

PROPHETIC TRUTHS FOR TODAY

Unveiling the End-Time Events

by

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

PROPHECY AND THE KINGDOM

IN THE chronological sequence of the latter-day events following the period of “**the Great Tribulation**,” is the establishment of *the Messianic kingdom on earth*. This period is alluded to by many of the Old Testament prophets. In fact, such a golden age is an integral part of God’s covenant with the nation of Israel. Christ also referred to it clearly in His Olivet Discourse and in several other pronouncements. The kingdom is distinctly emphasized in the prayer our Lord taught His disciples, “**Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth.**” To spiritualize the whole imposing array of references pointing to an earthly kingdom is to throw to the winds sound Bible exegesis.

TWO LINES OF OLD TESTAMENT PREDICTIONS

If we group prophecies of the Old Testament which refer to the Messiah, we find they fall into two categories.

First are the *promises of Christ’s coming to die*. Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 are two classic examples of such predictions. The coming of the Messiah to die is even implied in the first promise of a redeemer, namely in Genesis 3:15. In the New Testament our Saviour said, “**Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?**” (Luke 24:26).

The second line of prediction involves many more Old Testament references than those pertaining to His coming in humiliation. Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Daniel, Zechariah, Joel, and Malachi give over much of their prophecies to the future glory of Israel, at which time the Messiah will be in the midst of His nation.

The transfiguration account, referred to by the Gospel narrators, gives a vivid description of this coming glory. Jesus said to His disciples, “**There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom**” (Matthew 16:28). Immediately thereafter Christ took Peter, James and John up into a high mountain and was transfigured before them. The transfiguration was clearly a prophetic foregleam of the kingdom; in other words, a miniature picture of that coming day. Peter was so electrified and thrilled that he wanted to stay on the mount and build three booths, one for Christ, and the other two for Moses and Elijah.

Later Christ specifically referred to this aspect of His coming, **“The Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with him; then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory”** (Matthew 25:31).

That this throne is Davidic is clearly taught in Acts 15:16. Unquestionably the disciples believed in a literal kingdom to be established on earth. They were completely correct in this, except that they failed to comprehend that Christ first had to experience suffering, rejection, and finally the crucifixion before His exaltation could take place.

Peter tried to steer Him away from His going to Jerusalem to die. Our Lord rebuked him severely for his failure to understand the earthly purposes of the Messiah. Even after the Lord’s resurrection, the disciples believed in the imminence of the kingdom, for they asked, **“Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”** (Acts 1:6)

A literal, earthly, kingdom of Messianic glory has been promised for this earth. The Old Testament prophets understood it that way and made predictions accordingly. The New Testament apostles and disciples were also fully convinced that a period of glory for Israel and the world was lying ahead. I am not only disturbed but distressed that leading Bible teachers of our time can so completely fail to honor prophecies which deal specifically with the Messianic kingdom for this earth.

KINGDOM AGE ONLY CURE FOR ILLS OF THIS WORLD

Men have hoped, dreamed and written about some utopian condition for this earth, and liberal ministers are still over-working the unbiblical phrase *“building the kingdom.”* By that they still believe that men through religion, education, humanitarianism, and brotherhood will achieve this long coveted goal, namely, **“Peace on earth and good will among men.”** Any fair-minded student of world affairs must know that we are farther from its realization (through human ingenuity) than we have ever been. Man has failed in every dispensation of the past, and the Scriptures make it plain, I think, that the last dispensation or the final period of man’s day will also demonstrate failure.

Our generation is the most war-like period in all of human history. In 3500 years of well recorded history, peace has been absent in 3100 of these years. The idea of bringing in the kingdom might be a nice phrase to play with, but it has no scriptural base at all.

Our Lord promised that the Kingdom will come, and that God’s will shall be done on this earth. His coming will be a spectacular return, for it is written, **“Then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory”** (Mark 13:26). His coming for the Church is a secret coming and it will not be witnessed by the nations and in habitants on earth. In the present age, however, we are here as His witnesses and to serve as the light bearers in this world, holding forth the Word of life. Indeed we are not commissioned to bring in the kingdom. This rests alone with the Son of God. His prerogatives we need to respect in this regard. I am somewhat distressed with all the current emphasis on ecumenicalism and building the kingdom.

Christ's Commission clearly limited us to an energetic activity of witnessing, and the proclaiming of the glorious gospel.

A WARLESS WORLD

In the kingdom period war will be a lost art. The first action in conjunction with Christ's return to earth is the elimination of all evil doers. The archfiend, Satan, will be consigned to the bottomless pit, that he should deceive the nations no more (Revelation 20:3). The beast and the false prophet will be cast alive into the lake of fire (Revelation 19:20). What a day for this continuously tempted sphere! It will be spared any further activity of these arch-conspirators.

Moreover, **"He shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them who do iniquity"** (Matthew 13:41). With lightning rapidity the angels will purge the earth of evil doers. Every vice lord, whoremonger, and opponent of righteousness will be eliminated. **"With fan in his hand, he will thoroughly purge his floor (the earth) and will gather the wheat into his garner, but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable"** (Luke 3:17).

Gangsters, bootleggers, racketeers and all such scoundrels will find no place in Christ's Messianic kingdom. As a hawk swoops down upon its prey so will the angels pounce upon all evil actors. Let us not forget that in the Old Testament period one single angel slew over 182,000 Syrians. Governments and human administrators during the **"Times of the Gentiles"** have failed to purge out evil doers. But when **"the government shall be on his shoulders"** (Isaiah 9:6) there will be no compromise with unrighteousness. **"Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from hence forth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this"** (Isaiah 9:7).

In the kingdom era we will witness no more marching of military battalions. No men will bleed and die on the battlefield. **"And they shall beat their swords into plow shares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more"** (Isaiah 2:4).

And this peace will extend to the animal kingdom. **"The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them . . . the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as waters cover the sea"** (Isaiah 11:7, 9).

All the fierce beasts will be domesticated.

The earth itself will find the curse lifted. **"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as a rose . . . He will make her wilderness like Eden and her desert like the garden of the Lord"** (Isaiah 35:1, 51:3). Thorns, thistles and even crab grass will cease to be pests. The earth will produce plentifully; it will provide enough food for everybody. The 24th Psalm will have its fulfillment, **"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."**

WORLD WIDE EVANGELIZATION

The whole world will be evangelized. **“The Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world”** (Matthew 24:14).

It will be a red-letter day for missionary enterprise. There is only one Gospel, obviously, but at this period when the Messiah reigns, the kingly aspect will be given special emphasis. God’s ancient covenant people will be fully reconciled to their Messiah, and they will spearhead the message of salvation which has never reached all areas adequately in this present age. There will be no forgotten mission fields or neglected places on earth.

The Gospel in all its fulness and the kingly significance of Christ’s reign will be set forth by Messianic messengers. The Scriptures point out clearly that Christ will assume all His kingly prerogatives,

“When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory” (Matthew 25:31).

The whole context makes it absolutely certain that the scene depicted is earthly, not heavenly. At present Christ is on the right hand of the Father in glory, but one day He will sit on His own throne in the Messianic kingdom on earth. In the Olivet discourse Christ briefed His disciples on the end-times, that is, He covered the period of the Great Tribulation and the sweeping judgments to come on earth, as well as His return for the establishment of the kingdom.

For anyone to read into such a passage the heavenly sphere or eternity is simply astonishing in view of the precise exposition which our Lord gave concerning the climactic event to take place on this earth.

KINGDOM INVOLVES REIGNING WITH CHRIST

In the Book of Revelation the writer deals specifically with the period of our reign with Christ, **“And he has made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth”** (Revelation 5:10).

And the apostle Paul makes the pledge, **“If we suffer, we shall also reign with him”** (II Timothy 2:12). The same apostle also refers to the exalted position of the believers for the future: **“Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” “Know ye not that we shall judge angels?”** (I Corinthians 6:1, 3)

Even the martyrs of the final tribulation period are promised a participation in this reign. **“And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years”** (Revelation 20:4).

This is further elaborated by the same writer: **“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with him a thousand years”** (Revelation 20:6).

Reigning with Christ is in the future and will occur when the Son of Man will ascend His own throne. This position He has not yet assumed. We read, “**We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens**” (Hebrews 8:1).

This distinction between His own throne and that of His Father’s is very clearly set forth in these words: “**To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne**” (Revelation 3:21).

To write off a future kingdom of glory for this earth is nothing less than the disregarding of a consistent series of predictions which are set forth both in the Old and the New Testament. Since the call and destiny of the Church is heavenly, it is clear, I think, that we as members of His body will not be involved primarily in earthly activities during the kingdom period, but we are specifically promised that we shall reign with Him over the earth. This does not, however, detach the glorified Church from participating in Christ’s wondrous reign in the millennial period.

HUMAN LIFE WILL BE PROLONGED

It is not only logical but obvious that human life will be greatly prolonged in the millennium because the new world order lifts off the curse from every sphere of life. Clearly the prophet points to this day: “**There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days; for the child shall die an hundred years old, but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be cursed**” (Isaiah 65:20).

The whole passage indicates that human activities will not be cut off in the manner that men experience in this age. The implication seems to be that people generally will live on right through the millennial period. Sin will not be absent, but it will be the exception, rather than the rule. In the present world order sin has dominion, and righteousness characterizes only the minority of the earth’s inhabitants.

THE KINGDOM WILL COME TO THE EARTH

In order to cap our discussion of the future glory which is promised for the earth, let us state, first of all, that the kingdom is the hope of Israel. “**All Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob**” (Romans 11:26).

Paul, who wrote the major portion of the New Testament, sets forth prophetically the future of his nation. Apart from the kingdom there is no earthly hope of glory for God’s covenant people. Moreover, the Kingdom is the hope of nations. The League of Nations failed, and folded up during the period of expanding dictatorships. The United Nations is on the verge of being wrecked by the sledgehammer blows delivered by the chairman of the council of ministers in the Soviet Union. The United Nations is unable to cope with the ever-expanding problem of peace and war. The only hope is in the kingdom. God has said, “**And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come**” (Haggai 2:7).

Lastly, the kingdom is the hope of creation. Paul writes significantly on this coming day, **“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”**

Even the poor brutes sigh and groan under the impact of cruelty and hardship which characterize animal life during the present world order.

The kingdom is the last best hope of earth. With the prophet we may ask, **“Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there?”** (Jeremiah 8:22).

Yes, the hope for the full rectification of all affairs on earth is during the kingdom age. Surely we may pray as the Lord taught His disciples, **“Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven . . .”** (Matthew 6:10).

With the impressive signs of the times which we witness daily, we are encouraged to believe the Lord’s coming is imminent, and soon thereafter He will establish the kingdom on earth. With the sounding of the voice of the seventh angel, which refers to the final tribulation judgments, we read, **“There were great voices in heaven saying, the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ”** (Revelation 11:15).

Daniel, the great Seer in Babylon, visualized such a day, especially in his prophetic declaration, **“A stone was cut out without human hands, which smote the image upon his feet, that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces . . . and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain that filled the whole earth . . . and the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall not be destroyed . . .”** (Daniel 2:34, 35, 44).

Daniel gives a clear interpretation of all the governmental systems foreshadowed in the metallic image of the king’s dream. Following these kingdoms, the God of Heaven will establish a glorious domain which will never be destroyed by man. The Scriptures teach distinctly that such a golden age lies ahead for this earth.

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