

# The Kingdom of God and the Restoration of Israel

The restoration of the Kingdom to Israel is the principal theme of the message of the Hebrew prophets. With one voice they look forward to a great day coming when the Messiah, God's agent, will rule the earth from Jerusalem. No New Testament writer ever doubted this. They do not need to repeat all that the prophets had written. From time to time, however, the New Testament Christians refer to the coming time of Restoration (Acts 3:21). In Acts 1:6 the disciples of Jesus ask their final question of their Master. They want to know if the time had now finally come when God would intervene to restore the Kingdom of God to Israel.

It will be most instructive for the student of New Testament Christianity to examine the commentaries on Acts 1:6 (quoted immediately below). It is astonishing how this text has been mishandled. So many commentators are strangely critical of the Apostles' inquiry and unaccountably negative about a restored Israel. The reader may indeed assess his own sympathy or lack of sympathy for New Testament Christianity by his reaction to this verse (Acts 1:6). After their intensive course of personal instruction in Kingdom theology from the Lord, including the crucial six weeks in his company following the Resurrection (Acts 1:3), the disciples are eager to establish one supremely important fact: "Lord, has the time now come for you to restore the Kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6.)

The question, of course, implies belief in the future establishment of the Messianic Kingdom on earth, to which all the prophets had looked forward. It was the Kingdom to be restored by the regathering of the twelve Tribes of Israel. The Kingdom was to be administered by Jesus, the Apostles and the resurrected saints. The Messiah himself had promised the Apostles: "In the New Age, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of his glory, you too will take up your positions on twelve thrones to rule the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28, Luke 22:28).

The enthronement of Jesus and the disciples would occur at the Second Coming: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory..., then he will sit on the throne of his glory" (Matt. 25:31).

In these passages of Scripture we are at the heart of Messianism, a term which is synonymous with Christianity ("Christ" being only the Greek form of the Hebrew "Messiah" — the Anointed King).

Tragically, popular theology is most reluctant to accept the disciples' question in Acts 1:6 as a valid one. The prevailing opinion is that the disciples were still in ignorance about their Master's purposes for the future, and this on the eve of their being empowered as the New Testament Church at Pentecost! The spirit of error, it appears, has mounted a theological industry against the simple Truth presented to us everywhere in Scripture, that Jesus was the Messiah promised by the Old Testament and that he has ascended to heaven only until the "Restoration of all things, which God has promised through the mouth of the prophets" (Acts 3:21). This restoration implies the regathering of the remnant of the nation of Israel. The fiction that all Old Testament prophecy has been fulfilled in the Church, leaving no future of Israel, must be banished, if the Hebrew prophets are to be allowed to speak clearly to our generation. A theological system which denies the future Kingdom of God on earth practically denies the Messiahship of Jesus; and this denial is the spirit of Antichrist (i.e. Anti-Messiah) (1 John 2:22).

Jesus' answer to the disciples' question about the Restoration of Israel (Acts 1:6), which would involve the re-establishment in Jerusalem of the Davidic throne, gives not the slightest hint that the question was based on a misunderstanding (as so many commentaries would have us believe). That the Kingdom will be restored to Israel is assumed by Jesus (as also by Paul: Rom. 11:1, 25-27). Acts 1:7 shows that Jesus did not deny the premise of the question. Just when this restoration will take place remains unknown. Jesus had admitted ignorance about the date of his return in glory to establish the Kingdom: "But of that day or that hour no one knows" (Mk. 13:32). "It is not for you to know the times and seasons which God has set in His own authority" (Acts 1:7).

### **The Restoration According to Isaiah**

Since Jesus was sent to "confirm the promises made to the Fathers" (Rom. 15:8), we must establish what future for Israel had been foreseen. The great prophet Isaiah, who is quoted in the New Testament more frequently than any other OT writer (some 85 times) has left us in no doubt about the divine future for Israel. Though the nation was constantly upbraided for its failure to measure up to its high calling as God's chosen people, her final restoration was assured beyond all question. The following survey of the message of Isaiah will put us in touch with the background against which Jesus preached the Good News of the Kingdom: "How the faithful city [Jerusalem] has become a harlot! It was full of judgment; righteousness once lodged in it, but now murderers....Your princes are rebellious and companions of thieves. Everyone loves bribes and goes after rewards: they do not seek justice for the fatherless, nor consider the cause of the widow" (1:21, 23).

The time will come for God to punish His people for their apostasy, but with a view to refining and rehabilitating them: "I will avenge all my enemies...and I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterwards you will be called the City of Righteousness, the faithful city. Zion will be redeemed with judgment and those who return to God with righteousness" (1:26, 27).

It should be clear that the current condition of Israel, which has largely rejected its Messiah, does not fit the promised description of the Faithful City. But in the days of the Messianic Kingdom all will be changed:

"It will come to pass in the latter days [The days of Messiah] that the mountain of the Lord's Temple will be established as the highest mountain and will be exalted above the hills and all nations will stream towards it. And many peoples will say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the House of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us His ways and we will walk in His paths;' for from Zion instruction will go forth, and the Message of the Lord from Jerusalem; and He will act as international arbiter for the nations and will rebuke many peoples. And they will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into scythes. A nation will no longer raise a sword against other nations, nor will they ever again learn to make war" (2:1-4).

The suggestion that this prophecy has been realized in the churches (who in time of international war have not hesitated to kill members of the same churches in enemy lands) can hardly be taken

seriously. The promise of a world freed from the terrors of nuclear warfare lies at the heart of the Good News of the Kingdom of God, the Gospel proclaimed by Jesus. The message points to a time never yet fulfilled in human affairs. But where shall we find the Good News of the Kingdom being proclaimed?

The New Testament everywhere associates the “Day of the Lord” with the Return of Christ in glory to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. It is precisely in that context that the promises of world peace are given; nevertheless, peace will not be achieved until a terrible worldwide judgment has occurred. The condition of the world at the Second Coming will be as godless as at the time of the flood: “They will not know until the flood comes and takes them all away” (Matt. 24:39).

“The day of the Lord shall come upon every one who is proud and haughty...and he shall be brought low...and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day...when He arises to shake the earth terribly....Jerusalem will be ruined and Judah will fall....A curse upon their soul! For they have rewarded evil to themselves. O my people, your leaders are causing you to go astray....Therefore my people has gone into captivity, because they are without knowledge. Their leaders are starving and their people are parched with thirst. They have rejected the instruction of the Lord of Hosts, and despised the Message of salvation from the Holy One of Israel” (from Isa. ch. 3-5).

The result of Israel’s rejection of God is a judicial blindness. The prophet is told to “Go and tell this people, ‘Hear indeed, but do not understand; see indeed, but do not perceive. Make this people’s heart fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes: lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and become converted and healed” (6:9-10)

Jesus and Paul recognized that this insensitivity to the Gospel Message of the Kingdom would be a typical reaction to their preaching of the Message (Matt. 13:14, 15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40, Acts 28:26-27)

This blindness will last “until the cities are wasted without inhabitant and the houses without a man and the land becomes and utter desolation” (6:11).

Israel’s only hope is the promised Savior: “Behold, a virgin will conceive and bear a Son and will call him Immanuel: God is with us” (7:14, Matt. 1:23, see 2 Cor. 5:19: “God was in Christ”).

The promised Son will become an international ruler. He is to administer the first successful world government:

“For to us [Israel] a child is born, a Son is given. And the government will be upon his shoulders. His title will be ‘Wonderful,’ ‘Counselor,’ ‘Divine Hero,’ ‘Father of the Coming Messianic Age’ [so rendered by Greek versions of the Hebrew], ‘Prince of Peace.’ There will be no end to the increase of his government and peace. From the throne of David he will reign and order his Kingdom, establishing it with judgment and justice from that time onwards for ever...The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will see that this is carried out” (9:6-7).

Rebellious Israel must first suffer calamity at the hands of the Assyrian, whom God uses as a rod of anger, but “when the Lord has carried out His whole plan on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, He will punish the arrogant boasting of the King of Assyria and his haughty pride...The Light of Israel will be like a fire and His Holy One a flame, and it will burn and devour the King of Assyria’s thorns and briars in one day” (10:12, 17).

The result will be that in the future Day of Messiah:

“The surviving remnant of Israel and those who escape of the House of Jacob will never again rely on the one who attacked them but will rely on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in Truth...The surviving remnant will return to the Divine Hero...Lebanon will fall at the hands of a majestic hero and there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse [David’s Father] and a Branch shall grow out of his roots, and the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon him, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and power, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord” (10:20, 21, 34. 11:1-2).

The age-long dream of humanity for world peace will be achieved under his rulership: “With righteousness he will judge the poor and reprove with equity on behalf of the meek of the earth. And he will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth and destroy the wicked one with the breath of his lips” (11:4). (Paul cites this passage as applying to the destruction of the “Man of Sin” at the Return of Christ — 2 Thess. 2:8.)

Universal peace will result from the Messiah’s government:

“The wolf also will dwell with the lamb and the leopard will lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear will feed and their young will lie down together. The lion will eat straw like an ox. The infant will play over the hole of the asp and the weaned child will be able to put his hand on the adder’s den. They will not harm or destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. In that day [the day of the Messiah] the root of Jesse will stand as an ensign for the peoples. The nations will seek him, and the [millennial] Rest will be glorious” (11:6-10).

The restoration of Israel will be accomplished “in that Day” when:

“The Lord will set Himself the task of recovering for the second time [the first was at the Exodus from Egypt] the surviving remnant of His people, those who are left, from Assyria and Egypt, Pathos, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath and the coastlands of the sea. He will raise an ensign for the nations and assemble the outcasts of Israel and the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth...And the Lord will completely destroy the tongue of the sea of Egypt. He will wave His hand over the River and His scorching wind will divide it into seven channels so that people may cross dryshod. And the Egyptians will serve with the Assyrians. In that Day Israel will be the third nation with Egypt and Assyria, as a blessing at the center of the earth. The Lord of Hosts will bless them and say, ‘Blessed be Egypt my people and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance’ (11:11, 12, 15; 19:24-25).

The miraculous deliverance of Israel will cause a universal thanksgiving to be made to God who will now be present on earth in the person of His Vice-regent, Jesus, the Messiah.

The Restoration of Israel will mean relief from the slavery inflicted upon them by Babylon, “for the Lord will have mercy on Jacob and will yet choose Israel and place them in their own land...They will take captive those whose captives they had recently been. They shall rule over their [former] oppressors” (14:1-2).

The King of Babylon, who prior to the Return of the Messiah will have been “ruling the nations in anger, will be persecuted and no one will prevent this” (14:6). The universal relief is expressed in a beautiful picture of a world rescued from turmoil:

“The whole earth is at rest and at peace: They break forth into singing” (14:7). “In mercy the throne (of Messiah) will be established and He will sit upon it in the Tabernacle of David ruling and pursuing justice and hastening righteousness...In that Day a man will look to his Creator and his eyes will respect the Holy One of Israel. And the Lord will be known to the Egyptians...Egypt will return to the Lord” (16:5, 7; 19:21).

The result will be international peace amongst those who were formerly enemies: “In that Day there will be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria and the Assyrians will come into Egypt and the Egyptians into Assyria” (19:21-23).

The prophecies of Isaiah (and of the other prophets) describe with equal clarity both the devastation to occur when the Messiah intervenes and the peace which will follow in his Kingdom:

“The earth will be utterly emptied and spoiled. The earth is mourning and fading away...It lies polluted under its inhabitants who have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the covenant. The curse has therefore devoured the earth. The inhabitants are desolate. The world’s population is burnt up and few men survive...The earth will reel to and fro like a drunkard” (24:3-6, 20).

Then, when Christ appears at his return: “They will raise their voices and sing for the majesty of the Lord. They will shout aloud from the sea. The moon will be confounded and the sun ashamed, for the Lord of Hosts will reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and He will manifest His glory before His elders” (24:14, 23).

There will be a Messianic Banquet to celebrate the triumph of the Messiah (the non-conformist view of all use of wine as a sin will seem strangely out of place!): “And in this mountain the Lord of Hosts will prepare for all the peoples a banquet of fat things, a banquet of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of well refined wines on the lees” (25:6).

The blindness will be removed from the hearts of the people: “And He will destroy in this mountain the covering that is cast over all the peoples and the veil that is spread over all the nations. He will swallow up death in victory” (25:7-8).

The world will be instructed to build a new system based on righteousness, for “When your [the Messiah’s] judgments are in the earth the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (26:9).

Meanwhile the saints will have been resurrected to immortality at the Second Coming: “Your dead shall come to life; my body shall arise. Awake and sing you who dwell in the dust. For your dew is a dew of light and the earth will bring to birth its dead” (26:19).

Israel will be rescued from captivity and restored as the leading millennial nation:

“Israel shall blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit...The iniquity of Jacob shall be purged...Israel will be gathered one by one...This is what will happen in that Day: A great trumpet will be blown and those who are being exterminated in the land of Assyria and the outcasts in the land of Egypt will come and worship the Lord in the holy mountain at Jerusalem” (27:6, 9, 12, 13).

A general conversion of the nations will follow: “In that Day the deaf will hear the words of the book, and out of their obscurity and gloom the eyes of the blind will see. And the meek will obtain new joy in the Lord and the poor among men will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel” (29:18-19).

[Isaiah gives the classic indictment of false religion, a warning to all who approach God: “This people draws near to me with their mouth, and with their lips they honor me, but they have removed their heart far from me, for their fear toward me is based on the teachings of men (29:13). The very real possibility of attempting to worship God on the basis of a non-biblical, man-made system of belief will account for the tragic disappointment of the “many who will say to me [Jesus] in that Day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and in your name done many miracles? We have eaten and drunk in your presence, and you have taught in our streets’” (Matt. 7:21, 22, Luke 13:26). Jesus will answer by telling them that he never recognized them as Christians (Matt. 7:23, Luke 13:27). In the same context Jesus had warned of false prophets appearing in the guise of sheep (Matt. 7:15). Paul warned that Satan’s technique would be to preach another Jesus, another Gospel, and offer another Spirit (2 Cor. 11:4). “Many” would be corrupting the Gospel (2 Cor. 2:17). There could be no more serious warning than this. Safety can lie only in a personal examination of the beliefs which one has accepted in the light of the Scriptures, with the recognition that it is fatally possible to worship in sincerity, but in vain (Matt. 15:9, Mark 7:7). The only acceptable worship is that offered “in Spirit and in Truth,” that is, based upon the system of Truth revealed by the Scriptural Revelation (John 4:23).]

At the beginning of the millennial Kingdom of God many will come to understand the Truth for the first time: “And those who erred in spirit will come to understanding and those who murmured will accept instruction...For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem. You will weep no more. God will be very gracious to you at the voice of your cry...When He hears it He will answer you” (29:24, 30:19).

The rescue of Israel through the intervention of their Messiah will involve the destruction of their

enemy, the Assyrian: “Through the Lord’s voice the Assyrian who struck Israel with a rod will be beaten down. The Lord will come down (cp. “The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout...” 1 Thess. 4:16) and fight for Mount Zion and for its hill...Then the Assyrian will fall” (30:31, 31:4).

The Kingdom of God will be administered by the Messiah and the Saints:

“Behold a King shall reign in righteousness and princes will rule in judgment...The Spirit will be poured on us from on high and the wilderness will become a fruitful field...Then judgment will dwell in the wilderness and righteousness will remain in the fruitful field. And the effect of righteousness will be peace, quietness and assurance for ever. And my people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, in sure dwelling places and quiet resting places...The Lord has filled Zion with judgment and righteousness. And wisdom and knowledge will provide stability in those times. Your eyes will see the King in his beauty...Your eyes will see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle which will not be taken down. Not one of its stakes will ever be taken down, nor shall any of its cords be broken. But there the majestic Lord will be for us a place of broad rivers and streams. For the Lord is our Ruler and law-giver. The Lord is our King; He will save us” (from ch. 32, 33).

The joy of the Messianic Kingdom will be complete:

“The wilderness and the solitary place will be glad for Israel and the desert will rejoice and blossom like a rose. It shall blossom in abundance and exult with joy and singing...Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap like a deer and the tongue of the dumb shall sing. In the wilderness waters shall break forth and streams in the desert...And those ransomed from exile will return and come to Zion with songs and the joy of the Age to Come upon their heads. They will obtain joy and gladness and sorrow will flee away” (35:1, 6, 10).

The Good News (Gospel) of the Kingdom of God is closely linked to salvation in the Messianic Kingdom. The Gospel is introduced by John the Baptist who quotes from Isaiah. The latter places the “voice of one crying in the wilderness” (40:3) in a setting which implies the ultimate establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. It is to that great event that John and Jesus invite us to respond when they say: “Repent and believe the Good News of the Kingdom” (Matt. 3:2, Mk. 1:14, 15).

Thus the great future Kingdom makes its presence felt in the teaching of the Church. It is the prospect of the return of Christ in glory to inaugurate the Kingdom worldwide which provides the stimulus to hope and endurance according to the New Testament writers. John the Baptist’s announcement and call to repentance imply a warning that the government of the world must ultimately pass into the hands of the one to whom it rightfully belongs, Jesus the Messiah:

“The glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together. The Message of our God will stand for ever. You who herald the Good News to Zion, get up into a high mountain. You who bring the Good News to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with strength. Do not be afraid.

Tell the cities of Judah, Behold your God! He will come with a strong hand to rule, bringing His reward with Him” (40:10).

The prophet turns to the theme of the suffering servant who ultimately triumphs as King. The words are true of Jesus and of those who suffer with him (cp. “If we suffer with him, we shall reign as kings with him,” 2 Tim. 2:12):

“Behold my servant whom I uphold, my Elect One in whom my soul delights. I have placed my Spirit on him and he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry or lift up his voice or make it heard in the street. Even a bruised reed he will not break and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not fail or be discouraged until he has established justice in the earth and the coastlands will wait for his instruction (42:1-4).”

In the days of Messiah, the House of Jacob (not the Church!) will be restored:

“O Jacob, my servant, I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my spirit upon your seed and my blessing upon your offspring. And they shall spring up like grass amid waters, like willows by flowing streams. Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. You will never again be ashamed or confounded...Sing, O heavens, rejoice, O earth; break forth into singing, O mountains, for the Lord has comforted His people and will have mercy on His afflicted” (44:2-4; 45:17; 49:13).

In the heat of the premillennial affliction, Israel will believe that she has been abandoned, but:

“Can a woman forget her sucking child and not have compassion on the son of her womb. Indeed, they may forget. Yet I will not forget you...Thus says the Lord, I will raise my hand to the Gentile nations and set up my standard to the people, and they will bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters will be carried on their shoulders...and all humanity will know that I the Lord am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob” (49:15, 22, 26).

The establishment of the Reign of God, announced as the Good News of the Kingdom of God — the Christian Gospel — is the great theme of Isaiah’s Message. Israel will suffer a final calamity from which she will be rescued by the return of her Messiah:

“Awake, awake! Clothe yourself in strength, O Zion, put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the Holy City. From now on the uncircumcised and the unclean will never again enter the city. Shake yourself from the dust. Arise and sit down, O Jerusalem. Free yourself from the bands around your neck, O captive daughter of Zion...How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings Good News, announcing peace; who brings Good News of good things to come, announcing salvation, saying to Zion: Your God is reigning” (cp. the Reign or Kingdom of God, the content of the NT Gospel) (52:1, 7).

“Break forth into joy. Sing together, desolate places of Jerusalem. For the Lord has comforted His people and redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has bared His holy arm in the sight of all the nations. And the whole earth will see the salvation of our God” (52:9-10).

Israel will be instrumental in the conversion of the whole world, and she will be completely vindicated:

“The Lord God who gathers the outcasts of Israel says: I will gather others to him...And the redeemer shall come to Zion and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob. The abundance of the sea shall be converted to you, the wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you...In my wrath I struck you, but in my favor I had mercy on you. For the nation and Kingdom which will not serve you will perish, those nations will indeed be ruined...The sons of those who afflicted you will come and bow before you. All those who despised you will prostrate themselves at your feet...Violence will be no more heard in your land, there will be no more devastation or destruction within your borders...Your people will all be righteous and they will inherit the land for ever...You who make mention of the Lord, do not keep silent. Give Him no rest until He establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth” (55:8; 59:20; 60:5, 10, 12, 14, 18, 21; 62:6-7).

The triumph of the righteous, the faithful elect from every nation, is expressed in moving terms: “For you will go out with joy, and be led forth in peace. The mountains and hills will break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands” (55:12).

With this heritage from Hebrew prophecy, it is little wonder that Jesus taught the disciples to pray, “Thy Kingdom come,” and the petition of Isaiah could be added:

“O that you would rend the heavens and come down, so that the mountains might quake at your presence...to make your name known to your enemies, so that the nations may tremble at your presence...The Lord will appear to your joy...The Lord will come with fire...and with His sword He will plead with all flesh, and those slain by the Lord will be many...And this is what will happen: Every New Moon and every Sabbath everyone will come to worship in my presence. And they will go out and look at the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me. Their worm will not die, nor shall their fire be quenched. And they shall be viewed with abhorrence by all humanity” (64:1-3, 66:5, 15, 16, 23, 24).

This is a background to the New Testament announcement of the Good News of the Coming Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14, 15, Luke 4:43, etc.). An understanding of Hebrew prophecy is essential for a comprehension of the expectations of Jesus and his contemporaries. The removal of the Gospel from its Hebrew setting inevitably leads to its distortion. Many students of Scripture are reading the NT through the prism of later developments influenced by Greek philosophical thinking. The question that must be asked is whether this was a fair development or a defection from original Truth.

### **The Coming Kingdom in the Psalms**

We may add further information from the Psalms, especially those which describe the activity of the Messiah, and which the NT quotes most frequently as prophecies of the career of Jesus. Psalm 2 describes the climax of history when the Kingdoms of this world are to be taken over by the Messiah and his Saints (cp. Rev. 11:15):

“Why are the nations conspiring and the peoples plotting in vain? The kings of the earth are assembling and forming a conclave in opposition to the Lord and against His Messiah. They say, Let’s burst their bonds and cast their cords from us. He who sits in the heavens will laugh. The Lord will have them in derision. Then He will address them in His wrath, and terrify them in His fury, and say, ‘I have set my King [Messiah] on Zion, my holy mountain.’ [The Messiah replying says], ‘I will declare the decree: The Lord said to me, ‘You are my Son. Today I have begotten you.’ Ask of me, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance and the ends of the earth as your possession. You will break them with a rod of iron and dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel. Now, therefore, O kings, be wise. Be instructed, you rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, with trembling kiss His feet, lest He become angry and you perish when His wrath is quickly kindled. Happy are all those who put their trust in Him” (Psalm 2).

The Psalmist has the Messianic Kingdom always in view:

“All the corners of the globe will remember and turn to the Lord and all the families of the nations will worship in your presence. For the Kingdom belongs to the Lord and He is the governor among the nations” (22:27, 18). “He makes wars to cease throughout the whole earth” (46:9). “Let them know that God rules in Jacob to the ends of the earth” (59:13). “All the earth will worship you and sing to you” (66:4)...for you will rule the people righteously and govern the nations upon earth” (67:4). “Because of your Temple at Jerusalem, kings will bring presents to you” (68:29). “He shall have dominion from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth...Yes, all kings will fall down before Him, all nations will serve Him” (72:8, 11). “Arise, O God, rule the earth, for you will inherit all nations” (82:8). “For He is coming to rule the earth. He will rule the world with righteousness, and the people with His Truth (96:13). (Paul quotes this psalm to the people at Athens as a prophecy of the return of Jesus to reign in the Kingdom: Acts 17:31.) “The Lord is reigning. Let the earth rejoice” (97:1). “He has remembered His covenant forever, the Message which He commanded to a thousand generations, the Covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath with Isaac...saying, ‘To you I will give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance” (Ps. 105:8-11).

It is constantly asserted by the NT writers that Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father, from the ascension until the Second Coming. At that time he will return to rule in his Kingdom. Psalm 110, which foresaw this plan to exalt the Messiah and then send him back to the earth, is the NT’s favorite psalm: “The Lord [God, the Father — the One God, 1 Cor. 8:6] said to my [David’s] Lord [the Messiah], ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool. The Lord shall send forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies...The Lord at your right hand shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath” (116:1, 2, 5).

The psalmist prays for the Second Coming, as did Isaiah: “Bow your heavens, O Lord, and come down” (144:5). “Let Israel rejoice in his maker, let the children of Zion rejoice in their King....Let the Saints execute vengeance upon the people, to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron, to execute upon them the judgment prescribed. This honor is given to all the Saints” (Ps. 149).

Thus the second psalm and the psalm second from the end (149) contain the same central

message about the Kingdom. The throne of David is the principal concern of Psalm 72, which closes the 2nd book of psalms (the psalms are divided in the Hebrew Bible into 5 books). Psalm 89 closes the third book and deals primarily with the Davidic throne. The Kingdom is the theme of Psalms 96-100, and 102. Psalm 2, containing the term Messiah (AV, "His Anointed") is quoted often in the book of Revelation (12:5, 11:18, "The nations were angry," 19:15, Christ implementing the Messianic "rod of iron," 2:27, the promise of rulership for the Saints).

It is not surprising, though astonishingly unfamiliar to most churchgoers, that the triumph of the Messiah in his coming Kingdom is the underlying theme of the NT proclamation of the Good News of the Kingdom (the Gospel): "[Jesus] will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob [not the Church! The Church reigns with him, 2 Tim. 2:12, Rev. 5:10, 3:21, 2:26, 20:1-6], and of his Kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32, 33).

"Jesus said to them: 'I must announce the Good News of the Kingdom of God to other cities also. That is the reason why I have been sent'" (Luke 4:43).

At the mention of the word "Salvation" (Luke 19:9), "and because Jesus was near to Jerusalem, they thought that the Kingdom of God would be manifested immediately" (Luke 19:11). Jesus then explained that he must depart to his Father and then return invested with the power to rule in the Kingdom (Luke 19: 11-27). When he then entered Jerusalem, "the whole multitude of disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, saying: 'Blessed is the Coming King...'" (Luke 19:38). "'Blessed is the Coming Kingdom of our Father David'" (Mark 11:10, Nestles text). "'Blessed is the King of Israel who comes in the name of the Lord'" (John 12:13). The Pharisees then told Jesus to rebuke his disciples (not ignorant Jews!) for their Messianic fervor, which was not in the least out of place: "I tell you that if these [my disciples] were to keep silent, the very stones would cry out [for joy]" (Luke 19:38).

These episodes show the profound Messianism of the NT and underline the fact that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. On that solid rock the NT Church is to be built. A church which denies the Second Coming and the Reign of the Messiah in a renovated earth is founded upon sand.

The inheritance of the Kingdom and rulership over the earth were to be shared by Jesus with his disciples: "In the New Age you who have followed me in my trials will be enthroned to rule over the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28, Luke 22:28).

This promise forms the very heart of the New Covenant (cp. Luke 22, "I appoint you to rulership as my Father appointed me. This is my blood of the New 'Appointment.'" the Greek verb "appoint" is the root of the noun translated "covenant").

"Are you unaware of the fact that the Saints will rule the world?" (1 Cor. 6:2.) "How I wish that you had begun to reign (the aorist, 'reign' is ingressive), so that we might be reigning with you" (1 Cor. 4:8). "If we suffer with him we shall also reign as kings with him" (2 Tim. 2:12). "Shall God not with Him freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32.) "The Saints shall rule on the earth" (Rev. 5:10). They will sit with Christ in his throne (Rev. 3:21), receive power over the nations

(Rev. 2:26), and reign as kings with him for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4). “The meek shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5) (not disappear to heaven!). The promise to Abraham and his seed was that they would inherit the world (Rom. 4:13).

In view of this impressive biblical data, will anyone dare to criticize the Apostles when they inquire: “Lord, is this the time when you are going to restore the Kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6.)

Light was thrown on this question by Peter in his second sermon to the first converts to the Christian Church. He urged repentance, “so that the Lord may send you Jesus the Messiah, who was previously proclaimed to you. Heaven must retain him until the times of the Restoration of everything; of those times all His holy prophets have spoken” (Acts 3:20, 21).

The destiny of the Church is to reign with the Messiah over restored Israel and the world. The surviving remnant of Israel will form the nucleus of the world population destined to live into the New Age to be inaugurated by the arrival of the Messiah. There will be survivors from all nations who will live to see the dawn of a new era of civilization in which international warfare will be a relic of past history, no longer, as now, an ever-present threat. In that New World there will be One Church founded upon the worship of the One God, the Father (1 Cor. 8:6, Zech. 14:9), through His Son, Jesus the Christ. The earth will be reorganized under a theocracy administered by the Messiah and his followers, the faithful of Old and New Testament times. At the resurrection, they will be granted immortality in transformed bodies, animated by spirit (1 Cor. 15:23, 42-55). This transformation will occur for both the Christian dead and the Christians surviving in the flesh at the Second Coming (1 Thess. 4:13ff. — there will be no “Rapture” 7 years before the end! All believers will be caught up (raptured) to meet Jesus and then descend with him to the earth at the time when he comes in power and glory “taking vengeance on those who do not obey the Gospel” (2 Thess. 2:7-9).)

Such is the divine future proclaimed by the prophets and by Jesus himself. Such also is the Message of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God (or Heaven — the terms are entirely synonymous, cp. Matt. 3:2 with Mk. 1:14-15) entrusted to the Church. Why have the churches become so silent about this, the Christian’s glorious destiny and the world’s only hope?

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