

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Week 2 – The Postponement of the Kingdom of God on Earth/The Judgment Seat of Christ/Life During the Future Kingdom of God on Earth (Millennial Kingdom)

January 23, 2018

The Kingdom of God is a KEY theme in Scripture. In our attempt to delve into the “big picture” of the Bible (“the one long sentence” that is the Bible), the notes below explain the unfolding of the Kingdom of God in Scripture:

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The Universal Kingdom of God is the rule of God over the entire universe. This aspect of the Kingdom of God is the broadest expression of the Kingdom. His is an eternal, sovereign rule everywhere over the entire creation.

The Spiritual Kingdom of God is the rule of God over all those who are born again having experienced the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5) from Adam moving forward. The spiritual Kingdom of God began immediately after man sinned, when God promised the Redeemer (Gen. 3:15) and provided, through the shedding of blood, the skin of an animal to cover Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21). The Spiritual Kingdom of God was in existence before the Church, the body of Christ, began on the day of Pentecost. It will continue to exist after the Church departs at the rapture.

The Theocratic Kingdom of God is the rule of God over a human kingdom. Theocracy - a government where God is the supreme ruler. *Isa. 9:6 – ... unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government (rule, dominion) will be upon His shoulder.* When Jesus rules and reigns from Jerusalem, it will be considered a theocracy.

In Scripture we see God’s rule over the nation Israel which was established at Mount Sinai when Israel agreed to keep God’s law. After Israel entered the land of Canaan, the Promised Land, under Joshua, the children of Israel began to take the land God had promised them. Read Josh. 24:14-28. In the book of Judges we see disobedience and failure on the part of Israel during which time they demanded a human king – not God! We then read of the unrighteous kings over the kingdom of Israel and a mixture of righteous and unrighteous kings over the kingdom of Judah. Because of Israel’s brazen disobedience (going after other gods, idolatry, abominations even in the temple), we read of the departure of the glory of God from the Temple in Eze. 8:4 through 11:23. At this point in Israel’s history, the focus of attention was on the future when the Messiah would come and bring in the kingdom promised to David. And, thus, we read the Prophets who warned the Jewish people and also spoke of the glories of the Kingdom of God that would come to earth in the future. How long until the “future”? We read of Gabriel’s message to Mary of her Child, the Son of the Highest, Who would be seated on the throne of David (Luke 1:30-33). And we read of Zachariah’s praise of God for remembering His covenant with Abraham and extending mercy to Israel (Luke 1:67-75). The Kingdom of God on earth, with the Messiah ruling and reigning was expected by Israel in Jesus’ day.

WHAT HAPPENED? WHY DIDN’T THE KINGDOM OF GOD COME TO EARTH DURING JESUS’ DAY?

The OT anticipated the fulfillment of the great Messianic Kingdom. The OT also prophesied the rejection of the Messiah:

Psa. 22 – the Messiah would be crucified – and not be installed as King at His first coming.

Psa. 118:22-23 - *The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.*

Isa. 53:1-3 - *Who has believed our report?... He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. ³ He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.*

Dan. 9:26 - the Messiah would come and die before the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD

Hosea 5:15 - *I will return again to My place till they acknowledge their offense. Then they will seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.* Israel as a nation needed to repent before Jesus would rule and reign over them!

Hosea 3:4-5 - *For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim. ⁵ Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.*

Matt. 23:37-39 - *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! ³⁸ See! Your house is left to you desolate; ³⁹ for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Jesus spoke of His departure. As a nation, Israel needed to repent of their sins before the Messiah would return and rule over them as King! Wrapped up in the word, *till*, is HOPE!*

The Gospel of Matthew proves that Jesus is the Messiah and King in fulfillment of the OT. And, the Gospel of Matthew explains why the promised Kingdom of God on earth has not yet arrived. The Gospel of Matthew explains why the giving of the Kingdom of God on earth has been postponed!

NOTE: In the announcement of Jesus' birth, Joseph was told by an angel of the Lord in a dream...*you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.* In this one verse we are told again by God that Israel, as a nation, is to be forgiven of their sin before they can enter the Kingdom of God.

Both John the Baptizer (Matt. 3:2) and Jesus preached the Gospel of the Kingdom (Matt. 4:17). At Jesus' baptism, we read, *And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* Cross reference Psa. 2:6-7 – *Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion. ⁷ I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son,' This is speaking of God the Father installing God the Son as King during the Millennial Kingdom. The Kingdom was ready to come if only Israel would repent.*

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus laid out the “spirit of the law” – living out the heart of the law. Israel had not been doing so; Israel had been living by the “letter of the Law” – NOT from the heart. Again, Jesus' message was one of repentance – a heart change.

Throughout the Gospel of Matthew we see Jesus continuing to offer Himself as the Messiah to Israel. His miracles validated His Messiahship. Messianic Miracles: healing of a Jewish leper; exorcising a demon from a person who cannot speak; healing of a man born blind. The promises for the Millennial reign of the Messiah. Isa. 35:5-6: *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. ⁶ Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.* These Scriptures pertain to the Millennium when the Messiah would be ruling showing these are promises for the messianic age.

In Matt. 12 we read that the Jewish religious leadership rejected Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus' response to the leadership - Matt. 12:31 - *Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.* The leadership was responsible for the unpardonable sin. They knew, through the conviction of the Holy Spirit, that Jesus was the Messiah; they were denying/rejecting what they knew to be true. Note the following verses:

John 11:48 - *If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.*

Acts 4:16 - *What shall we do to these men? (Peter and John) For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.*

Due to the nation's rejection of Jesus (though many Jewish people came to faith in Jesus; the first believers in Jesus were Jewish; the early Church was primarily Jewish), God's delivering His physical, material Kingdom to Israel has been POSTPONED.

Acts 1:1-8 - following Jesus' resurrection before His ascension into heaven, Luke wrote, *The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, ² until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, ³ to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; ⁵ for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." ⁶ Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority." ⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth*

When asked about restoring the Kingdom to Israel, Jesus didn't respond with any indication that the Kingdom would not be restored. The time for the restoration of the Kingdom is under God's authority. God is not reneging on His promises! He will deliver the physical, material Kingdom to Israel in the future because He is faithful to His promises (Eze. 36:22-36). God is not, at this time, using Israel as His witness people, as

His redemptive tool. God is now using the Church, the body of Christ, since Pentecost and up until the Rapture, as His redemptive tool.

The Mystery Form of the Kingdom – After the Jewish religious leadership rejected Jesus as their Messiah, Jesus began teaching the “great multitudes” (Matt. 13:2) in parables. The parables addressed what we know as “Christendom” – comprised of wheat (true believers) and tares (non-believers who look like believers) – Matt. 13:24-30. The parables explain the time between the rejection of Jesus by the nation of Israel and Israel’s acceptance of Jesus. In Ephesians 3:3-6, Paul called the Church the mystery which had not been revealed in the OT. The mystery regarding the Church: that the body of Christ, the Church, should be comprised of both Gentiles and Jews and yet false teachers would come into the Church. Much is said within the NT re: apostasy infiltrating the body of Christ. After the rapture of true believers, God will purge Israel during the Tribulation and will use the 144,000 Jewish male virgins and the two Jewish witnesses as His redemptive tool, picking up where He left off with the Jewish people. At the end of the Tribulation, God will pour out His Spirit on the one third of the Jewish people left at the end of the Tribulation and they will come to faith as a nation in Jesus.

The Millennial/Messianic Kingdom – it is this aspect of the Kingdom of God that was not delivered to Israel after the Jewish religious leadership rejected Jesus as the Messiah. When the third of the Jewish people remaining at the end of the Tribulation come to faith in Jesus, they will mourn for Him and He will return and establish His 1,000 year reign on earth seated on King David’s throne in Jerusalem.

TODAY WHAT DO JEWISH PEOPLE WHO DO NOT BELIEVE IN JESUS BELIEVE ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

- There is no uniform belief system in Judaism.
- Rabbinical Judaism – Rabbis teach more from the Talmud (commentary by the Rabbis – opinions of the Rabbis) than from the Tanakh (OT). Rabbinical Judaism believes in one Messiah who comes once as a conquering King. The Messiah may be a person; or the Messiah may mean a Messianic age. If the Messiah is a person, He is NOT God. “He will be like someone who flunked math” (Rabbi Marvin Hier – Simon Wiesenthal Center in CA).
- Regarding a kingdom on earth, many Jewish people believe in *Tikkun Olam* - repair of the earth. God created but didn’t complete His creation. They do not believe God is perfect. God needs their help. In this view, man is exalted over God!
- They do not believe in someone dying for their sins because sin is not the focus. While they are told to make amends between themselves and their fellow man at Rosh Hashanah and the days preceding Yom Kippur...and they are told at Yom Kippur to confess their sins and beg God for forgiveness, it is for the purpose of being given another YEAR OF PHYSICAL LIFE!!
- Jewish people may tell you that they believe that Jesus is the Messiah; however, unless they see their need for the Messiah, their need to be forgiven of their sin by the Messiah alone, they are not redeemed/born again!

Following the rapture, the judgment seat of Christ will take place in heaven.

Believers will rule and reign with Jesus during the Millennium. Our being given rewards at the judgment seat, or the loss of rewards at the judgment seat (NO LOSS OF SALVATION) prepares the believer for our role in the Millennial Kingdom!

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST/THE BEMA

II Cor. 5:10 - *Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.* ¹⁰ *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.* After the Church is removed from the world at the rapture, the “judgment seat of Christ” will take place in heaven. Believers, when standing before the judgment seat of Christ, will be judged according to their works. This judgment does NOT determine whether they are saved or lost. That has already been determined. They are already in heaven – not on their own merit or works, but on the ground of divine grace through Jesus alone.

Paul uses the Greek word *bema* to describe this judgment. A *bema* was a seat or raised platform where a Judge sat as he made his decision regarding a case (Matt. 27:19; Jn. 19:13; Acts 18:12). *Bema* was also used in connection with the platform on which the referee sat during the Olympic games or at the Isthmian games at Corinth. This was the place where the winners of the various events received their rewards. The judgment seat of Christ will be a place of rewarding, not punishing. We must remember that God delights to give good gifts to His children – James 1:17 - *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*

The fact that Jesus will reward believers in connection with His coming indicates that the judgment seat will occur shortly after the rapture. Rev. 22:12 - *And behold, I am coming quickly (in the rapture), and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.* How significant that among the final words of Revelation we find Jesus words regarding rewards!

When Jesus returns to the earth at His physical Second Coming with His bride, the Church, the bride has already been rewarded since Jesus is wearing many crowns Rev. 19:11-12 - *Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.* ¹² *His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns.* In Rev. 4:10 we see the 24 elders who represent the Church in the throne room of God casting their crowns, their rewards, before the throne.

II Cor. 5:9-10 - ¹⁰ *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

It appears to be a private meeting between individual believers in Jesus. This judgment will determine the reward or loss of reward for service on the part of each individual believer.

I Corinthians 3:9-15 – *For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building.* ¹⁰ *According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.* ¹¹ *For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* ¹² *Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,* ¹³ *each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is.* ¹⁴ *If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.* ¹⁵ *If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.* God rewards the believer for works that “endure.” (See Week 3 for a further look at the judgement seat of Christ including the criteria for judgment, questions concerning how sin and failures after we come to faith in Jesus factor in, how believers will rule and reign with Jesus, the actual rewards.)

What then will be the reward for faithful service?

LIFE IN THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

The probability is that faithful service on earth will be rewarded by a privileged place of service in heaven.

- Rev. 22:3 – “His servants shall serve Him.”
- Dan. 7:27 – *Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.* Man will be given dominion and will rule with Christ and serve and nurture the world.
- Parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) – we are told about the man receiving five talents and the man receiving two talents, both of whom doubled what they had been given by their lord. They were told, *Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.* (Matt. 25: 21, 23)
- We know from Scripture that the Church will be residing in the Millennial Kingdom. In II Tim. 2:12, the Church is told, “If we endure, we shall also reign with Him.”

QUESTIONS:

Did the unfolding of the Kingdom of God in Scripture help you pull pieces of Scripture together?

Did you have any V8 moments?

How will this lesson impact your walk with the Lord?

How do you understand “endure” in II Tim. 2:12?

STRONGLY SUGGESTED HOMEWORK:

Reread the lesson and the references.

Note your questions. Attempt to find answers in Scripture.

Share what you’ve learned from this lesson with someone.

Read week 3’s handout when you receive it.