

THE DESTINY OF THE BELIEVERS

Throughout the majority of church history, and in the majority of the religious world today, Christians have been and are being predominantly taught, and firmly believe, that the hope and destiny of Christians is in a heavenly disembodied state in a city in the sky...after the earth has been destroyed. Though this belief has become the dominant way of thinking in the church, it is actually a corruption of the true biblical hope. Ask the average church member what their hope is the answer will be "to go to heaven when I die." The thought is that the message of Jesus was the forgiveness of sins in order that we might be saved. Although Jesus preached a message of forgiveness and salvation, his prominent message was *the Kingdom of God* that spoke of a physical, earthly eternity based on the resurrection of the body and the redemption of the earth. This concept of eternity is foreign to most Christians and is never heard preached from the pulpits today. It was the theme of most Apostolic preaching and teaching when it became a question of the destiny of believers.

In the beginning it was God's purpose that man "rule...over all the earth" (Gen.1:26). The reason for God placing man in this position was: "The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, but the earth He has given to the sons of men (Psalm, 115:16). When man sinned, he lost his position as ruler (Gen. 3:17-24) and the whole earth was placed under a curse. God told Adam "Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you...by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground." In the New Testament it is stated by Paul in these words in Romans 8:19-22: "The anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now." (It is no wonder, so little attention is paid to these verses and so many believers are confused and think God is going to destroy His creation, because the King James Version translates the word *creation* in this passage as *creature*. (How much sense does the word *creature* make?))

When Adam sinned Satan became the ruler of the earth (John 12:31), for, (Satan speaking to Jesus): "All this domain and its glory has been *handed over to me* (by Adam), and I give it to whomever I wish" (Luke 4:6). When Jesus was crucified, raised and ascended "the ruler of this world was judged" (John 16:11), and Jesus was given "all authority both in heaven and earth" (Mt. 28:18) for God had "highly exalted him" (Phil. 2:9) "above all rule, and authority and power and dominion not only in this age but also in the age to come. And He put all thing in subjection under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church" (Eph. 1:21-22).

If the ruler of his world has been judged and all things have been put in subjection to Christ on behalf of the church, why do we

not see man fulfilling the position and purpose for which he was created? The answer to this question is found in Hebrews 2:5-8 when the writer stated "He did not subject to angels the inhabited earth to come concerning which we are speaking" he then quotes verbatim Psalm 8:4-8: "What is man, that You remember him? Or the son of man, that You are concerned about him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, You have appointed him over the works of Your hands; You have put all things in subjection under his feet." He then says, "For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now *we do not yet see all things subjected to him.*" This shows that although we do not see it and it is yet in the future, God has declared it already done. This is a prolepsis example of describing an event as taking place before it could have happened, treating a future event as if it had already been accomplished. Throughout the Scriptures God calls things which have not yet taken place as though they already were and we can be assured they will take place. By faith we accept them as a present truth.

When man was created all things were in subjection to him. He was to "rule over all the earth" (Gen. 1:26). Man, then, was created to rule the earth. When he sinned, he lost his standing before God and lost his dominion over the earth. The words of the Hebrew writer: "Now we do not yet see all things subjected to him (man) but we do see Jesus" takes on significance because Jesus being "the Last Adam" (I Cor. 15:45), restored man's position that Adam lost. If man's original position and purpose was to "rule over all the earth" (Gen. 1:26) then Jesus as "the last Adam" (I Cor. 15:45) will do what the first Adam failed to do. This means there is a future reign of Christ upon the earth when he returns and "the kingdoms of this world (will become) the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ and he will reign forever and ever" (Rev. 11:15). There is a popular hymn that says, "we shall reign with him on high." The opposite is true: "...thou didst purchase for God with thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. And thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and *they shall reign upon the earth*" (Rev. 5:9, 10). The Apostle Paul writes: "If we endure, we shall also reign with him" (II Tim. 2:12). Romans 8:17 states: that we are "heirs of God and joint heirs of Christ." A joint heir shares everything the heir inherits. If Christ rules the nations of the earth, then we rule with him when he is crowned with glory and honor. Since the Christian is a "joint heir with Christ" he will be "glorified with him" (Rom.8:17), when all things are subjected to Christ, and he rules all nations with a rod of iron: "And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule the nations with a rod of iron..." and "from his mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it he may smite the nations; and he will rule them with a rod of iron..." (Rev. 12:5, 19:15), then not only shall Christ reign, but Christians will reign with him: "If we endure, we shall also reign with him" (II Tim. 2:12). It is promised "he who overcomes, and who keeps my deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are

broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from my Father” (Rev. 2:26, 27). It is then that “the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come...and the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him” (Dan. 7:18, 27). God’s redemption of man included the redemption of the creation, but the creation “waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God” (Rom. 8:19). It is then that we will see all things subjected to Christ and this will be the earth the meek and the seed of Abraham will inherit (Matt. 5:5; Rom. 4:13; Gal. 3:16, 29). To Christ God had promised through the Psalmist that He would “surely give the nations as thy inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as thy possession” (Psalm 2:8).

That the saints will reign with Christ (II Tim.2:12) is made certain when Paul writes to the Corinthians and censures them for not knowing this: “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we shall judge angels?” (I Cor. 6:2, 3). The judges in the book of Judges were administrators and governors, and “judging” is the function of a leader and king (Psalm 2:10, NASV margin). All this means that in eternity the saints will not be floating around on a cloud with a halo on their head and a harp in their hand. Paul is telling the Corinthians to get in some practice while they are living in this present world.

The Kingly rule of Christ and his saints is an unfamiliar theme in the modern church. As we have shown above even if the church does not see it and it is never preached from our pulpits, God has declared it a done deal. The religious world has been so absorbed with walking the streets of gold with Christ in heaven, they have never considered ruling with him on earth. Romans 8:16, 17 states: “...we are the children of God, and if children, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.” A joint heir shares everything the heir inherits. This means that God declares us as heirs, but our inheritance has not yet occurred. Just what is our inheritance? “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen to gladly give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). “The Lord will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom” (II Tim. 4:18). “For in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you” (II Pet. 1:11). Jesus said, “Come you who are blessed of my Father, Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt 25:34). The biblical texts refer to the presence of the kingdom (Matt. 12:28, 13:38 ,41; Col. 1:13) as well as those that refer to the future of the kingdom (Matt:13:43; I Cor. 6:9; 15:24). Christians can speak of the kingdom of God as present and of themselves as having entered it because God’s promise makes this hope a reality of faith. Our having the Holy Spirit “is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view of the redemption of God’s own possession” (Eph. 1:14). God says we have obtained an inheritance (Eph. 1:1).

The future reign of Christ on the earth is proven by the many Scriptures, in both the Old and New Testament, that speak of Christ occupying the throne of David. (Many take these passages as figuratively and say they were fulfilled on the day of Pentecost; however, we see them as literal.) The angel Gabriel

assured Mary that Jesus “will be great and will be called the Son on 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 1:32, 33). Compare this verse with I Kings 2:12: “And Solomon sat upon the *throne of David his father* and his kingdom was firmly established.” Peter on the day of Pentecost stated of David: “And so, because he was a prophet, and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath, to seat *one of his descendants on his throne* he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh suffer decay. (Acts 2:30, 31). Peter is saying it is the resurrected Christ that will be seated upon David’s throne. He is quoting from Psalm 89:3: “I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant I will establish your seed forever and build up *your throne to all generations.*” And, Psalm 132:11: “The Lord has sworn to David a truth which He will not turn back; ‘Of the fruit of your body I will *set upon your throne.*” When God makes covenant and swears to it, He will surely bring to pass.

God’s oath and covenant show the unchangeableness of His purpose to fulfill His promises. Speaking to the Apostles in Luke 22:29 Jesus said: “And I *appoint* unto you a kingdom, just as my Father has *appointed* me; that you may eat at my table *in my kingdom* and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” The words “appoint” and “appointed” in this passage are translated “grant” and “granted” in the NASV. Neither is a good translation. This word is the same word Jesus used in verse 20 translated *covenant*, and the same word used in Hebrews 8:9, again translated *covenant*. This verse actually says “Just as my Father has *covenanted* with me to give me the kingdom, I have *covenanted to give you the kingdom*...and you will sit on twelve thrones judging Israel.” If this is true, then what does it say about the other believers who are not apostles? We have already answered this question above when we commented on I Corinthians 6:2, 3, a passage virtually unknown by most church members and neglected by the majority of the clergy.

The Jewish scriptures had prophesied that the Messiah (Christ) would be “installed upon Zion and given the nations as an inheritance” and he would “break them with a rod of iron and shatter them like earthenware” (Psalm 2:6-9). He then warns the rulers of this world to respond: “Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; take warning, O judges of the earth. Worship the Lord with reverence and rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the son, lest He becomes angry and you perish in the way, for his wrath may soon be kindled” (Psalm 2:10-11). Further: “He will shatter kings in the day of his wrath and judge among the nations, he will fill them with corpses and shatter the chief men over a broad country” (Psalm 110:5, 6). These scriptures indicate a warrior, a military commander endowed with both priestly and regal power, who will act for God in the restoration of divine government on the earth. This is what is referred to in the New Testament as “the restoration of all things, about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time” (Acts 3:21) and “the regeneration when the son of man will sit on his glorious throne, you (the Apostles) shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel ” (Matt. 19:28). This being true, then Psalm 2:8 is applicable to the inheritance of the Christian. Jesus never spoke of the inheritance of the Christian as “going to heaven.” He offered his followers the inheritance of the earth (Matt. 5:5). This, then, is the destiny of believers.