

THE LOST KINGDOM

by

DAVID W. DYER

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*Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from
the New Testament are from The Father's Life Version.*

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PREFACE

This book began as a means to address an erroneous doctrine that is very common in the church today. This doctrine asserts that we are now in the millennial kingdom. Although to some this may seem to be a benign belief – that it really does not negatively affect the faith of those who believe it or that of anyone else – the truth is that it is a major factor in helping obscure essential truth about the coming kingdom which has been lost to the church for hundreds of years.

In the process of trying to clarify this subject, this writing grew to include many other truths about the coming kingdom which seem to also have been lost to today's church. In these last days, the correct understanding of these truths seems to be more and more essential.

It is the hope of this author that many believers can come to see with clarity the importance of the coming kingdom. This revelation may stir them up to seek the Lord with ever more intensity and sincerity. In my experience, a true understanding of the scriptures concerning this subject has really helped believers to know the fear of the Lord and to take submission to Him more seriously.

Furthermore, when we rightly understand the biblical teaching about the millennium, much problematic theology is unraveled and straightened out. The plans and purposes of God become more clear and even His work of salvation in our souls becomes more understandable.

May God bless you and speak to you as you read through this work.

“And he who overcomes
and he who keeps *on doing*
my works until the end,
I will give him authority
over the nations.

He will rule them
with a scepter of iron
just as the vessels of the potter
are broken into shards
since I also have received *this*
from my Father
(Rev 2:26,27 FLNT).

CHAPTER 1

THE MILLENNIUM LOST

In the scriptures we are taught many things about the millennium: a one-thousand-year period of time. Jesus teaches extensively about this subject in the four gospels. Several of the apostles also instruct us about this important period of time in their writings. However, for some reason (and I suspect the reason has to do with the devil), much of the truth about this time has been lost to today's church.

There is a lot of confusion about this very important subject. Theories, teachings, and beliefs concerning it abound. Generally speaking, there seem to be two "camps" of teaching concerning the millennium. One camp believes that this time period is in the future. The other believes that we are experiencing it, that it is happening right now. But which view is true? Furthermore, is there some important truth concerning the millennium that BOTH views have lost?

As we will see in this writing, these are not unimportant questions. The answers to them have serious consequences for believers. What

the Bible teaches us about the coming kingdom is important for our walk with the Lord and our understanding of His revelation. Therefore, although some may not understand why this discussion is necessary, it is actually of paramount importance.

The devil has strong reasons for wanting to hide the biblical truth about the millennium, as you will see as we progress through this writing. In fact, the truth about the coming kingdom, when rightly understood, forms a basis for correctly understanding the gospel, knowing the fear of God, understanding God's plans for His children, and motivating believers to dedicate their lives to Jesus. This important truth seems to have become lost or hidden from much of today's church.

THE KINGDOM TODAY

To begin, we must all be aware that there is a very real and important aspect of the kingdom of God for us to experience today. This is true no matter which of the above "camps" we are in, that is whether we believe that we are in the millennium or not. Although Jesus has not yet returned and is not reigning physically on the earth, there is an invisible, spiritual reality of His kingdom that we should be participating in right now.

We read in Luke 17:20, 21: "And being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them and said, 'The

present kingdom of God does not come with visible evidence. Neither will they say, “Look, here it is!” or, “It’s over there!”““

Now there is, in the future, a “coming” of God’s kingdom which will include “visible evidence.” For example, we are told: “Look, he will come with the clouds and every eye will see him – even those who pierced him” (Rev 1:7). This will be something everyone will see with their eyes. This event will come with clear evidence.

But in Luke Jesus is speaking about an aspect of His kingdom which comes without such obvious evidence. This aspect is that Jesus must begin to reign over, and even inside of, those who claim to be His right now.

In order for Him to come physically to the earth as a king, He must first have some subjects on the earth, some people who are submitted to Him. In order to have a kingdom, He must actually be reigning over some group of people. He must have some men and women who have subjected their lives – all of their living – to His authority. They must be obedient to His directives and be submissive to Him, gladly doing His will.

Although this might seem obvious, many people today are brought to Jesus without this basic truth. They come to Him for forgiveness and/or for solutions to their problems but are never taught that He must reign over every aspect of their lives. They have never submitted their lives to the LORD Jesus but only to a Jesus whom

they imagine as someone they want Him to be – some kind of a celestial servant, for example.

Perhaps they know Jesus as a savior but not as their king. They are mistakenly told that if they just “confess” or say some words with their mouth about Jesus, everything will be OK with God and that they will go to heaven when they die.

But it turns out that this “confessing” is much more than expelling air from our lungs, vibrating our vocal cords, and forming intelligible words with our mouths. This “confessing” must involve sincerity.

Obviously, many people say things about which they are not sincere. Can it be that God perceives whether we are speaking things which we truly mean or whether we are only mouthing words which we imagine He wants to hear?

Let us look at this Greek word translated as “confess” which is found in Romans 10:9 where we read: “... if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (NKJV). Here we see that such a “confession” is intimately related to our salvation. It is an essential part of being saved.

When we investigate this word “confess” in the Greek language, we find that it can mean: “to promise, to agree,” or “to enter into a covenant.” You see, it is much more than mouthing words. It means that we covenant, promise, or agree to something. So what is this

“something”? It is to submit ourselves to Jesus as our king and Lord from that day forward.

Perhaps a more adequate translation of Romans 10:9 would be: “Therefore, if with your mouth you make a covenant to take Jesus as your Master and are believing in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be being saved” (FLNT).

Without such a covenant, without our sincere agreement to submit our lives completely to Jesus’ authority, there is no way for Him to really accomplish much in our lives. The progress of our ongoing salvation will be severely stunted. We will never escape our natural tendency to sin and so will continue to be in bondage. We will be people who claim to belong to Jesus but are not really part of His kingdom because we are not really submitted to Him.

The formation of such a group of people over whom He supremely reigns is the first step in Jesus establishing His kingdom. When this group is ready, then He will come back physically and establish His visible kingdom over all the earth.

The truth is that our participation in this present, invisible kingdom has everything to do with our participation in the coming, visible one. This present aspect of God’s kingdom is a preparation for the one which is coming.

There are serious, long-lasting consequences for how we do, or do not, participate in the present, spiritual kingdom of God. How we act with

respect to Jesus' authority today has everything to do with how Jesus will reward us when His physical, earthly kingdom comes.

There is no doubt Satan wants to obscure and even eliminate these truths. He has worked hard and is still working, to keep believers from understanding God's plan. This is part of his overall scheme to dilute the scriptures, eliminate the fear of the Lord, and diminish the need for us to earnestly seek the face of God. His work is to assure Christians that everything is OK in their lives when, in many cases, there is a serious need for repentance and a change of lifestyle.

Therefore, the question of whether or not we are actually in the millennium is not inconsequential or unimportant. It is essential to know whether we are now in the millennium or not.

Why is this? If we are already in the millennial kingdom of God, then these future consequences about which we will speak have no real meaning. They are eliminated. If we believe that we are already in this one-thousand-year reign, then there is nothing further to gain or lose.

Therefore, the question of whether or not we are now in the millennium is of paramount importance. If certain passages of scriptures which we will investigate in this writing only apply to today or are merely allegorical, then we have nothing to fear. But if we are not yet in this kingdom, there may be serious consequences concerning our present behavior when Jesus comes.

CHAPTER 2

ARE WE IN THE MILLENNIUM TODAY?

Those who promote the “kingdom now” teaching have their verses which they cite to prove their position. Although we will be taking a brief look at some of these ideas and verses later in this writing, I don’t think there is any benefit to arguing about scriptures.

In more than fifty years of walking with Jesus, I have never seen anyone edified, and almost no one convinced of the other’s position, by debates about the meaning of scripture verses. So instead of this, in this writing I will provide some biblical proofs which will show us whether or not we are now in the millennium.

To begin, we will focus on the signs which the scriptures say will be the evidence of the millennial kingdom. When we see these signs, we can know that we are experiencing this kingdom. When these signs are lacking, then we can know with certainty that we are not in the millennial kingdom.

This investigation is both interesting and important. It is a subject to which the scriptures devote a lot of time. Not only will we be uncovering God’s truth here, but the reader may also

discover some interesting aspects of the coming kingdom of which they have not been aware.

IS THE FATHER'S NAME DAVID?

To begin, we will ask: "Is the Father's name David." In the Bible, God reveals to us some of His names. But, as far as I can tell, none of them is "David." Why is this important? It is because we are clearly taught that Jesus will sit on David's throne. We read in Luke 1:30-32 the following: "And the angel said to her, 'Don't be afraid Mary. For you have found favor with God. Look, you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son and shall call his name JESUS. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. **The Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David.**'"

Also, we read in Acts 2:30, "Yet he [David] knew, being a prophet, that God had sworn with an oath to him, that from the fruit of his loins (according to human procreation) he would raise up the Anointed One to sit on his throne" (FLNT).

It is clear that Jesus today is sitting on a throne somewhere and reigning. But is it David's throne? No, it is God the Father's throne. It is in the heavens, not on the earth. David's throne was an earthly one. King David never sat on any throne in heaven. He ruled the people of Israel on the earth.

But in Jesus' case today, He is reigning in heaven from the Father's throne. We read: "He

who overcomes, I will grant him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father in his throne" (Rev 3:21). So it is easy to see that Jesus today is sitting on the Father's throne.* He is not sitting on David's.

Please do not get distracted here by any theology here which may be difficult to grasp. The point is that today Jesus is not sitting on and reigning from what could possibly be understood as "David's throne." He is not here on the earth.

Therefore, we can know with certainty that we are not yet in the time of His reign on earth which was foretold to Mary by the angel. By the way, this prediction of a descendant of David sitting on his throne is mentioned many times in the Old Testament.

Today's church is very "heaven oriented." They are all expecting to go to heaven. It is their hope and dream. But the first believers had no such orientation. They were Jews. They were expecting an earthly kingdom. They were looking for the fulfillment of the many Old Testament prophecies concerning a Messiah who would sit on David's throne. In fact, some of the disciples asked Jesus about this very thing. They said: "Lord, will you restore the kingdom to Israel at this time?" (Acts 1:6).

*Now I know that Jesus sat down on "the right hand of God" (Luke 22:69 and others), but please do not be confused by this. The expression "on the right hand" of someone meant in that culture "to share the position and authority" of that person. There are not two thrones in heaven – one for the Father and another smaller one for the Son. There is only one throne and Jesus is occupying it.

His answer to them was not to deny that this would happen in the future, but to indicate that this time had not yet come.

RULING WITH A ROD (OR SCEPTER) OF IRON

While we are discussing the reign of Jesus on the earth, perhaps it would be beneficial to investigate just how this reign will look. Revelation 19:15 gives us some clues. We read: "A sharp double-edged sword came out of his mouth so that he would strike the nations with it, and he will rule them with a scepter of iron."

The book of Revelation 2:26,27, speaking about the rule of Christ and of the believers who will reign with Him, adds: "And he who overcomes and he who keeps on doing my works until the end, I will give him authority over the nations. He will rule them with a scepter of iron just as the vessels of the potter are broken into shards since I also have received *this* from my Father."

Now this sounds like a very definite, severe kind of reigning. It doesn't sound like some limp-wristed, namby-pamby, benign sort of a guy ruling with a wet noodle.

Although today many have this sort of a concept about Jesus, it is not His true character. During this present age of grace, God is not exercising His judgments in this strict, forceful manner but in the coming kingdom age, we are told that He will.

So we see that Jesus will rule with “a rod of iron,” and the nations which disobey Him, He will shatter in pieces just as a clay pot is shattered when it is smashed with an iron bar.

This is the analogy that God Himself chose to demonstrate the absolute, unswerving way Jesus will rule this world. This means that when the population of the earth during the millennium deviates from God’s will, He will punish them severely.

This strict rulership will last until all His enemies are subdued before Him. In 1 Corinthians 15:25 we read: “For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.”

What then are these enemies? Of course, they must include the evil spiritual rulers who are today governing the earth (Eph 6:12). But they also must include men and women who are rebellious against Him. These are those who refuse to embrace and seek His righteousness and His justice. These are those who refuse to stop sinning. These are also His “enemies.”

So what will this be like? In Isaiah 32:1 we are told: “Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with justice” (NKJV). Therefore, during the genuine kingdom reign of Christ, we should expect that there would be an end of unrighteousness and injustice of all kinds.

The nations who practice such things, along with the people who inhabit them, will be severely punished until they abandon their sin.

Again, this severity is compared to the smashing of clay pots with a rod of iron.

The result will be that the world would then be an enjoyable place in which to live. Evil-doers will be justly punished. Injustice will not be practiced. Cheaters will be caught. Liars will be exposed. Corrupt individuals will be stopped from their activities. People will no longer take advantage of each other. The hallmarks of Jesus' true kingdom will be "justice" and "righteousness"! The whole world will be full of such attributes.

So, are we seeing these attributes on full display today? Are the nations which violate God's law being severely punished? Are they being ruled "with a rod of iron"? Is the world a wonderful place to live without any violence, robbery, murder, or any other sin?

Some of those who believe that we are now living in the millennium try to argue that somehow this righteous reign of Christ described here will really be during eternity and not here on earth. Yet it is hard to imagine anyone stepping out of line in "eternity" or any nations rebelling against Him. In fact, it is impossible.

Will He be smashing the nations with an iron scepter during eternity? No, in eternity all rebellion and sin will not exist; therefore, it could not be punished. Consequently, it is easy to conclude that we have not yet seen the one-thousand-year kingdom of God come to earth. We are obviously not in it right now.

NO MORE WAR

Another hallmark of the coming millennial kingdom is the absence of war. We read in Isaiah 2:4: "He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (NKJV).

When Jesus sets up His kingdom on this earth, there will be no more war. What a relief! War is a horrible, destructive thing! Jesus will put an end to it during His reign.

So are we seeing this millennial sign? Again, we must honestly ask ourselves: has war been eliminated from the earth? Are there no more men and women being trained to fight (learning war) in any country? Is there, according to the angelic hosts who prophesied to the shepherds at Jesus' birth, "peace on earth"? (Luke 2:14).

Those who think we are in the millennial kingdom now imagine that Jesus is reigning over the earth at this time. Furthermore, they assert that He has been reigning for almost two thousand years since the year 70 AD.

But has the earth changed? Is it a better place? No! In the last two thousand years have there been any wars? Far too many! Have people stopped sinning: stealing, lying, cheating, murdering, etc.? I think not.

If Christ is going to reign until ALL His enemies are put under His feet and the earth is subdued in righteousness, at the present rate it will take millions of years to arrive at the goal. It's just not happening. War still exists along with all other kinds of unrighteousness. In fact, it seems to me that we are very close to seeing a lot of new wars starting up. Contrary to what some might say, the world is NOT becoming a better place. There is no visible evidence of His reigning over the nations.

(Although some people are "getting saved," this does not fulfill, or negate the importance of, these and other many signs.)

The idea that we are now in Christ's one-thousand-year kingdom appears to be preposterous and absurd. It defies any and all logic. Although some will drum up what they believe to be "scriptural" arguments to say that somehow Jesus has secretly or invisibly returned and is now reigning over the earth, no one should embrace a teaching which demands the abandonment of all rational thinking.

THE "TWELVE" ON THRONES

The Bible teaches us that Jesus will sit on David's earthly throne, but we are also informed that the twelve apostles will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. This also must be here on the earth. We read: "And Jesus said to them, 'Truly I say to

you that you who have followed me, in the Messianic restoration – when the Son of man sits on the throne of his glory – you also will sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel” (Mt 19:28).

Why do I insist that this must be on the earth? It is because at the final judgment, everyone, including all Jews, will be judged by God, not the twelve apostles. In trying to explain this verse, some have suggested that the twelve will be “helping” Jesus judge other Jews in the final judgment.

This is patently ridiculous. That final judgment is reserved for God alone. Men are not capable of judging the hidden thoughts and intentions of the hearts of other men (Heb 4:12; Rom 2:16). In fact, the Bible teaches us that we should not judge others in this way! Men will not judge other men at the final judgment. Only God will ultimately be our judge.

Therefore, the “twelve judging” must be referring to the kind of “judging” which was done by the judges of the Old Testament. This means that these twelve will hear and settle civil and legal disputes.

This will involve questions such as: if someone did not respect land boundaries, if someone had stolen something, if someone might or might not be guilty of murder or adultery, and many other such things.

These are actions that must be done here on this earth, not in heaven. Once “eternity” is ush-

ered in, there will be no more such disputes to settle. Sin will have been eliminated. Therefore, there will be no need for these men to judge anyone. There will be nothing for them to judge in eternity.

So the promise of the twelve apostles judging the twelve tribes of Israel must be something which happens during an earthly, millennial reign. It cannot be at the final judgment or in “eternity.”

Who will the “twelve” be judging? They will be judging Jewish men and women, still in physical bodies, going about their natural lives on this earth. These will be those who survive the judgments of God during what many wrongly called the “tribulation” and the descendants of these people. (The best translation of the Greek word here would be “persecution” not “tribulation”).

REIGN WITH HIM ON THE EARTH

Not only will the twelve apostles be sitting as judges on the earth during the real millennium, but faithful believers will also be occupying such positions all over the world.

In the book of Revelation 20:4-6, we read: “Then I saw thrones and they sat upon them, and the reward of judging was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, even for the word of God, and whoever had not wor-

shipped the beast or his image and had not received the impression of his character on their forehead or on their hand. And they lived and reigned with the Anointed One for one thousand years."

Revelation 5:9,10 reads: "And they sang a new song saying, 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to break open its seals, for you were slain and thereby purchased for God with your blood men from every tribe, language group, people, and nation and made them to be kings and priests to our God. And they will reign on the earth.'" Please notice where this takes place. It is not in heaven.

This judging is one of the promises of Jesus to servants who are faithful and use the gifts He gives them wisely. He says in Luke 19:16-19: "And the first came before him saying, 'Lord, your pieces of money have earned ten more.' And he said to him, 'Well done, you excellent servant. Since you were found faithful in a very little, you will have authority over ten cities.'

"Then the second came saying, 'Lord, your money has earned five more pieces of money.' And he said to him also, 'You will have authority over five cities.'"

This cannot be something which will happen in "eternity" or "in heaven." Why not? This is because in the church, in the spiritual kingdom of God, Jesus prohibits believers from exercising authority over each other (Lk 22:26). So this cannot be believers reigning over the con-

verted. Furthermore, there will be no unbelievers “in heaven” to reign over.

Not only this, why would anyone “in heaven” need anyone to have authority over or reign over them? Such governance is only needed where there is sin or where there are problems to be resolved. Surely this cannot be the case in the new heavens and the new earth. No sin could be there.

Therefore, the only logical conclusion one can come to is that this reigning of believers over parts of the earth – or tribes of Israel in the case of the twelve apostles – must be on this present earth during the millennial kingdom.

Furthermore, we cannot believe that Jesus was just making up a theoretical example when He told this parable and that the idea of servants reigning over cities was just imaginary. If we adopt this way of interpreting scripture, almost nothing in the Bible can be taken literally.

CHAPTER 3

MORE SIGNS

ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB

During the millennial kingdom there will be a feast. The saints of the Old Testament will be involved. We read: “And I say to you that many will come from the east and the west and will recline at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom which comes from the heavens...” (Mt 8:11). So here we learn that there is a feast during the millennium.

This will be something visible to all. It will not be something secret somewhere in “heaven.” We also are told in Luke 13:28,29 that: “At that time **you will see** Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets participating in the kingdom of God. ...But they, *the faithful*, will come from the east and west and from the north and south and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.”

Jesus taught these truths about the kingdom, not eternity. You can't have it both ways. Either we are in the kingdom now, as the amillennialists (those who believe that we are now in the millennium) teach, or not. If we are, then these

signs of the kingdom must be evident! They must be visible and verifiable. If these signs are really about “eternity,” then why does Jesus say that they refer to the kingdom? And if we are really in the kingdom, where are these signs?

The claim that the amillennialists make, that these things are allegorical and are merely a description of what will go on in heaven, is completely illogical. It is inherently contradictory.

Our theology must be consistent. If you insist that we are in the earthly kingdom of God now and Jesus is somehow from somewhere reigning over the earth, the scriptural signs concerning that kingdom must be in evidence!

THE WOLF AND THE LAMB

Here we read a very well-known scripture: “The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra’s den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper’s nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Is 11:6-9 NIV).

Here we are presented with several signs which will show us when we are in the millen-

nial kingdom. One of these is that the animals which today are carnivorous will no longer be so. They will become “vegan.” They will eat vegetation. Another is that snakes which today are poisonous will no longer be so. Still another is that these animals, which today are feared, will “neither harm nor destroy.”

The phrase “in all my holy mountain” means “in all my holy kingdom” since in biblical language, the word mountain often refers to a kingdom.

Not only does the behavior of animal life change, but the plants too will change. We read: “Instead of the thorn bush will grow the juniper, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the LORD’s renown, for an everlasting sign, that will endure forever” (Is 55:13 NVI).

It is interesting that the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament suggests a possible translation of the word “forever” could be “for the age” singular, thus pointing to the kingdom age or millennium. In fact, Young in his literal translation renders it this way: “Instead of the thorn doth come up fir, Instead of the brier doth come up myrtle, and it hath been to Jehovah for a name, for a sign age-during – it is not cut off!”

These important signs of the true reign of Jesus Christ are possible because there has been a change in the rulership of this earth. The evil behavior of nature today is a result of the earth being ruled by evil principalities and powers. These spiritual rulers will be replaced during

the millennium by believers who have overcome them during their lifetime.

When the faithful, overcoming believers are put in positions of authority on this earth in place of the evil principalities, even the course of nature will change. In fact, we are taught that this present creation is groaning with “birth pangs” right now waiting for this very change of rulership!

CREATION IS GROANING

Romans 8:20-22 teaches us: “Now the creation was subjected to degradation, not voluntarily but because of him who subjected it in the hope that even the creation itself will also be delivered from the slavery of decay into the liberty of the children of God when they are glorified. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers birthing pains until today.”

I remember many years ago when my son wanted to raise animals, we bought twenty-five lambs for him. This was a great experience for all of us. That summer was very cold and wet. One day I noticed that the snout of one of the sheep – the only place without wool – was covered with mosquitos sucking its blood and, no doubt, producing itching. These poor animals were suffering from the results of the fall of Adam and Eve.

If you have ever observed wild animals, you will notice that they are always alert. They live

in constant fear for their lives from predators. They are continually watching and/or sniffing the air, afraid that something might attack them and eat them.

This shows us that creation itself is still suffering from the fall of man. Furthermore, they are groaning to be free from this suffering. This is compared to a woman groaning in pain just before childbirth. What then are they “groaning” for? It is for the “sons of God” to finally be glorified and take the place of the present evil rulers who are governing this earth.

The signs of Jesus’ kingdom, which will change this situation, are not present. The rulership of the world has not yet “...become that of our Lord and his Anointed One and he will reign forever and ever” (Rev 11:15).

Although some might insist that the phrase “forever and ever” points to eternity and not the kingdom, it is very clear that even *after* the millennium, Jesus’ reign will not end but will continue on forever. He will then reign from the NEW Jerusalem. Of course, once Jesus begins to reign, He will never stop.

So, this does not point to eternity but instead reveals to us information about the coming kingdom. When the millennium really comes, there will be some holy people of God ruling over this earth, taking the place of the present evil spiritual rulers. This will change the course of nature, including the habits and diet of the animals and the nature of plants.

LONGEVITY

Another sign of the millennial kingdom is that people will live for a much longer time, just as they did in the days before the flood. Although death will not be eliminated at that time, the death process will take much longer. We read: "... for the days of my people will be like the days of a tree, and my chosen will long enjoy the work of their hands" (Is 65:22 WEB).

So how long does a tree live? A tree can live 800 or 900 years or even longer. This means that along with the effects of the curse upon Adam and Eve (thorns and thistles from Genesis 3:18) being somewhat lessened during the kingdom reign, death and aging will also take place at a much slower pace.

However, please notice that death and aging are still present. Nothing here indicates that they have been eliminated. Therefore, such things must refer to an earthly, physical kingdom on the present earth. So, if we are in this millennial kingdom, we should be seeing this sign.

We are also taught: "Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; the one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child; the one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed" (Is 65:20 NIV).

This verse cannot be describing anything about "eternity" since it is obvious that death

will still exist at that time. Therefore, this truth must be describing in further detail the longevity which will exist during the coming millennium. This is a sign which must be seen right now if we are indeed living in the millennial kingdom. But clearly it doesn't and so we aren't.

The amillennialists' claim that these things are merely figurative and allegorical is really unfounded. Their explanations seem to insinuate that the Old Testament people were sort of simple-minded, perhaps not far removed from being cavemen, and so could not understand plain speech telling them that something was eternal.

Some of them claim that the prophets spoke to those people in terms to which they could relate. So, "failing to reach one hundred years of age" doesn't really mean that, but is instead a simplistic way of telling the "yokels" that there would be no more death.

This kind of theology is weaselly. It is a slippery, dishonest, twisting of the scriptures to take away important meaning. In my mind, these are doctrines of demons. The source of such teaching is something about which we will speak more later.

SATAN BOUND

Another sign that we will see when we are in the millennium is that Satan will be bound. In Revelation 20: 1-3 we read: "Then I saw an angel

coming down out of the heavens having the key to the abyss and a large chain in his hand. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent which is the devil and Satan who has deceived the entire world, and bound him for one thousand years. So he threw him into the abyss, locked it, and sealed it over him so that he could not be deceiving the nations any more until the thousand years are fulfilled. After this, he must be released for a little while."

So the question at hand is: "Is Satan really bound"? Some of the "kingdom now" folks point to Jesus' parable about binding the strong man and plundering his house (Mk 3:27) as evidence that Satan is today bound.

It is true that some men and women are meeting Jesus and are escaping (to a greater or lesser degree) the influence of the devil.

Therefore, we can conclude that to some extent, his power has been weakened since Jesus' crucifixion. It is true that, to some degree, his house is being plundered by men and women coming to Christ.

However, in order for the Revelation passage to be completely fulfilled, the nations have to be freed from his influence entirely. He cannot be "deceiving the nations" at all.

As we look at today's society, including the nations all around the world, are they completely free from Satan's influence? Are all the new trends righteous instead of evil? Are the vast majority "waking up" to realize that they

should obey God and forsake sin? Have the nations really stopped being deceived in any way? If so, then we can be sure that we are in the millennial kingdom today.

BRINGING BACK ALL THE JEWS

Another sign of the kingdom of God on earth during one thousand years is the regathering of each and every Jew to the land of Israel. The Bible teaches us that when Jesus returns, He will send people to seek out every natural Israelite, no matter where they are on the earth, and bring them back to their land.

Jeremiah 16:15,16 reads: "Behold, I will send for many fishermen," says the LORD, "and they shall fish them; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks." Therefore behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that it shall no more be said, "The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt," but, "The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them." For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers." (NKJV).

Isaiah 66:20 says: "Then they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the LORD out of all nations, on horses and in chariots and in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy moun-

tain Jerusalem,' says the LORD, 'as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD. And I will also take some of them for priests and Levites, says the Lord.'" (NKJV). See also Ezekiel 36:22-38.

This kind of intensive, widespread regathering of Jews to the nation of Israel has never happened. Those who returned after the Babylonian captivity were the minority, not the majority.

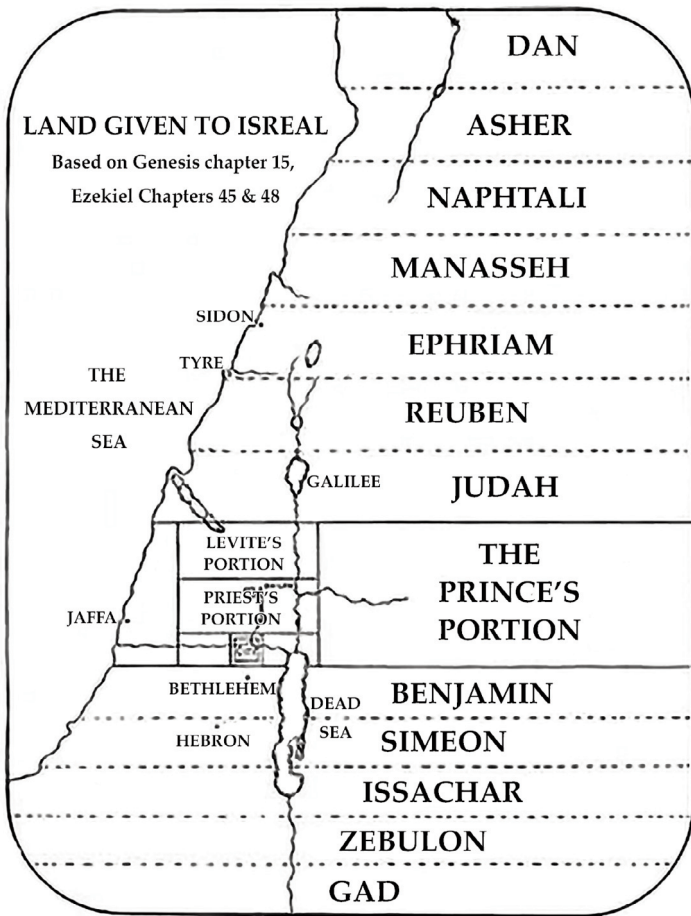
Today, there are still many Jews scattered around the world. This prophecy is one which speaks about the coming millennial kingdom. It has not yet been fulfilled. So this too shows us that we are not today in this kingdom.

REDISTRIBUTING THE LAND OF ISRAEL

When these Jews are returned to the land of Israel, first they will be judged by Jesus. Then, those who are considered worthy will be settled in the land of Israel. The land will be subdivided among the twelve tribes in horizontal strips. Each tribe will be allotted a strip of land. This will be completely different from the way the land was divided in Joshua's time. A kind of representation of this is included on the next page.

This division of the land is detailed in Ezekiel chapter 48. This is also something that has never happened in history. As with the other prophecies, it obviously cannot apply to "eternity," since at that time there will be a new heaven and a new earth. The new earth will not be iden-

tical to the present one. Furthermore, there will be no such division of land among the twelve tribes in eternity.



THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

Another proof that we are in the millennial kingdom is when we see all the nations of the earth going to Jerusalem every year to celebrate the feast of Tabernacles. I'm not sure why, but during the kingdom age, this feast will be the most prominent one. Every nation will be required to participate in it.

We read: "And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain. If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles" (Zech 14:16-18).

Now I have not noticed in the news that during this "millennial kingdom" which people say is happening right now, anyone is going to the feast of Tabernacles. Have you? Do we see delegations from every nation faithfully going every year to Jerusalem? I don't even know if the Jews in Israel today celebrate it. But during the genuine kingdom age, it will be an essential part of life.

Do we see nations today, who refuse to go to this feast, experiencing drought? Are they receiving the “plague” which God promises to those who don’t come? If we are now in the millennium, these things must be occurring.

This, then, is a reliable sign that we are not there yet. Although Jesus’ spiritual kingdom is being spread in men’s hearts, His physical and earthly kingdom has not yet come.

This demand for people to come to the feast of Tabernacles cannot logically be something which will happen in eternity. Would God withhold rain in eternity? Will He “plague” the nations at that time? The efforts of those who believe we are now in the millennium to make everything into an allegory for what will happen in eternity is patently ridiculous.

THE ELIMINATION OF MOST OF THE INHABITANTS OF THE EARTH

Another sign that we are in the millennial kingdom is that, after what most people call “the great tribulation” where God’s judgments are poured out, there is a huge reduction in the population of the earth. At one point, the horseman called “death” along with “hades” appears to kill 25 percent of the population (Rev 6:8).

On another occasion 30 percent of the earth is slain (Rev 9:15). Then there is the battle at Armageddon in which millions, maybe hundreds of millions, of soldiers are killed with

huge hailstones. This is just to list a few obvious examples.

Consequently, we are told that at the beginning of the real millennium, the population of the earth will be extremely reduced. We read in Isaiah 13:11,12: "I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity. I will halt the arrogance of the proud, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold, a man more than the golden wedge of Ophir" (KJV).

Here we see that humans will be so scarce at the beginning of the coming kingdom, that it is compared to finding gold. A male human will be even more scarce, like the especially good gold from a place called "Ophir." Probably males will be more scarce than females because most of the soldiers who are killed in the various battles (including the final one) will be male.

In Isaiah 17:6 we are taught: "'Yet 'gleaning [of] grapes' will be left in it. [It will be] like the shaking of an olive tree, two or three olives at the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in its most fruitful branches," Says the LORD God of Israel" (NKJV).

Olives and olive oil were an important part of the diet of people of that era. They harvested them by beating the tree or shaking the branches. In this case, too, they didn't leave behind any on purpose. But there are always a few which escape, perhaps being too unripe to fall off or hidden in some way.

After grapevines are harvested, there are always a few small clusters that are missed, hidden behind a leaf or other obstruction. But the harvesters don't leave any behind on purpose. These grapes represent their livelihood and their beverage. So, the remaining ones will be very few.

These verses are given to us in the context of "in that day," verse 4, which is often a kind of "code" for the "day of the Lord" or the one-thousand-year day which is the millennium.

I am guessing that only about 2 or 3 percent of the population of the earth will survive all the plagues, judgments, and wars of the "end times." Today, the earth's population stands at 8 billion. So that may leave a few hundred million people, if my calculations are correct, scattered around the world who survive and therefore will be alive at the beginning of the millennium. It is these survivors over which Jesus and the overcoming believers will reign.

Of course, without wars and other problems, along with the increased longevity occurring during the millennium which we have investigated, the population of the earth will increase rapidly and dramatically.

Until today, such a drastic reduction in the number of inhabitants of the earth has not happened. Since the death of Christ, such a thing has not occurred. Therefore, this is another sign that we are NOT now in the millennial kingdom.

NATIONS SURROUNDING AND ATTACKING JESUS

The amillennialists (those who think we are in the millennium), along with those called “preterists,” believe that most, if not all, the prophecies about the end times, the antichrist, the tribulation, etc. were all fulfilled in 70 AD when the soldiers under Titus the Roman general destroyed Jerusalem and the temple.

Obviously, many of these prophecies were fulfilled, especially the one about “not one stone being left upon another” which is what Jesus predicted concerning the temple (Mt 24:2).

If I understand correctly, these folks make the General Titus the antichrist and the attack on Jerusalem by his armies the fulfillment of the prophecies found in Revelation 19:19. But please notice, the scriptures do not say here the antichrist and his armies are fighting against Israel or Jerusalem. Instead, they say that they will fight against “...the One who sat on the horse.” Who, then, is this?

Well, His name is “the Word of God.” This seems pretty clear. No one but Jesus could have this name. And who are His armies? They are the “armies of heaven” (Rev 19:13,14).

Such an attack could only fulfill the prophecy of Revelation 19 if Jesus were to be physically on the earth. We, in all honesty, cannot “spiritualize” this fact away. In order for the destruction

of Jerusalem by Titus to be the fulfillment of this prophecy, Jesus would have to have physically returned to earth in order to be present. Also, Titus and his armies would have to have fought against the “armies of heaven” who descended with Jesus from heaven to earth and not the Jews.

Furthermore, according to the prophecy, it is Jesus who would have to win this battle, not the supposed antichrist. Therefore, this too is a part of the scriptures which has yet to be fulfilled.

WHEN DID JOHN WRITE DOWN THE REVELATION?

According to the amillennialists, all the prophecies about the future have been fulfilled (at least the ones about the millennium). But what about the prophecies in the Book of Revelation? According to Irenaeus who was a disciple of Polycarp, who in turn was a disciple of John himself, John wrote down this revelation sometime around 95 AD.

The evidence for this assertion is vast and compelling. The evidence against it is sparse and unconvincing. Only those who want to be convinced, or want to defend their position could be persuaded.

For a detailed investigation of this, please go to: www.evidenceunseen.com/bible-difficulties-2/nt-difficulties/jude/date-of-revelation/

This one fact entirely undermines the position of the amillennialists. Their theory does not

hold water. Surely John could not have been writing history! Instead, Jesus clearly states that these things are occurring at that time of his writing or will take place in the future (Rev 1:19). The events predicted in John's writing could not have been fulfilled in 70 AD if he saw the vision and wrote it down 25 years later!

Therefore, the position that the things predicted in the book of Revelation, including the saints reigning on the earth, have already happened or are now happening, is not sustainable. If, as it seems is true, John wrote the book of Revelation *after* the events of 70 AD, the amillennialist's position is completely untenable.

CHAPTER 4

SOME SPURIOUS ARGUMENTS

Those who believe we are now in the millennium insist that when Jesus taught about the destruction of Jerusalem and the time of the end (Mt 24, Mk 13, and Lk 21), He was merely teaching about what was going to happen in 70 AD.

It was then that the Roman general Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. From that time until recently, Jerusalem has been under the control of non-Jewish people. There are many similarities between the chapters in these three Gospels describing future events.

Many people do not realize that the disciples asked Jesus two different questions, which He was answering. We read in Matthew 24:3: "Tell us, when will these things be *and* what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

Jesus' explanation then included two different sets of events. One of them was what would happen to the temple and Jerusalem. The second was what would be the signs of the end of the age and His coming.

It may be that His hearers did not realize that there were two different scenarios being described: the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and the time of the end. Therefore,

those who wrote down Jesus' words did not distinguish between them. Although these events have their similarities, they are not the same. Yet Jesus was speaking about both events in the same discourse.

It must also be noted that many prophecies both in the Old and New Testaments have an earlier and later fulfillment. Many are not just one-dimensional. So, some of the things Jesus was saying could have, and in fact do have, an earlier and later fulfillment. One was on the date of 70 AD and another later one will be shortly before His coming. Therefore, some of the things Jesus taught us in these passages can and probably do refer to similar events which will occur at two different times.

Yet the amillennialists point to these chapters and insist that they are *only* speaking about the events related to the destruction of the temple, Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jews. Therefore, for them, everything was fulfilled in 70 AD by General Titus and his armies.

One of their main reasons for this belief is Jesus saying: "This generation will not pass away until all these things are fulfilled" (Mt 24:34; Mk 13:30; Lk 21:32). They insist that Jesus meant the generation to which He was speaking. This is one of their principal arguments. It is one upon which a lot of weight is placed. Consequently, for them everything Jesus predicted had to happen during the lifetimes of those who heard Him.

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

But in Luke 21:24 Jesus says something quite significant. We read: “And Jerusalem will remain under the dominion of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” Then **later** in verse 32 He says: “This generation will not pass away until all these things are fulfilled.” Here we find a huge elephant in the room which everyone pretends not to notice.

This cannot refer to the generation to which Jesus was speaking at that time! They saw Jerusalem destroyed but did not see Jerusalem returned to Jewish dominion. Jerusalem was only restored to Jewish control in 1967.

There is no way to misunderstand this verse. To “remain under the dominion” or “be trodden underfoot” by the Gentiles means to **not** be under Jewish control. This was to be “until” some spiritual event called “the times of the Gentiles” was finished.

Nothing like this occurred around 70 AD. To be sure, Jerusalem fell under the control of the Gentiles, but the rest of this prediction did not happen for almost 2,000 years.

This is extremely significant! To which generation was Jesus then referring? The one to whom He was speaking or the one which would see certain signs? Or perhaps both? One of these signs is Jerusalem being restored to the Jews after being possessed by the Gentiles! In this

case, the phrase “this generation” cannot apply to those to whom He was speaking. It can only be a much later generation, which could be understood to be our generation.

Before Israel became a nation in 1948 it is understandable how some Bible scholars could not see this elephant. But today, this huge sign is right in front of us, as big as life. This “elephant” testifies to the fact that everything was not fulfilled in 70 AD. The phrase “this generation” cannot mean only the people who heard Him speak.

NO JERUSALEM OR ISRAEL

The lie that we are now in the millennial kingdom has roots that go back many hundreds if not over one thousand years. Perhaps one reason for this is that Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus, the Roman general. Shortly thereafter, the nation of Israel ceased to exist.

So, people trying to understand the prophecies concerning the kingdom in the Old Testament were faced with a challenge. How could these prophecies be fulfilled literally without having a nation on the earth called “Israel”?

These prophecies demand a literal country, full of Jews, in the same place as it was before. But how could that be possible? The land was in the possession of other people and the Jews were dispersed widely around the globe. So, the easiest thing was to just “spiritualize” the promises to not have a literal fulfillment. This then

“resolved” the problem of how these holy predictions could come to pass. I suspect that amillennialism has its roots in just such unbelief.

This is what the “we’re in the kingdom now” people do. They make everything have a “spiritual” fulfillment. Any need for a literal fulfillment is removed. Everything is explained as really referring to heaven.

But God has done wonderful things. Jesus taught us that: “...Jerusalem will remain under the dominion of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Lk 21:24). In 1967 a miraculous thing happened. The ancient part of the city of Jerusalem came into Jewish hands after almost 2,000 years. This is an event that many Bible scholars from the past thought to be impossible. Unfortunately, because of such thoughts, they altered their theology to make a literal fulfillment unnecessary.

Yet God did it! He has restored the land of Israel to the Jews. Regardless of what you think about this from a political point of view, it is something unprecedented. Never before in the history of the world has a people lost their nation and then, after almost 2,000 years, come to the same place and reestablished their nation again.

Now all the Old Testament prophecies can and will have a literal fulfillment. There is no need to spiritualize them. There is no need to explain them away. Jesus will come back to Jerusalem and to a land filled with the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION

Some other passages which the amillennialists use to try to prove that the kingdom of God came in 70 AD are the ones where Jesus says: “Verily I say unto you, there are some standing here, which shall not taste of death, before they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom” (Mt 16:28; Mk 9:1; Lk 9:27 NIV). So, they insist for this to be true, Jesus has to come and set up His kingdom during the lifetime of those to whom He was speaking.

To repeat this idea, they say that at least some of the people who heard Jesus say these words would have to be alive when His kingdom came. Therefore, His kingdom had to have come shortly thereafter and the events of 70 AD provide for them a possible solution to this.

However, this idea really doesn’t hold much water. In fact, it’s very leaky.

It may be of some help for us to take a look at the Greek word translated “see” here. Jesus says that some will “see” the Son of man coming in his kingdom. This Greek word can mean “see” but it can also mean: “to experience any state or condition,” “to perceive, notice, discern, discover,” “to know, i.e. get knowledge of, understand, perceive” and other similar concepts.

Therefore, an actual, physical “seeing” is not required. All that this verse really requires is

that some of Jesus' hearers have an experience through which they perceived or gained knowledge of what His coming and kingdom would look like.

In all three gospel accounts, immediately after Jesus' pronouncement, this "seeing" happens in the next verses. He takes three of His disciples up on a mountain and there they see Him transfigured along with Moses and Elijah. This obvious connection between His saying these words and the disciples' experience immediately thereafter cannot be ignored.

It must be that when Jesus comes in His kingdom He will come in His glorified body. Since He has now been glorified, He will not become "unglorified" to reign on the earth.

On the mountain, the disciples learned what He would look like in His kingdom. We read in Luke 9:29: "And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered and his garments became brilliant white and radiated light."

Furthermore, the Old Testament saints will participate in this kingdom. The three disciples also saw this. Therefore, there is no demand here, none whatsoever, that some of the people who heard Him say these words would see the coming kingdom physically on the earth. In fact, what these three disciples saw was far more impressive than what we are seeing today which some claim to be "the kingdom."

CHAPTER 5

FOCUSED ON HEAVEN

As stated before, today's church seems to be focused on heaven. Everything revolves around "going to heaven." But a careful examination of the scriptures reveals that this focus is misguided. In the book of Revelation, we are informed that the New Jerusalem comes "down **out of heaven.**" This is repeated twice (Rev 21:2,10)!

While some have speculated that it is coming down from one heaven to a lower heaven. This is not logical. Why would God leave the highest heaven to come and live in the atmosphere above the new earth? It should be obvious that the New Jerusalem is "coming down out of heaven" to the new earth.

This is a very important point. It really makes a difference in how we understand God's plans.

Not only is His bride, the New Jerusalem, coming down *out of heaven*, but the throne of God is moving to the new earth also. His throne will be in this new city (Rev 22:3). It would be ridiculous to suppose that God moves His throne from the highest heaven to a lower one somehow suspended above the earth. Instead, it is the new earth which becomes the place from which Jesus will reign together with His new bride, for eternity.

Although we read that our “reward is laid up for us in heaven,” this reward does not stay there. Jesus will bring it with Him to the new earth when He comes. We read in Revelation 22:12: “Look, I will come promptly and my reward is with me to recompense each man according to his work” (FLNT). So our reward will not be waiting for us in heaven but will be brought to the earth with Jesus when He returns.

This is all to say that while most Christians are interested in going to heaven, God is interested in coming to earth. We must give up our heaven-centered theology and conform our ideas to what the Bible actually teaches.

This then brings us to one of the more confusing phrases in the Bible. It is a phrase that only appears in Matthew, but it does appear there over thirty times. It is the phrase: “the kingdom of heaven.” There are many parables in Matthew where Jesus is teaching us things about the “kingdom of heaven.” How are we to understand this? Most Christians, without much contemplation, just imagine that He is teaching us about what heaven will be like. But this is exactly what He is NOT teaching us.

To begin, let us note that the Greek word “heaven” appears in the plural form in these parables – “heavens.” It is not in the singular as so many versions wrongly render it. Possibly some translators, influenced by the “heaven” tradition in today’s church, tried to push their erroneous understanding by making it singular.

In this way, they “help” the readers understand. But this is wrong and misleading. When Bible translators fudge their translations to support some doctrine or other, the readers suffer by being misled.

There are actually three kinds of “heavens” mentioned in the Bible. The atmosphere, outer space, and the presence of God on His throne. So, since the word is plural, these verses are not only speaking about the “third heaven,” – or the presence of God – which many understand to be “heaven.”

Furthermore, the preposition “of” does not appear in the text. The actual Greek text literally says: “The kingdom the heavens.” In this case the article “the” in Greek can imply the existence of a preposition. But which one? The preposition “from” comes to mind.

Using this preposition we would read: “the kingdom from the heavens” or “the kingdom *which comes* from the heavens” which is much more clear.

This translation corresponds exactly to the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray: “May your kingdom come ... on earth as it is in heaven.” (Mt 6:10 FLNT). Therefore, God’s desire is for the heavenly kingdom to come to earth, not for us to go to heaven.

Obviously the new Jerusalem – which is the bride of Christ – is heavenly in origin and nature. It is truly “the heavenly Jerusalem.” But it is not “heaven” and it will ultimately not stay

in, or be located in, “heaven.” It is clearly seen as “descending **from** heaven.” I wonder, what so many Christians are planning to do up there in heaven all alone without Jesus or His bride?

THE EARTH IS IMPORTANT

Why did God create an inhabitable earth? Why did He make mankind in His image and put them on this planet instead of in some heavenly place? Why did He create man with flesh and blood, instead of making him a spirit being, as are so many other heavenly beings? Why did He send His son to men on earth? Why did He “partake of flesh and blood” (Heb 2:14), becoming a man Himself? Why is it this world that He loves so much (Jn 3:16), even enough to send His only Son to die for us?

Obviously, this place, earth, is important to Him. He has a special interest in it. It is a very unique place, created by Him for a special purpose.

For some reason, human beings with physical bodies are also important.

God has decided to take Himself a bride from mankind. It seems that humanity expresses His nature – who and what He is – better than any other kind of being. He did not take on the likeness of angels (Heb 2:16). No merely spiritual beings were qualified for His marvelous, eternal plan. He, in His infinite wisdom, chose to make man in His own image and after His likeness. This included physical bodies. Then He

further chose to be born into the human race, having been birthed by Mary.

Even after His death, Jesus did not discard His human body. It was not left in the grave. Instead, He glorified it. When He appeared to the disciples after His resurrection, He gave them proof that He still had a human body.

Luke 24:39 reads: “See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have” (ESV). See also John 20:25-27. This is an important truth.

We too will never lose our human bodies. They also will be glorified when Jesus returns. So we will never be merely spirit beings.

Through all this, we can conclude that God is much more focused on the earth than Christians imagine. He created mankind and put him on the earth. The earth is a place for those with physical bodies. This includes Himself (Heb 2:14).

Now let us think about these facts. Why will He create a new earth? If He is just going to whisk all believers off to heaven, why would He want a new earth? Could it be just for the wild animals to have a place to live? It must be because the earth is important to God. It has a special place in His plans. Earth, both this one and the new one, is for humans with physical bodies.

I don't know why, but God has chosen this earth. Out of the countless galaxies, stars, and

planets, He chose this one. I cannot understand or question His reasoning. But far too many Christians are giving up on the earth and planning to “go to heaven.” They have an escapist philosophy.

WILL GOD BE DEFEATED?

Furthermore, heaven-centered believers seem to accept that in an important way, God will be defeated. They may not realize God’s defeat is part of their theology, but it is there just the same.

Their idea seems to be that Satan succeeded in seducing man to fall, thus corrupting the earth. He proved his power and authority over this planet by causing men and women to become part of his kingdom and express his evil nature. What God made has been corrupted by the devil and he is firmly in control of it still today.

So, although it is not stated clearly, today’s Christian church just concedes the territory to Satan and hopes that God will whisk everyone off to heaven. Then, they think, God will just destroy the earth, admitting that He was not able to recover it from the devil’s grasp. Essentially, the church seems to think that God is defeated concerning who will control this earth.

Let me try to use an example here to explain this. Recently, Russia invaded Ukraine. At this moment, they have taken some territory. If an accord is reached to end this war and this territo-

ry is ceded to Russia, then to some degree the Ukraine will have been defeated.

The only way for them to have what could be seen as a victory is to take back all the land which has been invaded. Even if Russia just destroyed everything in the occupied territory so that it was left a useless wasteland, the defeat would still exist. In the same way, if God just whisks believers off to heaven and then destroys this present earth, it represents a defeat for Him.

But it is Satan, not God, who will be defeated. Jesus' plan is to return to this earth, establish His holy kingdom here, and reign until all rebellion is subdued. All His enemies, all sinful behavior, all outward unrighteousness, will be eliminated during the earthly reign of Christ, with the aid of the overcoming believers who will reign with Him. Jesus' reign will recover this physical earth from the reign of the devil and place it again under the Father's control (1 Cor 15:24,28).

The final victory will belong to God and not the devil. He will recover the earth from his influence and grasp – every bit of it. God will not be defeated in any way.

While some amillennialists think that Jesus is reigning now over the earth, this is absurd. If Jesus has been reigning right now to subdue the earth to His righteousness, He is doing a terrible job. After almost 2,000 years, the world is not a better place. Nothing has changed for the better or gotten more righteous.

To imagine that this is true is the worst kind of self-delusion. Evil of all sorts is abounding. Wars are still occurring. Murder, hate, robbery, lying, adultery and fornication, cheating, and every other kind of sin are flourishing among men. Unfortunately, this is true even among those who call themselves Christians.

Along this line, although many people have come to Christ throughout the centuries since His death and resurrection, many of these same people have not become holy. The sad truth is that many, if not most, people who call themselves Christians are more influenced by the devil and the world around them than by Jesus.

While some may see the advance of Christianity in terms of numbers as proof of Jesus' kingdom on the earth, this is only part of the story. The world as a whole has not changed.

Furthermore, it can easily be argued that many Christians are not really living in God's kingdom. They are not under His authority. They are rebellious, self-willed, and full of sinful behavior. Although they are His children, they cannot be thought of as living in His kingdom.

Not only this, there are places where in the past there were many believers, but now they are spiritually barren, almost devoid of the gospel and real believers. Furthermore, the increase of believers today is parallel to an increase in the total number of inhabitants of the earth. I doubt that the number of the truly converted – not just those who call themselves

Christians – is proportionally much different today than it has been for the last several centuries.

In short, if what we are seeing today on the earth is Jesus' millennial reign, it's not working. It's a fiasco. The world is not becoming a better place. To believe that it is, is just self-deception. Satan is still deceiving the nations. The nations are still learning war. Injustice is rampant. Sin is abounding. I don't like this so-called "millennium." I want a refund!

If there is any progress – and there isn't any real progress – it is so slow as to be indiscernible. At this rate, for the earth to be subdued in righteousness, it will take uncounted millions of years.

Yet, although many Christians seem to have given up on the earth and are waiting to go to heaven, God has not given up. He will not be defeated! He will return, set up His kingdom here, sit on the throne of David, and subdue the entire earth in righteousness. He will never, even in some small way, be defeated.

The earth is evidently very important to God. It is not an afterthought. It is central to His eternal plans. He has not given up on it. It is so important that when He makes His new creation, He not only will make new heavens, but a new earth. This new earth is the place to which He will move and where He will establish His throne (Rev 21:1-3). Did you realize that?

CHAPTER 6

WHY IS THE KINGDOM IMPORTANT?

Now, many may wonder, “Why is it important whether or not we are in the kingdom of God now, or whether it is coming in the future?” “What real difference does this make?”

As we saw at the beginning of this book, there is certainly a spiritual reality to the kingdom of God on earth right now. This invisible kingdom is entered into by allowing Jesus to be the king of your life. You must permit Him to reign over you!

But this is only one aspect of the kingdom of God. The other aspect is that there is an earthly, physical manifestation of this kingdom coming. Now, these two aspects of the kingdom are intimately related. According to the Bible, to take part in the second aspect, you must participate in the first!

According to the scriptures, our participation in the coming millennial kingdom is a reward for God’s faithful servants. Those who faithfully submitted themselves to the Lord (by entering the present kingdom during their lifetimes) will be rewarded in various ways during the coming kingdom. As we proceed, we will investigate this truth.

This aspect of the coming kingdom – the fact that it will be a reward for faithful believers – is important. Jesus promises us that if we overcome, we will reign together with Him. This is something to which we can look forward.

Also, we are taught that during the kingdom, there will be a wedding feast. We can take part in that too, if we succeed in entering into His kingdom. Denying the truth of a coming kingdom also takes away these important rewards for the faithful.

Also, there is a very serious flip side to this truth. Those who were stubborn and rebellious, not submitting themselves to Jesus' kingship during their lifetime, will be subjected to various punishments during the coming earthly kingdom. Those who don't enter the spiritual kingdom of God today will not enter into the coming kingdom later.

This may startle many readers. The possibility of future punishment existing for unfaithful servants of God may be new to them. This is exactly the reason why a true understanding of the millennium is essential! This is exactly why the devil has worked so hard over the years to obscure this precious truth about the kingdom!

By hiding the truth about the coming millennial kingdom, and even removing it from Christian teaching and understanding of the gospel, a very crucial truth has been taken away.

The lack of the kingdom teaching removes, to a large degree, the fear of God. It deprives us

of the sobering reasons why faithfulness and submission are important right now.

Everything will not be overlooked and forgiven. Disobedience will generate serious consequences for children of God. This is an essential truth. Yet it is something that the devil doesn't want us to know about and that most of the church doesn't want to hear. So the devil is working very hard to obscure this truth.

ISN'T EVERYTHING ALREADY FORGIVEN?

Although there seems to be one verse in the Bible which teaches us that all of our sins are forgiven once we receive Jesus, this is not the case. This verse, in Colossians 2:13, is commonly used to justify this "everything's already forgiven" doctrine.

The New King James Version reads: "And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses."

But, in the Greek text, this word translated as "forgiven" does not have this exact meaning. Although forgiveness can be implied by this word, it is not its principal meaning. Instead, this Greek word primarily means "to grant as a favor" or "to be gracious." It can also mean "to rescue." So this verse could be translated as "... graciously rescuing us from the whole of our sins."

Therefore, this is not a “proof text” in the scriptures which assures us that “once we say the prayer” or “come to Jesus” there can be no consequences for our behavior since everything is forgiven. Neither this verse nor any other, can be honestly used to assure unrepentant believers that everything is already forgiven.*

This concept is actually a lie from the enemy. Although Jesus can and does forgive us when we sincerely repent, it is not automatic. God has not become blind or stupid. The church has been fed a diet of fables, a kind of fairy tale in which everything is sort of magical and unbelievable and works out wonderfully in the end. Everyone will live “happily ever after.”

However, the scriptures actually teach us something very different. There are serious consequences for becoming a child of God and then living our life without submitting to His authority.

We have been robbed! The thief “comes to steal ...” (Jn 10:10). And he, the devil, has done a good job. He has blinded the eyes of the church to the fact that there are consequences for rebellion. There are consequences for unrepentant sin. There are consequences for unfaithfulness.

Jesus clearly teaches us about each and every one of these consequences. But, without the correct understanding of the coming millen-

*There is no room here to thoroughly address the subject of what is wrong with the “gospel of forgiveness” but I would like to recommend that the reader download or order the book, free of charge, titled *The Hidden Gospel* from the website www.agrainofwheat.com for a complete discussion of this all-important subject.

nial kingdom, they disappear. Without an understanding of both – the present invisible and the coming physical – aspects of Jesus' kingdom, we are spiritually blinded.

Can you now see why the devil wants to subvert and hide this truth? He doesn't want anyone to be convicted of sin or repent. He doesn't want Christians to have the fear of the Lord. It fits his scheme perfectly when God's people feel no need to seek Him intensely or realize that they have to obey Him. He loves it when everyone feels good about themselves and just coasts along primarily looking after their own interests.

The church has been fed a diet of universal forgiveness of sin with no punishment whatsoever and they have been robbed of the truth. Along with this unhealthy diet of no consequences, the great majority have also almost completely missed Jesus' teaching about the coming kingdom.

THE "KINGDOM OF HEAVEN" IS NOT HEAVEN

There are quite a few parables about the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God in the gospels. Due to the "heaven-centered" message of today's church, most people mistakenly try to apply these truths to "heaven." What happens when we try to make these kingdom teachings into eternity teachings is that we end up with some really illogical and strange theology.

For example, most of those who believe you can “lose your salvation” base many of their arguments on Jesus’ parables. Since these parables clearly demonstrate negative consequences for some of God’s people, those who cannot accept this possibility have to come up with alternative explanations for these teachings.

These “alternative explanations” then lead to erroneous and convoluted theology.

However, if we apply the kingdom parables to the coming kingdom, everything fits together very nicely. There is then no need to try and find a rather tortured solution to the truths presented in these parables. Let’s look at some of the parables together.

Perhaps the parable of ten virgins would be a good place to start (Mt 25:1-13). In this section, we find half of the virgins are left out of the wedding feast. Oh no! How can we understand that? Did they get unsaved? Did they “lose their salvation?” Were they not really saved in the first place? How can it be that Jesus will say: “I never knew you”?

We can begin here by stating that the wedding feast of Jesus will go on for one-thousand years. There is no such thing as being raptured, gulping down a feast, and then returning with Christ for the kingdom as many seem to believe.

The feasting is part of the coming kingdom experience. As we have already read: “And I say to you that many will come from the east and the west and will recline at the feast with Abraham,

Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom which comes from the heavens..." (Mt 8:11). So here we learn that there is a feast during the millennium.

So during the kingdom age, which will last for one thousand years, there will be a feast. I am telling you that this is Jesus' wedding feast. The marriage of the Lamb takes place at the *end* of the millennium. That is when we are shown the prepared bride descending OUT of heaven.

It is impossible that Jesus would have a wedding feast, as some believe, just after the rapture and then wait one thousand years for His wedding. NO. Feasting with Jesus at His wedding feast is one important aspect of the coming millennial kingdom.

Now back to the ten virgins. What do we do with this parable? All these individuals are "virgins" representing a certain purity (2 Cor 11:2). This is something which the unsaved do not have. These virgins all have at least some oil in their lamps, otherwise they could not later have been "going out." The oil is representative of the Holy Spirit. So they all had at least some of God's Spirit.

Also, all of them are waiting for the Bridegroom, something that the unregenerate are certainly not doing. So, the only honest, logical conclusion we can reach is that they represent believers.

Since the understanding of the kingdom is lacking or entirely lost in the church, some really ridiculous explanations are offered. They try

to fit this parable into the “saved or unsaved,” are we going to “heaven or hell” scenario. Some say that these five virgins lost their salvation. Others insist that they weren’t really “saved” in the first place.

This kind of teaching is a result of trying to make the kingdom parables apply to eternity. So many have wrestled with these kingdom parables without any clarity simply because they imagine that Jesus was talking about “heaven,” but He wasn’t.

What we are really being taught is that there are consequences for foolishness in God’s kingdom. Jesus makes it clear that this parable is relating to the kingdom from the heavens. So, it is easy to understand that some believers who are foolish in their walk with the Lord will be left out of the coming millennial kingdom. The door will be shut in their faces.

But, some will no doubt ask, what about Him saying, “I don’t know you?” How could these be believers if Jesus doesn’t know them?

Well, if you think about it, Jesus knows everyone, believer and unbeliever alike. He knows the fallen angels. He knows Satan. If every hair of our heads is counted, how could it be that He somehow doesn’t know who someone is? Have some human beings escaped His notice? No, of course He knows all of them!

But in this case, He is not acknowledging that He knows them. This is the fulfillment of one of His promises. He says, “But whoever

denies me before men, I will also disown before my Father who is in the heavens" (Mt 10:33). So, because of their foolish behavior, He is denying knowledge of them and therefore, they are left out of the rewards and pleasures of the millennial kingdom.

This parable teaches us very clearly that when Jesus returns and sets up His earthly kingdom, not all believers will be allowed in. The foolish ones will be excluded. They will have lost the right to enter into it.

Now this is something which many Christians do not want to hear. They, with their wishful thinking, want to believe that once you receive Jesus, there can be no more negative consequences. From then on, everything will be great.

Perhaps this is one of the reasons that so many like to imagine that there is no such earthly kingdom coming. With such theology, they get to escape from any punishment for disobedience.

Let's move on now to a parable about servants and talents. This is found in Matthew chapter 25:19-28. Most of the readers will probably be familiar with this parable. Here we are told the results.

"Now after a long time the lord of those servants returned and made an accounting with them. So he who received the five talents came and brought another five talents saying, 'Lord, you delivered five talents to me. Look, I have

made another five talents.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You have been faithful with small things, I will set you over important things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

"And he also who received the two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered two talents to me. Look, I have made another two talents.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You have been faithful with small things, I will set you over important things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

"Then he who had received the one talent also came and said, 'Lord, I perceive you as a hard man, reaping where you didn't sow and gathering where you didn't scatter, and I was afraid. So I went away and hid your talent in the earth. Look here, I am giving you back what is yours.'

"But his lord answered and said to him, 'You problematic and lazy servant. You say you saw me as one who reaps where they didn't sow and gathers where they did not scatter. Therefore, you should have at least invested my money with the bankers so that at my coming I would have received my money back with interest.'

"Therefore, take the talent away from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who holds onto what he has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance. But with respect to him who does not hold onto what he has, even that which he has will be

taken away. And throw out that useless servant into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

In verse one of this chapter, Jesus makes it clear that He is teaching about "the kingdom *which comes* from the heavens." We can be completely confident that it is not a teaching about eternity or eternal life.

This is because, as everyone should be able to agree, eternal life cannot be earned. It is not based on our works. It is most assuredly through faith. Therefore, this parable cannot possibly be teaching us about eternal life or "going to heaven."

It is very clear here that these servants are rewarded according to "works" which they did or neglected to do. While salvation is a free gift of God, entering into His coming kingdom is based on what we did with this free gift. It is – oh no, don't say it out loud – based on our works.

This is obviously what Jesus is teaching. To enter the kingdom, faithfulness is required. Although some have done some fantastical theological wiggling to try to get around this fact, there it is.

Now this should be obvious. Jesus is coming to reign to put down rebellion and sin. He is going to use some of His people to help Him with this task. They will rule with Him. But how could He use unfaithful, sinful, rebellious believers to accomplish this? This would be like

putting a thief in charge of a bank. It simply would not work.

This is why entering into the coming kingdom is a question of faithfulness. It is why we must submit to His reign over us today through the Spirit. It is the reason that He must be our LORD right now. If not, then we will be disqualified in the future and lose out on the coming kingdom.

CHAPTER 7

“OUTER DARKNESS”

Now just where is this place called “outer darkness,” where this unfaithful servant is thrown? Most assume that this is another word for “hell” or “the lake of fire.” However, this assumption must be a modern one.

Before the age of electricity, the only way to have light at night or in a dark place was to have fire in some form, whether it be a candle, lamp, torch, etc. For someone of that time, the idea of a lake full of fire being dark would be total nonsense. How could a fire be without light?

So it is easy to conclude that this place is not the same as the lake of fire. Furthermore, no one is thrown into the lake of fire before the millennium except the beast and the false prophet (Rev 19:20).

The only tenuous connection between the two (outer darkness and the lake of fire) seems to be the phrase used while describing both places “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mt 8:12; 22:13; 13:42).

This similarity of reactions of the people who suffer these two different punishments cannot be honestly used to insist that they are the same place. Obviously, anyone who is punished by God in any form will be unhappy and

experience regret. They will weep and gnash their teeth.

This judgment of servants will take place when Jesus returns to set up His kingdom. Please notice that the judgment of unbelievers will take place later "...after the one thousand years are finished" (Rev 20:5,12). Therefore, those judged at the time of Jesus' return can only be believers.

So, the place called "outer darkness" is somewhere that "servants" of Jesus are thrown who are lacking in something. This "something" is faithfulness. We will see this truth again as we examine other parables.

It is easy to see why so many people want to get rid of or skip the millennial kingdom. If we accept it, then we must admit that there can be punishment for unfaithful believers. Horrors!

Many have a hard time with that. So, they develop doctrines to eliminate the coming kingdom. This unfortunately is the work of the wrong kingdom with the wrong leader. It is darkness. Although those who teach that there is no such earthly kingdom coming have ways of explaining away certain scriptures, the result is to lose an important truth which today's church badly needs to hear!

ANOTHER SERVANT PARABLE

Let's go on to read more about what will happen to some of Jesus' servants. In Luke 12:42-48 we read: "And the Lord said, 'Who

then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord sets over his household to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he comes will find fulfilling his task. What I say to you is true. He will appoint him to administer all his possessions.

“But if that *same* servant says in his heart, ‘My lord is delaying his coming’ and begins to abuse the other menservants and the maidservants and to eat and drink, and get drunk, the lord of that servant will come on a day which he doesn’t expect him and at a time which he does not imagine. Then he will whip {or beat} him severely and assign him his share with the unfaithful.

“And that servant, who knew his lord’s will and did not prepare himself or carry out his will, will be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not understand and did things worthy of stripes will be beaten with few stripes. And to whomever much is given, much will be required of him. And to whom someone entrusts a larger portion, even more will be asked from him.”

Here Jesus teaches us that there are consequences – serious consequences – for unfaithfulness. The unfaithful servants, whether knowingly unfaithful or unwittingly unfaithful, are beaten. How does that fit into the “everything’s already forgiven” theology? It doesn’t! So, many dishonestly try to make this passage *not* refer to Christians. They try to make these servants

Jews, or something else, anything but believers receiving a just reward which they deserve.

Also, they point to verse 46 which in many translations reads: "He will appoint their portion with the unbelievers." So, they say, these must be unbelievers. This must mean they go to hell.

But when we honestly examine this Greek word translated as "unbelievers," it also can mean "unfaithful" or "not to be trusted, perfidious." It could then read: "He will appoint their portion with the unfaithful." So, this verse cannot be used as proof that these were unbelievers.

Furthermore, as we have seen, unbelievers will only be thrown into the lake of fire much later, not when the Lord comes.

There will be no beatings in the lake of fire. The fire will be punishment enough. As so many erroneously imagine, the devil and his demons will not be there inflicting punishment on people. They will be there suffering punishment themselves, not beating others!

Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Dante's *Inferno* along with Bosch's paintings have brought nothing but confusion to the church about this subject. But, thinking about it, perhaps they were just expressing the confusion that already existed in their time and still exists today.

Can you now understand how much the devil wants to hide this truth? It is in his best interest that Christians believe they can live any way they want without consequences. It serves

his purposes to rob the gospel of any serious results and so take away any fear of the Lord which could motivate believers to turn away from sin. Obscuring the coming kingdom, with all its related rewards and punishments, is the work of the prince of darkness.

Without a clear, true understanding of the coming kingdom, all possible consequences for disobedience disappear, and what we are left with is a mushy, weak, pusillanimous message which seems to make God into a doddering old fool.

It pictures God, who in the Old Testament was severe against sin, as someone who has changed His mind, doesn't care so much about sin anymore and now just wants people to "accept" Him. Perhaps He has repented for His overly harsh attitudes. It seems that He has become very insecure and He now craves acceptance so much that when we "accept" Him, He will just ignore all of our sin and whisk us off to heaven when we die.

Let me be very clear about this: God is NOT needing you or anyone else to "accept" Him. We need to be accepted by Him! And for this to happen, we need to repent for our sins, both our past and our present ones.

Let's move on to another parable. Here we read about the wedding feast and someone who shows up there without the proper attire. Matthew 22:1-3 reads: "And Jesus answered and spoke again in parables to them saying,

‘The kingdom which comes from the heavens is like a certain king who made a marriage feast for his son and sent out his slaves to call those who were invited to the wedding feast.’”

During the feast this happens: “But when the king came in to see those sitting at the feast, he saw a man who did not have on a wedding garment. And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without having a wedding garment?’ And the man was speechless. Then the king said to the slaves, ‘Bind him hand and foot and throw him out into the outer darkness, where there will be wailing and the gnashing of teeth’” (Mt 22:11-13).

Here we have a message concerning the marriage feast for the Son. As we have seen, the marriage feast is an aspect of the coming kingdom, not eternity. Why would there be a feast if the Son were already married? The wedding feast has to happen before the eternal kingdom begins. Think about this! This parable cannot be teaching us about eternity. This is because Jesus’ marriage takes place at the *beginning* of the new heaven and new earth (Rev 21:1,2). Therefore, there will be no wedding feast “in eternity.”

In this parable, we see that someone who is present at this feast suffers some negative consequences. The Lord asks a very good question: “How did you get in here without a wedding garment?” How could, for example, an unbeliever get in unnoticed? Will some non-Christians accidentally be raptured? Obviously, whether this be

in the kingdom or, as some erroneously imagine, eternity, no unbelievers could possibly sneak in. To teach this is both dishonest and ridiculous.

What is this garment or what does it represent? The scriptures tell us clearly. We read: For the fine linen is [represents] the righteous acts of those set apart for God" (Rev 19:8).

Here we see that the wedding garment is a result of righteous actions. This Greek word does not merely mean "righteousness" but righteous acts, or deeds.

Oh no! Do you mean "works"? Yes, that's right. What we do as a result of our faith is important and even essential. This wedding guest in this parable got in because he was a believer. But he lacked something important. His faith did not motivate Him to obey Jesus and fulfill His will. Therefore, during the kingdom he will be excluded and thrown into a place called "outer darkness."

MORE OF JESUS' TEACHINGS

Jesus reveals that there are also further requirements for entering into His kingdom. Please remember here that He is NOT teaching about eternal life or "salvation." Matthew 18:3 reads: "Truly I say to you, unless you change direction and become as little children, you will by no means enter into the kingdom *which comes from the heavens*. In Luke 18:17 Jesus says: "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, will in no

way enter into it." Here we see that there are requirements for entering into the kingdom. One of them is to become childlike.

We also read in Matthew 5:5 "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." And "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom *which comes from* the heavens." Now we learn that being "poor in spirit" and "meekness" are also requirements for entering. Are these characteristics necessary for being born again? Do you have to be like this to become a Christian?

Without "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15 NKJV) – in this case making a clear separation between "entering the kingdom" and "having eternal life" – there is no coherent, logical theological solution to these questions.

When we meditate upon these scriptures, we must admit that there are many believers who do not fit in these categories. They aren't meek. They aren't childlike. In fact, many are proud and full of themselves. So how then can we understand these scriptures?

Are these people lost? Were they never really believers in the first place? What must be clear to any honest reader is that while "salvation" – that is being born from above – is a free gift, entering into the coming kingdom has some further requirements. Among these are: humility, meekness, obedience, and faithfulness. Once we understand the truth about the kingdom, these and many other such biblical questions are easily resolved.

CHAPTER 8

OTHER SCRIPTURES WHICH TEACH THAT CHRISTIANS WILL BE LEFT OUT OF THE KINGDOM

Some readers may be wondering, in light of these assertions, if there are any other scriptures outside of the teachings of Jesus which show us these things. The answer is: Yes, there are! There are quite a few of them.

Let's start with the book of Jude. In this small book, Jude is warning us about some people, evidently who are taking part in the activities of the church, who will be punished. They will "...suffer the coming punishment" (Jude 1:4). It might be good to take a little time and reread Jude for yourself. It is quite a short book.

These people are right in the middle of the people of God, the church (vs 12). Yet their behavior is fleshly, selfish, and sinful. What then is their punishment going to be? It is this: "... for whom the *outer* darkness has been reserved **during the age** {singular, Gk}" (Jude 1:13 FLNT).

This is referring to the kingdom age, not eternity. In Greek, this word "age" is singular, not plural. Although most translators have rendered this as "forever" or "eternally," this is not correct or even honest. Once again, we find

translators influenced by their religious concepts, adjusting the scriptures to “help” us understand. In the process, they hide important truths from their readers.

Another verse which bears on the subject is 1 John 2:28 where we read: “And now little children, continue in him so that when he is revealed we may have confidence and not be ashamed, *and be* separated from him at his appearing.” What? Separated from Him at His coming? Is that the right word? Don’t most translations say: “...ashamed **before** Him” not “separated” from Him? How can this be?

Let’s look at this Greek word translated as “separated” together. It is ΑΠÓ which means: “from, away from.” It indicates: “separation and cessation; any kind of separation of one thing from another by which the union or fellowship of the two is destroyed.” I don’t see how, by any stretch of the imagination, this word could be translated as “before” which in this situation would mean “in front of.”

But most Bible translators suffer from the idea that once you “receive Jesus” there can be no more negative consequences. There can be no “separation.” So they twist this word to mean something it doesn’t mean. In the process, they rob us of some important truth.

Could Christians be separated from Jesus when He comes, even when the Bible says that: “...what could separate us from the love of the Anointed One?” (Rm 8:35 FLNT).

Absolutely! This is exactly what the scriptures teach us. However, this is not a permanent separation, but a temporary one. God, in His great love for all His children, will arrange for some of them a temporary separation for disciplinary purposes in order to achieve an important and eternal result.

It is not from lack of love that He does this, but because of His love for them! God will punish His rebellious children for their benefit! He will achieve eternal results through it. Through these punishments, He will deliver them from their self-will, stubbornness, and rebellion. They have not been separated from His love, but only separated temporarily from His presence.

Nothing in this understanding of the Bible shows us that these people are “lost.” Nothing tells us that they have become unborn again or that they have lost their salvation. Nothing indicates that they are somehow unloved by God.

Everything we are studying shows us that this is a temporary punishment. It lasts “for the age.” It is a discipline which is only during the kingdom age or the millennium.

WHAT PAUL TEACHES ABOUT THE KINGDOM

In the New Testament, we find many more verses which teach these truths. Yet somehow many just skip over them. Due to so much wrong teaching and/or wrong concepts, they

assume they can't possibly apply to them or any other Christian.

For example, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:9,10: "Or don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit the coming kingdom of God? Don't be deceived: neither those who have sex outside of marriage, nor those who worship something besides God; nor adulterers, nor crossdressers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor those who are eager for wealth, nor drunkards; nor slanderers, nor those who take advantage of others will inherit the kingdom of God [the millennial kingdom]" (FLNT).

There is no doubt that everyone to whom he was writing already understood (just as we understand today) that the unsaved, or unregenerated, will not be in eternity with the Lord. But here Paul is reminding the believers about something important concerning the coming kingdom. This letter was written to the church! It is not talking about, or to, unbelievers. It is not addressing the condition of people in the world.

Although there are many people today who are "born again" and even "church members," there are also many who are still practicing these very sins! It is a tragedy, yet it is true. Many of God's children are wallowing in sin.

For example, sexual sin – that is sex outside of the marriage union – is epidemic in the church. Many are slanderers. Others are eager for wealth. And the list could go on for quite a while. It is to these people that Paul is talking. There is no way

for them to live like this and expect to inherit the coming kingdom. It is impossible.

Paul also teaches us in Galatians 5:19-21 the following: “Now the works of the flesh are obvious, which are these: sex outside of the marriage bond, impure relationships, unholy sexual behavior, worshiping anything other than God, witchcraft and drug use, holding onto anger, arguments, jealousies, angry outbursts, selfish ambition, excluding others, separating into special, select groups, envying others, drunkenness, wild parties, and such similar things of which I warn you right now, even as I already warned you, that those who practice such things will in no way inherit the coming kingdom of God [the Millennium].”

Here Paul is giving the believers a serious warning. Once again, he is giving this warning to the church! This is not a message to the unsaved. He is affirming that if you live this way, you won't get into the kingdom.

But today's church has lost this truth. Partly as a consequence of this, today's church is replete with just such sins! Having been robbed of this precious kingdom truth, and been assured by a “no consequences” message, many have no fear of God. They think that God has become blind. They imagine that He “can't see their sin.”

What a ridiculous idea! Of course God is seeing everything and what He sees concerning our lives will have a result when He comes. He will judge and discipline His children.

In Ephesians 5:3-5 Paul repeats this same warning. “But don’t let such things as sex outside of the marriage bond and all sexual impurity or the desire for wealth even be mentioned among you, which is the characteristic of those set apart to God. Neither should you use obscenities, engage in frivolous conversation, or tell dirty jokes, which are not appropriate; instead be giving thanks.

“For you know this without a doubt: no one who engages in sex outside of the marriage bond, who practices impure sexual acts, nor anyone who is greedy (who is really worshipping money as an idol) has any inheritance in the coming kingdom of the Anointed One and of God [the millennial kingdom” (FLNT).

Do you know anyone who calls themselves a Christian and practices these things? Do you practice them yourself? Then know with certainty that there is severe and prolonged punishment facing you and them when the Master comes. “Truly I say to you, you will never get out of there until you have paid the last little bit of money” (Mt 5:26 FLNT).

Peter in his second letter also speaks about this subject. He instructs us to: “...add to your faith God’s virtuous character; and to virtuous character, increased understanding; and to understanding, self-control; and to self-control, patience; and to patience, holiness; and to holiness, brotherly affection; and to brotherly affection, *God’s perfect love*” (2 Pet 1:5-7 FLNT).

So why should we do this? He further explains. "In this way, an entrance into the age-lasting [millennial] kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus the Anointed One will be made abundantly available to you" (2 Per 1:11). Here he is explaining that to enter the coming kingdom requires something. It requires a godly life produced by submitting to the present spiritual reign of Jesus.

Of course, many versions of the Bible translate this phrase "age-lasting kingdom" as "eternal kingdom." The question here is about the translation of the word AONIAN.

This word can in fact mean "lasting for an age" or "eternal." So it is up to the translator to decide which it is. Obviously, the translator will be guided by his or her understanding of the gospel message.

In this passage, Peter employs a very serious word. It is the word "if." In 2 Peter 1:10 we read: "For if you do these things, you will never fall short of it."

This word "if" is important. Peter is telling us that it is possible to fall short of something. What is this? It is: "...an entrance into the age-lasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior..." (vs 11). Literally, this word "if" refers to: "doing these things."

So, there is something that, if we neglect to do it, will cost us our entrance into this coming kingdom. These teachings come to us from the Bible. They are not the inventions of this writer.

THE WRITER OF HEBREWS

The writer of the book of Hebrews also provides us with some serious warnings. In Hebrews 4:1 we read: "Therefore, since we have a promise reserved for us of entering into his rest, let us reverently fear so that none of us would be judged to be failing to enter into it."

What does it mean to "enter into the rest"? Here the writer is making an analogy between the children of Israel entering into the land of Canaan for the first time and believers entering into something called the "Sabbath rest." This spiritual experience of ceasing from doing our own works, or resting, in this passage is related to entering into a future "rest" which is the millennial kingdom. It is the same as the "day of the Lord" which is the Sabbath, a day of rest.

In the same chapter, we also read: "Let us, therefore, be diligent to enter into that rest so that no one would come under judgment by following the same pattern of disobedience [the pattern of the Jews in the wilderness]!" (vs 11, FLNT).

Further on we read: "But if we continue sinning willingly after we have received the full understanding of the truth, there is no longer a sacrifice for sins left for us. But, instead, there is a certain fearful expectation of judgment and the fire of God's burning jealousy which will consume those who are the opposite of his holy nature.

“Anyone disregarding Moses’ law was killed without compassion based on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, has considered the blood of the covenant with which he is being made holy as something of little value, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

“For we know him who said, ‘Revenge is mine, I will repay those who rebel.’ And again saying, ‘The Lord will judge his people’ (Deut 32:35,36). It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:26-31).

Now let us focus on this phrase: “How much worse punishment...” This must really mess up many Christian’s theology. Punishment? How could that be? It can be and will be because that is exactly what the Bible teaches! Jesus taught it. The apostles taught it. You better believe it.

The sad truth is that many people who call themselves Christians are not respecting Jesus’ authority. They treat His death for them as a way to escape the consequences of their sin. They are not serious about obeying Him.

THE WORD GIVEN THROUGH ANGELS AND THE WORD GIVEN BY JESUS

In Hebrews 2:1-4 we read: “Therefore, it is extremely important for us to hold onto the things which we heard so that in no way we would carelessly let go of them.

“For since the word spoken through angels was unchangeable and every sin and disobedience received a just reward, how will we escape *a similar judgment* if we neglect so great a salvation, which was initially received through the words of the Lord, being confirmed to us by those who heard *him*?”

This should be really impressive for us. When God says something, it's important. Here we see that His word given through angels was serious. Anyone who violated it was punished. Some were punished by death.

But His word given to us through Jesus is even more serious! Here we see that we also will not escape punishment if we disobey Him.

So, there will be consequences. As your friend and brother, I am telling you right now, if you do not submit to Jesus' rule today, you will be punished and possibly punished severely when He comes. Furthermore, you will be left out of His earthly kingdom when it comes.

IS THIS PUNISHMENT ONLY TEMPORARY?

Many will ask if this punishment of believers about which we have been speaking is only temporary. I believe it is and there is some evidence to prove it. Those who are left out of the wedding feast and punished during the Millennium will be “weeping and gnashing their teeth.” Yet when eternity finally comes we

read in Revelation 21:4: “And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes....”

I would like to suggest that those who are participating in the coming kingdom – feasting and reigning with Jesus – will not have any tears to be wiped away. Yet there are some at the beginning of eternity who have been weeping. It is at this time that God comforts them and wipes these tears away. Although this cannot be thought of as absolute proof of the restoration of believers who have been punished, I see it as a good possibility.

Why is God punishing these individuals? It is for their good. During their lifetimes, they were stubborn, rebellious, and did not submit to His rule. So this problem must be resolved! They cannot become part of the new heaven and the new earth with this deep-seated rebellion within them. It must be driven out. So God in His love provides this solution: punishment. This God-induced punishment will help them to change their attitudes and bend their wills to His authority.

It sounds severe, and it is. But it is much better than being totally destroyed along with the unbelievers. How good it is of God to do this! When He chooses someone to be His and gives them His eternal life, He means business.

This is not a random choice on His part. He is not just giving His life to anyone who comes along and then later “culling the herd,” that is, getting rid of the ones who didn’t work out. No.

When God begets a child, He has a plan to bring them to where they need to be to be with Him forever.

GOD HAS A TIMETABLE

God is and has been working throughout human history following a timetable known only to Himself. However, there are and have been set times for all of His work. God is not just doing things on a whim, or, for example, sending His son when He just felt like it. No, instead, everything is following a predetermined plan.

For example, we read: "And he replied to them, 'It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has set by His own authority'" (Acts 1:7). You see, there are times and seasons which have been "set." They have already been established. God is not just waiting to see how things work out to act or to fulfill His will. It is He who – perhaps invisibly, or "behind the scenes" – is orchestrating events to work out His plans. This is also true concerning the second coming of Christ.

Although these times are not clearly explained to men, they do exist. God does give us some clues concerning these things in His word. These clues are there for those who are open to hearing from God.

Now let's take some time here to talk about the Sabbath. For reasons of His own, God chose to make this present heaven and earth in six days. Then on the seventh day, He rested. This

must be significant! Why didn't He make them in twelve days, or three, or twenty? He deliberately chose the numbers six and seven. There is no doubt that this is significant and important. It is not accidental.

This seventh day, the Sabbath day, became very special to God. Keeping the Sabbath is one of the most prominent laws in the Old Testament. There are many verses which talk about it. This special seventh day is known as "the Lord's day." There are also many scriptures which talk about the coming "day of the Lord." Could there possibly be any connection between these two "days"?

It also cannot be accidental that from the creation of Adam and Eve until Abraham was about 2,000 years. Then, from Abraham to Christ there were another 2,000 years. And from the death of Christ on the cross until today, another almost 2,000 years have passed. How could this not be important? Numbers are always important to God. He knows mathematics.

So, from Adam until today, almost 6,000 years, or six "days" have passed. Then the scriptures teach us many things concerning another day called "the day of the Lord." Does this remind anyone of the Sabbath? Could there be any connection? Is it possible that the seventh thousand years of this earth could be "the Lord's day" or "the day of the Lord"?

According to Peter: "...one day with the Lord is like one thousand years and one thousand

years like one day" (2 Pet 3:8). Now the amillennialists claim that Peter is being allegorical here. He doesn't really mean anything concrete. Perhaps he is waxing poetic or brushing up on his prosaic skills, hoping to sell more parchments.

However, the context here is the "last days." He is explaining something important. He says: "It is of primary importance to know that in the last days scoffers will come, who will follow their own fleshly desires and say, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For, since the time that the fathers passed away, everything has just gone on the same way as it always has since the beginning of creation'" (2 Pet 3:3,4 FLNT).

Can all this just be allegorical? Here we are at what I believe is the end of this "age," the age of grace. Six thousand years have almost passed and the scriptures predict a period of one thousand years of rest, peace, and righteousness for the earth. Can this "one day is as one thousand years" only be a metaphor? Is it all accidental? Does this phrase have any real meaning? Are we supposed to believe that all this is just coincidental?

To ignore such a "coincidence" is to be willingly blind. God has a plan. His numbers are in evidence everywhere. If we just casually dismiss this obvious correlation between the seventh day, the Sabbath, and the day of the Lord, the millennium, we are running a huge risk of being exposed when Jesus comes.

CHAPTER 9

SOME REALLY BAD THEOLOGY

As stated before, if we reject this kingdom teaching, we are left with some really bad theology. To begin, by misapplying these kingdom verses, – that is trying to apply them to the subject of eternal life – many think that people can become unsaved, that they can lose their salvation.

This idea leaves God looking like a fool. It shows Him to be completely irresponsible. It means that He fathers children without any real care for them or plans to bring them to where they need to be. This would make Him equal to many men today who generate children with many different women with no way to take care of them or any interest in their welfare.

Such an idea that God will abandon some of His children, kill them off, or even burn them up if they don't please Him makes Him seem to be very careless, cruel, and insensitive. He "saved" someone and later couldn't handle them and so had to unsave them. Some of His children were too rebellious for Him so He has to just get rid of them. He gave them a gift, but then jerked it away when it didn't work out.

This would be like a parent today murdering their own children when the stress and con-

flict of raising them becomes too much for them to handle. Is this what our God is like?

Doesn't God know everything, even the future? Of course He does. So, then, doesn't He know before He begets a child how things will work out? Since He does know, it is impossible that He would generate His own life in someone only to realize later that He made a mistake.

Can you really believe that God is begetting children without any idea how to get them to where they need to be? Do you think that He is going to just burn the trash, that is to burn up the ones who don't turn out well? This kind of theology does not put the Father in a very good light. In fact, if you really think about it, it is horrible to imagine such a thing.

But if and when we reject the theology about the "coming punishment" for some believers, this is one of the few options left for us.

On the other hand, the other option for trying to explain away punishment for believers during the millennium is to try to make the virgins, servants, people already inside the wedding feast, etc., into unbelievers or Jews. This is just a dishonest interpretation of clear scriptures. Only someone blindly trying to defend their position would need to try to manipulate the Bible in this way.

For example, they try to make those whom Jesus says are "servants" into "not really servants," not really "saved" people. But in Luke 12:43-46, it is *the very same* servant who is

rewarded in one verse and then punished two verses later! This cannot be referring to an unbeliever. This is not really an honest interpretation of the scriptures. It is just wiggling around trying to justify a certain position or other.

Such dishonest manipulation of scripture also makes those He calls “virgins” into non-virgins. It also requires an unbeliever to have sneaked into the wedding feast. How could such a thing be possible unless an unbeliever were raptured? This kind of juggling of Bible verses is a perilous way to understand the scriptures. It could lead to future judgment for those teaching it. (See James 3:1).

But if we just accept the kingdom verses for what they actually say, the whole of the scripture is shown to be harmonious. Everything makes sense. In fact, the truths about the millennial kingdom which we have been discussing are the **ONLY** way to honestly harmonize **all** the scriptures about these subjects.

Can it be that God will beat His children? Yes, He will. We read in Hebrews 12:6: “For whom the Lord loves, he disciplines, and he chastises with a whip every son whom he receives.” This is quite a statement. It means that God will use a very severe form (or forms) of discipline when His children get out of line.

However, many are deceived about this. Since we are in the “age of grace,” these kinds of severe punishments are not being meted out right now. Of course, God does use circum-

stances and other natural things to bring discipline to His children today.

But for those who don't respond to this treatment today, in the age to come these punishments will be much worse. This is the clear teaching of the New Testament which the devil is trying to hide from us and which the church doesn't want to believe.

All previous ages have ended. The age of grace will be no different. Someday it, too, will end. After that, the kingdom age begins. The kingdom age is an age of judgment. Grace will not be the predominant characteristic of this coming age.

CHAPTER 10

REAL TRANSFORMATION

Christianity is not magic. Although there are many supernatural and invisible experiences involved, it is not magic. Why am I saying this? It is because many believers cannot imagine why any Christians would need to be punished. Of what use would such a thing be? Most think that it does not matter in what condition believers find themselves when Jesus comes because He will change them instantly, “in the twinkling of an eye,” to be righteous. This is Christian magic.

Please bear with me here. This, and other similar wrong notions, are so pervasive and deeply rooted in Christians’ thinking that it will take some time to unravel them.

It is true that when we believe into Jesus, God can forgive our sins. This is not magic. All that is necessary for God to forgive our sins is a decision on His part to do so. Of course, His decision to forgive us is based upon our faith.

But remember that He is a God who sees into our hearts. He sees our thoughts from far away (Ps 139:2). So, He knows when our faith is genuine. Based on His perception concerning our sincerity, He forgives us. God will not for-

give someone who is intending to continue on sinning. He will not forgive a hypocrite.

When God forgives us, we are forgiven. This is a wonderful and eternal thing. But – and there is a huge BUT here – although God can and does forgive what we do when we repent, He **CAN-NOT** forgive what we are! And it is what we are that is at the root of the problem.

Any amount of forgiveness on God's part cannot change this. What we *are* needs to be changed! Even when we stand before Him, He could theoretically forgive us for any evil deeds, but not for who and what we are. We would still be sinful.

Please pay careful attention to this. We sin, not because we just slip up once in a while, but because it is our nature to sin. We sin because our human life has a sinful nature. That is the way we were born, with a sinful nature. Therefore, in order to be holy or righteous, we need a radical change, not just forgiveness! How, then, is this going to happen?

Jesus came to this earth in human form, then died and rose again to make us holy, to make us righteous. He wants to change us from what we are as natural human beings into what He is. How does He intend to do this? This wonderful process involves several steps.

The first step is to give to those who believe a new life. This new, holy life is given to replace our old, sinful one. This life is the life of God the Father which can be born into us. We can be "born from above" (Jn 3:3). Although this is an

invisible, spiritual event, it is very real. It is something which we must actually experience.

It is not good enough just to try to convince ourselves, or for someone else to try to convince us, that it has happened. If we have not had this experience, then we cannot really be considered a Christian.

This spiritual birth is very much parallel to a physical birth in which the egg and sperm join to form an embryo. In our case, the Holy Spirit enters into our being and joins with our human spirit to make a new creation.

We read: "...that which is born of the Spirit, is *our human spirit*" (Jn 3:6 FLNT). We also read: "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation *inside of him...*" (2 Cor 5:17 FLNT). And "...he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit *with the Lord*" (1 Cor 6:17 FLNT). This new birth is a real event. To repeat, it must be experiential, not merely theoretical or doctrinal.

This impartation of God's life is not something He does lightly. It is not based on someone saying the "magic" prayer. Some may believe that if we "say the right words," God is obligated to "save us."

But this is not the case. Instead, when we truly believe, God knows this. As stated before, He knows our hearts. So when He sees that we have genuinely believed, He then gives us His holy life, causing it to be "born" within us.

It seems important to clarify here a common misunderstanding about eternal life. Many, if

not most Christians, seem to think that receiving eternal life is a kind of grant from God for their own life to keep existing forever, or at least go to heaven instead of hell.

Therefore, some imagine that if we don't measure up to His standards, this grant can be revoked. God can change His mind. This revocation of the "grant" would be "losing your salvation" in their minds.

But what we are seeing here is that eternal life is NOT a grant for us to live longer. Instead, it is the birthing inside of us of a life which is inherently eternal. This is the Father's own life. This makes such a revocation impossible. As we have seen, now that God is our Father, it is His responsibility to care for us for eternity.

The next step in the process of being made holy takes more time. It is called "transformation." The Greek word used here is METAMORPHOÛ from which we get our English word, metamorphosis. In this process, the larvae of a moth or butterfly spins a cocoon or excretes a chrysalis around itself. Then it spends some time in a death-like state, with nothing apparent happening.

After a significant amount of time, this creature emerges. But it has changed! It is beautiful! Instead of being an earthbound creature crawling along the ground or on vegetation, it is now a creature of the heavens. It can fly! This is the meaning of the Greek word translated as "transformation" in the Bible.

How, then, does this work in our case? It works through our experience of the death and resurrection of Christ. This, too, is not theoretical. It is not magic. It must become our experience. As we give ourselves to God and pray for Him to apply the death of His Son to our human life and nature, we will become different people. We must enter into His death so that we can be changed.

The time of the larvae in the cocoon is representative of time in a coffin. It represents our entering into a death experience through Jesus. We can have Jesus' death on the cross made real to us. Our old life can actually be put to death. Then the resurrection of Jesus can also be our experience. We can then walk in newness of life (Rm 6:4).

It is true that when Jesus died, all humanity died with Him. We read in 2 Corinthians 5:14: "We understand things in this way: that since One died on behalf of all men, then all have died too." We also read Paul saying: "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal 2:20).

However, this spiritual truth will do us no good whatsoever if we do not experience it for ourselves! It cannot remain merely our doctrine or "belief" but must become real in our lives. Our old life with its sinful nature must be put to death.

It is not good enough just to try to believe that we have died with Christ as so many try to do. Please stop trying to convince yourself that you are dead when the sin in your daily life tes-

tifies that your old life is still very much alive. This kind of “believing” will do nothing for you. This death must become real to you. You must experience it!

Perhaps some verses from Romans will help us here. It is written: “For as we become united together with him in the form of his death, *to that same degree* we will also be *like him* in his resurrection. We know this: that our ‘old man’ is being crucified with him so that sin in its entirety would be being rendered inoperative, in order that we would no longer be in slavery to sin. For he who is dying is being freed from sin.

“And if we die together with the Anointed One [actually experience his death], we are believing that we will also be sharing his life, knowing that the Anointed One, having been raised from the dead, no longer dies since death has no more dominion over him” (Rm 6:5-9 FLNT).

So here is God’s plan: that our old, natural, human life would *experience* a death, a crucifixion. This is like the larvae entering into a coffin-like cocoon.

Then the new life, His own holy life which has been born into us, grows up and replaces ours which is being put to death. This is the gospel message in a nutshell. Any other is simply imagination and wrong.

Today’s church wrongly believes in magic. They think that if you say the “magic words” or “the sinner’s prayer,” then God will forget all

about your sin and you will go to heaven someday when you die or when He returns.

But God cannot just forget about or ignore what we are. This must be changed. If we somehow were to enter into eternity without this change, we would someday sin. This would then destroy the whole new creation. Just as Adam and Eve's one sin destroyed this present world, so too one sin, just one, would pollute God's new creation. Therefore, no one with a sinful nature can get in.

So, we need to be "metamorphosed" or transformed. We need a new life with a new nature to become the source of our living. So Jesus came, not merely to forgive us, but to provide us with a new supernatural life with a sinless nature. He came to bring us God's life with its holy nature! What a wonderful salvation.

But there is not "room" in our being for two lives. In order for the new life to grow and spread, the other one needs to go. God's provision for getting rid of this old life is death. In fact, the only way for any life to cease is to experience death. The only way for us to be rid of our sinful life is for it to die. So Jesus provided a death for us to experience.

Have you been taught this yet? Did you know that Christians need to die? Didn't Jesus say that we need to carry our cross and follow Him? Does that mean lugging around a piece of wood or does it mean experiencing His death for ourselves?

Let me give you an example here. It is true that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. Yet this will do no one any good until they believe into Him and experience the resulting new birth. You see, there is some action required on our part. It is not automatic. It is an eternal truth, yet a truth which must become our experience.

In the same way, our crucifixion with Christ must become real in our lives. Although it is an eternal truth, this too is not automatic. We must experience it. Furthermore, just as Paul did, we must experience it every day (1 Cor 15:31). It is only by actually experiencing the death of our old life and nature that we can be free from sin.

In Philippians 3:10,11 we read: "I want to know him and the power of his resurrection – which comes through participating in his sufferings and becoming integrated into his death – so that in this way I may be experiencing the resurrection from the dead" (FLNT).

None of this is magic. It is indeed invisible and spiritual, but it can and must be experiential. We must "know" these things through "participating in His sufferings and becoming integrated into His death." This truth cannot remain only doctrine or theory. We need to possess it for ourselves through experience. If not, we will never be freed from sin.

Now I do remember the verse about our being changed "in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye." As already stated, many are believing

that this verse means that God will make them instantly holy when He returns. They probably realize that their life is not really holy and so are putting a lot of hope in this verse.

However, a careful reading of this passage reveals that it is not talking about our human life – our soul-life – but about our body. It is our human body which will be glorified instantly, not our inner life and nature. God has made another provision for that to change.

It is precisely this provision which we have been discussing. You see, God cannot and will not magically change us. This would be a violation of who we are and of our free will. Instead, He has provided a way for us to change, but it involves our willing cooperation. It is this transformation process which we have been discussing. We must seek Him diligently in order to be able to experience this transformation. He will not automatically do it to us, whether we want Him to or not.

Being forgiven is not enough. It is only the beginning. We must be changed into the image of Jesus to qualify to reign with Him (2 Cor 3:18). We must be freed from sin, not merely forgiven. It doesn't matter how many times you are forgiven or how much you are forgiven, your fallen, sinful nature can never enter into the new creation which is coming.

Far too many Christians are waiting for that magical day when Jesus will make them different people from who they really are. This will

never happen! It is a false hope generated by wrong teaching. In order to be different people who are freed from sin, we must take advantage of the process which Jesus provides for us, right now in this age.

Our changing must be done through this process that He died to bring us! It cannot happen any other way. God's way is the transformation process which we have been discussing. If we don't take advantage of it, then we will have wasted the opportunity and we will suffer the consequences for wasting it. There will be no second chance.

WHY IS THERE A NEED FOR PUNISHMENT?

Now we come to the question of punishment. When believers are rebellious and do not submit themselves to the process God has provided, they will stand before His throne unprepared. They will still be unholy. This cannot be changed by magic.

Of course, God is able to do anything, but He will never change who a person is without their willing cooperation. We must willingly cooperate with the plan which He has offered us through His death, not with some "magic" we hope will happen later when He comes. And when we appear before Him, the opportunity for the transformation process to take place will have passed.

For those who did not seek and take advantage of transformation during their lifetime, God has provided another mechanism which will also be experiential. It is called punishment.

This suffering will, over time, help these children of God change their own minds. They will willingly abandon their self-centeredness. They will willingly forsake their rebellion. They will become submissive and yielding. They will become ready for eternity when it comes.

Unfortunately, this “mechanism” does not seem to provide gaining more of God’s life. It only involves loss: the loss of our own stubbornness and rebellion. This is so that those who did not prepare themselves can enter into the new creation without these sinful traits. Through this suffering, they will find true repentance.

But what a difficult way to arrive: a millennium of suffering to arrive at a place which could have been attained in a few short years of obedience! That would be a great tragedy.

WHY THE DEVIL WANTS TO HIDE THE MILLENNIUM TRUTH

Hopefully, this discussion will help you see why the devil does not want the church to know the truth about the millennium. It is a teaching which he wants to hide so that believers won’t be motivated to seek the Lord and become more holy today.

Just as he has succeeded in obscuring many important truths of the scriptures – including

some we have been discussing such as transformation and being freed from sin – he wants to keep Christians in the dark about the coming millennium and its consequences for them.

The devil is extremely intelligent, much more so than you and I. He has had 2,000 years to study how to distort the scriptures to make them seem to say things that they do not really say and diminish their impact.

He makes his suggestions to those trying to understand the scriptures with purely mental reasoning. He works to alter their meaning, subtly changing their impact. He inspires Bible translators to change the meaning of a few key words to “help” readers understand.

He has managed to promote on a world-wide scale the false idea that once you “say the prayer” there can be no more negative consequences. Everything’s forgiven. It has all been done. All you have to do is try to believe it. There is not really any need for freedom from sin to become real to you.

This is his message. He has succeeded in watering down the gospel today to such an extent that we have a world full of believers who are engulfed in sin.

Of course, there are exceptions. There are Christians who love God and are serious about following Him. But there is no denying the fact that the church as a whole today is not holy. It does not express God’s divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). In many groups the behavior of the mem-

bers is barely different from the world around them. And it is just getting worse, not better.

This twisting of the scriptures is exactly what the devil has done in the case of the coming kingdom. He has provided men and women with interpretations of the scriptures which mask the truth. He has shown them “reasonable” alternatives to a literal interpretation.

Everything about the kingdom can be seen as allegorical. It’s all just types and shadows, says he, along with the amillennialists. Don’t be a participant with the devil in spreading his lies.

So men with their human reasonings have been outsmarted by a being even more intelligent than they, to explain away the coming kingdom and its consequences for believers. This is the work of the kingdom of darkness. I hope that you are not participating and helping in this work.

In general, I believe that any interpretation of the Bible which makes God’s truth seem easier and more palatable is probably not the truth. Any teaching or theology which assures us we are right with God while we are still in sin is most certainly wrong.

The only way we can know we are right with God is by actually being right with Him. We can have assurance of this by becoming intimate with Him through prayer and obedience.

Then, through this relationship, we can sense if He is pleased with us or not. Don’t let anyone convince you with subtly twisted Bible

verses that everything's OK between you and God when you know in your heart that it is not. Get right with God yourself so you can have a conscience free of guilt and serve Him with joy.

In these last days, there is a desperate need for a restoration of the truth! The church needs to hear it! So many are drowning in sin, thinking that it doesn't matter and that there can be and will be no consequences. Who do you think convinced them of that? It certainly was not Jesus.

I have personally seen the correct understanding of the true kingdom message change lives. I have seen it generate in hearers a genuine fear of the Lord and promote life-changing commitments to His work and will.

This is a message the church needs to hear! Let us forsake the lies and darkness which the devil has managed to insert into the doctrine of today's church. Let us return with all of our hearts to Jesus' will and way. Let us, moving in the fear of God, prepare ourselves for His soon coming and His kingdom here on the earth.

**Partial list of churches
who are amillennialist.**

Eastern Orthodox
Oriental Orthodox
Anglican
Roman Catholic Church
Lutheran
Reformed Anglican
Methodist
Amish
Old Order Mennonite
Conservative Mennonites
Churches of Christ
Christian Church/Disciples of Christ
Christian churches and churches of Christ
Association of Grace Baptist Churches
in England
Some Presbyterians

Other books by this same author:

FROM GLORY TO GLORY

THY KINGDOM COME

LET MY PEOPLE GO!

GENUINE SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

BABYLON

ANTICHRIST

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