

LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

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THE KINGDOM IN PROPHECY

“He said to them, ‘These are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about me, in *the Law of Moses and the Prophets and Psalms* must be fulfilled.’” Too many Bible scholars, Christian writers and present-day preachers say all the prophecies of the Old Testament have been fulfilled or should be taken as allegories and not literal truth. This makes the Old Testament of little value to the church today. In fact there are those who say the Old Testament is only an example for us as it has been fulfilled and replaced by the New Testament. The fallacy of this is evident when we consider the Old Testament was the only “Bible” Jesus and the Apostles had. Everywhere in the New Testament the word “Scripture” is used it is referring to the Old Testament. It is time the majority of expositors rethink their handling of the Old Testament.

At this point it might be helpful to quote J.C Ryle, an eighteenth century expositor’s words in *Are You Ready For The End Time*: “What I protest against is, the habit of allegorizing plain sayings of the word of God concerning future history and explaining away the fullness of the contents in order to accommodate them the Gentile Church.” He further says: “Cultivate the habit of reading prophecy with the single eye to the literal meaning of proper names. Cast aside the old traditional idea that Jacob, and Israel, and Judah, and Jerusalem and Zion must mean the Gentile Church, and that predictions of the second Advent are to be taken spiritually, and the first Advent predictions literally. Be honest, and fair. If you take the 53rd of Isaiah literally, be sure you take the 54th and 60th and 62nd literally also.” Galatians 3:16-29 and Romans 11:25-32 puts to rest the way we interpret Old Testament prophecies.

We begin the prophecies of the kingdom with some of the direct prophecies in the New Testament. The first prophecy of the kingdom is found in the words spoken to Mary by the Angel Gabriel: “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 shall rule over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will have no end*” (Luke 1:31-33). Are we to take the words of the angel Gabriel literally when he told Mary she “would conceive in her womb and bear a son and he would be great and be called the Son of the Most High,” and simply take as a figure of speech “*and the Lord will give him the throne of his father David, and he shall rule over the house of Jacob forever?*” The throne of David was in Jerusalem (not in heaven as some affirm). The expectation of the Jews and the Apostles was the restoration of the kingdom of Israel: “When they had come together they asked him, ‘Is it that this time you are restoring the kingdom of Israel?’ He said to them ‘*It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed in His own authority.*’” Peter answered their question in Acts 3:21: “Whom (Christ) heaven must receive until the period of restoration of *all things* about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets.” If Christ rules the world, as the scriptures teach, why could Jerusalem where David’s throne is not be his headquarters? Isaiah 1:26: “Then I will restore your judges as the first, and your Counselors as the beginning, you will be called the faithful city.

Near the end of his ministry Jesus told his disciples “Just as my Father has granted me a kingdom, I grant you may *eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and you will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel*” (Luke 22:29, 30). Mathew’s record of this event states: “You who have followed me, in *the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you also will sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*” (Matt. 19:28). Many interpret this passage being fulfilled by the ministry of the Apostles recorded in the book of Acts. For example: David Chilton in *Days of Vengeance* “In this age, the Apostles reign over the new Israel; they are the very foundation of the church.” However, Jesus said this would take place in “*the regeneration* (Acts 3:21), *when the son of man will sit on his glorious throne.*” Christ is now sitting on the right hand of the Father on His throne in heaven. Christ will sit on *his glorious throne* in his kingdom on earth.

When instituting the Lord’s Supper Jesus said: “This is the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until that day when *I shall drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom* (Matt. 26:28, 29). Luke 22:30 (quoted above) shows there will be eating and drinking at the table of the Lord in the Father’s future kingdom. This passage has also been interpreted as being fulfilled today in the church (if the church is the kingdom) by the sharing of the Lord’s Supper. The church is to partake of the supper *until he returns* (I Cor. 11:26).

Before considering the Kingdom prophecies of the Old Testament we want to make the following observations. Revelation 2:9: “They say they are Jews and are not but are a synagogue of Satan,” and 3:9: “They say they are Jews, and they are not, but lie.” In May of 1948 the modern state of Israel was born. These sixty-nine years have given birth to a multiplicity of prophetic speculations mis-guided opinions, and dogmatic doctrines, leaving many Christians in doubt, confusion and fear. In the last several years the works of Tim LaHaye, Jerry Jenkins, Hal Lindsay, John Hagee, the late Jerry Falwell, and a host of other popular prophesy preachers and politicians have kept the confusion alive. The Middle East and notably Jerusalem and the Jews have been the center of the drama. Most Christians would be shocked to learn that Orthodox Jews opposed the modern state of Israel and most of what we have been fed by the media and much from our pulpits about the Jews is blatantly false. The modern state of Israel is not related to Bible prophecy, neither is it based on divine right. Louis DeCaro in his book *Israel Today* stated it well: “Much of what is written in defense of the notion that Israel today fulfills prophecy is comprised mainly of a large selection of those passages of Old Testament prophecy which speak of territorial restoration. These are applied indiscriminately to the modern state of Israel on the assumption that Zionism is the work of God in history. This assumption possesses more emotional and literal dimensions than true prophetic and spiritual value”

A modern illustration: *Christianity Today* a national religious magazine founded by Billy Graham in the early days of his ministry is one of the most popular and most read magazines in the conservative religious world today. In early 1998 they carried a full-page colored ad announcing, “the largest gathering in

Orlando, Florida of Christians in American history to celebrate *Israel's Jubilee* of the fiftieth year of Jews living in Israel and Israel becoming a nation." The scheduled speakers included some of the brightest lights in the conservative religious world, including Pat Boone, Glen Campbell, Benny Hinn, Kay Arthur, Bill Bright, Rabbi Daniel Lapin and Zola Levitt. The ad stated: "In May 1948, after almost 2000 years of wandering, the modern state of Israel was born. Jesus said the generation that sees this will not pass away before His return." We wrote the following letter to the magazine: "For the past two months you have carried a full-page announcement of 'Israel's Jubilee' to be held April 29-May 3 in Orlando, Florida. (We then quoted the statement above), Jesus did not say this, and the statement is not found in Scripture. It is amazing to see the amenability of religious teachers in assuming things are true when they are not." Our letter was printed in the February or March issue. In the next issue they had pulled the ad., although the meeting was a month later.

Most sermons on prophecy, written and spoken from the pulpits today, are based upon Scofield dispensationalism--the imminent secret rapture, the great tribulation, the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple, the modern state of Israel and the anti-Christ. It is not our purpose to deal with any of these prophetic suppositions. We will simply point out some of the most important Old Testament prophecies of the Kingdom of God.

Daniel 2: Nebuchadnezzar's dream. In Daniel 2:44, 45 his interpretation of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar was concerning four kingdoms before the kingdom of heaven would be set up (Dan 2:44). Three of these kingdoms are named as being: Babylon (2:38); Media/Persia (8:20) and Greece (8:21). The fourth kingdom is not mentioned by name, but we can conclude it was Rome (the kingdom following Alexander the Great's rule in Greece and was the ruling power in the time of the New Testament). It was "in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up the kingdom which will never be destroyed, and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will endure forever" (Dan. 2:44) Of the fourth kingdom it is said that its "dominion will be taken away, annihilated destroyed forever" (Dan. 7:26). The contrast in this passage is a contrast with earthly kingdoms, such as Babylon, Media/Persia, Greece and Rome (kingdoms that arose by human efforts) and the kingdom that comes into being by the divine intervention of God. This means the essential meaning of kingdom of God is *reign* rather than *realm*. Also, this reign cannot be a realm which arises by natural development or by human efforts, but one by which God breaks into the existence of the realm of earthly kingdoms. This is seen in the 45th verse of Daniel 2 where it is stated "In as much as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands crushed the four human kingdoms. It was "in the days of these kings," consummating with the Roman Empire, that their time came to an end and the kingdom of God broke into history in the person of Jesus Christ, and God by the resurrection and ascension of Christ (Eph. 1:19-21) established the kingdom prophesied by Daniel that would never be destroyed. The Hebrew writer tells us: "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...*" The above scriptures from Daniel 2 will all be completely fulfilled in the future when the kingdom will be fully established on earth at the return of Christ. However, according to Colossians 1:13: "He delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of His beloved son." This means Christians already experience something of which they will partake fully "when Christ, who is our life, is revealed and we will be revealed with him in glory (Col. 3:4).

Daniel 7:13, 14: When Jesus ascended to the Father he "received the kingdom." Daniel 7:13, 14: "And behold with the clouds of heaven one like the Son of man was coming. And he came up (not down) 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.*" Not only was Jesus given a kingdom, but "The saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come" (Dan. 7:18), and "then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole 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. 7:27).

On these verses we quote Anthony Buzzard from his book *Our Fathers Who Aren't in Heaven*: "These verses expressive of the Messianism with which Jesus was so well acquainted. His reliance upon the book of Daniel is well known. Portrayed in these passages is a world revolution by which a new world government, presided over by the son of man and the saints, takes the place of present empires. It should not be difficult to understand that the nations and dominions of our present world are very far from being subjected to Christ and his church. This fact alone is proof that the kingdom is dependent on the return of Jesus to be (fully HB) established. 'Thy kingdom come' is a petition Jesus to come back to earth and set up his kingdom. The petition does not read as some often thought, 'Thy Kingdom spread.'"

Isaiah 9:6,7: "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the *government* shall be upon his shoulders; and his name Will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of his *government* or of peace, on the throne of David over *his kingdom*, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from now on and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of host shall accomplish this."

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" (Acts 3:21) and "the regeneration when the son of man will sit on his glorious throne" (Matt. 19:28). God said of Jesus "Ask of me and I will surely give the nations as your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as thy possession" (Psalm 2:8). A fundamental fact not grasped by the modern church is that "children of God are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8: 16, 17). 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 us an inheritance of the earth (Matt.5:5).