silence

Are we to believe that everything the prophets predicted was forgotten as centuries passed from the last of these voices to the voice of one crying in the wilderness? More to the point, should we downplay all that the men of God said because so many years passed from Old Covenant days to the time of Jesus? Is the chain of thought broken? Has literal truly become figurative?

In our own time, the long wait for Jesus' return has had that effect on liberal scholarship. I have heard that Jesus' return will be nothing more than an awareness among His people that He is somehow "here" in the Spirit. They confuse Olivet with Pentecost...

No, the prophets and their prophecies are still intact. Jesus is still coming literally for us, and the literal kingdom of God is still to come to the people of Israel, as well as to those grafted into Israel. Nothing changed from Malachi to Matthew. Nothing.

True, the faith of the people must have waivered. The last prophet who spoke, prophesied under the reign of Persian kings. Persians gave way to Greek control of Israel and Greek to Roman; all of them held sway over the tiny land, a nation it seemed that was forsaken by God forever.

So, a coming kingdom? A Messiah? Crazy talk! But some believed. Some waited. May their example inspire us, for we await the same mighty Messiah ourselves, and with Him, the same Golden Age the prophets predicted.

Luke 23:50-51 tells us of one Joseph from the city of Arimathea. Yes, he was the man who loaned his tomb to Jesus for a few days and nights. It is said of him that he was waiting for the kingdom of God. As are we. He will not be disappointed, nor shall we.

Yes, a Messiah was expected by some. We know not how many. And we know not how many variations there were on the theme. The woman at the well, in John 4, seemed to understand, in spite of her Samaritan tradition that honored only the books of Moses, that a Messiah would come one day and tell us all things. Gamaliel, Acts 5, gives advice to those who want to hurt the Christians. He reminds them that local men were always rising up, perhaps as potential deliverers, but that they came to nothing.

Israel, at least part of her, was looking for someone to come and set them free. A new Moses. Their exalted prince, David. An anointed one who would beat down the Romans and restore them to their prominence. There were Messianic movements that even tried to take things into their own hands. More than one of Jesus' disciples was recruited from that number.

Writings from this period, though not inspired or authoritative, not a Voice from Heaven, still reflect a continued longing for the coming kingdom by the Jewish nation.

22. 200 B.C., The Kingdom and Tobit.

Tobit is one of several apocryphal books that make some mention either of the promises of God to Israel or the kingdom that shall come to that place. There are at least fourteen such books altogether, found in Catholic and a few Protestant Bibles.

As for Tobit, I quote from the website *Got Questions?*

The Book of Tobit, also referred to as Tobias, believed to have been written early in the second century B.C., recounts the story of a man named Tobit and his family exiled to living in Nineveh shortly after the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. Tobit and his family strive to love and honor God and act as righteous followers of the Law. The Book of Tobit is regarded as a book of history, and its literary form is regarded by some as that of a religious novel. However, the teaching of the book is not driven by or relevant to historical events. Rather, it instructs about piety, honoring one's parents, giving alms to the poor, intercessory prayer, marriage, and following the Law.

For example, this admonition. But notice the motivation for obedience:

Tobit 4:12

*12Beware of all whoredom, my son, and chiefly take a wife of the seed of thy fathers, and take not a strange woman to wife, which is not of thy father's tribe: for we are the children of the prophets, Noe, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: remember, my son, that our fathers from the beginning, even that they all married wives of their own kindred, and were blessed in their children, **and their seed shall inherit the land.***

Later in the book, this familiar promise:

Tobit 13:3-5

*3Confess him before the Gentiles, ye children of Israel: for he hath scattered us among them.
4There declare his greatness, and extol him before all the living: for he is our Lord, and he is the*

God our Father for ever. 5And he will scourge us for our iniquities, and will have mercy again, and will gather us out of all nations, among whom he hath scattered us.

And in the same chapter this lengthy exhortation showing the author's awareness of what is coming.

Tobit 13:9-18

9O Jerusalem, the holy city, he will scourge thee for thy children's works, and will have mercy again on the sons of the righteous. 10Give praise to the Lord, for he is good: and praise the everlasting King, that his tabernacle may be builded in thee again with joy, and let him make joyful there in thee those that are captives, and love in thee for ever those that are miserable.

A last-days temple. Yes.

11Many nations shall come from far to the name of the Lord God with gifts in their hands, even gifts to the King of heaven; all generations shall praise thee with great joy.

Worldwide worship of Jesus. Yes.

12Cursed are all they which hate thee, and blessed shall all be which love thee for ever. 13Rejoice and be glad for the children of the just: for they shall be gathered together, and shall bless the Lord of the just. 14O blessed are they which love thee, for they shall rejoice in thy peace: blessed are they which have been sorrowful for all thy scourges; for they shall rejoice for thee, when they have seen all thy glory, and shall be glad for ever.

15Let my soul bless God the great King. 16For Jerusalem shall be built up with sapphires and emeralds, and precious stone: thy walls and towers and battlements with pure gold. 17And the streets of Jerusalem shall be paved with beryl and carbuncle and stones of Ophir. 18And all her streets shall say, Alleluia; and they shall praise him, saying, Blessed be God, which hath extolled it for ever.

The eternally holy Jerusalem. Yes. Tobit was tuned in.

More of Israel's future in chapter 14:

Tobit 14:5-7

5And that again God will have mercy on them, and bring them again into the land, where they shall build a temple, but not like to the first, until the time of that age be fulfilled; and afterward they shall return from all places of their captivity, and build up Jerusalem gloriously, and the

house of God shall be built in it for ever with a glorious building, as the prophets have spoken thereof.

6And all nations shall turn, and fear the Lord God truly, and shall bury their idols. 7So shall all nations praise the Lord, and his people shall confess God, and the Lord shall exalt his people; and all those which love the Lord God in truth and justice shall rejoice, shewing mercy to our brethren.

I believe we have read words like this throughout the Old Testament.

23. 170 B.C., The Kingdom and Ecclesiasticus.

Per the *Got Questions* site, this book, an apocryphal document, was supposedly written by one *Jesus*, the Greek form of Joshua. He was a philosopher who lived in Jerusalem and knew the Scriptures well. Consider these quotes:

Ecclesiasticus 44:19-23

19Abraham was a great father of many people: in glory was there none like unto him; **20**Who kept the law of the most High, and was in covenant with him: he established the covenant in his flesh; and when he was proved, he was found faithful.

21Therefore he assured him by an oath, that he would bless the nations in his seed, and that he would multiply him as the dust of the earth, and exalt his seed as the stars, and cause them to inherit from sea to sea, and from the river unto the utmost part of the land.

22With Isaac did he establish likewise for Abraham his father's sake the blessing of all men, and the covenant, And made it rest upon the head of Jacob. He acknowledged him in his blessing, and gave him an heritage, and divided his portions; among the twelve tribes did he part them.

Confirmed: The land belongs to Israel. The covenant is sure. And in chapter 47:

Ecclesiasticus 47:22

22But the Lord will never leave off his mercy, neither shall any of his works perish, neither will he abolish the posterity of his elect, and the seed of him that loveth him he will not take away: **wherefore he gave a remnant unto Jacob, and out of him a root unto David.**

Amen, "Jesus".

24. 100 B.C., The Kingdom and the Maccabees.

The Maccabees histories tell some of the story of Israel between the testaments. Some church traditions consider them inspired of God, most Protestants do not. Still, much of the history is accurate and useful to one searching out this era. I found a few quotes of interest.

1 Maccabees 2:57

*57David for being merciful possessed the throne of **an everlasting kingdom.***

The coming kingdom was assumed even in the midst of reversals in the Grecian world.

2 Maccabees 1:2, 2:17-18

*God be gracious unto you, and remember **his covenant that he made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, his faithful servants;***

*We hope also, that the God, that delivered all his people, and gave them all an heritage, and the kingdom, and the priesthood, and the sanctuary, 18As he promised in the law, will shortly have mercy upon us, and **gather us together out of every land under heaven into the holy place:** for he hath delivered us out of great troubles, and hath purified the place.*

They believed the end was near, but at least they believed what the Scriptures teach about that end, the regathering of Israel.

THE KINGDOM AND ITS KING

The Desire of Nations is coming. The promise King is on the way. He is the King of Israel and is coming to the lost sheep of that nation. His teachings, His death, His resurrection, are all about Israel first. Certainly all the nations shall hear about this good news of the Kingdom, and all shall be invited. But to the Jew first, and then the Gentile, Jesus now comes.

Please note that even after four hundred years, angels and men have not forgotten the promises to Abraham, David, and the rest.

25. A.D. 0, The Kingdom and Gabriel.

Luke 1:31-33.

*31And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. 32He 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.** 33And He will reign over **the house of Jacob** forever, **and of His kingdom there will be no end.**”*

26. A.D. 0, The Kingdom and Mary.

Luke 1:54-55

*54He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, **55As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever.**”*

27. A.D. 0, The Kingdom and Zacharias.

Luke 1:70-75

70As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began,
71That we should be saved from our enemies
And from the hand of all who hate us, **72To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, 73The oath which He swore to our father Abraham: 74To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, 75In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.**

28. A.D. 30, The Kingdom and John the Baptist

It was a happy time for Israel when a messenger appeared in the desert announcing a *kingdom* that was very near! He called it the *kingdom of heaven*, and he insisted that to be a part of this kingdom the people would have to turn their lives around. As a seal of their repentance, he symbolically washed them in the waters of baptism. Matthew records (3:5) that Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the regions around the Jordan went out to him. They repented, confessed, and were baptized.

Matthew 3:1-2, 5

*1In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2and saying, "Repent, for the **kingdom of heaven** is at hand!" 5Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him 6and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.*

But where was the promised kingdom? Where was the anointed king? Was this just another attempt by another charlatan? Show us! Just what did the Jews hear when they listened to John? Did John, and later Jesus, even have to define what they were talking about? Hadn't the people been steeped in this language from childhood?

Jesus was to answer those questions by His appearance. Oh but please know that nothing He said, though difficult to understand, changed one jot or one tittle of the words of the prophets. Jesus expanded the definition of kingdom, to be sure. *But He never canceled what His servants of old had said.*

When One is God, He can define and fulfill, all at the same time. It is we who must have it one way or the other. Our minds don't grasp, and therefore our hearts don't believe.

With the coming of Jesus, the beginning of the fulfillment of all the kingdom promises had arrived. The king was here. At the end of His life He would even offer Himself to Israel as the king, riding on a donkey into Jerusalem. A peaceful takeover.

But it was not to be. Messiah knew exactly what He was doing. He knew of the coming rejection. But the offer had been made. One day He will finish that offer a bit more forcefully. Meanwhile His rejection has meant the acceptance of millions of sheep into His fold.

29. A.D. 30, The Kingdom and Its Messiah, Jesus.

A heavenly kingdom?

Were the residents of first-century Israel a bit confused regarding this kingdom being called heavenly? Not only John the Baptist used this term, but following His temptation in the wilderness and His arrival in Galilee, Jesus began His preaching ministry with the same announcement:

Matthew 4:17

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Other Gospels use the term *kingdom of God*. It seems that Matthew was being as sensitive as he could to his Jewish audience and refrained from using any name or title of God with any regularity.

The terms are interchangeable.

Those who sat at His feet for several years, and His close disciples of all the ages, have been able to piece together, little by little, what He meant. It is to be a true kingdom, and He is to be

a true king, and nothing in the prophets is to be denied, but the citizens of this kingdom will not be like citizens of any kingdom they had known.

Actually, if the people of God had listened before, they would have realized that it was these heavenly principles that God had always wanted for His people. David the king was chosen over King Saul because he, David, was a man after God's own heart. He thought in heavenly terms, unlike his predecessor. That simple lesson could have gone a long way to educate Israel and let them know that God always honors heart-felt love for Himself. Jesus would make all of this crystal-clear in His three years of teaching. Then He would send His disciples out to look for more citizens like themselves. Only then can the kingdom long-prophesied, come to earth. The search is still on as I write.

Still following Matthew, Jesus begins to spread this good news about a kingdom that is coming. His apostles will later be told to preach the same message.

Matthew 4:23

*23And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, **preaching the gospel of the kingdom**, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.*

We read of a man who wanted to wait for his father to die and be buried before he would follow Jesus. He was told by the Master to go and preach the kingdom of God. That was Jesus' message then, and must be now.

The gospel of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven. There is only one gospel, though some today want to divide it into two. The one gospel is the news of the Messiah who will lay down His life so that He can gather a people together and raise them to eternal honor with Himself... in a kingdom.

He shall reign, and His people shall reign with Him. All because of Calvary. That's the good news. We should preach it all.

The sermon on the mount, Kingdom people.

Look at the promises for those who have the right heart, the right spirit.

- Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- They will inherit the earth.
- They will be called sons of God.

Matthew 5:3, 5, 9

*3“Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is **the kingdom of heaven**. 5Blessed are the meek, For they shall **inherit the earth**.*

9Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.

Christ’s kingdom, we hear from many quarters, is a spiritual kingdom. True. A spiritual kingdom that will one day be gloriously physical, as God’s sons and daughters inherit it on the earth, under King Jesus.

Next Jesus lets us know that there will be divisions in that kingdom, classes of people who were more faithful in their obedience than others. And that there are many who will not enter it at all:

Matthew 5:17-20

*17“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. 19Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, **shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven**; but whoever does and teaches them, **he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven**. 20For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means **enter the kingdom of heaven**.*

Twice in the model prayer the kingdom is invoked. In the first mention, we are taught to pray for the kingdom to come so that God’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Matthew 6:10, 13

***10Your kingdom come.** Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.*

13...For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

But wait, I hear that the kingdom is now, it is here, it is in my heart. Then why are we praying for it to come *later* unless there is a greater manifestation of that kingdom on the way?

I ask you, is God’s will done on earth as in heaven today, after twenty-one centuries of praying this prayer? You say, yes, some. I believe that more than “some” is intended here! When Jesus comes there will be no abortion clinics, liquor stores, foolish music and drama, rape, murder. God’s will will be done when the government is on Jesus’ shoulders (Isaiah 9), and our prayers will be answered.

At the end of Matthew 6 is an admonition to seek first the kingdom. This is repeated in Luke 12 with the added promise that the Lord wants to give His kingdom to His people. Here are

seemingly two uses of the word in one passage. Unless we know what that kingdom is, how can we seek it? Surely it involves the work of the Spirit in our lives now, but just as surely it includes our blessed hope, the good news (gospel) of the coming kingdom and the coming King.

Matthew 6:33

*33But **seek first the kingdom of God** and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

Luke 12:31-32.

*31But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. 32“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure **to give you the kingdom.**”*

The final usage of the term *kingdom* in this sermon is found in 7:21, a passage that we all know has to do with the future, not the present.

Matthew 7:21

*21“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ **shall enter the kingdom of heaven**, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.*

Those who do the will of the Father will be allowed into the kingdom on that day. Oh yes, they were already kingdom people. Oh yes, they already had King Jesus ruling their lives, but now the government is set up, the King is on His throne, and these kingdom people receive a kingdom that has suddenly turned from being faith to being sight.

Those who have only had the external trappings of Christendom will be told to depart, with no allowance into the kingdom.

Some citizens of this very real kingdom:

Matthew 8:11-12.

*11And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with **Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.** 12But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

Here Jesus equates the promises of the prophets of an earthly reign under a Messiah, with the kingdom of heaven, letting us know that heaven was involved in the whole kingdom idea from the beginning!

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and some unnamed Gentiles are all gathered together in this kingdom. But sons of the kingdom, that is, natural-born Jews who fell away from the God of Israel and never had a heart for Him to begin with, are cast out.

Only Jews!

Matthew 10:5-7

*5These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. 6But **go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.** 7And as you go, preach, saying, '**The kingdom of heaven is at hand.**'*

The apostles are now commissioned to announce the nearness of the kingdom, then to prove its nearness by extraordinary signs from that kingdom (also in Luke 10:9). Healings, resurrections, exorcisms are to become common in first-century apostolic Israel. The King is here. His kingdom is near. It was obvious.

Revival!

Matthew 11:11-12

*11"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in **the kingdom of heaven** is greater than he. 12And from the days of John the Baptist until now **the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.***

A revival was taking place. An awakening was occurring. So enlivened were the Israelites that they are described as "violently" coming into the kingdom (Matthew 11:12, Luke 16:16). Pressing in. Pushing their way into the rule of Christ as He demonstrates the power of God, the authority He has over everything earthly.

Was John the Baptist a part of the kingdom? Based on what I just shared, we would of course have to say yes. Jesus was not comparing John, as one outside the kingdom, to the future church, inside the kingdom. Far be it. He calls him the Elijah that was to come, one that, greater than whom, there is none among men.

Then? Jesus taught his disciples humility and hidden service. In the true kingdom of God, the one who is least among us is the one that God honors the most. Look at Jesus Himself. Humbled to a beating and a crucifixion. Seemingly weak and helpless. What could such a dying man do for the sins of the world? But the kingdom centers around this One, not John or any of the great public figures we can think of. Think rather of the martyrs and the hidden saints of all times. The least is the greatest in Emmanuel's Land.

Matthew 12:28

*28But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely **the kingdom of God** has come upon you.*

King Jesus has come to us. But this does not negate the future kingdom which the prophets saw and which we will see. We are simply seeing the King at work, given a preview of coming attractions. What we see in the Gospels will seem small when compared to the glory of the kingdom, when all sicknesses and their causes will be gone, when demons are forever cast out.

The kingdom in parables

These are the mysteries of the kingdom. They describe the lifestyle of a true citizen of the kingdom of heaven, whether Jewish elect or saved Gentiles. Kingdom people act like this. The kingdom works like this. Learn these things and you will start looking like subjects of the King of Kings. And you will begin to recognize "kingdom" when you see it here. There is no question of its being recognized when Jesus returns.

Matthew 13:3-9

3Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow. 4And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. 5Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. 6But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. 7And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. 8But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

So, first we learn about the *word of the kingdom*. Some will hear it, the good news, and go on to glory. Some will not.

Matthew 13:11

11He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know **the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven**, but to them it has not been given.

The way the kingdom works on earth before Jesus' return and even after, is to be hidden from the lost. They will be given a parable but except for the very few who come and ask the meaning, they will never understand it. Yet none will be able to say they never heard, whether because of a direct word from a believer, or their own conscience, or the majesties of nature.

Matthew 13:24-30, 41

24Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "**The kingdom of heaven** is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; 25but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. 26But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. 27So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' 28He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' 29But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. 30Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."'

41The Son of Man will send out His angels, and **they will gather out of His kingdom** all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness,

Here Jesus teaches of *the enemy of the kingdom* and the final victory over him. The *nature of the kingdom* is brought out in the interpretation given in verses 37-43.

Matthew 13:31-32

31Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "**The kingdom of heaven** is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, 32which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

Here is *how the kingdom starts small* but develops into something universal. The disciples were on the small end, though they were given hints that the kingdom had existed from the days of Abraham.

Matthew 13:33

33Another parable He spoke to them: **"The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three [measures of meal till it was all leavened]."**

Then the same story as the mustard seed but in the picture of leaven that causes wheat to expand. The expansion would begin with Paul's work, and continues to this day.

Matthew 13:44-46

44"Again, **the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.**

45"Again, **the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, 46who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.**

Two parables direct disciples to forsake all in this life to be ready for the next life, namely the kingdom of God that is coming.

Matthew 13:47-50

47"Again, **the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, 48which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. 49So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, 50and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."**

Then there is the dragnet parable that instructs us to be ready for the end of the age, proving yet again that the kingdom is not just an unseen and temporary expression of God's care for us.

Matthew 13:52

52Then He said to them, **"Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old."**

Finally in this first set of parables are the *new and old aspects of the kingdom's history*.

The following story is often overlooked in its meaning, as we want to focus rather on the seemingly rude conduct of the Lord. Jesus is the *Jewish* Messiah. He came in fulfillment of His promises to *Israel*. Only slowly did the door to the Gentiles open, then widely as Israel rejected Jesus' first offer to be Israel's king.

Again, the Jews are first!

Matthew 15:24

21Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. 22And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed."

*23But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us." 24But He answered and said, "**I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**"*

Peter, the church, and the keys to the kingdom.

Here now is a key moment in the expression of the kingdom in Jesus' ministry.

Matthew 16:18-19

*18And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock **I will build My church**, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19And **I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven**, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."*

Two things happen in this short episode. There is a promise of a new entity, the church, which merely means the *called-out ones*. And there is the handing over of some keys to an already-existing entity, *the kingdom*. These must not be confused, and neither should be denied.

The church is not the kingdom but people have access to the kingdom via the church. Church was created, for one thing, to call all who will into the kingdom as in highways and byways. Then, secondly, the church exists to nurture kingdom citizens and prepare them to rule.

The church is not a social agency. Not a psychological agency. Not a counseling center. Not a kingdom in itself, to be ruled by the mighty. Not a business. Not a money-making scheme. Not an entertainment center. Not a food pantry or kitchen.

It is a place of assembly for the redeemed who love Jesus and desire to build His kingdom by bringing souls into it (the kingdom).

Notice that church and kingdom are used in this same passage. Jesus was not ending the kingdom to start the church! Not going back on His promises to Israel. Rather He was going to use the church to expand the kingdom, as Peter and the others would be opening the door of that reign to Gentiles.

The church officially began on Pentecost after Jesus had gone to heaven. The kingdom had been around since David and before. The church is to be a new extension of the kingdom, its promotional unit, a place for melting together of Jew and Gentile in Christ. But without erasing the promises to Israel.

We have seen in the Gospels that the Patriarchs are already considered kingdom people. David is a kingdom person. The kingdom then takes a new form in the person of Jesus. Not a new kingdom, just an announcement that this kingdom is from heaven. Always was, actually.

The kingdom is to continue, and Peter and his associates are to allow people in on the basis of their faith in Jesus Christ. But these that come in now will also be members of the new thing on the earth, a called-out group of mainly Gentiles, who will eventually round out the purposes of God on earth.

Possessing “keys” to this kingdom can only mean the preaching of Christ and His teachings to members of the new assembly that all will be called to join. Today God’s people are called the church but we must never forget that we are also in some way kingdom people, who will rule and reign with Christ one day. Church people are still commanded to seek first the kingdom.

The kingdom in the transfiguration.

Matthew 16:28

... there are some standing here who shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.

Wherever this statement is made in the Gospels, the Gospel writer goes on to tell of the event known as the transfiguration. Here on the mountain are Moses and Elijah and Jesus in one glorious moment, with Peter, James, and John looking on.

So it was impressed on their mind and should be impressed on ours, that the kingdom of God is a very real domain, a domain which will one day be quite visible and touchable and include the saints of old as well as Jesus and His saints of the New Covenant. What they will all have in common is their submission to the kingship of Jesus.

Here is yet another view of the kingdom, making it untenable to keep proclaiming that the kingdom of God is “spiritual”, inward, invisible. So many facets to the coming kingdom!

More about kingdom requirements and kingdom people

Matthew 18:1-5

*1At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is **greatest in the kingdom of heaven?**" 2Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, 3and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter **the kingdom of heaven.** 4Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the **kingdom of heaven.** 5Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.*

Jesus had to reorganize their thinking altogether by letting them know that simple ones who are as humble and innocent as a young child are the truly great ones in the kingdom! Conversion to Christ is by definition a humbling of one's self before God, an admission of one's nothingness before Him.

Matthew 18:23-35

*23Therefore **the kingdom of heaven** is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. 26The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' 27Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.*

28"But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' 29So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' 30And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.

*31So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. 32Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. 33Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' 34And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. **35"So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."***

Here is another kingdom parable, the story of the unforgiving servant. The clear command to forgive is a part of the kingdom of heaven teaching. This is how heaven operates. Do the same.

Matthew 19:12

*12For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the **kingdom of heaven's** sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it."*

This message seems to be a reference to present-day working for the Lord's kingdom. Such things are worked into the fabric of Matthew's Gospel. Kingdom now. Kingdom later.

Matthew 19:23

*23Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter **the kingdom of heaven.**"*

Here, the rich are told that it will be difficult for them to enter the kingdom. The kingdom of God will be made up mostly of the poor and needy, those who can easily see their need of a Savior. Paul seconds this later when he looks around the church and declares that not many mighty, or noble or powerful have been called alongside Jesus in the church.

Matthew 19:14

*14But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is **the kingdom of heaven.**"*

Jesus' Kingdom people are not like any kingdom people they have known, for sure.

What to expect when the kingdom comes

Matthew 19:28

*28So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that **in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.***

Startling information here. A literal kingdom with literal apostles sitting on literal thrones. He calls this time the *regeneration* when the world will not be destroyed, but will as it were, be “born again.”

Matthew 20:1-16.

*1“For the **kingdom of heaven** is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. 2Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, 4and said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.’ So they went. 5Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. 6And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day?’ 7They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.’*

*8“So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, ‘Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.’ 9And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. 10But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. 11And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, 12saying, ‘These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.’ 13But he answered one of them and said, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? 14Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. 15Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?’ 16**So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.**”*

The kingdom of heaven is once more projected into the future. The workers in the vineyard are given various rewards by the lord of the vineyard. Last will be first and first last.

Talking about Kingdom now? Yes, but so as to qualify for kingdom later.

Matthew 20:21-23

*21And He said to her, “What do you wish?” She said to Him, “Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, **in Your kingdom.**” 22But Jesus answered and said, “You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” They said to Him, “We are able.” 23So He said to them, “You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, **but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father.**”*

Oh they believed in the coming kingdom! Jesus did not squelch that belief, but he did have to deal with their personal plans for the kingdom.

Matthew 21:31

*31Which of the two did the will of his father? "They said to Him, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that **tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you.***

One other group of future citizens of the kingdom are catalogued here, namely the tax collectors and harlots. The kingdom here is pictured as an entity that one can enter. A material physical place.

Kingdom transfer

Matthew 21:43

*43"Therefore I say to you, **the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.** 44And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."*

Jesus says that the kingdom is going to be ripped from the Jewish leaders of that day and given to a nation that will bear the proper fruit. *He does not say the kingdom is finished*, only that the keys of it are to be taken from them and given to someone else.

Hence the Matthew 16 presentation of those keys to Peter. We will see in Romans 11 that this transfer is temporary and partial. But management of the kingdom does shift in Acts from the wicked rulers of Israel to other Jewish leaders who would be able to handle it properly because of the direct operation of the Spirit of God living within them.

Jesus told His disciples in John 14:18, *"I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you."* When the Spirit came into the church, Jesus, King Jesus, literally came into the church also, and was its head.

This the kingdom is still on the earth, though in temporary exile. One day the church visible and invisible will unite with the Lord from Heaven, and lo and behold! we will discover that we were kingdom all along!

An unconditional promise of a kingdom

Matthew 22:2-14.

2“**The kingdom of heaven** is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, *3*and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. *4*Again, he sent out other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.”’ *5*But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. *6*And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. *7*But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. *8*Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. *9*Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.’ *10*So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.

11“But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. *12*So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. *13*Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

14“For many are called, but few are chosen.”

The kingdom is like a king who invited everyone to a feast for his son’s wedding. Many are called to the feast. Of those called, not all show up. Again, clear reference to future events and entrance or non-entrance into the coming kingdom.

Note especially that the rejection of the invitation does not annul the invitation or the feast.

Matthew 22:29-30

*29*Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. *30*For **in the resurrection** they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven.”

Now the new world is labeled “the resurrection.” The people being referenced here are the resurrected saints, not the nations that enter unchanged into the Millennium.

Unfaithful Israel

Matthew 23:13

*13“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up **the kingdom of heaven** against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.*

Matthew 23:13 reminds the Pharisees and scribes that they had kept people from entering the true kingdom because they, the Pharisees, had not entered it themselves, and were not allowing others to enter it because they did not know where the door was. Jesus was that door and as they embark on a mission to destroy Jesus and His people, they are more than ever going to be keeping people from entering that door. So the transfer of ownership will be necessary.

Matthew 23:37-39

*37“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! 38See! Your house is left to you desolate; **39for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ”***

His triumphal entry has already taken place. He speaks of another time He will enter Jerusalem, as the Victor over all His enemies and the Founder of a new world order.

Matthew 24:14

*14And this **gospel of the kingdom** will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*

It's the same gospel with which He entered His ministry years before. Good news. The King and His Kingdom are here. Simply accept Him as your king and all will be well. Forever. Whether this promise is about the centuries long spread of the Gospel we have been a part of or a last days event that will precede the Tribulation and His coming, we can't tell.

Matthew 25:1-13

*1“Then **the kingdom of heaven** shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. 3Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, 4but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 5But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.*

6“*And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’*
7*Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. 8And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ 9But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’*
10*And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.*

11“*Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ 12But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’*

13“*Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.*

This is the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. The story is familiar but how often have we likened it to a future kingdom with a real King Who has the power to bring into or cast out of a kingdom?

Matthew 25:14-30

14“***For the kingdom of heaven*** *is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. 15And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. 16Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. 17And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. 18But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord’s money. 19After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.*

20“*So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ 21His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ 22He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’ 23His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. **Enter into the joy of your lord.**’*

24“*Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.’*

26“*But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. 27So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. 28So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.*

29‘*For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. 30And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’*

The parable of the talents. Unprofitable servants are cast out. Profitable ones brought in. The kingdom has entrance requirements.

Matthew 25:31-46

31“*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. 32**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. 33And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 34Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, **inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world**: 35for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’*

37“*Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ 40And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’*

41“*Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 42for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; 43I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’ 44“Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ 45Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ 46And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*

The King will invite His favorite ones to come into a kingdom that was prepared from the foundation of the world. Note how this passage speaks of a division of *nations*, not necessarily individuals. His church has returned with Him, is seated there with Him. They are already

saved. But the various *nations*, surviving the final war, either favored or disfavored Him during the hard times that have just passed. It seems He is now rewarding them, to their great shock. And punishing the others.

Matthew 26:29

*29But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in **My Father's kingdom.**"*

At the institution of the *literal* Lord's Supper, Jesus talks about a time when He will *literally* drink *literal* wine with them in His Father's Kingdom. Let's not rob the beauty of this passage. The Communion service is a truly spiritual remembrance of the cross of Christ. But in the kingdom that is coming, a feast will take place, called the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in Revelation.

So, in the Matthew account, Jesus talked much of a kingdom. Its people. Its operations. Its entrance requirements. Its future status. But above all for the purposes of this document, *its physical reality.*

The future kingdom.

Many of these passages make it very plain that this kingdom, though not of this world, is not simply a frame of mind. An honest reader sees flesh and blood people on a planet covered with earth and water, the very one we live on now.

A look at Mark

We now visit with Mark to see what unique statements he has discovered from Jesus. He says much of what Matthew said, but adds a word or two of his own.

*26And He said, "**The kingdom of God** is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, 27and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. 28For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. 29But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."*

This parable is unique to Mark. Notice that "kingdom of God" has been substituted for "kingdom of heaven," with no difference in meaning implied.

Mark 11:10

*Blessed is the **kingdom of our father David** that comes in the name of the Lord!*

We certainly cannot leave out David in this talk of citizens of the coming kingdom. That was the expectation of the Jews who surrounded Jesus at his final entry into Jerusalem.

The kingdom is near and here. They knew it in that moment though they quickly forgot under pressure from their masters.

Mark 12:34.

*34Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "**You are not far from the kingdom of God.**"*

When a certain scribe answered properly Jesus' question about the first commandment, Jesus was impressed, and was inspired to tell the man he was not far from the kingdom. Indeed, the kingdom's king stood before him. The kingdom's principles were in his heart.

And Luke?

Luke 4:43.

*43but He said to them, "**I must preach the kingdom of God** to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent."*

This kingdom business was the essence of His teaching. As in the next quotes also:

Luke 8:1

*1Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, **preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.***

Luke 9:60-62.

*60Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and **preach the kingdom of God.**"*

61And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house."

*62But Jesus said to him, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for **the kingdom of God.**”*

Luke 10:9-11.

*9And heal the sick there, and say to them, ‘**The kingdom of God** has come near to you.’ 10But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 11‘The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.’*

Now this passage must yield to the reminder that the kingdom is on earth whenever King Jesus or His Spirit are here.

Luke 12:32

*32“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure **to give you the kingdom.**”*

Luke 12:32 has Jesus assuring His men that it was the Father’s pleasure to give the disciples the kingdom.

Though church and kingdom remain separate, there is an overlapping we cannot ignore. Seeing how the church has brought in millions of Gentiles over the years, it is clear that its formation was initialized to be the “missionary arm” of the kingdom.

And though promises of protection and blessing are given to the church, the very gates of hell never being allowed to prevail against her, it is the kingdom that claims eternal status over and over. The church will eventually be part of the kingdom, as elect Jews and elect nationals from all over the world form one huge body of Jesus-worshipers.

Luke 14:15

The expectation of the Jews resurfaces in Luke 14:15, where one who is sitting at a meal with Jesus blurts out,

Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!

Without knowing it, he spoke of the coming Marriage Supper at the return of Jesus. Jesus responds with a story of persons who refuse an invitation to a great supper. He has servants being told in the story to go and find anyone who will come. The man’s observation was confirmed, not denied! Blessed is anyone who is invited to this literal supper and answers the invitation!

But the following passage, 17:20-21 seems to be in conflict with the plethora of verses that talk of a spiritual yet future kingdom. For those who continue to tell us that the “kingdom is spiritual” not physical, this is home ground.

Consider. Jesus is plainly asked, “When is the kingdom coming?” But the question is from the Pharisees, not the disciples. When the disciples asked about His coming and the end of the world, He gave them a clear description of the lead-up and the actual visitation of His coming, and the kingdom that will follow.

Jesus was trying to drive home to the blind Pharisees that before they could even think about entering the kingdom of God (as in John 3 to Nicodemus) they would have to meet the king, recognize Him as the Messiah, fall at His feet and worship Him. So He responds, No need looking for some sign, no need staying up nights waiting. *The kingdom is already here among you.* And you are talking to the King.

Immediately He turns to His disciples and begins talking about the future, where the bulk of the kingdom experience will take place. He tells them He is going to suffer. He tells them He is then going away. He tells them to expect His coming as the lightning.

So which is it? The kingdom is here? Or the kingdom comes when the King returns? The Pharisees heard one message, the disciples heard the whole truth.

13. *Jesus. Luke 17:20-24.*

*20Now when He was asked by the Pharisees **when the kingdom of God would come**, He answered them and said, **“The kingdom of God does not come with observation; 21nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”***

*22Then He said to the disciples, **“The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. 23And they will say to you, ‘Look here!’ or ‘Look there!’ Do not go after them or follow them. 24For **as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day.*****

Related to the above text, Luke 19:11 informs us that some expected the kingdom to appear immediately, in their lifetime. Interesting, don't you think, that Jesus, who had told some Pharisees that the kingdom was already here, among them, tells these Judean citizens a parable that indicates it could be a long time before the kingdom comes?

Luke 19:11-27

11Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because **they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately.** 12Therefore He said: "A certain nobleman went into a **far country** to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. 13So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.' 14But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this man **to reign over us.**'

15"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, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. 16Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.' 17And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.' 18And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.' 19Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.'

20"Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. 21For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.' 22And he said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. 23Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?'

24"And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.' 25(But they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas.')

26'For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. **27But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me.'** "

Then there is this clear sign of a coming kingdom:

Luke 21:31

31So you also, when you see these things happening, **know that the kingdom of God is near.**

This is a parallel passage to Matthew 24 and Mark 13, where Jesus clearly tells his disciples, who want to know about His coming and the end of the world, that they will see specific things happening **before** the kingdom is near again. This does not deny a kingdom now. It simply announces a greater kingdom to come.

Luke 22:28-30

28“But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. 29And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, 30that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

Luke 22:29 continues the future kingdom thread. Jesus tells the ones who have borne His trials with Him that He appoints to them a kingdom, just as the Father bestowed one on Him. He goes on to speak of that same Supper theme, and even tells the apostles they will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel! How physical is that kingdom! And how cruel if He is just saying some figurative language that they cannot figure out. No, the kingdom is not just an allegorical vision. It's as real as the planet earth, where Jesus will reign.

John's Gospel

Finally there is the Gospel of John, so totally different from the first three, yet telling the same story.

John's account of Jesus has Him speak the word *kingdom* in only a few passages. But the concept of the rule of a coming king is definitely in John. Consider Nathanael.

John 1:48-49

*48Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” 49Nathanael answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! **You are the King of Israel!**”*

A king was expected. A king had arrived.

John 3:3, 5.

*3Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, **he cannot see the kingdom of God.**”*

*5Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot **enter the kingdom of God.**”*

In John 3, Nicodemus is told He cannot see or enter the kingdom unless he is born again. And Jesus assumed Nicodemus knew what he was talking about when he mentioned the kingdom. Every tuned-in Jew knew a physical kingdom was promised and on the way, maybe soon.

John 12:12-15.

12The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' The King of Israel!" 14Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: 15" Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, Sitting on a donkey's colt."

Zechariah's prophecy is now partially fulfilled. The King has come. He has entered the city as Messiah, offering Himself to the Jewish people. But they were not interested. They kill Him, rejecting fully His claims to be their King. This rejection allows Jesus to die for a people who will indeed accept Him, made up of Jews and Gentiles alike. And the command will go forth to a handful of faithful Jews to go into the highways and byways to compel anyone who is interested to join His kingdom.

See how Caiphas words it:

30. A.D. 33, The Kingdom and Caiphas.

John 11:49-52.

*49And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, 50nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that **one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.**" 51Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, 52and **not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.***

31. A.D. 33, The Kingdom and Pilate.

John 18:33-37

33Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" 34Jesus answered him, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?"

35Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?"

*36Jesus answered, "**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."*

37 Pilate therefore said to Him, **“Are You a king then?”**

Jesus answered, *“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.”*

In John 18, in response to Pilate’s queries about His kingdom, he states plainly that His kingdom is not *of* this world. Then He says it is not *from* this world. *But He never says it does not exist.* Nor does He deny that this same kingdom which exists in heaven now, will come to earth when He comes to earth.

So it has been since that day, that we who are kingdom people realize we are a kingdom *in exile*. Our King is real, His principles work in us, and we seek citizens of that kingdom every day.

But one day the exiled, hidden, subjects of the kingdom of God will be made manifest openly to the world at His appearing. No Pilate will question King Jesus then. No Sadducees will deny the resurrection then. No one of His true people will be in shock that He reigns from Jerusalem as King of all Kings and Lord of all Lords. They will know in that day that this “kingdom of God” was not just a high and lofty title, but a full description of the thousand-year reign of Jesus on earth.

One last attestation to a kingdom from the book of John originates with an unlikely character in the story.

John 19:19-22.

19 Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was:
JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

20 Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.

21 Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but, ‘He said, “I am the King of the Jews.” ’ ”

*22 Pilate answered, **“What I have written, I have written.”***

Two more men must now be allowed to speak to us of the coming kingdom as we close out the life of Christ at His first coming.

32. A.D.33, The Kingdom and Joseph of Arimathea.

Luke 23:50-51

*50Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. 51He had not consented to their decision and deed. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, **who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God.***

How many others were like Joseph in that day? How many like Joseph live in our day? And how many have had their hopes dashed by one telling them to look around them and inside of them to experience the Millennial Kingdom?

Last, but certainly not least – for we shall meet him in Paradise – is the man who gained entrance to Heaven from a Roman cross.

33. A.D.33, The Kingdom and the Thief on the Cross.

Luke 23: 38-43

*38And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: **THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.** 39Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us."*

*40But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? 41And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." 42Then he said to Jesus, "**Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.**"*

43And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

Even the thief on the cross, who could read the sign over Jesus' head, and who was given grace to believe it, knew there was a real kingdom ruled over by a real Man, and that that Man was on the next cross over. Yes, where Jesus is, the kingdom is. The thief entered that kingdom with Jesus on that selfsame day.

THE KINGDOM AND THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

Did the early church believe in a coming kingdom that one could see and touch? Did they believe in a spiritual kingdom available in one's heart and life now? Or did they believe in both?

They did continue to meet in the temple. At first, they were all Jews waiting for the Kingdom to be revealed. Paul preached first to Jews then to Gentiles, even after he knew they were not interested.

Let's look at the Kingdom in the history of Acts.

First we still hear from Jesus.

Acts 1:1-3

*1The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, 2until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, 3to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of **the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.***

Luke tells us in the very first verses of Acts exactly what Jesus was talking to His disciples about between His resurrection and ascension. One of those items was things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

This discussion evidently raised the question in their mind that had perhaps been burning throughout His ministry:

Acts 1:6

*6Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, **will You at this time restore the kingdom** to Israel?”*

Good question, yes? He was for sure the awaited Messiah. The prophets had spoken of a literal kingdom that would be in David’s line. He had already ridden into town making the claim to the Messiahship. What was Jesus waiting for? Let’s see our kingdom again!

Note that Jesus did not squash their hopes! He did not deny that a physical kingdom was coming. He simply let them know:

Acts 1:7-8

*7And He said to them, “It is **not for you to know times or seasons** which the Father has put in His own authority. 8But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and **you shall be witnesses** to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

It wasn’t time yet, and it wasn’t necessary for them even to know the time.

Odd. They had asked Him about the end of things before and His answer was specific. Signs. Directions. Everything but the day and hour. Now He says, hold off on that awhile. You go preach the good news of the kingdom all over the earth. Get some citizens of that kingdom gathered together. Thus book of Acts begins.

34. A.D. 33-65, The Kingdom and Peter.

Peter, with his keys to the kingdom, opens the door to the Jews in Acts 2, and the Gentiles in Acts 10.

Acts 2:38-39

*38Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and **you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** 39For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."*

The promise of the kingdom is suddenly put on hold so that a more immediate promise can be fulfilled. The ideas of Jeremiah and Ezekiel about a new covenant, a sprinkling of water, a new heart. First enter the kingdom now, and later the other kingdom will be yours too.

Acts 3:19, 21, 24-26.

*19Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that **times of refreshing** may come from the presence of the Lord, 21whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. 24Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. 25You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' 26To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."*

Much to learn from this message of Peter that follows the healing of a lame man. The "times of refreshing" have been called the Holy Spirit, and well might they be. Others see this phrase, connected as it is to the coming of the Lord here, as the long-awaited Kingdom from heaven.

Interesting to me is the fact that Peter suggests that every prophet from Samuel onwards has spoken of what is about to happen. I am not aware of most of the prophets speaking about the coming of the Spirit. But all the prophets had something to say about the coming kingdom. The Jews here knew exactly what Peter was talking about.

And then of course the final evidence that Peter is speaking of the kingdom to come in this passage is the reference to the Abrahamic covenant. There is no question that the apostles still awaited the promises given to the Patriarchs.

Now, about those Gentiles:

Acts 10:42-44

*42And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. 43To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, **whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.**" 44While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.*

Confirmation. The Gentiles are in this kingdom too!

Philip next preaches *the things concerning the kingdom of God* and the name of Jesus Christ in Acts 8.

But more of Peter, from his epistles:

1 Peter 2:9

*9But you are a **chosen generation**, a royal priesthood, a **holy nation**, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*

Yes, the Gentiles are in, and Peter knew it. But this letter of his is addressed to the *pilgrims of the Dispersion*. He also recognized that his main calling was to be an apostle to the Jews, as Paul was to the Gentiles. In 2:9 he reminds Israel of their election.

2 Peter 1:11

*11for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly **into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.***

This second letter is addressed to Gentiles "who have obtained like precious faith with us (Jews)."

He reminds them to be very sure of their salvation. Don't stumble. That's how they will be allowed to enter the everlasting kingdom of our Lord. He sees a future kingdom. Full. Visible.

2 Peter 3:8

8But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

This verse is often used to muddy the waters regarding the thousand-year reign. Peter says that with the Lord, one day is as a thousand years. It's a quote from Psalm 90:4.

The key phrase is *with the Lord*. The key word is *as*. Now, with humans like us, one day is one day and a thousand years is a thousand years. With the Lord, however, Who does not live in a limited time realm, a thousand earth-years are as easily passed through as one day.

Interesting to me is that Peter would use this Psalm at all, and quote *this very number* at all. In using the number *one thousand*, he lines up with his good friend John in the Revelation, who used the same year, in a literal way, *six times*, to define the period of the coming kingdom!

35. A.D. 30's, The Kingdom and Philip the Deacon.

Acts 8:12

*12But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning **the kingdom of God** and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.*

Passages like this jump out after one has discovered the idea of "kingdom" in the Scriptures. Notice that Philip preached the things concerning the kingdom. People believed the things concerning the kingdom. Then they were baptized.

So the things concerning the kingdom must involve what Jesus did on Calvary, His resurrection, and His promise of an eternal reign. Today we preach most of that, but we seem to be limited in our preaching of the kingdom. We need to remember, though, that this Gospel is indeed "the gospel of the kingdom." Without the reign being added, which involves the Lordship of Jesus over lives now, is it a full Gospel we preach?

36. A.D. 30's – 60's, The Kingdom and Paul

Paul preaches the gospel in the province called then Asia, exhorting the brothers there and telling them that it is through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. See that though the church was in full swing, people were being admitted also to the kingdom. It was not that the kingdom was entering them, not in this verse anyway.

Acts 14:22

22strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

It was that same kingdom of God message that Paul preached in Ephesus as that church was being formed (19:8).

First this word from the acting leader of the church in Jerusalem while Peter was traveling, and the half-brother of Jesus:

Acts 19:8

8And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.

In fact the book ends with Paul, now a prisoner, preaching the kingdom of God and the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ at his lodging near Rome.

Before that text, we see him in Ephesus again, saying his farewells:

Acts 20:25

25“*And indeed, now I know that you all, **among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.***”

Notice how preaching the gospel and preaching the kingdom of God are phrases used interchangeably by the apostles. Hence the term, “Gospel of the Kingdom” places the two entities in one package. Let not modern man pull them apart. The Gospel, the good news, is about the King and His Kingdom.

Acts 28:30

*30Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, **31preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.***

This kingdom message which began historically in New Testament times, with John in the wilderness, now has continued up to and including Paul under house arrest.

What exactly was this kingdom message by now? Had it changed? Were the prophets ignored? What expectations did the apostles place in the ears of their hearers now? Perhaps there are clues in the epistles.

We now move to the epistles.

Kingdom in the epistles of Paul.

Romans 8:19-22.

*19For the earnest expectation of **the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.** 20For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; 21because the creation itself also will be **delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.** 22For we know that the whole **creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.***

Here is a text that has suffered the ravages of false prophets in many generations. Quite often there arises among us a group of people who believe they are the manifested sons of God come to save the world and bring in the Messiah.

Hasn't happened. But it's coming. The true sons of God will be revealed on that day when Jesus returns and raises His own from the dead. The world will see these sons ruling with Jesus, and

turning this planet into something inhabitable again. We humans groan and labor now suffering through the governments of men. But it will not always be like this.

A critical text

Romans 9-11 need to be read carefully by every child of God. In those three Pauline chapters one can find the just judgment of Israel, the temporary setting aside of Israel, and the restoration of Israel. And that restoration of Israel is the key element in the coming kingdom.

Churchmen much later began to abandon the millennium altogether, but just before this they were saying there would be a kingdom, but Israel would not be a part of it!

“Stuff and nonsense” is the phrase that comes to mind. I’m sure Paul would agree with this impolite but true wording. Let’s follow his train of thought a while.

Romans 9:22-28.

*23...and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, **which He had prepared beforehand for glory, 24even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?***

*25As He says also in Hosea: **“I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved.”***

26“And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ There they shall be called sons of the living God.”

*27Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: **“Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, **The remnant will be saved.*****

8For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, Because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth.”

God has called Jews and Gentiles to Himself. The Jews rejected His ways all through their history, and at one point they were not even considered His people, says Hosea. But in the end, they will be, and so will a group of Gentiles. Together they will form a new people, once, all of them, unbeloved unaccepted. That will all turn around.

Let’s not forget another promise. When the kingdom is set up here, twelve *churchmen* will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. *The prophecies to Israel will come to pass.* And the church will somehow be a part of that fulfillment, as grafted in branches to the great tree called Israel.

Then Romans 11 shows us clearly that the present situation with Israel is a temporary one. Verse 25 states that blindness has happened to Israel in part. That is, though there are many saved Jews, most of Judaism is blind and hard-hearted. This hardness will be the norm *until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in*. All Israel will be saved, he says, when the last Gentile has been saved, Jesus appears to His Jewish elect, and they are truly sorry for their sinful ways. Then the kingdom comes! Then all the promises are fulfilled. Read it yourself:

Romans 11:5, 25-27.

*5Even so then, **at this present time there is a remnant** according to the election of grace. 25For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, **that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.** 26**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;** 27**For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.”***

Next, Romans 14:17. The kingdom of God was a given in the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. So it should not be surprising that Paul suddenly brings up the subject when talking about something else, namely the law of love when dealing with eating meat sacrificed to idols. Paul claims that *kingdom* citizens do not demand their way in this matter, but rather show compassion on one with a weaker conscience. For, says he, the kingdom we are a part of is not about what we eat and drink, but rather it is about bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

This is one of those “internal kingdom” messages about the kingdom that many will point to, to try to claim that *internal* is all there is. Truly, without the internal, no one will be admitted into the physical realm of the kingdom, but let’s not destroy that visible part...

Romans 14:16-17.

*16Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; 17**for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.***

The Rosetta Stone?

1 Corinthians is a serious advocate of a coming kingdom.

1 Corinthians 4:20.

20For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.

Another negative. The kingdom is *not* just talk. It is power. It is action. Paul was endowed with true power from the Spirit as opposed to some of the men challenging him, who only had words. Kingdom people have kingdom power from King Jesus. There's a clear difference between that and the challengers.

1 Corinthians 6:9, 10

*9Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit **the kingdom of God**? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will **inherit the kingdom of God**.*

Here Paul speaks of *inheriting* the kingdom. That's future. That's substance. And Paul says that a long list of evils will be excluded from the kingdom, as well as those who commit those evils. The kingdom is something with a door. You will be excluded from that kingdom if the kingdom power is not inside of you.

Now, in my opinion, The Rosetta Stone of kingdom matters. A passage that lays out clearly the order of coming events, verses that I believe resolve the whole issue of timing of the coming kingdom, coupled of course with Revelation 20 and a host of those Old Testament verses that we have already covered.

1 Corinthians 15:20-26

*20But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. 23But each one in his own order: **Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.** 24Then comes **the end**, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when **He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.** 25**For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.** 26The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.*

Paul is speaking of resurrection. Some uninformed folks in Corinth were actually denying same, and Paul was here setting them straight. But in the process of speaking of resurrections, he outlines the events that shall surely come to pass before it is all over:

1. Christ rises from the dead.
2. Christ's people rise from the dead [and reign with Him.]
3. Then the Kingdom – that visible kingdom we have traced all through Scripture – is delivered from Christ to the Father. Jesus shall have put an end to all rule. He will reign until all enemies are destroyed.
4. Death itself is destroyed.

5. Then God is all in all as the Son fully submits to the Father.

I have found these things by a simple but intense reading of the Scriptures. But I am not alone. I find that Bible scholar John MacArthur says the same thing. From the ESV MacArthur Study Bible, p. 1709, commenting on 15:24, “then comes the end”:

This third aspect of the resurrection involves the restoration of the earth to the rule of Christ, the rightful King... in the culmination of the world’s history, after Christ has taken over the restored world for His Father and reigned for 1,000 years, all things will be returned to the way they were designed by God to be in the sinless glory of the new heavens and new earth... during the Millennium, under Christ’s rule, rebelliousness will still exist and Christ will have to rule them with a rod of iron...

We will finish those thoughts when we come to John’s Revelation. But Paul sets up the case for a transitional time. Yes, a “Golden Age” it will be, but sinful men will still try their tricks. They will be governed properly, justice will abound, but enemies will have to be dealt with during that era.

Then the end of the Millennium. New Heavens. New Earth.

In this same chapter, verse 50, Paul tells us that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom. We knew that, yes? “You must be born again.” And those who are born again will receive a new body with which to inherit that kingdom, a body like we have now but wildly different also. Consider Jesus’ glorified body. Our body is corruptible now but incorruptible then.

1 Corinthians 15:50

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

In Galatians:

Galatians 3:29

29 And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Faith being the bottom line of kingdom acceptance, our faith in Christ, even as Gentiles, allows us to be called the seed of Abraham, Israel. As in this text:

Galatians 6:16

16And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

I believe the Israel of God is nothing different from the tree called Israel that Paul speaks of elsewhere. When all is said and done, it is Israel to whom the promises were given and for them they are fulfilled. We “foreigners” were given the chance of a lifetime when we were invited to join that commonwealth. Once taken in, by faith, we are with them, the Israel of God.

In Ephesians:

Ephesians 1:10, 13-14.

10that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. 13In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Many precious teachings in this passage, but to our subject, notice how what is coming is called an inheritance, a purchased possession. Notice that all who are in Him, Jew or Gentile, will be gathered together to receive this grand prize.

And here is that mention of our joining the commonwealth first promised to Abraham:

Ephesians 2:11-22

11Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands— 12that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

14For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 15having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. 17And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. 18For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

19Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21in whom the whole

building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Gentiles were going nowhere fast. But along comes Jesus and invites us to the family that He has been nurturing for thousands of years.

And in Colossians, the same message:

Colossians 1:13

*13He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us **into the kingdom of the Son of His love,***

Paul's messages to Timothy:

2 Timothy 2:12

*12If we endure, **We shall also reign with Him.***

Clear, yes?

And,

2 Timothy 4:1

*I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead **at His appearing and His kingdom:***

Jesus is going to judge the living and the dead at His appearing and kingdom. See the order?

1. He appears.
2. He sets up His kingdom.

It's that simple.

So,

2 Timothy 4:18

*18And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me **for His heavenly kingdom.**
To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!*

Now Hebrews. I will include this letter as one of Paul's, if that is alright with you.

Hebrews 2:8.

*8You have put all things in subjection under his feet.” For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. **But now we do not yet see all things put under him.***

Yes, we know that God rules the world. But the word “yet” above lets us know that one day *all things* will literally be put under the Son. Here. On Earth. On the planet. A real government ruled by a real King.

*Hebrews 8:8-12. 8Because finding fault with them, He says: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when **I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah**— 9not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. 10For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 11None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. 12For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”*

Doesn't it surprise you a little to find that “New Covenant” or “New Testament” are not church words? The New Covenant was a promise to Israel! We are invited in to their covenant, but only when they at first rejected Christ.

Hebrews 10:1-3.

*1For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, **can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.** 2For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. 3But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. **4For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.***

Remembrance is what the sacrifices are about, not forgiveness. So would it be such a problem for remembrance sacrifices to take place in the Millennium? Looking back to Jesus, remembering what He did, as we do when we partake of the communion service?

I once visited a Sunday School class taught by one of the amillennial persuasion. He invited the class to research for homework the book of Hebrews, to see if they could find a future sacrificial system. The more energetic were invited to scour the entire New Testament for such a topic.

It would be difficult indeed to find such a thing in Hebrews, where the author is attempting to free people from dependence on the Old Covenant. What the teacher failed to do is direct his students to the prophets.

Now, the prophets are found in what we call the "Old Testament." But the prophets are not Mosaic in character. They do not describe the old law, but simply tell of judgments and future glories of Messiah. They are so very valuable to the child of God and informative in this area of the kingdom. Why not look there?

It's like saying, this week, read the book of Jude and see if you can find anything there about a post-tribulation rapture. No, you won't find anything about *any rapture* in Jude.

Hebrews 12:22, 26-28.

*22But you have come to **Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels,** 26whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." 27Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. 28Therefore, 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.*

More clues here, if we need any at this late portion of my documentation, that the kingdom coming is material. Notice the matchup of names in verse 22. These are the very same geographical names we read of throughout the prophets.

Notice, we are receiving a kingdom, in the future being the implication. Aren't we kingdom people now? Do you see the difference?

37. A.D. 40's, The Kingdom and James.

James was the half-brother of the Lord who was in some way the leader of the Jerusalem church, giving Peter the freedom to travel here and there to find and preach to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Our first hearing from James comes during a council called to deal with Judaizers in the church.

Acts 15:13-17.

13And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me: 14Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. 15And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 16'After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up; 17So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the Lord who does all these things.'

I cannot say enough that the early church expected a literal Jewish kingdom with Jesus at its head. But here the church is being made to accept the real possibility that God is allowing Gentiles into their midst. They not only see what God is doing around them, but suddenly their own Scriptures are coming alive to them. These words quoted by James are from Amos.

Later James wrote a letter *"to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad."*

How easily we forget that the early church was Jewish! But James makes it clear that the kingdom is for anyone who loves the Lord, but in doing so he once more declares that a kingdom is coming!

James 2:5.

*5Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of **the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?***

God has promised a kingdom to those who love Him. A promise involves a future event. Yes, we have the kingdom now, but the fullness is later. Promise.

38. A.D. 90's, The Kingdom and John's Revelation.

Though we dealt with John above in outlining kingdom passages in the Gospels, we must look at this final book of the Bible in a totally different light. Yes, this is the same John. The apostle. "The disciple that Jesus loved."

But he has aged greatly. At least sixty years have passed. He is experiencing the long life that Jesus seems to have hinted at in that dialogue with Peter by the sea. He is a prisoner of Christ now. And as he has changed, so has the Jesus he once knew. Oh, Jesus cannot change in essence, but He has changed in appearance. His form is so overwhelming that John falls at His feet as dead. That certainly never happened while Jesus walked here with us. Even at the transfiguration, there was room for a comment or two.

Certainly if there is going to be some abrogation of a literal kingdom, the book of Revelation is the last chance we have to read of it. No, not going to happen. The kingdom is here, stronger than ever.

In the greeting...

Revelation 1:5-6.

*And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the **ruler over the kings of the earth**. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and **has made us kings and priests** to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

Kings! Priests! This is a "legit" kingdom for sure. Real kings reigning over real subjects.

1:9 speaks of the kingdom and patience of Jesus.

Revelation 1:9

*I, John, both your brother and companion **in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ**, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

Tribulation and patience for now. But a kingdom is coming.

Revelation 2:26-27

26And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him **I will give power over the nations—** 27'**He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'**— as I also have received from My Father;

He reigns. We reign with Him! How clear is that?

Revelation 3:21.

21To 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.

Such a promise!

Revelation 11:15

... is the grand announcement that all the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ! And He shall reign forever.

15Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "**The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!**"

Revelation 11:17-18.

17saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come Because **You have taken Your great power and reigned. 18The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth.**"

He comes to reign. Have you picked up that theme yet?

Revelation 12:10

10Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, **and the kingdom of our God**, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

This chapter 12 tells us that when the dragon is cast out, the kingdom of our God comes.

Here is indeed Millennial thought. It is not that Jesus comes and destroys the world and starts over. It is that Jesus comes and takes over the government of the world and that government rests on His shoulder. Paul tells us how that transitions later into an eternal reign with the Father (1 Corinthians 15, above).

Judgments fall on the nations throughout Revelation, the Babylonian world system and/or church, falls, and then His coming, graphically portrayed in Chapter 19.

First this:

Revelation 15:4

*4Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. **For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested.***

Worldwide worship! As the prophets predicted!

Now the end. See how Revelation 19 connects seamlessly to Matthew 25! It is the same terrifying Jesus here as the Jesus who sits before the nations of the world in Matthew, and sends some to hell, some to His Kingdom. Please understand that He brings His saints with Him! They are not the sheep and goats of Matthew 25.

Revelation 19:11-13

*11Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and **in righteousness He judges and makes war.** 12His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.*

A description of the coming King. Awesome. Powerful True. Not the meek Savior Who gave His life thousands of years before. He is ready now to make war while He tenderly cares for His sheep.

Verse 14. He is accompanied by saints, made righteous by Him.

Revelation 19:14

14And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

Verse 15. He strikes the nations. Defeats them quickly. Pours out the wrath of God on all His enemies. And they are many. He begins His rule with them, as predicted in Daniel and so many other places. Do you remember where the “rod of iron” is predicted?

Revelation 19:15

*15Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will **rule them with a rod of iron**. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*

Verse 16. He is as in chapter 11, King of Kings, Lord of Lords.

Revelation 19:16

*16And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS**.*

Verse 20. He makes short work of the antichrist and his assistant and throws them into the lake of fire.

Revelation 19:20

20Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

Agreed? Now watch carefully. Revelation 20. Keeps going with the chronology. No need to change gears here. The flow of history continues. No chapter division in the Greek...

Revelation Chapter 20.

Revelation’s final chapters have become a victim of the revisionists, those who wish to make the Bible fit a certain theology and eschatology. Revelation 20 is especially troublesome to them.

Let's look at the words of Jesus first. John 5:28-29 is in the middle of one of Jesus' messages to unbelieving Jews. A portion of this talk has to do with the coming resurrections, of which Jesus identifies clearly, two.

He says there is to be a resurrection of life, and following this resurrection, one of condemnation. These two events seem in that conversation to follow one another immediately, giving fuel to the idea that a one-thousand-year period in between the two resurrections is probably not feasible.

Now, it is John who records this conversation. And it is *that same John* who saw the chronology of Revelation 20, about sixty years later on the island of Patmos, as a prisoner of Rome. Let's look at what he saw.

Revelation 19 tells of the bloodbath that will occur when the crowned King Jesus, accompanied by the hosts of heaven – for He is the Lord of hosts – returns. This story is told in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Jesus is back.

Literal so far? Of course literal!

So we move to the next chapter, 20, remembering there are no chapter divisions in the original. The story progresses without a stutter, without a stop.

The very next happening is the rendering powerless of our great enemy, Satan. And for how long will Satan be out of the reach of the people of God?

One thousand years! Literal? Of course literal!

I mean, is there a place anywhere in Scripture where "year" is used with a number, and that expression is figurative? Not to my knowledge. [An idea borrowed from John MacArthur].

Or is there a place in the New Testament where the word "thousand" is somehow figurative? There were three *thousand* souls added to the church on Pentecost. In Revelation I read of one hundred forty-four *thousand* Jews from the various tribes of Israel. There are one *thousand* two hundred and sixty days in Revelation's tribulation description. None of those usages are figurative. Why in the **six times** in Revelation 20 that refer to the coming kingdom period, where the word is used, is *thousand* considered non-literal?

After *one thousand years*, the enemy is released for one more bout with the Son of God, one which he miserably loses again.

But then the text (verses 4-7) backs up to the beginning of the thousand years and describes the first resurrection of which Jesus spoke. Martyrs and holy saints are raised – raptured, we now say – as also in Matthew 24, and not only live, but reign with Christ during that one-thousand- year period.

A kingdom is coming. A millennial kingdom. A one-thousand-year kingdom. As I said, no less than *six times* the number one thousand is employed by the Spirit-filled apostle of Christ in that Revelation 20 passage, who was there in the future, saw and heard an angel, and wrote down what he saw and heard.

He had no reason to lie or allegorize.

Then comes that other resurrection, at the end of the chapter. The rest of the dead are judged, and if their names are not recorded in the Book of life they are cast into a lake of fire. The resurrection of damnation.

All of this is in the same order as Jesus predicted in John’s Gospel. John does not contradict himself. He merely inserts the later revelation given him by the Father through the angel, namely, that in between the first and second resurrections, is the reign of Jesus with His saints, a reign that will last a full one thousand years!

Of course, those who would take away the millennial reign of Christ must “interpret” this verse, rather than simply accept it. I have to contend that the inability to take a text in its literal form and meaning is a possible sign of unbelief.

Here is the actual wording of Revelation 20:

*1Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for **a thousand years**; 3and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till **the thousand years** were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.*

*In verses 1-3, Satan, though he is going to be used later for God’s purposes, for now, he is to be put out of commission for *one thousand years*.*

Revelation 20:4-6

4And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their

*foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for **a thousand years**. 5But the rest of the dead did not live again until **the thousand years** were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6Blessed 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**.*

Verse 4-6. Satan is out of the way, Jesus is in charge, those who rise in the first resurrection live and reign with Christ for that same *thousand years*.

That is the Millennium. Jesus one by one defeats His enemies, rules harshly, allows nothing evil on His planet. Next,

Revelation 20:7-10

*7Now when **the thousand years** have expired, Satan will be released from his prison 8and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. 9They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. 10The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

Verses 7-10. Evil still lurks, and as one final push against it, Christ defeats a rebellion raised up by a suddenly freed Devil, following the *thousand years*, and seals his fate in that same lake of fire for eternal torment. Then,

Revelation 20:11

*11Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face **the earth and the heaven fled away**. And there was found no place for them.*

Verse 11. *Then* the heaven and earth flee away! *Then* will come the new heavens and new earth. Not until *then*. This revelation was not given to Peter or even Jesus when He was here. This is the final piece of the puzzle, given only to John. An intermediate kingdom to deal with God's final enemies via God's chosen Man, the Man Christ Jesus. Finally,

Revelation 20:13

13The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

Verse 13. Death itself is destroyed. Eternity begins without sin, death, anything evil at all.

Chapter 20 is so critical to the final chronology and therefore is attacked the most by those who like rearranging things for their own purposes.

The Kingdom in the new earth.

Following the expanded description of the tribulation and a brief description of the coming kingdom, there are only two chapters left in the Bible. Of those two, the second one contains only five verses telling of the final state of God's kingdom.

We are faced with a puzzling question as we approach this state of things. Why, after a one-thousand-year rule with His saints, does God decide to destroy everything and start over? Now the earth is perfected, now death is defeated. Certainly now we can enjoy the planet.

Consider our own transformation though. Though we were to die in perfect health and perfect relationship with God, these old bodies have been tainted, corrupted. They need to be renewed. At the first resurrection this will happen.

During the millennial reign, as wonderful as it will be, there will still be sin and sinners. Death will be allowed until the last battle with Satan. Disobedience and defiance will be a part of even this new world under Jesus' control. The earth is tainted.

God will remove His people, give them over to the Father (per 1 Corinthians 15), and annihilate this planet once and for all. Some call it the "uncreation."

That final day of the Lord will involve the heavens passing 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... the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat [2 Peter 3:10, 12].

Peter, as Jesus in His incarnation, does not see the thousand years as does John, and seems to go directly to the final destruction from our present status. He is possibly using Psalm 102:25-26 as a reference, and adding some words he is hearing from the Spirit at that time. It is a true revelation, but not timed as John times the same event, after the thousand years (Revelation 20:11).

Why does John see the Bride of Christ entering the new earth? Did they not enter one thousand years earlier?

Consider: First the reign with Christ. Then the earth is destroyed and the people of God are taken to heaven while the new earth is created. Then they come back again and inherit the new earth.

The Millennium vs The Eternal Kingdom

Are there differences between the millennial period and the post-millennial period? Some. And they are significant. For example,

- No more death. That was defeated during the reign.
- No more Temple. Ezekiel's millennial temple, the same house as seen by Isaiah, will no longer be needed. The Lord is now the temple.
- No more sun and moon. The Lamb is the light.
- The gates are not shut. No more enemies.
- No more curse. Absolutely no reminders of that last planet's corruptions.
- No sorrow, no crying, no tears. All things new.
- No night.

Here are the texts that make those statements:

Revelation 21:4, 5, 22, 23, 25

4And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." 5Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

22But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

25Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).

Revelation 22:3

3And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.

Other things to look for in Revelation 21 and 22: A description of the Bride, the new City, the nations that shall still be giving glory to God, the tree of life, and then the book ends with severe warnings, and an invitation for us to come to Jesus, and Jesus to come to us.

No more information? No more. We will have one thousand years to find everything we need to know about that eternal state. It has not entered into our minds, nor can it, the things God has prepared for those who love Him. Not yet.

So this is what Almighty God, Yahweh, His prophets, and His apostles taught about the coming Kingdom.

Let me try to summarize my findings in this composite of the prophets' and apostles' teaching:

A Composite

An unconditional promise has been made of an everlasting Kingdom to follow immediately after the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ. A man shall have dominion over it, as the Lord God had attempted to initiate from the Garden of Eden.

The territory of this Kingdom will be headquartered in the land we call the "holy land" today. One day it will truly be holy, for the Holy One of Israel will dwell there.

An everlasting covenant was given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob regarding this land. All the families of the earth will be blessed from it. A seed from Abraham, descending through Judah and David, will be the final Ruler.

All of God's enemies will be defeated. All of the elect remnant of Israel will be recalled from the ends of the earth to come back to the land and settle there for one thousand years.

The nations (Gentiles) remaining after the Lord's return with judgment, will love and serve Jesus for those thousand years. They will bring Him offerings, travel to His land for worship, participate in regular feasts.

The saints of the church will have been resurrected, and allowed to reign with Christ. Twelve of them, all the Jewish apostles, will sit on twelve thrones reigning with Jesus.

His rule will be a righteous rule. Justice will prevail. Sin will be punished. The meek will inherit the earth with Jesus, along with the poor in spirit, men of peace and joy and love and all fruit of the Spirit they produced in the pre-kingdom days before His arrival.

Mt. Zion, Jerusalem will be the joy of the earth. The city of the great King will no longer be maligned by men, but will be honored by all. Though Jesus rules there with a rod of iron, He will also be the shepherd that tenderly cares for His own.

Nature will be tamed. The animals. The weather. All will be controlled perfectly by the Lord and His people.

The Spirit of God will deeply touch the Jews Who went so far astray. They will loathe themselves and repent as the Lord sprinkles them with clean water and causes their hearts and minds to be turned to Him in a New Covenant.

The waste places will be built up after the devastating activities of the Tribulation period. Gentiles will help the rebuilding project, and will generally be subservient to the Government of Messiah and Israel.

A new Temple will be erected, where the Lord Himself will dwell, and where sacrifices will be made as before. All of this will be merely memorial, not salvific. Jesus will be the center of all and the reason for all who are there. His blood finished the work, and all will be made to remember this work for the thousand years.

At the end of this period, the Lord will deliver all to the Father, the heavens and the earth will be destroyed, and a totally new planet will come into being.

There is more. But these are the main items we can look forward to.

Now the question is, who heard these Voices and tried to carry them on down through the ages? I offer now quotations from men, mostly men of God, who agreed with the written Word as it is. And others who did not.

THE KINGDOM AND THE FATHERS

The apostles taught men who carried on the teaching to the next generation. I'm speaking of men like Justin Martyr and Papias and Irenaeus in the early centuries of the church.

Much later, the Roman Catholic system tried to replace Israel with its own priesthood, its own rituals, its own jubilee, its own symbols, its own ceremonies, but the vision could not be kept suppressed forever.

Replacement theology, a ruthless form of anti-Semitism, caused the leaven of amillennialism to rise and be the dominant Millennial theory for centuries, even on into the Reformation and from the reformers to our own day.

But those who know Puritan names like Sibbes, Owen, Henry, Mather, Boston, Gill, should not be surprised to hear from their pens affirmation of the promises of God to Israel. Premillennial thought is not some new doctrine that started in the 1800's. As I have shown, it is prophetic, apostolic, and post-apostolic.

Indeed the cloud of premillennial glory was for a while smothered by the likes of Origen and Augustine, but it remains a fire. It was never allowed to burn out completely. Today it is still a major way of thinking for the Christian Church, as we rapidly approach the time of that Kingdom, when Christ returns.

Before the Fathers...

Before we move to the church fathers, two other glimpses into Post-Apostolic Judea. First, the Zealots:

39. A.D. 66, The Kingdom and the Zealots.

Wikipedia says these folks were...

...a political movement in 1st-century Second Temple Judaism which sought to incite the people of Judea Province to rebel against the Roman Empire and expel it from the Holy Land by force of arms, most notably during the First Jewish–Roman War (66–70).

What does that tell you about the expectation of the Jews? It says to me that one way or another, a kingdom was going to come to Israel. Obviously this Jesus had not made it happen. We'll take things into our own hands. Israel wanted a kingdom, longed for it, waited for it. But some just went ahead and tried to make it happen. Perhaps these fighters had the Maccabees in mind. Both attempts failed to bring about the promise given to Abraham.

Now, secondly, another word from the apocrypha. I enter apocryphal writers here, as I did before the coming of Christ, not because of their authority, for they are not inspired writers. I simply am allowing to speak, all those men who agree with the apostolic and prophetic writings regarding the coming kingdom.

For example, *Baruch's* message quite possibly came out just after the last apostle, John, gave us the Revelation. We continue the journal of kingdom thinking through the ages...

40. A.D. 100 (?) The Kingdom and "Baruch."

We all know the real Baruch from the prophecy of Jeremiah. Several apocryphal writings were based on this man's life, most written after Jerusalem fell and the promises of God needed to be reaffirmed. Again, I do not present this work as from God, but as from a people trying to hang on to God's Word and the covenant with Abraham.

An entire chapter of Baruch is given to exhorting God's people to have faith in what is coming.

Baruch 5:1-9

1Put off, O Jerusalem, the garment of mourning and affliction, and put on the comeliness of the glory that cometh from God for ever. 2Cast about thee a double garment of the righteousness which cometh from God; and set a diadem on thine head of the glory of the Everlasting.

3For God will shew thy brightness unto every country under heaven. 4For thy name shall be called of God for ever The peace of righteousness, and The glory of God's worship.

*5Arise, O Jerusalem, and stand on high, and look about toward the east, and **behold thy children gathered from the west unto the east** by the word of the Holy One, rejoicing in the remembrance of God.*

6For they departed from thee on foot, and were led away of their enemies: but God bringeth them unto thee exalted with glory, as children of the kingdom.

7For God hath appointed that every high hill, and banks of long continuance, should be cast down, and valleys filled up, to make even the ground, that Israel may go safely in the glory of God,

8Moreover even the woods and every sweet-smelling tree shall overshadow Israel by the commandment of God. 9For God shall lead Israel with joy in the light of his glory with the mercy and righteousness that cometh from him.

Yes, the “kingdom” lived in the post-apostolic community.

41. 100 A.D. (?) The Kingdom and “Esdras.”

1 and 2 Esdras are a couple other of the apocryphal books found, but not fully accepted, in Jewish and Christian tradition.

“Esdras”, who claims falsely to be the Ezra of Biblical fame, wrote this book, some say, after the destruction of Jerusalem, or at least in some trouble time in Israel after Christ was here. In spite

of the trouble, the author is sure about a coming kingdom and a promise to the fathers that must be kept.

2 Esdras 3:13-15

*Now when they lived so wickedly before thee, thou didst choose thee a man from among them, **whose name was Abraham**. 14Him thou lovedst, and unto him only thou shewedst thy will: 15And madest an everlasting covenant with him, promising him that thou wouldest never forsake his seed.*

2 Esdras 13:32-38

*And the time shall be when these things shall come to pass, and the signs shall happen which I shewed thee before, and **then shall my Son be declared**, whom thou sawest as a man ascending. 33And when all the people hear his voice, **every man shall in their own land leave the battle they have one against another**. 34And an innumerable multitude shall be **gathered together**, as thou sawest them, willing to come, and to overcome him by fighting.*

The author was certainly familiar with the book of Revelation, as these and the following words make plain:

*35But **he shall stand upon the top of the mount Sion**. 36And Sion shall come, and shall be shewed to all men, being prepared and builded, like as thou sawest the hill graven without hands. 37And this **my Son shall rebuke the wicked inventions of those nations**, which for their wicked life are fallen into the tempest; 38And shall lay before them their evil thoughts, and the torments wherewith they shall begin to be tormented, which are like unto a flame: and he shall destroy them without labour by the law which is like unto me.*

Obviously the Biblical Ezra was not given this revelation. I include the quote only to demonstrate how the sentiment of the kingdom was enduring after Jesus was here, and into the age of the “fathers.”

Now a searching through the leaders of the church down through these many years.

But wait! Somewhere along this trail we travel, misguided souls will steal the Kingdom of Israel, and give it to the church!

In the spirit of “see something, say something,” it is my sad responsibility to inform my Christian peers that something sinister has been long perpetrated on a huge portion of Scriptures, and no one seems to care!

So how does one steal a full one thousand years from the Biblical story and get away with it?

Well... one doesn't. But that hasn't kept many from trying to do so over the centuries.

I have taken you on a tour of *Bible* history, and especially Biblical prophecy, to point out to you how often the Grand Old Book mentions a coming kingdom, its very length, and its specific contents. Now we take a short visit to *church* history.

My heart is heavy as I proceed, for as in so many cases where Biblical truth is under attack, the one who makes Christians aware of it is left crying out with Isaiah, "Lord, who has believed our report?"

I send this *report* out with the prayer that someone, at least, will believe it.

Scissors Theology.

I well remember the days I spent at Kentucky's Heritage Academy, sitting at the after-school homework desk, supervising little ones for an hour or so. Not too exciting a task, and I had a lot of free time.

Somehow I had gotten hold, internally, of the kingdom message of the Bible. I was especially enamored with Isaiah 2:2-4,

*2Now 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.
3Many people 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.
4He shall judge between the nations,
And rebuke many people;
They shall beat their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,*

Neither shall they learn war anymore.

How wonderful that sounded then, and still sounds today! A high mountain in Jerusalem. A House of the Lord sitting up there. Everyone in the world visiting it to learn the ways of the Lord. King Jesus putting the nations in order. No more war.

I had been taught to take the Bible literally whenever possible. Why not here, I thought. I skimmed through the Bible and found tons of other passages that said the same, and more. A real kingdom with King Jesus in charge. Details. Promises. What was not to like?

I found an old beat-up Bible, brought my scissors to work, and started cutting out every passage I could find on this wonderful subject. I pasted all the pages into a notebook that soon bulged with information on this kingdom.

Much later I wrote a book about it all, called *The Kingdom Handbook*, still available at Amazon.com.

But that's not the scissors theology I'm talking about. That was an innocent heart magnifying the kingdom of God and enjoying every minute of it. I'm doing more of the same now, nearly forty years later.

But there have been since the days of the church fathers, shortly after the apostles lived and died, a class of men who have taken their virtual scissors to their virtual Bibles, and cut out these same passages, interpreted them any way they saw fit, and tried to paste them back into the Book, hoping no one would notice or even care that much.

And do you know what? *Most people didn't care.* They said and say, as they do with the rapture question, "I'm not worried about details. Just give me Jesus now and I'm happy. Now when's the next ball game on TV?"

It sounds good to try to avoid controversy, to be all-inclusive in one's beliefs. Harmonic. Unified. Jesus prayed for unity, right? But you see these same people tremendously concerned about their baseball scores, recipes, homes, gardens. They will give hours and hours to projects that involve this world, but will not investigate the preachers and teachers who stand before them with whatever doctrine. As long as their sports life can continue, their home is secure and comfortable, their bellies are full...

The Lord wants us to love His Word. Jesus said of the words He gave the disciples in Matthew 24, *Let him that reads **understand**...*

A special blessing is also given to those who read and comprehend the book of Revelation (Revelation 1:3). Why are we too busy to dig deeper?

Scissors theology is not new, nor is it related only to the Millennial Kingdom teaching. Consider those [I speak of Christians] who have trouble with Genesis 1-11:

How many Christians believe the world was created in six twenty-four-hour days? How many believe in a worldwide flood that killed all but one family? How many believe the story of the fall of man? A real Adam? A real Eve? The Tower of Babel story?

More critical, there are those who have cut out the resurrection of Jesus along with all of His miracles, and reduced Him to a nice man who said nice things... most of the time.

We should not then be surprised to see how kingdom passages, such as Revelation's final chapters, along with huge portions of the Old Testament prophecies, have been watered down, cut out, allegorized, and forgotten.

I state again, my view of all this revisionism is that the underlying problem with those who eliminate and/or rewrite and/or re-interpret whole passages of Scripture, is *unbelief*.

Now, to be fair, it is difficult to believe that a man could rise from the dead. It is difficult to comprehend a God who would destroy nearly all His created beings. It is difficult to see why there needs to be a transitional kingdom on earth before the new heavens and new earth appear.

"I don't get it! It doesn't fit my way of thinking! Therefore it doesn't exist. Let me explain..., " is the approach.

Well, personally, I can't handle such treatment of God's Word. I still believe the Bible is literally true in every place except where it says it is not literally true, as in the parables. And even the parables have a literal meaning behind them, and only one, to be sought by erstwhile students of the Word.

In this document I have visited Millennial passages with the idea that they are actually true! Now isn't that a novel way to approach the Bible? Actually true! Oh my!

I enjoy the challenge of taking a prophecy as far as it will go, without changing a word, and believing it all the way! Would that more of God's people would try this.

Handling the Word in this way will produce in our minds a risen Savior, an all-powerful Creator, a Judge of all the earth, and a kingdom that responds to the prayer many of us pray regularly when we ask, Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

Bob, you were talking about the church fathers? Yes, yes, just one more thought or two.

Alva McClain in his *Greatness of the Kingdom* tells us that the idea of a

Christ, who will reign with His risen and glorified saints over the nations in a literal kingdom for 'a thousand years'... was the almost universal belief of the early church [and] is now generally conceded by scholars who are able to read history with a minimum of theological prejudice.

He quotes Archibald Robertson (*The Kingdom of God*) as saying that this view

prevailed in the Church generally for two centuries and a half, and in the Western Church for four centuries... until the time of Augustine.

McClain adds that even Augustine held to this belief in his early career.

The Scriptures and the kingdom. Bright as day.

The Scriptures speak volumes about a coming kingdom. And John tells us exactly how that kingdom fits into the chronology. How could this be made clearer, I wonder? What was it that brought this teaching down, to be replaced by a no-kingdom or kingdom-now or eternal-only or allegorized-kingdom-only doctrine? Did everyone after the apostles abandon the literal Scriptures? We'll see.

But to whom should we appeal when looking for foundational truths? I believe the apostles and prophets, when taken literally, can only be called Pre-Millennial, that is, they believed in a one-thousand-year reign of Christ and His people on earth following the return of Christ to that earth.

Are there other teachers that have more authority, that are more trustworthy, that speak with one voice? No. The rest of the teaching on the millennium is garbled. Whether the church fathers that followed the apostles, *the* church father himself, Augustine, the Roman system that led into the Dark Ages, the Reformers, or well-known teachers that have appeared since: they all have their own take on the future kingdom. There is no one of them to build upon.

I now present the few who saw what the apostles saw:

42. A.D. 100's, The Kingdom and Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr is among the most well-known of the early church fathers. He was born around 100 A.D., not long after the death of the last apostle, John. His life is legendary and exemplary,

but I quickly go to the comments he has made on the subject at hand. This is from chapter 80 of his Dialogue with Trypho:

*I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, **and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, as the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah... declare.***

Already, many had departed from this belief, admits Justin...

and many who belong to the pure and pious faith, and are true Christians, think otherwise.

Elsewhere he says,

*... there was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied... **that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem;** and that thereafter the general, and, in short, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place.*

But sad to say, Justin opposed the Jews. An anti-Jewish tradition was already beginning. To that same Trypho, a Jew, Justin suggests that Christians are the new *Israelitic race*. The original Jews are useless, disobedient, faithless. With that view of Israel, it is clear why Israel's coming Kingdom, headed by Israel's Messiah, will also be cast aside in the church's thinking.

43. A.D. 100's, The Kingdom and Irenaeus.

Irenaeus was born when Justin was about 30, and lived into the third century. He eventually became the bishop of Lyon, and was outspoken in his beliefs about the Millennium. His fifth book of *Against Heresies* contains this Millennial argument, based on God's promise to Abraham:

*The promise remains steadfast... **God promised him the inheritance of the land.** Yet, Abraham did not receive it during all the time of his journey there. Accordingly, it must be that **Abraham, together with his seed (that is, those who fear God and believe in Him), will receive it at the resurrection of the just.***

In another place the reference is to Jacob:

*[the blessing to Jacob] belongs unquestionably to the times of the **kingdom when the righteous will bear rule**, after their rising from the dead. It is also the time when the creation will bear fruit with an abundance of all kinds of food, having been renovated and set free... And all of the animals will feed on the vegetation of the earth... and they will be in perfect submission to man. And these things are borne witness to in the fourth book of the writings of Papias, the hearer of John, and a companion of Polycarp.*

Though he thus speaks, he and others began to squeeze Israel out of that kingdom, believing that all God's promises are for the church. That is, they believed in those Old Testament

prophecies, but applied them to Christians. Basically, Israel was being disinherited. Before long there would be no kingdom/Millennium, first for them, then for anyone.

44. A.D. 100's, The Kingdom and Papias

With Papias (60-130 A.D.) and Polycarp (69-155 A.D.) being added to believers in this doctrine, we have named some of the most influential of the early church leaders, pre-millennialists all.

Here is Papias, quoted by the historian Eusebius about things he gathered from unwritten traditions: (*Ecclesiastical History*, 39.11–12).

Papias believed things that “came to him from unwritten tradition” and “teachings of the Saviour.” Among these beliefs were “that there will be a millennium after the resurrection of the dead, when the kingdom of Christ will be set up in material form on this earth”

45. A.D. 100's, The Kingdom and “Barnabas.”

The Epistle of Barnabas was not written by Paul's companion, but one who identified himself as that man. This epistle holds to a circulating idea that the history of man would correspond to the six days of creation, one thousand years for each day.

*Attend to the meaning of this expression, “He finished in six days.” **This implieth that the Lord will finish all things in six thousand years, for a day is with Him a thousand years.** And He Himself testifieth, saying, “Behold, **to-day will be as a thousand years.**” Therefore, my children, in six days, that is, **in six thousand years, all things will be finished.** “And He rested on the seventh day.” This meaneth: when His Son, coming again, shall destroy the time of the wicked man, and judge the ungodly, and change the sun, and the moon, and the stars, then shall He truly rest on the seventh day.*

46. A.D. 100's, The Kingdom and Tertullian

A contemporary of Justin and Irenaeus (85-160 A.D.) was one Marcion. This man was opposed to using the entire Old Testament (there go the prophecies!) and most of the New also. He was devoted to the apostle Paul, yet abandoned the teaching of the personal return of Christ. He did not believe in a real incarnation, so there could not be a second coming!

He obviously had no use for a Millennial reign. Marcion was the church's first great heretic, yet many followed him, and latched on to his system, which included the amillennial position.

Tertullian an author/theologian from Carthage, came against Marcion in a tract where among other things he defied Marcion's eschatology.

*“We do confess that **a kingdom is promised to us upon the earth, although before heaven, only in another state of existence; inasmuch as it will be after the resurrection for a thousand years in the divinely-built city of Jerusalem, ‘let down from heaven.’”***

47. A.D. 177, The Kingdom and Melito.

From a book entitled, *The voice of the church on the coming and kingdom of the Redeemer, or, a history of the doctrine of the reign of Christ on earth*, 2nd edition. H.L. Hastings, 1855. p. 66:

[Melito] was Bishop of Sardis. He was born in Asia, and was contemporary with Justin Martyr. He was bishop of one of the apocalyptic churches, and was so eloquent and deeply pious, that Tertullian affirms, "he was by most Christians considered a prophet," and Polycrates says of him, "he was in all things governed by the Holy Ghost."

*He made extracts from the scriptures respecting the Messianic prophecies, and wrote a treatise on the Apocalypse, and also made out a complete list of the canonical books of the Old Testament, but his works are not now extant. **He was a Chiliast [believer in one-thousand-year reign].** In regard to his views of that period, he probably followed Papias: Jerome and Gennadius both affirming that **he was a declared millenarian.** And even Neander [19th century theologian] admits that Polycarp, Papias, ... and Melito, **"endeavored to maintain the pure and simple apostolic doctrine, and defend it against corruption."***

48. A.D. 200's, The Kingdom and Lactantius

Lactantius was a rhetorician, an apologist, and a historian who lived from 240-320. Here is his comment:

the dead will rise again not after a thousand years from their death but that when again restored to life they may reign with God a thousand years. Christ will deliver all nations into subjection to the righteous who are alive and will raise the righteous dead to eternal life and will Himself reign with them on the earth and will build the holy city and this kingdom of the righteous shall be for a thousand years.

49. A.D.200's. The Kingdom and Methodius

Methodius (d 312) was the bishop of Olympus, and a serious critic of Origen's allegorical ways. He came up with the idea that perhaps all of history is divided into thousand-year periods.

*For since in six days God made the heaven and the earth, and finished the whole world, and rested on the seventh day from all His works which He had made, and blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, so by a figure in the seventh month, when the fruits of the earth have been gathered in, we are commanded to keep the feast to the Lord, which signifies that, **when this world shall be terminated at the seventh thousand years...in the seventh month, the great resurrection-day, it is commanded that the Feast of our Tabernacles shall be celebrated to the Lord, of which the things said in Leviticus are symbols and figures...***

50. A.D. 200's, The Kingdom and Commodianus.

Commodianus was a bishop from North-Africa. Definitely he believed in a literal Millennium: He writes,

*"They shall come also who overcame cruel martyrdom under Antichrist, and they themselves live for the whole time, and receive blessings because they have suffered evil things; **and they themselves marrying, beget for a thousand years.**"*

51. A.D. 200's, The Kingdom and Hippolytus.

One may have problems with the roundabout way Hippolytus, theologian and writer of Rome, came to his millennial view, but most agree that he bought into the prevailing notion of his day that there would be a one-thousand-year period of Kingdom at the end.

For the first appearance of our Lord in the flesh took place in Bethlehem, under Augustus, in the year 5500; and He suffered in the thirty-third year. And 6,000 years must needs be accomplished, in order that the Sabbath may come, the rest, the holy day "on which God rested from all His works." For the Sabbath is the type and emblem of the future kingdom of the saints, when they "shall reign with Christ," when He comes from heaven, as John says in his Apocalypse: for "a day with the Lord is as a thousand years." Since, then, in six days God made all things, it follows that 6,000 years must be fulfilled. And they are not yet fulfilled, as John says: "five are fallen; one is," that is, the sixth; "the other is not yet come."

52. A.D. 300's, The Kingdom and Augustine.

A belief in a non-literal millennium, or no millennium at all, gained wider acceptance after the days of Constantine, an age that coincides with the ever-growing influence of Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A.D.).

But the reason for his influence is not happy history.

Diprose (see Resources) tells us that

Millennarianism remained a normative doctrine during the first four centuries of the Christian era. It was not overthrown until Augustine brought together the concepts of the church and the kingdom of Christ... A triumphant church NOW supersedes a need for a future millennium. Christ's return signifies His disclosure of Himself and His deity to all humanity in such a way that all might partake of His glory to the degree that each individual's actions warrant.

Ambrose, the mentor of Augustine, taught that the Jews were irrevocably perverse. Augustine began to write about such things, and his words against the Jews were very influential. This noted theologian lent his weight to a teaching that was practically becoming a given, a church doctrine.

It wasn't always so with the bishop. Augustine's most famous work was *the City of God*. He is quoted in Book XX, chapter 7, as saying:

Now the thousand years may be understood in two ways, so far as it occurs to me: either these things happen in the sixth thousand of years or sixth millennium (the latter part of which is now passing)...

This was his original view, in keeping with many Biblical literalists. There would be six thousand years of purely human history, followed by a golden age of one thousand years. But his faith in such a future began to waiver, perhaps because of the influences of others. Later he is quoted in a different vein,

...the kingdom of God (was) already manifest in the Church...the age between Pentecost and the return of Christ was the very millennium itself, marked by the ever-increasing influence of the church in overturning evil...

Hence the blending of church and Israel, the present age with the Bible's future age.

THE KINGDOM IN CHURCH HISTORY

The trend was changing.

In the *Letter to Diognetus*, whose author is a matter of controversy, this second-century epistle labels Jewish laws as "superstition, idolatrous." The canonical status of the Torah was ignored.

Then there was Origen of Alexandria, teaching in the third century, who more successfully opposed the idea of a premillennial kingdom. Among generally accepted men of the church, Origen was the first to come against the one thousand years. His approach to the matter was allegorical, symbolic. Not only the millennium, but the whole idea of a physical second coming was done away with in Origen.

He and the rising class of theologians who surrounded him, simply stole Old Testament passages and applied them to Christians. He denigrated the Jews. He claimed that Bible statements are not all literally true. He said that the promises of God were unworthy of Israel. Anyone who needed proof of his claims need only look at Jerusalem's destruction. True Israel is the church.

Replacement theology had arrived. Allegorical interpretation had arrived. Anti- or a-millennialism had arrived.

In the same century was Cyprian, telling God's flock that the Church now occupies the place that was once Israel's.

Constantine, the Roman Emperor who freed slaves and favored Christianity, had a clear influence also, as *pontifex maximus*, the high priest not only over pagan religions, but, in his mind, over the church.

This title stuck. When the Empire moved East, the title *Pontifex Maximus* was transferred to the reigning Pope. Now the church had a high priest, a set of lower priests, holy days, an altar, a "jubilee", a building divided into two parts, a system of salvation by works, tons of laws, and a host of other items borrowed from Judaism. *Of course* Israel is now the church and the church is the new Israel. Why not?

Constantine went so far as to change the date for Easter because it was based on Jewish calculations and the Jewish Passover.

And then the curious case of John Chrysostom:

53. A.D. 400's, The Kingdom and John Chrysostom.

*Regarding the fact that they, the Jews, shall believe and be saved, Paul brings Isaiah to witness who cries aloud and says, "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." **If then this has been promised but never yet has happened in their case, nor have they ever enjoyed the remission of sins, certainly it will come to pass.***

Thank you sir!

But John Chrysostom was vehemently antisemitic, saying that Jews were hated by God and *cannot repent.*

Interesting transformation, yes?

The voices multiply

The next years gave the church Cyril of Alexandria, who led Christians in pillaging Alexandria's Jewish quarter. Many died. *They are murderers of the Lord,* was his justification, *they are alienated from the hope of the fathers.*

The sixth century's Pope Gregory I promoted Augustinian values. Various canon laws were formed addressing Jewish matters. There were to be separate Jewish communities, with more and more restrictions arriving through the centuries

Thus the Medieval church arrived full of hatred for Israel. Archibald Robertson says that

*Medieval theocracy created by replacement theology, **eclipsed millenarianism** . A Christian Empire was now being formed, where **the Kingdom of God is an omnipotent church!***

Origen and Augustine and many of like mind had their way in the ever-evolving description of the kingdom, until that description, like many other church teachings, was buried in the vast wasteland we call the Dark Ages. Dark, because the light of God's Word was hidden by priest

and Pope and scholar. The church was entering its serious apostasy and the millennial question was put on hold. Most were not concerned about it anyway.

The Reformers and the Millennium.

I will not visit each of the godly men who dared come out of, or be put out of, the church of Rome. We love them all, we honor them all. Names like Wycliffe, Tyndale, Huss, Calvin, Luther, Zwingli... where would we be without them?

But the Reformers shared one very difficult circumstance: they all had the same mother. Mother Church was a cruel mom, and a false one, and a mother whose beliefs were seemingly set in stone. The heroes of the faith came as far from her as they dared. But they did not come far enough, in my opinion.

As with the church fathers, one can find a variety of competing beliefs among the Reformers. They struggled over the communion service, the form and reason for baptism. They were simply not in agreement with each other on a number of issues. Some practices and beliefs were simply taken from Rome as a given. To this day, "Reformed" can mean any number of things, and the reformed churches will often admit that they themselves are in need of reforming.

One of the teachings that came out of Rome with those leaving her was the *amillennial doctrine* that went back to Augustine. It was not contested for some time. But eventually men arose who discovered something that hadn't been noticed for a long time: the number *one thousand*.

Modern thoughts about the millennium

Eventually, the light of a premillennial coming of Christ followed by the kingdom promised by all the prophets, began to shine again in the church. Note these rays of light sprinkled over the centuries:

54. A.D. 1500's, The Kingdom and John Calvin.

John Calvin on allegory (a necessary element for amillennial views):

*The error of allegory has been the source of many evils; not only did it open the way for **adulteration of the natural meaning of Scripture**, but also set up **boldness in allegorizing as the chief exegetical virtue**.*

And then there is the Geneva Bible (partly a product of Calvin):

*The blindness of the Jews is neither so **universal** that the Lord has no elect in that nation, neither will it be **continual**, for **there will be a time in which they also will effectually embrace that which they now so stubbornly and, for the most part, reject and refuse**.*

55. A.D. 1600's-1700's, The Kingdom and the Puritans

Richard Sibbes, Puritan, d.1635.

*When the fullness of the Gentiles is come in, then comes the conversion of the Jews. Why may we not expect it? **They were the people of God**.*

Samuel Rutherford, Puritan, d. 1661.

*Oh, to see the sight next to Christ coming in the clouds, the most joyful! O day! O longed for and lovely day! O dawn! O sweet Jesus, let me see that sight which will be as life from the dead, **Thee and Thy ancient people in mutual embraces**.*

John Owen, Puritan, d. 1683.

...speaking before the House of Commons, 1649, talked of the **bringing home of God's ancient people, the Jews, to be one fold with the fullness of the Gentiles**.

Matthew Henry, nonconformist author and minister, d. 1714.

That though for the present time the Jews are cast off, yet the rejection is not final. They are not cast off forever.

Cotton Mather, New England Puritan, d. 1728.

I lay before the Lord. I lift up my eyes for the conversion of the Jewish nation.

Get Israel right, and you'll get your eschatology right... These men were on the way.

56. A.D. 1700's, The Kingdom and Isaac Watts

Isaac Watts, songwriter. *Jesus Shall Reign*. 1719.

*1 Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
does its successive journeys run,
his kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
till moons shall wax and wane no more.*

*2 To him shall endless prayer be made,
and praises throng to crown his head.
His name like sweet perfume shall rise
with every morning sacrifice.*

*3 People and realms of every tongue
dwell on his love with sweetest song,
and infant voices shall proclaim
their early blessings on his name.*

*4 Blessings abound where'er he reigns:
the prisoners leap to lose their chains,
the weary find eternal rest,
and all who suffer want are blest.*

*5 Let every creature rise and bring
the highest honors to our King,
angels descend with songs again,
and earth repeat the loud amen.*

57. A.D. 1700's, The Kingdom and Pastors

John Gill, English Baptist pastor, commentator, d. 1771.

The space of a thousand years in Revelation is to be taken definitely, for just this number of years exactly as appears from having the article prefixed to them, "the thousand years," and are called afterwards no less than four times...

Jonathan Edwards, Congregationalist pastor, d. 1758.

Though he believed that the church was the "new Israel", he said,

The Jews and all their dispersions shall cast away their old infidelity and shall have their hearts wonderfully changed, and hate themselves for their past unbelief and obstinacy.

58. A.D. 1800's, The Kingdom and Pastors

Adolf Saphir, Hungarian Jewish convert to Christianity, Jewish Presbyterian missionary, d. 1891.

*Is not such a consummation of history a necessary postulate of our thought? **Would we not expect such a transition period between the present and the ultimate everlasting condition?** ... Is earth simply a failure, abandoned by God to the power of the enemy, the scene of divine judgment, and not the scene of the vindication and triumph of righteousness? Is not Jesus the Son of Man, **the Christ who shall reign on earth? We believe that He will come, and with Him the Kingdom, and with the Kingdom the fulfilment of the prayer, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."***

G V Lechler, German Lutheran theologian, d. 1888.

*As to the fact itself, the coming of the Kingdom, and as to Israel's privilege with respect to the latter, they [the disciples of Acts 1] entertained no doubt; and the Lord was so far from disapproving of such an expectation, that he rather confirmed it by declaring that the Father had fixed the times. Now we know that neither a period nor an epoch can be affirmed concerning an event which is only imaginary. **Those interpreters have altogether mistaken the sense, who maintain that Jesus here entirely rejects the conceptions entertained by his apostles respecting the Messianic Kingdom, for this is by no means the case. He did not deny that either their expectation on earth of his glorious Kingdom in its reality, or their hope of the glorious future which that Kingdom opened to the people of Israel, was well founded; he simply subdued their eager curiosity respecting the time...***

Samuel J. Andrews, Theologian, pastor of Catholic Apostolic Church, Hartford, Connecticut , d. 1906.

*Thus there is, **during the Kingdom period a well-ordered system of government embracing the whole earth, administered by Christ**, through those whom He appoints; a system adapted to meet the needs of all its inhabitants in all their varied conditions and degrees of intellectual development.*

Charles Spurgeon, Baptist minister, London, d. 1894.

*... to make the wonder [of the resurrection] extraordinary beyond conception, they will rise at once, or perhaps in two great divisions. **There is a passage (Rev. xx. 5, 60 which apparently teaches us that between the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the wicked there will be an interval of a thousand years.** Many think that the passage intends a spiritual resurrection, but I am unable to think so; **assuredly the words must have a literal meaning.** Hear them and judge for yourself. "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection: Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*

Spurgeon is quoted elsewhere in a post-millennial vein, but this Revelation text could not be denied by the great preacher.

Horatius Bonar, Scottish churchman and poet, d. 1889.

Why should not the temple, the worship, the rites, the sacrifices, be allowed to point to the Lamb that was slain, in the Millennial age, if such be the purpose of the Father... and if God should have yet a wider circle of truth to open up to us out of His word concerning His Son, why should He not construct a new apparatus for the illustration of that truth?

Philip Schaff, historian d. 1893.

The most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene Age is the prominent millenarianism; that is the belief of a visible reign of Christ in glory on earth with the risen saints for a thousand years before the general resurrection and the judgment. It is the widely-held opinion of distinguished teachers such as Barnabas, Papias, Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Methodius, Lactantius etc.

59. A.D. 1900's, The Kingdom and Pastors and Authors

(see Resources for longer list)

James Orr. Scottish Presbyterian minister, professor of church history and theology, d. 1987.

*In announcing the approaching advent of the "kingdom of heaven," **Jesus had in view the very kingdom which the prophets had foretold.***

Alva J McClain. Theologian, author, d. 1968.

The Greatness of the Kingdom, p. 476.

*There have been minor differences among premillennial interpreters with reference to some details of **Revelation 20**, but these are as nothing when compared to the confusion which reigns*

among postmillennial and amillennial writers who attempt to expound the chapter... they seem to be a united family only in their unyielding scorn for the premillennial viewpoint and in their opinion that “the thousand years” are not a thousand years.

James D. G. Dunn, British New Testament scholar, Lightfoot Professor of Divinity in the Department of Theology, University of Durham, d. 2020.

*The point is that **Israel has not been cast off**; its blessings have not been taken away from them and given to others. Rather the Gentiles have been brought in to share the blessings previously confined to Israel.*

Archibald (A T) Robertson, author, theologian, 1934. Indirect quote:

The eclipse of millenarianism in the early Christian centuries produced an earth-bound “medieval theocracy,” which included the illusion of a Christian empire and the concept of the Kingdom of God as an omnipotent church.

John MacArthur, pastor, author, theologian.

from a MacArthur message of 1994, source unknown

*This is it. **As the Kingdom opens, the temple has been built, the nations of the earth are coming there to worship the true God and Christ.** Prosperity reigns from pole to pole in a paradise regained. The garden of Eden is worldwide, it’s back. Poverty is unknown, so is injustice. Everyone has his heart’s desire. Ah, it’s an incredible, incredible time.*

*We don’t know exactly what it’ll be like. It could be a time with no prisons, no hospitals, no mental institutions, no barracks, no saloons, no houses of ill repute, no gambling dens, no homes for the aged and the infirm. The bloom of youth is on everyone’s cheek. Cemeteries are crumbling relics of the past and tears are infrequent. The wolf and the lamb, the calf and the lion, the cow and the bear, the child and the scorpion are all at peace. Jesus is come. **The golden age has dawned. The earth is filled with the knowledge of God. Jesus is Lord. He rules the nation with a rod of iron.***

His reign is righteous and the nations obey. Sin is visited with swift and certain judgment. It’s everything that you could never even imagine beyond your wildest dreams, that kind of life. This is the Kingdom. This is what we live for. This is what we wait for. This is what we hope for. And, beloved, this is what is really coming. **And this isn’t it. We’re not in it. And believe me, Satan is not bound.** We’re waiting for him to be bound, but he can’t be bound until Jesus comes.

And from that same series, MacArthur uses an unidentified source to tell of possible scientific ramifications of the 1000 years. Please be aware that this is educated speculation, but not revealed truth. Using the beginning points of Scripture, the author has attempted to paint a picture of what life will be like in that wonderful day.

Let me give you some insights from some in the field of science. Just listen to this. "The violent earthquakes and upheavals through the tribulation time will have leveled all the polluted cities of a sinful world, the better to facilitate the erection of new, clean, peaceful communities at the beginning of the millennium. These great land movements will also have eliminated the great mountain ranges and islands of the world, filling up the ocean depths and restoring gentle, globally habitable topography and geography all over the world, as it had been in the antediluvian age before the cataclysmic upheavals of the flood.

"As Isaiah the prophet has foretold, every valley shall be exalted, every mountain and hill shall be made low. The crooked shall be made straight, the rough places plain. The prophets also say the islands will flee away. This reversal of the topographic upheavals of the flood, however, will not send waters over the continents again - in other words, they won't flood the globe - since much of the waters of the ocean will already have been re-elevated above the atmosphere, restoring in some measure the antediluvian waters above the firmament, the canopy of water.

"The worldwide draught of the first half of the tribulation, the cataclysmic splashdowns of bodies from the heavens during the trumpet judgments, and the intensified solar radiations of the bowl judgments will all have contributed to the translation of vast quantities of water vapor far back into the skies. The earth, then, would be sheltered, as it was before the flood. Sheltered from the ultraviolet rays of the sun and that's why people will live to be very old, like they did before the flood.

"Quite probably the immense tectonic movements and the earthquakes and eruptions and landslides may also have trapped vast quantities of water beneath fresh sedimentary and volcanic deposits, reinstating in partial degree the primeval pressurized reservoirs of the great deep, as the Bible calls it, facilitating the birth of copious artesian springs, including one which will feed the vast river emerging from the millennial temple in Jerusalem, described by both Ezekiel and Zechariah. And the seas of the millennial world will be relatively narrow and shallow once again, as in primeval days.

"Furthermore, the restoration of the vapor canopy should in large measure restore the globally pleasant warm climate of that part of the - that period of the earth again. No longer will great atmospheric movements generate violent rainstorms, blizzards, hurricanes, and tornadoes because the uniform temperatures of the global greenhouse will inhibit air mass movements of more than local extent.

“In the original world, the only rains were gentle mists from localized daily evaporation and precipitation, according to Genesis 2:5, keeping the world everywhere at comfortable temperatures and humidities and supporting an abundance of plant and animal life in all regions of the globe. There were no deserts or icecaps or uninhabitable mountain heights, it was all very good. The cataclysm of the great flood destroyed that beautiful world, but the global upheavals of the great tribulation will restore it, at least in measure.”

“Joel wrote, ‘Fear not, O land, be glad and rejoice, for the Lord will do great things. Be not afraid, you beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree bears her fruit, the fig tree and the vine yield their strength. Be glad then, ye children of Zion, rejoice in the Lord your God, for He hath given you the former rain moderately and He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.’”

Scientific expectation goes on. “The redistribution of earth’s topography and restoration of its vapor canopy will result in the elimination of many, if not all, of its wastelands and deserts. And the prophet said in Isaiah, ‘The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them and the desert will rejoice and blossom as the rose, for in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert, and the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water.”

“Somehow there will also come a great healing of the lands and the waters of the earth, healing from the terrible judgment of the tribulation. Before the great flood, the soils were rich in all the needed nutrients and the drinking waters all came pure and fresh from artesian springs, fed from deep underground reservoirs. The destruction of these deep fountains and the devastating land erosion of the great flood largely destroyed God’s primeval terrestrial ecology, leaving the lands depleted and the waters polluted.”

“Originally, all animals as well as man were to derive nourishment only from plant foods, but under the far more rigorous conditions of the postdiluvian environment, God authorized man to eat animal flesh as well. Evidently, for the same reason, many animals also had to become carnivorous. These conditions were further aggravated during the long centuries after the flood with the lands becoming further impoverished and the waters further contaminated, requiring increasingly great expenditures on fertilization and purification.”

“The traumatic upheavals of the tribulation period will have brought these conditions to a climax with devastating famine conditions and with terrestrial waters so depleted and poisoned that all the animals of the sea had perished. Had such conditions been allowed to persist much longer, all life on earth would become impossible. In some marvelous way, God will use the physical convulsions of that awful period to purge and cleanse the land and the waters of the earth, as well as its moral and spiritual climate.”

Possibly, the tectonic and volcanic upheavals and perhaps even the atmospheric bombardments will implant new supplies of needed nutrients and trace elements in the soils. Even the multitudes of dead animals and plants in the lands and the oceans, as well as the skeletons of the millions of dead men and horses at Armageddon and elsewhere, may well become fertilizing agents for the land as they remain scattered far and wide. Unprecedented global earthquakes and eruptions will trigger vast and violent landslides and showers of dirt and rocks, entrapping tremendous volumes of ocean waters beneath great overburdens of solid materials, which will rapidly become pressurized, lithified, and partially sealed.

“This will likely produce at least two effects. In the first place, the sea bottoms will be raised to higher elevation than at present, compensating for the great losses of water caused by the restoration of the atmospheric canopy and by the entrapment of vast volumes beneath the huge landslides, which produced the great reservoirs of fresh water. The entire crust itself will to some extent have shifted and slipped over the earth’s mantle, rearranging the various continental plates to a more nearly uniform distribution of land and sea surface areas.

“Second, this extensive rearrangement will facilitate the development of a new terrestrial system of springs and spring-fed rivers. Isaiah 41 says, ‘I will open rivers into high places and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I’ll make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water.’”

Somehow God is even going to repopulate the oceans. We know that the second bowl judgment resulted in the death of every living soul in the sea so that those fishes who required a marine environment were destroyed, eliminated. But we know that in the great millennial river in Jerusalem described in Ezekiel 47, “It shall come to pass everything that lives, which moves, whithersoever the rivers shall come shall live, and there shall be a very great multitude of fish.” Somehow the Lord is going to bring the fish back to the sea. He’s going to adjust them so they can live in whatever the climate of that new water is. And so it goes.

Well, you say, “Is that all absolutely true or is that a little speculation?” It’s a little speculation. But it may not be too far off. This is the - this is the new creation, this is the glorious liberation of the children of God. This is when the creation is freed from its bondage. That’s the kind of world it’s going to be in terms of ecology or something similar to that, something like that. And when Satan isn’t here, beyond that, it’s going to be a world of blessedness, a world of absolutely blessed, blessed conditions.

Summing up

Though there are those who want to tell us that premillennialism began in the 1800's. Such a fallacy. I have exposed it by tracing it from the Garden and down through the centuries. Though the light was dim for some time, as it was with many other doctrines of the church during Rome's heyday, we see now how this doctrine was merely buried with other treasures for centuries inside a Bible that was largely ignored by the masses, and interpreted only by the elite of Rome.

Unfortunately, the pendulum is swinging away from the literal millennium again in our day, as reformed churches continue to hang on to the teaching they inherited from Mother Rome, and pressure fellow believers in other communions to drop the argument altogether for the sake of unity.

One denomination I know of that used to be strictly premillennial, the Evangelical Free Church, has taken the very word *premillennial* out of its description of the coming King.

We don't want to offend, they say. This feeling of cooperation goes all the way back to Justin Martyr, who, as we quoted above, believed there were good people who believed amillennialism. Therefore let's be loving.

Truly there are good people of this persuasion. But is our faith in the literal Scripture so weak that we must keep making accommodations for those who simply can't believe it?

This ebb and flow of doctrinal positions is true about the events of Genesis 1-11, the gifts of the Spirit, the doctrines of grace, eternal judgment, probably every Biblical position there is. How far will we go to appease people among us who won't accept Scripture as it is written?

Conclusion: Your Kingdom come!

So there you have it. I have traced the concept of kingdom through Moses, the Psalms, Jewish history, the prophets, the words of Jesus, the teachings of the apostles. God's desire for and plan for a kingdom on earth where He will reign supreme, is everywhere. The very timing of it is set. The descriptions are clear. The need is real.

I have drawn a small sketch also of how men turned away from this view early in church history, due to their inability to believe the Scriptures as they are written, in my opinion.

I have shown, I believe, the weakness of trusting in church fathers, Reformers, great preachers. I have pointed us rather to the Spirit of God and a dedicated searching of Scripture for the answers to this issue.

May the love of the kingdom rise in your hearts as you continue your own quest for the truth of God's Word.

Lord, Your kingdom come! Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven! Not just among those You are presently governing, but in all the earth may Your Name be glorified. Even so come, Lord Jesus.

Appendix 1

About hermeneutics.

A quick look on the internet at this topic will reveal that here also is no abiding city for the one desiring to know the truth of Scripture. Many and varied are the approaches to this "science" of interpretation. And each list you will find pretends to be the inspired way of getting at God's truth. I'll quote a few of the items on the lists, and apply them to this present study.

But remember. Hermeneutics is a totally human science if it can be called a science at all. It is clever men defining how we must interpret the Scriptures, based on their own conclusions

about a host of doctrines. Some lists have four items, some five or six, others ten or more. And as one might expect, they do not all agree with one another.

Here are some hermeneutical principles. I should say, suggestions. Gathered from here and there...

1. Interpret the Bible literally. Except [watch out when you see this word!] when the text is obviously symbolic. [The key word here is *obviously*. Obviously to whom? People interpret *obviously* in different ways. So now we must interpret our means of interpretation!]

In this report I have given on the Kingdom of God, I have indeed interpreted the Bible literally. I was especially literal when quoting numbers, such as *one thousand*.

2. Never “spiritualize” the text or find “hidden” meanings.

Total agreement here. The amillennialist is forced to explain away all the specific prophecies about the coming kingdom. Stretching and mangling texts is the only way of avoiding the conclusion that a one-thousand-year reign is coming.

The charismatic strain of the church and the Reformed are in surprising harmony here. They both do a lot of allegorizing. And when one allegorizes a text, it can mean whatever one wants it to mean.

3. Context is king! Look at the verses before and after the ones you are examining.

Indeed! As in Revelation 20 where the *thousand years* are mentioned. The context here is the return of Christ, and a clear chronology of the events of that period is spelled out.

4. Let Scripture interpret Scripture.

Yes. There is a preponderance of evidence for a *literal material kingdom* that will be set up when Jesus returns. When there is a stray verse here and there that seems to say otherwise, let that bulk of evidence speak to the single verse, not the other way around. I believe I have produced enough evidence for a literal kingdom to convince the unprejudiced.

5. Scripture does not contradict Scripture.

The fact that the coming kingdom is literal and physical does not contradict the fact that it is also spiritual and internal.

6. We may understand what a passage means only when we approach it from the author's perspective.

Here I suspect one of those man-made rules made to push a particular agenda. The human author may indeed have a particular perspective. But the Holy Spirit Who gave us the Scriptures through that author is the One Whose perspective we seek.

You see here how hermeneutical principles are only as reliable as the creator of the hermeneutical principle, and thus not a valid way to approach Scripture.

There are others. Like, read from the text, not into it. Trust the clarity of Scripture. Recognize literal and figurative. Our own personal interpretations may be wrong. Study the history of a doctrine in the history of the church, and so on and on...

Interpretation of Scripture is not necessarily an easy thing. I do not mean to make light of how we approach the Bible. Learned men have found ways to obtain the most accurate views. But learned men are flawed and prejudiced just like the rest of us.

I believe that a person full of the Holy Ghost who desires to know the truth of Scripture will little by little know it. In fact, I found some *Biblical* principles of "hermeneutics" that actually can be trusted:

1. John 7:17. *If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.* [Jesus]

That is, You must desire to know and understand.

2. 1 John 2:27. *The anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.* [John]

That is, The Holy Spirit will teach you. Rest in Him and His Word, and allow teachers to confirm.

3. Psalm 119:10, 15,18 and many other verses in this Psalm. The Psalmist asks God *to teach him, to open his eyes, to make him walk in God's path, to give him understanding.*

This combines 1 and 2. Desire first to know the truth. Call on God to guide you into that truth.

And why am I sure that men's principles are not the answer and God's principles are? In the very process of the writing of this book, I became aware of people that slavishly – they believe – follow the rules of hermeneutics, and promote those rules to others, but who come up with

totally different interpretations of Scripture. Though I agree with most of their rules, I have found the premillennial position and they have not.

So much with men's guidance. I believe the words of Jesus and John and the Psalmist will suffice *till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ.* [Paul, Ephesians 4:13-15]

This all takes practice. I am told that men at the FBI who are trained in sniffing out counterfeit money must above all study the *real and true bills* over and over. Then when they see a false bill they know immediately what they have found.

Desire to know. Then study the Word over and over and eventually you will know when you are hearing false teaching about any Biblical topic. It is such processing over many years that has given rise to the book you are now reading.

May God correct me and give me greater insights as I continue to seek His Face and His Word.

Appendix 2

Some Definitions

1. Amillennial. *The denial that an earthly millennium of universal righteousness and peace will either precede or follow the second advent of Jesus Christ .*
2. Chiliasm. *Belief in an earthly thousand-year period of peace and prosperity, sometimes equated with the return of Jesus for that period. Based on Revelation 20.*
3. Gospel of the Kingdom. *The message preached by Jesus when He first came to earth, and which shall be preached all over the world before His return. It is the Good News about the work of the Messiah of Israel: His atoning sacrifice, His resurrection, His coming reign over the earth at His coming.*
4. Kingdom Now. *In Christian thinking, the fact that King Jesus is among us in His people, bringing souls into His future eternal kingdom. For those who have eliminated the Millennial idea of the Kingdom, "Kingdom Now" means the rule of Christ has begun with the establishment of the church.*
5. Kingdom of God. *This term can mean the reign of God over the Universe, generically, or the reign of Jesus Christ as the God-Man on earth when He returns. It can also refer to the rulership of God over His people in their everyday lives at present.*
6. Kingdom of Heaven. *Interchangeable with "Kingdom of God" in the Gospels that mention it.*
7. Millennium. *A period of one thousand years.*
8. Premillennial. *In Christian eschatology, is the belief that Jesus will physically return to the Earth (the Second Coming) before the Millennium, a literal thousand-year golden age of peace. Based on Revelation 20.*
9. Replacement Theology. *The concept that the church has replaced Israel in the heart of God. Israel had a chance, says this theory, many chances, to be the people of God, but refused those offers, and is now abandoned forever.*
10. The Regeneration. *As with the individual man's experience of being born again, so will it be with the entire planet one day. A rebirth of humanity, when Christ judges evil and brings new life to us.*
11. The Restoration of All Things. *The kingdom of Israel had been taken from it and given to others. The day will come when the kingdom will be restored to Israel with the Jewish Messiah at its head.*
12. Times of Refreshing. *This period will come when the Lord returns and renews all things on the planet. It is much the same as "the restoration of all things" and the "regeneration."*
13. Times of the Gentiles. *There is mention of such a time in Revelation 11:2, a period of forty-two months when Jerusalem will be trodden down by Gentiles. Luke mentions a similar time in Luke 21:24, and if this passage in Luke is speaking of the final judgment on Israel, this phrase would mean exactly the same as it does in Revelation.*

14. Zion. *Zion is the city of David, Jerusalem. The name came to stand in for Israel. It was originally a particular hill in old Jerusalem.*

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