

THE
*Coming Kingdom
of God*
by Gil Rugh



*Is it already here,
not yet completed or future?*

The Coming Kingdom of God
Copyright 2009

Published by Indian Hills Community Church
1000 South 84th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska 68510-4499

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations in critical articles or reviews.

Scripture quotations taken from The New American Standard Bible®, Copyright© 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation (www.Lockman.org). Used by permission.

Companion Tapes: GRM 990, GRM 991, GRM 992, GRM 993, GRM 994, GRM 995, GRM 996, GRM 997

Web Site: www.ihcc.org
E-mail: ihcc@ihcc.org
FAX: (402) 483-6716
Phone: (402) 483-4541

C O N T E N T S

Part One: God’s Present or Universal Kingdom	
Chapter One	1
<i>Characteristics of God’s Present Kingdom—His Sovereignty</i>	
Part Two: God’s Prophesied or Coming Kingdom—Two Phases	
Chapter Two	9
<i>The Millennium—The First Phase</i>	
Chapter Three	17
<i>Eternity—The Final Phase</i>	
Part Three: God’s Prophesied or Coming Kingdom— Has It Been, or When Will It Be Established?	
Chapter Four	21
<i>The Establishment of This Kingdom—Three Views</i>	
Chapter Five	27
<i>Why This Kingdom Is Yet Future—Israel’s Rejection of the Messiah Causes a Delay</i>	
Chapter Six.....	39
<i>Why This Kingdom Is Yet Future—Tribulation Paves the Way for God’s Prophesied Kingdom</i>	
Chapter Seven	45
<i>Why This Kingdom Is Yet Future—The Prophesied Counterfeit Kingdom</i>	
Conclusion: Where Will You Reside In Eternity?	53

“But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming, then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death” (1 Corinthians 15:20-26).

Part One

God's Present or Universal Kingdom

Chapter 1

Characteristics of God's Present Kingdom—His Sovereignty

The Bible talks about two kingdoms—one present, and one yet to come. The present kingdom will be the focus of this chapter; the prophesied (or yet to come) kingdom will be the focus of the remainder of this booklet.

However, before studying about the kingdoms of God, a simple question should be answered first. Why? Why study the kingdoms of God? Perhaps financial pressures are weighing heavy on you. Or perhaps struggles in your marriage or in raising your children seem like an insurmountable burden. Thus the question: what does studying about the kingdoms have to do with current, everyday problems? What difference will a better understanding of His kingdom make?

Studying about the kingdom will provide a clear understanding of God's plan for mankind. A vital source of peace in the midst of life's difficulties is knowing that God has a plan—He is in control. Sovereignty not only characterizes the present kingdom, it is also a central characteristic of His coming kingdom.

Therefore, when you study God's kingdom and understand His plan, both now and in the future, a tremendous source of comfort will guard your heart and mind (see Colossians 3:15; Philippians 4:7)—no matter what circumstances you may encounter.

The Universal Kingdom

Three components must be present for something to be called a kingdom: 1) a ruler, 2) a realm to be ruled, and 3) the actual ruling. You could have a ruler but if he is not exercising his rule by reigning over a region, a kingdom does not exist. Thus, when talking about a kingdom, a king has a territory over which he is exercising his rule.

The Bible speaks about a present or universal kingdom—a kingdom that has been present throughout history. In this kingdom, the spotlight is on God’s rule over His creation.

Alva J. McClain, in his book *The Greatness of the Kingdom*,¹ calls this kingdom the universal kingdom of God. This kingdom has always existed. Why is it called universal? The answer is because it encompasses everything—everything in heaven, on earth, and in hell. It involves a control over all events, no matter how small or how large. It includes everyone—believers, unbelievers, the living, as well as the dead. Even the devil and his demons are not exempt. It is a sovereign rule over all creation.

Scripture identifies five characteristics of this present or universal kingdom of God.² These are given in no particular order.

Characteristic #1: No Interruption

This kingdom of God exists without interruption; that is, it exists throughout all time. Earthly kingdoms come and go, but God’s kingdom continues.

Psalms 145:13 says, “Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations.” God’s kingdom is everlasting and knows no end. People come and go, kingdoms come and go, but the kingdom of God endures without end.

Lamentations 5:19 says, “You, O Lord, rule forever. Your throne is from generation to generation.” In the midst of the despair that surrounded the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah could be excused if he had feel-

1. Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom – An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God*. BMH Books, Winona Lake, IN. 1959, 1992.

2. These characteristics are adapted from McClain’s book, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, pp.22-36.

ings of misery and anxiety. Instead, no question or doubt entered his mind. God was sovereign; He still reigned and sat on His throne. His purpose was still being accomplished.

The Babylonians were destroying Jerusalem, but they were merely God's instruments to accomplish His purposes. God was the one who was acting. While Jeremiah did not like the results of His action, he still came to the realization that as king, God can do what will accomplish His will. He is king (without interruption) of an everlasting kingdom.

Characteristic #2: All-Inclusive

All creation is included in God's universal kingdom—angelic creation, human creation, animal creation, and nature. The realm over which God is king is everything and everyone, whether in heaven, on earth, or in hell.

God's sovereign rule over His kingdom includes all aspects of creation, from nature to human beings. Psalm 29 states that what happens in nature is a result of God's action. "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders" (v. 3). "The voice of the Lord hews out flames of fire" (v. 7).

These verses picture the sovereign God acting through what some would call the forces of nature. Nature responds to His instructions. This also extends to the animal world. "The voice of the Lord makes the deer to calve" (v. 9).

God's rule and control is over all aspects of nature. He is directly involved and is sovereign over it. "The Lord sat as king at the flood" (Psalm 29:10). All activity on the earth—the realm of His universal kingdom—is the result of His sitting as king and determining what will happen in His realm. He brings it all about.

Jeremiah 10:6-7 says, "There is none like You, O Lord. You are great and great is your name in might. Who would not fear You, O King of the nations?" Earthly kingdoms exist, but there is One who is King of the nations. The Babylonians may have been the reigning empire at the time Jeremiah wrote, but God is still the king of all the nations.

Jeremiah 10:10 states, "The Lord is the true God; He is the living

God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth quakes and the nations cannot endure His indignation.” As king, God can allow harm and destruction, or He can bring blessing and goodness. It is all under His control.

Daniel 4 records the demise of the king of Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar was a mighty king, one that was feared by all. He was the king of the nation that ruled the world. Nebuchadnezzar was also a very proud king. He went about boasting about all the great things he did and how he established the Babylonian empire. He was filled with pride, and was as godless as he was fierce.

God, who is the ultimate ruler of the nations, intervened in the life of Nebuchadnezzar to show him who truly was King. Daniel 4:16-17 states, “Let his mind be changed from that of a man; let a beast’s mind be given to him. And let seven periods of time pass over him . . . that the living may know that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whom He wishes and sets over it the lowliest of men.”

Nebuchadnezzar would remain like a beast of the field until he recognized that “the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes”—this is repeated three times in this chapter (Daniel 4:17, 25, 32). After seven years of eating grass and roaming in the fields, God restored his mind and he came to his senses, realizing that there was only one true God and that all must submit to Him. “I raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation” (Daniel 4:34).

Nebuchadnezzar, with all his splendor, majesty, might, and power, was there only by the appointment of God—and he could be removed whenever God said the word. God’s sovereignty moved him from a position of great power to a position of extreme lowliness. His sovereignty also restored him to a position of ruling over the empire once again. God establishes kings, and He removes them, all for His purposes.

The psalmist wrote, “The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all” (Psalm 103:19). The universal kingdom includes everything in His creation, and He rules over all.

David understood this point. As he was transferring his kingdom to his son Solomon (1 Chronicles 29), he recognized that ultimately it was God's authority and direction that brought this about, not his (see verses 1 and 11). It was the sovereign God who determined that Solomon was to assume David's throne, because everything in the heavens and earth are under His authority.

Characteristic #3: Providence

In the universal kingdom, divine control is usually exercised providentially. Providence refers to that which comes about by second causes. Illustrations from Scripture will help us better understand providence:

1. When God wanted to part the Red Sea and have His people walk through on dry land (see Exodus 14), He brought a great and strong wind that blew and blew. The waters were set back and the land dried out. God could have spoken and the sea would have parted and the ground would have been dry in an instant. Instead, He chose to use the wind to accomplish His purposes.

This is an act of God's providence. He used a secondary means, or a secondary cause, to carry out His purpose. This was not the forces of nature at work; this was God providentially using the wind to perform this miracle.

Man may try and explain this event by showing how the parting of the sea could have happened by natural causes. However, the Bible says that God was at work, using secondary causes. Thus, we would say that He providentially caused this miracle to help protect His people as they left Egypt.

2. The rise of Esther to the position of queen is another example. Shortly after Esther became queen, the king could not sleep. Many people have sleepless nights, which ordinarily are not a big deal, except that God was at work preserving His people.

During this sleepless night, the king asked one of his slaves to read to him one of the historical records of his kingdom hoping it would put him to sleep. But it "so happens" that the slave read from a section that talked about a man named Mordecai. The king stopped his slave and asked whether they had ever honored Mordecai. They searched the records and found that they had not.

Through the king's sleepless night, Mordecai ended up being honored. And in the process, Israel was preserved from planned destruction. Why couldn't the king sleep that night? Myriads of possibilities exist, but the ultimate answer is providence. God was behind it. He is in control of all these seemingly ordinary details of life and uses them to bring about His purposes.

3. In Isaiah 10, Assyria was the ruling empire of the world—the nation that would conquer the northern kingdom of Israel. “Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger, and the staff in whose hand is My indignation” (v. 5). Isaiah continued, “Is the ax to boast itself over the one who chops with it? Is the saw to exalt itself over the one who wields it?” (v. 15).

These verses show that God wanted to punish Israel for their sin, and the tool He decided to use to punish Israel was Assyria. God said that Assyria was an instrument in His hand to bring about judgment on Israel for their unfaithfulness. Assyria was nothing more than a tool in the hand of God—just like an ax, or a saw, is nothing more than a tool in the hand of the person using it to cut down a tree.

4. Shortly after Assyria conquered Israel, Assyria was then conquered by Babylon. Babylon was the nation God used to punish the southern kingdom of Israel (known as Judah in the Old Testament). But what would become of the Babylonian Empire? They would, in turn, be conquered by the king of Persia.

Isaiah 44 is a fascinating chapter of the Bible. In this chapter, the prophet introduced a man named Cyrus (verse 28). Long before Cyrus' great-grandfather was born, Isaiah told about the man who would become the king of Persia.

Many events took place between the writing of Isaiah 44 and the rise of Cyrus and the Persian Empire. Through it all, we see the hand of God—what we would call providence or secondary causes—working in the details to bring about His plan. Assyria would come and go. Babylon would come and go.

But along came Cyrus, who though he was a pagan, just happened to be instrumental in bringing the remnant of Israel back from captivity to the land of Israel. He is called God's anointed (Isaiah 45:1). Why? Because he was the tool God used to accomplish His purposes.

What do all of these examples illustrate? In His present kingdom, God controls all of life's details. Nothing happens that He is not aware of or allows. The little details of our lives are all under the sovereign control of the one who rules. God providentially uses the little things to bring about the big things.

Kings come and go. Nations rise up and nations fall. God is in complete control of all that happens in His kingdom. He uses anything and everything to accomplish His purposes. From Scripture, we know that God is king over all history, and His will is being accomplished through the empires of the world.

Characteristic #4: Direct Intervention

Rather than using secondary means, sometimes God intervenes directly; He exercises His control by direct means. When God wanted to free His people from the bondage of slavery in Egypt, He did so directly by signs, wonders, and miracles. Jesus' earthly ministry and all of the miracles He did would be another example of His direct intervention.

At certain times throughout history, when God wanted to display and manifest Himself in a way that would be more clear and more evident, He did so Himself directly.

Characteristic #5: Efficacious

Efficacious means that it works; it is effective. The universal kingdom always exists efficaciously, regardless of the attitude of its subjects. God's reign in His kingdom always accomplishes His purposes.

Whether we are talking about angels in heaven, or people on earth, they all ultimately do His bidding; they cannot thwart or stand in the way of His purposes. Here are a couple of Scriptures to back this up:

- “The Lord has established His throne in the heavens and His sovereignty rules over all” (Psalm 103:19)
- “The Lord Most High is to be feared, a great King over all the earth” (Psalm 47:2)
- “God reigns over the nations and sits on His holy throne” (Psalm 47:8)

“When I select an appointed time, it is I who judge with equity. The earth and all who dwell in it melt; it is I who have firmly set its pillars. I said to the boastful, ‘Do not boast,’ and to the wicked, ‘Do not lift up the horn; do not lift up your horn on high, do not speak with insolent pride.’” For not from the east, nor from the west, nor from the desert comes exaltation; but God is the Judge; He puts down one and exalts another” (Psalm 75:2-7)

Everyone and everything is part of His kingdom. You do not become part of this kingdom by an action—you already are by being part of creation. Nothing exists that is not under the sovereign authority and rule of the King. This is His realm—nature, animals, people, and angels are all under His control and authority.

His kingdom reigns over all effectively, efficaciously. It accomplishes His purposes. This is a great comfort. As a child of God, you are privileged to have this window open to better understand what is going on in the world. You may not know why it is happening, but you do know who is behind it. In the tragedies of life, in the blessings of life, and in the confusion of the world, we know that God reigns and His will will be done.

As God’s children in His present kingdom, we can take great comfort knowing that God always exercises His sovereign control over everything and everyone in His creation.

Part Two:
**God’s Prophesied or Coming Kingdom—
Two Phases**

Chapter 2
The Millennium—The First Phase

The second kingdom that the Bible talks about is the prophesied kingdom. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the Magi came looking for “He who has been born King of the Jews” (Matthew 2:2). However, Jesus did not reign as king on the earth at His birth or at any point before He ascended to heaven.

As was developed in chapter 1, Jesus was (and is) reigning in the present or universal kingdom. However, when Jesus came to the earth, He did not assume the role of king. Today the nation of Israel exists, but it is still without a king.

This second kingdom that the Bible discusses is the one that God promised to establish on the earth, over which His Son, the Messiah of Israel, will rule and reign for eternity. He will literally sit on a throne here on earth (cf. Psalm 110). This is a coming kingdom that is yet to be established—a fact that will be discussed further in Part Three.

This prophesied kingdom is comprised of two phases. The first phase of this yet to be established kingdom takes place in what is commonly referred to as the millennium.

On the chart located on the next page, you will see a timeline that gives an overview of history (the church age) and prophesy, as found in Scripture.

Resurrections

1 Corinthians 15:23, 24

**Christ
First Fruits**

After That

Those that Are Christ's at His Coming

Then Comes the End

Second Coming

**First Stage
In the Air**

**Second Stage
To the Earth**



Christ

Matthew 28
Mark 16
Luke 24
John 20

Church Raptured

1 Corinthians 15:50–58
1 Thessalonians 4:13–18



3¹/₂ Years



3¹/₂ Years

1,000 Years

**Old Testament
Saints Raised**

Daniel 12:1, 2

Tribulation Saints

Revelation 20:4

**Unbelievers
Judged**

Rev. 20:11–15

At the end of the church age, the 70th week of Daniel begins (Daniel 9:24-27)—a seven-year period of time that starts shortly after the rapture of the church. At the end of this seven-year period, known as the tribulation, Christ returns to earth to establish His kingdom (Revelation 19).

The first phase of His kingdom is called the millennium. The word millennium literally means “a span or period of 1000 years.”³ We are told no less than six times in the first seven verses of Revelation 20 that this is a 1000-year period of time. Below are the key events that will take place during this period of time.

Judgment of the Nations: Separation of the Sheep and Goats

The millennium starts with the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9). However, before He can have this supper, the King must first determine who can enter the kingdom. Those who can enter will join Him at the marriage supper of the Lamb; those who don't will perish. This is commonly referred to as the separation of the sheep and goats (see Matthew 25).

In Matthew 24, in His discourse to His disciples, Christ unfolded the events of the 70th week of Daniel. In Matthew 25, He talked about the judgment that will occur at the time of His second coming.

The judgment of the nations, or the separation of the sheep and goats, was first mentioned in verses 31-33: “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.”

The sheep and goats are all those people who are still alive when Christ returns to earth to set up His kingdom. All these people are gathered before Christ to be judged.

He told the sheep to enter into the kingdom (v. 34)—a kingdom that they had not been living in before, even though they had been living on

3. Merriam-Webster dictionary, among many others, gives this definition for “millennium”.

earth. It's been prepared, but it hasn't been established on the earth.⁴

The next part of this passage is a very familiar text. Jesus told His disciples (vv. 35-40):

“For I was hungry, you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.

Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you sick, or in prison, and come to You?’

The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’”

He then told the goats that they will not be permitted into the kingdom. Christ told them, “Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels” (v. 41).

This passage about “helping the least of these” is often quoted to urge the church to take care of the poor and be involved in a wide range of social programs. While it is, of course, a good thing to help people, this passage cannot be used to support this cause.

This passage has nothing to do with the church age. This is talking about something that will happen when Christ returns to earth to set up His throne; He is judging those people who have come out of the 70th week of Daniel. All the people alive on the face of the earth when Christ returns are being divided—some are sheep and some are goats.

The sheep are those who “helped the least of these.” Who are “the least of these?” If you do not spiritualize this text, then the only possible answer is the Jews. During this seven-year period, called the tribulation, and in particular during the second half of this period, an all-out attempt by Satan and his followers will take place to annihilate and wipe out the Jews.

4. This would seem to run counter to the belief of the Postmillennial position. See chapter 4 for further discussion about this view of God's prophesied kingdom.

Thus, the only Gentile who would show any kindness to a Jew during this time period would be someone who has come to faith in Christ and recognized the unique place that Jews have in the program of God.

He tells these people to enter into the kingdom and the “righteous into eternal life” (Matthew 25:46). However, to those people who did not show kindness to the Jewish people, and who in turn have rejected Christ, He tells them that they will enter into a place of “eternal punishment” (Matthew 25:46).

Satan Is Bound

Once His throne has been established, and He determines who will join Him in His kingdom, the next thing Jesus will do is to confine Satan. “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed” (Revelation 20:1-3).

The place where Satan is bound is not hell. Rather, the abyss is the holding place for demons that God does not allow to have freedom of movement. Satan will join these demons in this place, and he will only be restricted—he will have no activity on earth at all. He will not be able to deceive the nations during this time.

Population Explosion

During the millennium, the curse is lifted from creation. People will be living in a perfect environment—there will be no wars, no conflicts, no death (except in exceptional cases), no infant mortality, no crime, and no satanic influence. Righteousness will characterize the world.

The people who enter into the kingdom will enter in with their physical bodies. As such, they will have children. In this perfect environment, a population explosion will occur—innumerable children will be born.

Each of these children that are born will be born with a sin nature, for sin has not been eradicated yet. Everyone in the millennial kingdom will live under the authority of the King. They will be required to sub-

mit. Some of those who submit will do so because they are afraid of the consequences of not submitting, not because they want to obey the King.

Fear is what will restrain people in the millennium. People will have a sin nature, but even people with a defiled heart can be restrained by fear of punishment. The indication of Scripture is that there will be no death in the millennium, except for the judgment of God. When someone determines in their heart to kill their neighbor, the sovereign King will step in and kill him first.

Satan Loosed: The Final Rebellion

At the end of the millennium, Satan will be loosed for a short period of time, and will be able to deceive the nations once again. “When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore” (Revelation 20:7-8).

When Satan is loosed, he will go throughout the world and offer himself as an alternative king to Christ. A group of people—those who submitted to the King out of fear but have not had their hearts cleansed by trusting the King to be their Savior—will decide that they would rather have Satan as their king. They wanted to rebel before but they were fearful of the punishment. But now that Satan is loosed, they are eager to follow him as their king. Their number is so large that you cannot count them—they are like the sand of the seashore.

These people will come to Jerusalem to try and dethrone Christ. They will mount an attack against the saints. However, their effort will be in vain as they will be destroyed. “They came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them” (Revelation 20:9).

Satan Thrown Into Hell

When this rebellion is put down, the King will exercise judgment on Satan, the one that was behind it. His fate will be what has been waiting for him since the time he first rebelled against God in heaven.

Hell has always been the ultimate destination of Satan and his followers. Throughout history, he has done everything he could to avoid this certain fate. But he can no longer run from this judgment. “The devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Revelation 20:10).

Hell will be where Satan will reside throughout the rest of eternity. He will never be loosed again. He will never be allowed free to deceive people. Instead, he will spend eternity in torment.

Great White Throne Judgment

The last event of the millennium is the final judgment of Scripture. It is here where all unbelievers are gathered before the throne of the King to await their final judgment.

Like Satan, the verdict rendered will result in the same place of judgment—unsaved people will also spend eternity in hell, being tormented day and night.

The Great White Throne Judgment is a place of judgment not only for those who came through the millennium, but it is the final judgment for all unbelievers who ever lived on the earth. The account of this final judgment is recorded in Revelation 20:11-15:

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.

Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he

was thrown into the lake of fire.

Once this judgment is complete, no more death will ever take place. Hades, the temporary residence for all unbelievers, will be done away with. The final phase of His kingdom—eternity—is now ready to be entered.

Before delving into this final phase of God's prophesied kingdom, a question begs to be answered. Why was there a need for a millennium? Why does God's future kingdom need two phases?

Primarily, the millennium enables God to demonstrate that mankind's main problem has always been our sinful heart. The problem is not with our environment, or the way we were raised, or the social or political conditions that we live in. The problem is the condition of our heart.

In the millennium, people will live in a perfect environment. The curse of creation will be removed. In spite of this, a great rebellion will take place once open rebellion is allowed. Numerous people—more than could possibly be counted—take part in this rebellion. In spite of a perfect environment, people still reject the King and want to go their own way.

The millennium not only enables God to demonstrate that the problem with humanity is not external but internal, it also enables God to demonstrate His final dealing with sin. Once sin is shown to be the problem, God swiftly moves with finality to deal with sin once and for all. Satan, the great deceiver, is tossed into the lake of fire. All unbelievers meet the same fate. Sin is no more!

When believers enter into the final phase of God's kingdom, sin will no longer be present or hold any power over them.

Chapter 3

Eternity—The Final Phase

The eternal kingdom is the believer's residence for all eternity. Specifically, New Jerusalem will be the dwelling place. "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21:1-2).

This New Jerusalem is further described later in Revelation:

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal (Revelation 21:10-16).

This will be a glorious dwelling place for all eternity.

What Is Missing In The Eternal Kingdom

In addition to being an indescribable place to live, the eternal kingdom is also known for what is no longer present.

1. **No Suffering**—Perhaps the most well known, and most anticipated event in eternity is the removal of suffering. “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).
2. **No Temple**—“I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple” (Revelation 21:22). No need for a temple in this kingdom for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.
3. **No Sun or Moon**—“And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it” (Revelation 21:23-24). The glory of God will replace the sun.
4. **No Fear**—In addition to there being no night (for there will be no moon), there will also be no fear. “In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed” (Revelation 21:25). The fact that the gates never need to be closed is symbolic of security. You won’t have to lock the doors; there will be nothing to fear.
5. **No Sin**—This kingdom will be a glorious place where saints will live throughout all eternity, free from the presence and power of sin. This is different than the first phase of God’s prophesied kingdom, or millennium, where sin will be committed and sin’s presence was very much alive. Sin is now eradicated in every aspect for all eternity. “Nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Revelation 21:27).

What Will Be Present In The Eternal Kingdom

Revelation 22 begins with a breathtaking description of God’s eternal kingdom.

1. **Tree of Life**—“Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month” (Revelation 22:1-2). A connection exists between the Garden of Eden at the beginning of creation and at the climax of God’s plan. Believers will be allowed to partake of the tree of life, since they are going to live for eternity in this kingdom. Previously, God had graciously banned Adam and Eve from the Garden before they could eat of this tree. If He had not, and they had eaten of it, all mankind would have been doomed to live in their sin for eternity.
2. **Time in Eternity**—As seen in Revelation 22:2, on either side of the river is the tree of life “bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month.” Some think that there will be no time in eternity, that there would not be any months or seasons. However, we have the tree of life bearing fruit every month. Only God is timeless; created beings cannot be timeless as they have a beginning.
3. **Things to Do**—In dispelling the common myth, believers will not sit on clouds and play harps throughout all eternity. Instead, they will serve the King. “There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him” (Revelation 22:3). There will be things to be done through eternity; believers will not be bored.

Jesus said in John 14, “I go to prepare a place for you. If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that were I am, there you may be also” (vv. 1-3). The place He is preparing for us is in the New Jerusalem, where believers will live with Him for all eternity. What a glorious future!

Part Three

God's Prophesied or Coming Kingdom—Has It Been, or When Will It Be Established?

Chapter 4

The Establishment of This Kingdom— Three Views

Having looked at the present kingdom as well as the two phases of the prophesied kingdom, the focus of this section is on when the prophesied kingdom will be established. Or has it already been established?

Some think that we are in the kingdom today. Others believe that the effort and good works of the saints will help improve the condition of the world and thereby usher in the kingdom. And still others believe that the world is a miserable place, destined only to get worse until Jesus Christ directly intervenes and sets up His kingdom.

Who is correct? In this chapter, the three main views of when this prophesied kingdom will be established will be discussed. This will be more of an overview, not an in-depth development, of each view.

Postmillennialism

The name postmillennialism indicates that those who hold this position believe that Christ will return to earth after the millennium to establish His kingdom. His return will announce the kingdom, culminating a long period of time in which the world is getting better and the nations are won to Christ.

Postmillennialists believe that the millennium is already present. “The kingdom of God is a present earthly reality, not a future heavenly reality. It is here and now, and it is growing gradually.”⁵ This kingdom is not a realm or domain over which the Lord reigns. More correctly, it is the rule of Christ in the hearts of men, not something to be introduced at a future time.⁶

Postmillennialists believe that all of the nations will be converted prior to the return of Christ.⁷ Those who hold this view believe that through the preaching of the gospel and the good works of believers, the world is going to get better—so much better that Christ will naturally come and establish His kingdom and believers will move into eternity.

Another tenet of the postmillennial view is that there will be a long period of peace on earth. This period is called the millennium. “As more and more persons submit themselves to the Lord’s plan and begin to practice the teachings and way of life that He established, peace will be the natural result.”⁸

It is this tenet that caused postmillennialism to almost die out during World War I. When World War II came along, it almost nailed the coffin shut on this view, as most of its adherents became disillusioned with this concept that the earth would be shrouded in a long period of peace. However, this view is making a comeback of sorts, and is still a position held by people today.

Amillennialism

In English, usually when an “a” is put in front of a word, it negates that word. Thus, an “a” in front of “millennial” negates the millennium. Therefore, amillennialists teach that there will not be a literal, physical kingdom on earth.

The major tenet of amillennialism is that Christ will not literally reign on earth for one thousand years; there will be no millennium. His

5. *Contemporary Options in Eschatology*, Millard J. Erickson, (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI; 1977, 1983), p.66.

6. *Ibid.*, p.55.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*, p.56.

second coming will usher all believers into His eternal kingdom.

Another significant element of amillennialism is its treatment of the two resurrections referred to in Revelation 20:4-5. The first resurrection, they say, is spiritual, while the second is either physical or spiritual with most saying it is physical.⁹ Thus, to amillennialists, the first resurrection symbolizes the victory of the martyrs. The second resurrection, mentioned in Revelation 20:5, refers to the general, physical resurrection taught in the New Testament.¹⁰

Amillennialists take a different approach to interpreting Scripture. In particular with prophecy, they do not literally interpret these passages.¹¹ Instead, they look for the deeper meaning and often view these passages through a “spiritual” or allegorical lens. A man named Origen was the first prominent figure to promote interpreting Scripture spiritually or allegorically rather than literally. Augustine, in the fifth century, was the one who popularized this idea.

Augustine started out as a premillennialist. However, he lived in a period of history where remarkable changes were taking place. Constantine had declared Christianity to be the official religion of the empire. As a result, Christians that endured so much suffering over a long period, were no longer under persecution. It seemed to Augustine that the kingdom had arrived.

Augustine reevaluated his position and adopted the interpretation methodology of Origen. Since it appeared that the kingdom had come, this kingdom then could not be a literal, earthly, physical kingdom for Christ had not returned. Thus, he looked for “deeper” meanings in the Scriptures to explain that the kingdom had come.

Eventually, he came to the position that the church is the kingdom, and the kingdom is a spiritual kingdom that exists in people’s hearts. Augustine’s view became very popular, and eventually it was adopted by the Roman Catholic Church.

When the Reformation came along in the 16th century, the Reform-

9. *Ibid.*, pp.76-77.

10. *Ibid.*, p.78.

11. *Ibid.*, p.84.

ers—men like Luther and Calvin, who came out of Roman Catholicism—adopted the Catholic eschatology. They were battling and dying for the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone and they never changed the doctrine of the kingdom that the Roman Catholic Church embraced.

Thus, Augustine's idea of a non-literal kingdom became the dominate idea of the Catholic Church and of the Reformed Church, and continued to be the case through history. Today, we call this view the amillennial view of the prophesied kingdom.

Premillennialism

Premillennialists believe that Christ will literally return to earth before the millennium to establish His kingdom; this is known as His second coming. This return of Christ will dramatically inaugurate His kingdom.

Premillennialists believe that Christ's second coming will bring Satan and his demons under control, bind them for one-thousand years. Without this, the conditions found in the millennium would be impossible.¹² This is a literal one-thousand-year period of time.

Premillennialists differentiate between the two resurrections of Revelation 20:4-5 on the basis of their participants, not on the basis of their natures.¹³ Premillennialists believe that both resurrections are physical. In addition, they believe that only believers are involved in the first resurrection, whereas the rest of humanity (i.e., non-believers) are not resurrected until the end of the millennium. At this second resurrection, only unbelievers participate; they are judged at the Great White Throne.

Lastly, premillennialists see a special place for Israel in God's future plan. Unlike amillennialists, they do not believe that the church has replaced Israel in God's plan. Because of His covenants with Israel, they believe that Israel will be restored to its special place in God's economy. Jesus will sit on the literal throne of David and rule the world from Jerusalem, thereby fulfilling the Old Testament promises made to Israel

¹² Ibid, p.92. Also see chapter two of this booklet for further discussion about the millennium.

¹³ Ibid, p.93.

(see 2 Samuel 7).¹⁴

Which of these three views is correct? Which view best represents what the Bible says about God's future kingdom? Are we in the kingdom, or is the kingdom yet to come? The answers to these questions will be the focus of the remaining chapters of this booklet.

¹⁴ Ibid, p.103.

Chapter 5

Why This Kingdom Is Yet Future—Israel's Rejection of the Messiah Causes a Delay

Of the three views—postmillennialism, amillennialism, premillennialism—only one of them insists on a consistent, literal interpretation of Scripture. And of these three, only one of them states that we are not in the kingdom now.

A number of reasons exist as to why premillennialists believe the prophesied kingdom is yet future. From a belief that the Old Testament covenants given to Israel are yet to be fulfilled (and have not been fulfilled by, or transferred to the church), to a literal interpretation of the prophecies contained in the Books of Daniel, Zechariah, and Revelation, to a literal interpretation of the prophecies that Jesus gave while here on earth (Matthew 24-25), premillennialists have these reasons (plus many more) as to why they believe the kingdom is yet future.

Old Testament Covenants with Israel

Believing that Old Testament covenants are still viable for Israel, premillennialists believe that when Israel rejected the Messiah, it caused a delay as to when the kingdom would be established.

The foundational covenant that God established with the nation Israel was the Abrahamic Covenant, found in Genesis 12. This is an unconditional covenant that God made with Abraham and his descendants, the people of Israel.

The Davidic covenant, established in 2 Samuel 7, is an elaboration of just one portion of the Abrahamic covenant. In this covenant, God promised King David that one of his descendants would be seated on the

throne of David for eternity. “When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever ... Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever” (2 Samuel 7:12-13,16).

There was no confusion in David’s mind as to what God was talking about. David is a literal person, sitting on a literal throne, ruling over a literal, earthly kingdom. God promised David that one of his descendants would rule on his throne forever. The kingdom of Israel will not end, as a king—a literal descendant of David—will sit on the throne for eternity.

Daniel’s Prophecies

In the Book of Daniel, specifically chapters 2 and 7, God revealed what the future holds for earthly kingdoms. Through Daniel the prophet, God declared the fate of the coming empires of the world, beginning with Babylon, followed by the empire of the Medes and Persians, the Greek empire, and then the Roman Empire.

Daniel’s prophecy further declared that the Roman Empire would ultimately be divided into two—an eastern and western empire. Eventually, a revived form of the Roman Empire would be the next earthly kingdom to arise. This kingdom will arise from the western empire and be dominated by a ten-nation confederacy ruled by one dominant person.

This will be the last empire to rule the world, as God will dramatically intervene in the affairs of the world. He will shatter this empire and the kingdoms of the earth and set up a kingdom over which His Son will rule. He will replace the kingdoms of the earth with a kingdom that will never end. “I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will

not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13-14).

The title “Son of Man,” used in Daniel 7, is also used 83 times in the gospels, 82 times by Christ. It is a title that emphasizes the humanity of Christ, and became the title of the Messiah. Thus, when Jesus used the title, many Jews recognized it and connected it back to Daniel 7. Those who believed in Jesus realized that their Messiah, the Son of Man, had to be a man, a descendant of David, to sit on the throne of David.

The Gospel of Luke and the Davidic Covenant

Bring all of this Old Testament background to the gospels. In the Gospel of Luke, the angel Gabriel made an announcement to Mary, “a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David” (Luke 1:27). He said: “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end” (Luke 1:30-33).

In this passage, God reveals that Jesus is a descendant of David. As such, not only is He entitled to sit on the throne of David, He will indeed sit on that throne forever in a kingdom that has no end. This passage has a clear connection to the original promise made to David in 2 Samuel 7. All Jews would make this connection—and so should people today. The church is not in view in Luke 1; a kingdom of the heart is not what comes to the mind of the Jewish reader.

An announcement was made to the shepherds: “An angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord’” (Luke 2:9-11).

Jesus had to be born in Bethlehem because that was the city of David. He had to be a descendant of David so that he could sit on the literal throne of David. The throne of David had to exist on earth, in Jerusalem, to fulfill the promise made in the Davidic covenant. Thus, before Jesus

was even conceived, let alone born, Gabriel announced that Mary would supernaturally bear a child who would become the King of Israel. This truth was later confirmed to the shepherds on the night He was born.

The Gospel of Matthew and the Delay of the Kingdom

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is seen as the King who would fulfill the promise made in the Davidic Covenant. However, because of the religious leaders' hard hearts, the Jews rejected Him as their King. This rejection caused a delay in when Jesus would establish His kingdom on earth.

Matthew Chapter 1

The genealogy of Jesus is recorded in Matthew 1:1-17. Matthew traced his line all the way back to David, thereby showing that Jesus was qualified to sit on the throne of David. The account continues: "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (v. 21).

Jesus fulfilled the prophecy recorded in Isaiah 7:14. Matthew wrote, "Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,' which translated means, 'God with us'" (vv. 22-23). Jesus is both God and man; fully divine and fully human. As such, He uniquely fulfills the promise of the Davidic covenant.

Matthew Chapter 2

Approximately two years had passed after the birth of Jesus when magi, wise men from the east, arrived in Jerusalem. Upon their arrival, they asked, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him" (v. 2). They came to Jerusalem because this was the capital of Israel. If a king was born, logic would dictate that he would be found in the capital city.

They came to Jerusalem expecting that everyone would know about the birth of the king. However, no one knew about it. No one was celebrating His arrival. The Jews knew exactly what king the magi were referring to—their Messiah. Even Herod knew this; he gathered the re-

ligious leaders together to discuss this question, not his political leaders. “Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They said to him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: “And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel”’ (vv. 4-6).

The Jewish religious leaders had no trouble telling Herod and the magi that the only legitimate place that the King of the Jews, their Messiah, could be born was Bethlehem. Micah the prophet had prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (see Micah 5:2), and they took this to be a literal prophesy.

Matthew Chapter 3

John the Baptist began his ministry. “Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”’ (v. 1). John was preparing the way for the Messiah. Why did he preach that they needed to repent?

When the Messiah arrived, the Jews knew that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and that He would sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem. The reason John told them to repent was because of what was prophesied to happen when the Messiah came. He would come to judge all unbelievers for their sin. The Jews knew that when the Messiah comes, it will be, at first, a day of judgment where He will pour out His wrath on unbelieving rebels. Thus, John warned people that they needed to repent because the Messiah was coming.

Matthew Chapter 4

When Jesus began His public ministry, He started proclaiming the exact same message as John the Baptist. “From that time Jesus began to preach and say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”’ (v. 17). The kingdom that was prophesied in the Old Testament was going to be set up on earth, and only those who turn from their sin and believe in the Messiah would be part of it.

Jesus performed many miracles during His earthly ministry. He did

not do these because He had a social program to meet the needs of the poor or to heal the sick. He performed miracles for a very specific purpose. “Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people” (v. 23). Jesus was proclaiming the good news of the kingdom to the Jewish people. At the same time He was performing all sorts of miracles.

His purpose in doing this was to demonstrate that the kingdom was at hand. The Jews knew the characteristics of the kingdom that the Messiah would establish on the earth. It would be a place where there would be no more sickness, no more disease, and no more pain. Thus, Jesus performed miracles to announce to the Jews that the kingdom was at hand, and that He, as their King, would remove disease, sickness, and pain. He gave them a taste of the coming kingdom and urged them to repent and join Him in this kingdom.

Matthew Chapter 8

Matthew further displayed this truth later in his gospel. In this chapter, he tells us about other miracles Jesus performed. “When Jesus came into Peter’s home, He saw his mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever. He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she got up and waited on Him. When evening came, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill. This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: ‘He Himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases’” (vv. 14-17).

The Jewish reader would readily recognize this passage in Isaiah as being a Messianic prophecy. It would resonate with them that the Messiah was there, the kingdom was at hand, and that He was performing miracles to demonstrate that Jesus was their Messiah. The kingdom would be established on earth if He was received by the Jews as their King.

Matthew Chapter 9

Matthew wrote that the Pharisees were not impressed with Jesus’ miracles. “But the Pharisees were saying, ‘He casts out the demons by

the ruler of the demons.’ Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness” (vv. 34-35).

Jesus was ministering to Jews, demonstrating His power and thus proclaiming that the kingdom was at hand. However, the religious leaders, the Pharisees, rejected Him and His miracles. The kingdom cannot be established on earth until the Jews repent of their sin and respond in faith to Jesus as their Messiah.

Matthew Chapter 10

When Jesus commissioned His disciples, He gave them authority over unclean spirits, and to heal every kind of disease and sickness (v. 1). The reason Christ gave them this power was so the Jews would believe their message. And what was their message? “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand’” (vv. 5-7).

Their mission was to go strictly to the Jews and to proclaim to them that the kingdom was at hand. The kingdom was promised to Israel; ultimately it will encompass the world, but it is still centered in Israel. However, it cannot be established on earth until the nation Israel turns from their sin and trusts in their Messiah.

Matthew Chapter 12

This chapter is the turning point of the gospel of Matthew. From the middle of this chapter forward, the kingdom is no longer offered to the nation Israel. The Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah, and thus have rejected the kingdom.

In this chapter, Jesus cast a demon out of a person, causing an interchange between Jesus and the Pharisees, which ultimately led to the Jews rejecting Him as their Messiah:

Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw. All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, ‘This man cannot be

the Son of David, can he?’ But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, ‘This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons.’ And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, ‘Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? For this reason they will be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you’ (vv. 22-28).

The Jewish leaders said He cast out demons because His authority came from Satan. Jesus, in turn, said that His authority to cast out demons came from God, thus demonstrating that He was the Messiah and that the kingdom was being offered.

As a result of this interchange, Israel committed a sin that could not be forgiven. “Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come” (vv. 31-32).

Jesus stated that because the religious leaders rejected Him as the Messiah, the offer of the kingdom would be withdrawn from them. This is not a permanent withdrawal, as God is not done with the nation of Israel. However, for that generation, at that time, He was done with them. They rejected the King, and thus His kingdom could not be established.

Matthew Chapter 13

Chapter 13 is often misunderstood. It is at this time that Jesus began communicating through parables. Something had changed.

Some think that Jesus told parables to help clarify the truth. This is not correct. Rather, Jesus spoke in parables to hide the truth from unbelievers. After telling His first parable, the disciples asked, “‘Why do You speak to them in parables?’ Jesus answered them, ‘To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and

he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand” (vv. 10-13).

Jesus still told the Jews the truth, but He told them truth in a form that did not allow them to comprehend what He was saying. He did this because they had rejected the Messiah, and thus the offer of the kingdom was now being withheld from them. The disciples, however, did not reject Jesus as Messiah and thus they were able to understand the truth about the kingdom. It was not a mystery to them because they accepted the revelation that Jesus is God.

The kingdom was, however, a mystery to those who rejected Jesus as the Messiah. The kingdom had not changed—it was still the same kingdom, the same King, the same characteristics of the kingdom—however, the truth about the kingdom was now a mystery to unbelievers. Jesus spoke in parables to the Jewish people because they did not accept the truth, even when it was plainly presented to them.

Thus, in Matthew 13, the mystery that is revealed is that there will be a delay in the establishment of the kingdom. The parables recorded in this chapter do not change anything about the kingdom; they merely tell us that there is now going to be a time lapse before the kingdom is set up on earth.

The kingdom will not be established with the King at His first coming to earth. Rather, there will be a time of sowing the Word of God and preaching about the coming kingdom. Then, after Jesus departed, at a future, undetermined time, He will return to set up His kingdom. The parables talk about the period between His first and second coming.

In the parable of the wheat and tares, Jesus told the Jews that a good man sowed seed in his field, and then an enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat. The wheat and tares were allowed to grow together until the harvest. At the harvest, the reapers are told to first gather the tares. They are to be bound into bundles and burned. The reapers are then to gather the wheat to the barn. (vv. 24-30).

After the crowds left, Jesus explained this parable to His disciples.

The disciples did not understand this parable either, and needed Him to explain it to them. Jesus said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man” (v. 37). Thus, Jesus was preaching the good news about Himself, about the establishing of the kingdom, about the truth concerning the King.

The field where the seed is sown is the world (v. 38). The field is not the church, it is the world. The wheat and tares grow together in the world, not in the church.

The good seed are the sons of the kingdom, while the tares are the sons of the evil one (v. 38). The enemy who sowed the tares is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are the angels (v. 39).

Jesus concluded His explanation of the parable by saying:

So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (vv. 40-43).

Jesus was talking about future events in this parable. We have not separated the wheat from the tares. We are not shining in the kingdom. The message about the kingdom had not changed. The only thing that changed was that there would be a delay, a time lapse, before the kingdom would be established. Christ’s first coming would result in suffering and death. At His second coming, He will come to rule and reign.

Matthew Chapter 16

In this chapter, Jesus told His disciples that He had to go to Jerusalem to suffer many things and be killed (v. 21). Thinking he was speaking for God, Peter took Jesus aside and rebuked Him. In essence, Peter said that could not be. They had spent three years with Him and were waiting to follow Him to Jerusalem to set up His kingdom, not to go to Jerusalem to see Him suffer and die.

After all the parables and explanations, even His disciples did not

understand. They could not comprehend that God's plan involved the Messiah coming to earth a first and a second time, with a time gap in between. The parables of Matthew 13 unfolded this time gap, but they still did not understand.

In light of this delay, Christ explained to the disciples what following Him would now entail. "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" (v. 24). He called them to a life of suffering and rejection. He was going to Jerusalem to take up His cross and suffer and die. Those who followed Him would have to take up a cross also.

With this rejection of the Messiah came a delay. In addition, this delay brought about a change in message. At first, both John the Baptist's and Jesus' message was to repent for the kingdom of God was at hand. Now, the message was to take up a cross and expect suffering as you follow Jesus. The kingdom had not changed, just the time when it would be established.

Amillennialists say that with this change in message came a change in the actual kingdom. They claim it is now a kingdom of the heart, and will no longer be a literal kingdom to be established on earth. However, Jesus still spoke of the kingdom as a literal place.

Matthew Chapter 20

The mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus and asked, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left" (v. 21). Jesus did not respond, "The kingdom is in your heart; there are no thrones for your sons to sit on."

Instead, He answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" (v. 22). The two sons said to Him, "We are able." Jesus then said, "My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father" (vv. 22-23).

Their mother did not have any misunderstandings about the kingdom—that it was still a literal, physical kingdom with Christ sitting on a literal throne, and with a throne on either side of Him. The kingdom had not changed. The only thing that had changed was that it was not going

to happen at His first coming. It is a future kingdom. The rejection of the Messiah caused a delay, and thus it will not be established until He comes a second time.

Thus, the period of time we now live in is the gap between the first and second coming of Christ. During this gap, the message of Jesus Christ and the cross is proclaimed, along with the hope of His second coming to earth to establish His kingdom. Only those who bow their knees, repent of their sin, and trust in Christ as their Savior will be allowed into this coming kingdom. All who reject Him as their Savior are condemned and will not have a place in the future kingdom of God. “He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God . . . He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:18, 36).

Chapter 6

Why This Kingdom Is Yet Future—Tribulation Paves the Way for God's Prophesied Kingdom

The tribulation is a time of wrath and judgment, as God completes His program with Israel, and prepares them for the kingdom He will establish. It is a seven-year period, often called the 70th week of Daniel.

The Old Testament records much of the history of Israel. Once held in captivity in Egypt for 400 years, and having wandered in the wilderness for 40 years after being freed from their captivity, the Jewish people are finally on the verge of entering the promised land of Canaan. In Deuteronomy, Moses warned the people:

So watch yourselves, that you do not forget the covenant of the Lord your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything against which the Lord your God has commanded you. For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. When you become the father of children and children's children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord your God so as to provoke Him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed. The Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the Lord drives you (Deuteronomy 4:23-27).

Moses' warning is straightforward—if the people disobey the Lord

and worship anything other than the one true God, their punishment will result in Israel being removed from the land. They will be destroyed. This does not mean that they will be utterly annihilated. God will allow a remnant to remain, though that remnant will be scattered among the nations and will be few in number.

If Israel chose to disobey, judgment would come. They would suffer destruction. However, because of His covenantal relationship with the nation, Israel would not be completely wiped out. God will remain faithful to His promises to the nation, even if they are not faithful to Him.

History tells us that Israel did not heed Moses' warning. They followed after other gods and chose to disobey and turn their hearts away from God. As a result, ultimately they were driven from the Promised Land. The Assyrians took the ten northern tribes into captivity, while the Babylonians removed the remaining two tribes from the land of Israel.

The Jewish people remained scattered throughout the nations of the world for more than 2000 years. They wandered as a landless people until 1948, when the modern day nation of Israel was established. This return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel does not fulfill God's covenantal promise to His people. They may be back in the land—though not all of the land that was promised them is part of modern day Israel—but they do not have a king. They will not have a king, their Messiah, until they are ready to repent of their sin and cry out to God to save them.

This is the ultimate purpose of the tribulation. God will use the terrible events of this seven-year period to turn up the heat on Israel. God brings pressure to His people so that they will be brought to their knees and cry out in despair. When Israel returns to God in repentance, He will then intervene to deliver them.

Daniel 9 outlines God's plan and program for Israel. It is the backbone of His prophetic plan for the nation. This chapter began with Daniel studying the writings of the prophet Jeremiah. Through this study, Daniel came to understand that the Babylonian captivity would last for 70 years. Realizing that they were nearing the 70th year prompted Daniel to pray (v. 3).

In response to Daniel's fervent prayer, the angel Gabriel came to him. He told Daniel about God's future plans for Israel:

Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place. So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate (Daniel 9:24-27).

Literally, seventy sevens have been decreed, says Gabriel. Seventy seven-year periods have been decreed to map out God's plan and purpose for Israel. A 490-year period will climax God's program for His chosen people. Obviously this period of time cannot include the kingdom, because it is eternal and will last forever. However, this 490-year period will bring Israel to the place where they are ready for the kingdom to be established.

According to the passage, these seventy weeks are broken down into seven weeks, and 62 weeks, and then the final week, or seven-year period. The beginning point for these 70 weeks was when the decree was given to rebuild the city of Jerusalem (this took place in Nehemiah 2). Scholars agree that this decree was given in 444 or 445 B.C.

Thus, seven weeks is 49 years. That is how long it took to rebuild the temple, starting in 445 B.C. Another 62 weeks, or a total of 483 years, elapsed before the Messiah was cut off. This, of course, happened when He was crucified on the cross. After this, there is a gap in time. Because the Jews rejected their Messiah, there is a delay in the establishment of

His kingdom. There is a gap between His first and second coming. As Daniel put it, there is a gap between the 69th and 70th weeks.

As Gabriel told Daniel, the 70th week would not begin until the “prince who is to come” will make a firm covenant with the many for one week. What begins this final week, or final seven-year period, is the covenant that the prince who is to come signs with Israel. Some think that the 70th week will begin with the rapture of the church, but as Daniel 9 states that is clearly not the case. The rapture could occur and there could be a period of days, weeks, or months before this covenant is signed. It probably will not be a long period of time, because part of the purpose of removing the church is so that God can complete His program with Israel. The church does not come into existence until after the 69th week, and there is biblical evidence to suggest that it will be removed prior to the beginning of the 70th week.

The prince who is to come is the antichrist. He will be the one dominant ruler of the revived Roman Empire, which is made up of ten nations. In Daniel 9:27, Gabriel stated that in the middle of that final seven-year period, the prince will put an end to sacrifice and grain offering. This is a change, and marks the division of the seven-year period into two three-and-one-half-year segments. In the first half, Israel will be allowed to offer up sacrifices in their temple.

At the halfway point, however, the prince will put an end to this worship. Instead, he will set himself up as the only one to be worshiped. This is called the abomination of desolation in the Scriptures. It is at this point that the antichrist will break his covenant with Israel and will desecrate the temple. He desecrates the temple by claiming to be God.

After this abomination, the final three-and-one-half years of the tribulation will be marked with intense persecution and outpouring of God’s wrath, such as the world has never seen before. In fact, Matthew 24:21-22 says, “For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.”

Revelation chapters 6-19 describe the events of the 70th week of Daniel. In Revelation 11:2, John talks about Jerusalem being trodden

under foot for 42 months. Of course, 42 months is exactly three-and-one-half years. In Revelation 11:3, the two witnesses are given authority to prophesy for 1260 days, which is exactly three-and-one-half years. Scripture is consistent and clear as to the timeline for the unfolding of God's final plan for Israel.

In Revelation 12, intense persecution has broken out in the middle of the tribulation, and the women—the nation of Israel—fled into the wilderness to a place prepared by God so that they could be nourished for 1260 days (v. 6). Again, Scripture is consistent on how long the tribulation will last.

There are yet seven years in God's program with Israel before Christ will return a second time to set up His kingdom on earth. The purpose of this final week of Daniel, known as the tribulation, is to bring Israel to its knees, to repent of its sin, and to embrace Jesus as their Messiah. Without the intense persecution of the tribulation, Israel would not be brought to a place of repentance.

Therefore, the tribulation paves the way for God's prophesied kingdom to be established. Since the tribulation has not occurred, it obviously stands to reason that the establishment of the kingdom has not occurred as well. A literal interpretation of Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy can only lend itself to a yet future establishment of God's kingdom.

Chapter 7

Why This Kingdom Is Yet Future— The Prophesied Counterfeit Kingdom

Attempt #1: The Tower of Babel

Satan's first attempt at establishing a counterfeit kingdom was implemented at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11). After the great flood, Noah and his family repopulated the earth. At first this multitude of people were all centered in one location, primarily because they all spoke the same language and used the same words (see Genesis 11:1).

The descendants of Noah “journeyed east [and] they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there” (Genesis 11:2). The land of Shinar later became known as Babylon, and today is known as Iraq.

After a time, “They said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.’ And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. They said, ‘Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth’” (Genesis 11:3-4).

Satan's goal was for the people of earth to gather together in the capital city of the world and build a religious focal point. The people built a tower, and on top of the tower was the place of worship. Satan knew from the beginning that if the world was going to be unified, it would need to have a religion that unified it. Satan's aim was not just to dominate the world; he wanted all people to worship him rather than God.

God knew what Satan was trying to do. “The Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. The Lord

said, ‘Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them’” (Genesis 11:5-6). God knew that mankind was on track to establish a one-world kingdom, centered in one city (Babylon), and united by one religion (worship of a false god/Satan).

Thus, God knew that He needed to intervene in the affairs of man. “‘Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another’s speech.’ So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city” (Genesis 11:7-8). God intervened because it was not part of His plan to allow this one-world kingdom and one-world false religion . . . at that time.

Attempt #2: The Tribulation

There will, however, come a time when it will be part of God’s plan to allow a one-world kingdom that is united by the religion that worships Satan. In Revelation 17, John recorded the events that will occur toward the end of the 70th week of Daniel, otherwise known as the tribulation.

It will be at the mid-way point of the tribulation that the antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel, putting an end to sacrifices in their temple, and setting himself up as the only object of worship. Thus, at the start of Revelation 17, which describes the end of the tribulation, Satan has been the object of worship for nearly three-and-one-half years. John wrote,

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality” (Revelation 17:1-2).

Most inhabitants of the earth in those days will gladly worship the antichrist. They will eagerly participate in all kinds of immorality.

John continued, “I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns” (Revelation 17:3). This image of seven heads and ten horns is an image that Daniel

also saw (Daniel chapter 2 and 7). Daniel saw four different beasts, picturing four different coming world empires starting with Babylon.

In Revelation, John goes back even before Babylon, to talk about two empires that preceded it. These were not the only two empires that preceded Babylon, but the Bible is only concerned with those empires that impact Israel. John includes Egypt—the place where Israel first became a nation—and Assyria—the empire that God used to carry the ten northern tribes into captivity—along with the other nations that Daniel mentioned: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the revived Roman Empire.

These seven empires are represented by the seven heads in Revelation 17:3. The ten horns, just like in Daniel, represent the revived Roman Empire, which is the empire of the antichrist. Next John describes the beast: “The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come” (Revelation 17:8). This is the antichrist, the man who will rule during this seven-year period in a federation of ten nations.

Out of this ten-nation federation will come the beast, the little horn. The ten kings, or rulers of these ten nations are supportive of the little horn. “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast” (Revelation 17:12-13).

During the first three-and-one-half years of the tribulation, this ten-nation federation is ruling the world. During the last three-and-one-half years, the little horn, or antichrist, will assume total control, and the ten nations will agree that he ought to lead; he will have their backing. Satan’s goal throughout this seven-year period is to set up a counterfeit kingdom that worships him, and thus attempt to prevent Christ from establishing His kingdom on earth. This has been his plan from the beginning.

Satan's Plan from the Beginning

Revelation 12 provides an overview of what Satan's plan has been since the beginning. In this chapter, John wrote, "A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; and she was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth" (vv. 1, 2). Roman Catholicism says that this woman mentioned here is the virgin Mary, thereby giving further justification for their worship of her.

However, Mary is not in view in this passage of Scripture. Rather, it is a reference to Israel. In Genesis 37, Joseph was relaying his second dream to his father and brothers. "Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me" (v. 9). His father, Jacob, rebuked him for saying such a thing. "What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?" (v. 10).

His family knew exactly what Joseph was saying. The sun and moon referred to Joseph's parents, while the eleven stars were a reference to Joseph's brothers. Ultimately, these eleven brothers, along with Joseph, became the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. Thus, in Joseph's dream, the nation Israel was going to bow down before Joseph. The sun, moon, and stars, therefore, represent Israel.

Therefore, in Revelation 12, when John mentioned a woman clothed with the sun and the moon and the twelve stars, the Jewish reader would automatically know that this was a reference to Jacob and his twelve sons, or the nation Israel.

The text of Revelation 12 said that she, Israel, gave birth to a child. This child was the Messiah, as He was, of course, born in Israel. The passage continues, "Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems" (v. 3). The great red dragon is Satan. How do we know this? Verse 9 of this chapter says so: "And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world."

Thus, Satan appears with seven heads and ten horns. The seven heads are the seven earthly empires that have impacted Israel, as was discussed in Revelation 17. The ten horns, of course, are the ten nations that form the revived Roman Empire that is ruling the world in the tribulation. The picture of Satan with seven heads and ten horns shows that these empires of the world are under his control; he is the god of this world.

On his seven heads are seven diadems. The diadems represent the crown of the king, or, in short, his authority to rule. Next John wrote, “And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth” (Revelation 12:3). This is a reference to the rebellion that took place in heaven, when Satan tried to set himself up as God; a third of the angels followed Satan in this rebellion and lost their position in heaven.

The next event mentioned is: “And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child” (Revelation 12:3). This is a reference to the events that happened when the Messiah was born. Satan tried to kill Jesus, by orchestrating the plan that had Herod order all male children under the age of two murdered (cf. Matthew 2:16).

Some may ask, “He was going to die anyway; what difference would it make if he died as a child, or as an adult?” The difference is that Christ had to die by being lifted up on the cross (cf. John 3:14). He could not die as a child at the hands of Herod’s ruthless henchmen; instead, He had to die on the cross. Satan’s goal has always been to frustrate God’s plan. In this case, his goal was to try and keep Christ from going to the cross and paying the penalty for our sin—and ultimately to rule and reign on earth in the coming kingdom.

“And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne” (Revelation 12:5). Jesus, of course, is the “male child” that was born, and then was crucified, buried, raised, and ascended to heaven to sit at the right hand of the throne of God.

A gap of time exists between verses 5 and 6 of Revelation 12. The events move from the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ all the way to the middle of the 70th week of Daniel. “Then the woman

fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days” (Revelation 12:6). During the second half of the tribulation, Israel will be on the run, but will be protected by God at a prepared place for 1260 days, or three-and-one-half years. He will only protect Israel for that length of time, because after three-and-one-half years, Christ will return to earth to set up His kingdom.

A war will go on during this time. “And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him” (Revelation 12:7-9).

According to Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, Satan had sinned and lost his position as the anointed cherub that covered the throne of God. However, in spite of this, he still had access to heaven, along with the angels who followed him in this rebellion (cf. Job 1:1-2). According to this passage in Revelation 12, this is going to change. In the middle of the 70th week of Daniel, Satan and his angels are removed from heaven; they will no longer have access to the throne room of God.

This removal will lead to tremendous joy in heaven. “Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night’” (Revelation 12:10). The inhabitants of heaven are excited because the accuser of the brethren has been removed from heaven and can no longer accuse believers day and night.

Having been removed from heaven, Satan and his followers will unleash their wrath and fury on the inhabitants of earth. He knows that he only has a short amount of time before Christ will come to set up His kingdom, so he must work fast to try and set up his counterfeit kingdom. “And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child” (Revelation 12:13). Israel is the object of his persecution because he knows that if he

can destroy this nation, he can then thwart God's plan of establishing his kingdom on earth.

God will enable Israel to flee into the wilderness, where she will be protected for three-and-one-half years from Satan. "But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent" (Revelation 12:14).

Unable to go after Israel, Satan then will go off to make war with the rest of God's children. "So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus" (Revelation 12:17). The inhabitants of the earth will face the fierce awful wrath of Satan during the latter half of the tribulation. This is why, if Christ did not intervene in mercy to rescue a remnant, no one would be able to survive.

Satan's Ultimate Plan During the Tribulation

In addition to trying to wipe out Israel and believers, Satan will also try to thwart God's plan during this time by setting himself up as the sole object of worship. John talks about the beast again in Revelation 13:1. The beast is the antichrist. In this same passage, John mentions the dragon as being the one who gives the beast his authority (v. 2). The dragon, of course, is Satan.

Satan's goal is to solidify the world's worship into one person, the beast. The beast furthers this plan by railing against God.

There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven (Revelation 13:5-6).

This is Satan's masterpiece—to rule the world, and to have all of the world's inhabitants worshiping him.

This beast will suffer what appears to be a mortal wound. "I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast" (Revelation

13:3). Just like Christ before, the beast will die and will be raised from the dead. Satan's counterfeit christ will come back to life and people will say, "This has to be God." They will in turn freely worship him.

John then talked about another beast. "Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed" (Revelation 13:11-12). The role of this beast is to ensure that everyone on earth is worshiping the antichrist alone. In doing so, they are ultimately worshiping Satan.

To help him in his role, he will be enabled to perform great and "miraculous" signs. "He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform" (Revelation 13:13-14). People will believe his message because of these signs. In the midst of all the chaos that will take place during this time, people will be looking for something to provide them with hope. These miraculous signs will convince people that the beast is their hope, and they will gladly worship him.

Have any of these things taken place yet? Has the ten-nation empire, with the beast, started to rule the world yet? Has the beast become the ruler of the world? Has he died and come back to life? Has he set up a counterfeit kingdom that is unified by the worship of a counterfeit god?

Clearly, none of these things have taken place yet. As a result, it can be stated with confidence that the kingdom of God is yet future. Christ has yet to come to earth to protect Israel and to establish His kingdom. This will happen; it just has not happened yet.

Conclusion

Where Will You Reside in Eternity?

Having established the biblical basis for both the present and yet future kingdoms of God, the only question that remains to be answered is where will you reside in eternity?

The Bible definitively states that there will be two resurrections in the future—one for the righteous and one for the unrighteous. Jesus spoke about this during His earthly ministry:

Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment (John 5:25-29).

There will be a resurrection of life and a resurrection of judgment. The resurrection of life is for believers and is known as the first resurrection. Conversely, the resurrection of judgment is for unbelievers and is known as the second resurrection in Scripture. Everyone who has ever lived falls into one of these two categories—either they are a believer or an unbeliever. As such, there is going to be a resurrection for everyone who has lived on this earth.

Paul said the same thing. He had been arrested by the Romans and was standing trial before Felix. As part of his defense before the Roman governor, he said:

But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets; having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked (Acts 24:14-15).

Daniel had a similar message: “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2). The resurrection will be a reality for all people.

Revelation 20 speaks definitively about two resurrections.

Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-5).

The first resurrection will take place before the millennium, and is for believers. The millennium, or a thousand years, will pass before the second resurrection will take place.

When the thousand years are completed ... I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds (Revelation 20:7, 12-13).

John made it clear that no one will escape the resurrection. Believers will be resurrected and then reign with Christ in the millennial kingdom and on into eternity in heaven. Unbelievers will be resurrected at the end of the millennium to be judged and sent into eternity in hell. No one will

escape this judgment—whether they were alive at the end of the millennium or had previously died, all unbelievers will be judged.

The Bible's teaching is consistent. Whether it is Paul, Daniel, John, or Christ, whether it is the Old Testament or the New Testament, the truth is that both the righteous and the wicked will be resurrected. Thus, both will live for eternity—the righteous will spend eternity in God's kingdom, and the wicked will spend eternity in hell. There is no escaping this truth.

Studying and understanding biblical prophecy and future events is fascinating. But what really matters is your future. Where will you reside in eternity? No one will be able to bypass a future resurrection. Nobody will escape judgment. Either come to believe in Christ and have your sins judged and forgiven at the cross, or reject Christ and have your sins judged by Him in hell for all eternity.

What is your relationship to Jesus Christ? Have you placed your faith in Him alone and allowed Christ to take the penalty for your sin upon Himself at the cross? Do you have a personal relationship with Him? Or do you just know about Him?

The Bible makes it clear—there is a coming future kingdom, and a coming future resurrection. Will you be resurrected and spend eternity in heaven, or in hell? The choice is yours. Some say that they'd like to take their chances. However, once you die, the verdict has already been given; the judgment has already been sealed. "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36). Now is the time to choose . . . before it is too late.

