

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH

### INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

When I was a child, I developed an interest in current events. I read the newspaper and I read *Time* magazine. I tuned into the TV news, which back then meant watching Walter Cronkite. In college I majored in political science. At one point I got involved in a state political campaign. I have followed political events since then fairly closely.

My perception is that on the national level and, to a lesser extent, on the state and local level, partisans for whatever candidate are hopeful that the election of their candidate will lead to great and wonderful changes in the conditions of our lives. Occasionally individual politicians are involved in significant and positive changes. So often they seem to fall short. Ronald Reagan was a hero to many conservatives. He did have a hand in the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Iron Curtain. But even he was embroiled in scandal in the Iran Contra affair. He was also the first governor in the country to sign no fault divorce legislation, which made it much easier to end marriages, often to the detriment of children.

In our own state we had a US senator some years ago who was widely known as a committed Christian. I attended a conference which he led in Las Vegas that was dedicated to the promotion of marriage and the family. A short time later it was revealed that he was having an affair with the wife of supposedly his best friend. As a result of the ensuing scandal, he was forced to resign.

As Americans we are convinced that representative democracy is the best form of government. We defend it and promote it. Yet an objective look at democratic governments forces us to recognize that there have been some terrible shortcomings. It was an election in 1930 that gave the National Socialists, the Nazis, a foothold in the German government. In 1924 the National Fascist Party won the parliamentary elections in Italy. That became the basis of Benito Mussolini's rise to power. In the 1930s it was elections which brought militant nationalists to power in Japan. Our own representative democracy has resulted in a government that allows and defends abortion and which has authorized gay marriage, both of which practices we saw earlier in our study violate the owner's manual which we have received from our Divine Manufacturer.

If our ultimate hope is only in this earthly government, we are bound for disappointment. But as Christians we have hope in a divine promise that a new civil government is coming. It will be the best possible government. The promise of the Bible is that we will have a part in it. The form of this government will be a monarchy, and its king will be the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are going to look at the Scriptures this morning to see what they have to tell us about this coming kingdom. We will see what really good government looks like, and we will get a glimpse of what the perfect ruler will be like. This necessarily will be only a superficial survey, and we have time only to touch on some of the Scriptures that describe this coming king and kingdom. But hopefully this will give us some measure of hope and encouragement about what awaits us in the future.

I.

We will begin then with (PROJECTOR ON---I. THE OLD TESTAMENT TEACHING...) THE OLD TESTAMENT TEACHING ON THE COMING KINGDOM. We will pick up the story with God's promises to David through the prophet Nathan. This is part of the Davidic Covenant, which involves promises to David's descendants. (I. ... 2 SAMUEL 7:12-16) God is speaking to David through Nathan: **"When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. (2 SAMUEL 7:13-14) He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men..."** The immediate reference is to Solomon, David's son. The house in view could be the physical temple. (2 SAMUEL 7:15-16) **"...but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever."** The "house" here seems to be a reference to a lineage or a family. There will also be a kingship involving this family which will be eternal.

We are going to skip ahead to the prophets. (I. ... ISAIAH 2:2-4) The prophet Isaiah lived around 700 BC. In #2 we begin to see fascinating predictions about the future. In vv. 2-4 of #2 we read (ISAIAH 2:2), **"It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it..."** The prophet seems to be describing the temple in Jerusalem. There will be a supernatural physical change to the landscape which raises the Temple Mount, which becomes the object of visitation from other nations.

(ISAIAH 2:3) Verse 3: **"...and many peoples shall come, and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."** The Lord, who is Jesus Christ, will declare and teach about His rules and principles, which will be consistent with His revelation in the Bible.

Verse 4 (ISAIAH 2:4): **"He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and 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 anymore."** There will be no need for an International

Criminal Court or a United Nations. There will still be nations, but there will be no more need for militaries or national defense budgets. Those resources can be put into agriculture and economic pursuits. The Messiah will insure that there is peace upon the earth. There may be disputes between people groups, but He will decide them with complete fairness.

We will skip ahead to Isaiah #9 vv. 6-7 (ISAIAH 9:6-7). We think of this as a Christmas passage. It does have reference to the Messiah's first coming, but it also has relevance for His second coming. (ISAIAH 9:6) **"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."** The Messiah will be ruler over the earth. His rule following His second coming will have special relevance to Israel.

Verse 7 (ISAIAH 9:7): **"Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this."** The Messiah will rule as king of Israel, but His authority will go beyond that. The establishment of this rule is not dependent upon any human actions. God will do it. This rule will be characterized by justice and righteousness. This rule may begin with an earthly kingdom, but because it is eternal, it will extend into eternity.

We skip ahead to Isaiah 11 vv. 1-12. (I.... ISAIAH 11:1-12) The prophet declares, **"There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. 2 And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord."** This is Jesus, the descendant of David, the son of Jesse.

**3 And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear...**" The all-knowing God-man will not need witnesses to decide criminal or civil matters. For He sees and knows all.

**"4 ...but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. 5 Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins."** Justice and righteousness will prevail. There may still be some who are poor, but they will not need to hire expensive lawyers to get justice.

**"6 The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. 7 The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the**

**adder's den. 9 They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.**" What the prophet appears to be describing is a return to the conditions which existed in Eden, before the Fall. Animals did not eat each other at that time.

In Genesis #1 v. 30 we were told, **"And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so."** This seems to imply that all of the animals were originally plant eating creatures. To return to these conditions requires supernatural intervention. Peace will characterize even the animal world.

Back to v. 10 in Isaiah 11: **"10 In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious. 11 In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. 12 He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth."** Thus there is an assurance of a regathered Israel.

Look next at Isaiah #25 vv. 8 & 9. (I. ... ISALAH 25:8-9) In the context the prophet is describing a coming great feast where there will be a celebration of abundance and physical prosperity. Verses 8 & 9 (ISALAH 25:8): **"He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken."** The reign of Jesus will extend into eternity. My interpretation is that at the conclusion of the thousand year rule on earth death will finally be abolished. But during this earthly rule, the reproach of Israel--- perhaps of all of God's people--- will be removed. Verse 9 (ISALAH 25:9): **"It will be said on that day, 'Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.'"**

Let's move ahead to Isaiah 65 vv. 17-25 (I. ... ISALAH 65:17-25) **"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind."** In the Book of Revelation the new heavens and new earth seem to have primary reference to the eternal state. But as with the coming of Jesus to earth, which proves to involve two separate appearances, the prophets at times telescope two events together with each other.

Verse 18: **"But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. 19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress."** The reference appears to be to a restored, earthly city of Jerusalem.

Verse 20: **“No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed. 21 They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. 22 They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. 23 They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the Lord, and their descendants with them.”** Again there appears to be a restoration to conditions at the beginning of Genesis when people had long lives, although death is not yet totally eliminated.

Verse 24: **“Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear. 25 The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain,’ says the Lord.”** The kingdom rule of Jesus will involve a restoration of the animal world, as conditions seemingly existed in Eden.

(I. JEREMIAH 23:5-6) We move next to the prophet Jeremiah, who speaks several times about the end times. In #23 vv. 5 & 6 Jeremiah (JEREMIAH 23:5) says, **“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. (JEREMIAH 23:6) In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.”** The righteous Branch is Jesus the descendant of David. These verses also assume a restoration to prominence of Israel.

(I. ... JEREMIAH 31:31-34) Jeremiah also makes reference to the New Covenant, which has special application to the nation of Israel. Beginning in v. 31 of #31 (JEREMIAH 31:31) the prophet says, **“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah--- the primary connection is with the descendants of Abraham--- (JEREMIAH 31:32) not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord.”** That covenant involving Moses was a conditional covenant, which Israel regularly broke.

Verse 33 (JEREMIAH 31:33) **“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”** This covenant involves an internalization of God’s law, which a similar passage in Ezekiel #36 attributes to the coming of the Holy Spirit to reside in God’s people, in particular, the people of Israel.

Verse 34 (JEREMIAH 31:34): **“And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the**

**least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.**" In this coming kingdom all will know the Messiah. For all who enter this earthly kingdom will be true believers. Yet those who are born to these believers must make decisions about whether they will trust in Jesus.

We jump ahead to Ezekiel. (I. ... EZEKIEL 39:25-29; 40-48) In #39 vv. 25-29 this prophet says, **"Therefore thus says the Lord God: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel, and I will be jealous for my holy name. 26 They shall forget their shame and all the treachery they have practiced against me, when they dwell securely in their land with none to make them afraid, 27 when I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them from their enemies' lands, and through them have vindicated my holiness in the sight of many nations. 28 Then they shall know that I am the Lord their God, because I sent them into exile among the nations and then assembled them into their own land. I will leave none of them remaining among the nations anymore. 29 And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord God."** The advent of this coming kingdom involves a regathering of the Israelites, who will have a prominent position in this kingdom. The following nine chapters give a detailed description of a restored temple in a restored city of Jerusalem.

(I. ... DANIEL 7:27) Following Ezekiel comes Daniel. He speaks often of the end times. In #7 v. 27 (DANIEL 7:27) he says this about the coming earthly kingdom: **"And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him."** The term "saints of the Most High" seems to refer to believers of all periods of history. This future kingdom begins at the time of Christ's second advent. But His rule extends beyond the thousand year reign of Jesus on earth into eternity.

(I. ... ZECHARIAH 14:9-11) Let's move next to Zechariah. In the first part of #14 the author describes the return of Jesus Christ to the Mount of Olives. The Lord destroys enemies who surround Jerusalem. He then proceeds to establish His kingdom. (ZECHARIAH 14:9) Beginning in v. 9 we read, **"And the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day the Lord will be one and his name one."** Jesus will reign supreme. He will be the source of all government authority--- executive, judicial, and legislative.

Verse 10 (ZECHARIAH 14:10): **"The whole land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. But Jerusalem shall remain aloft on its site from the Gate of Benjamin to the place of the former gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's winepresses."** We saw in Isaiah 2 a reference to Jerusalem being lifted up from the surrounding territory.

Verse 11 (ZECHARIAH 14:11): **"And it shall be inhabited, for there shall never again be a decree of utter destruction. Jerusalem shall dwell in security."**

Jerusalem, which has been the scene of many battles down through the centuries, will have a central role in this coming kingdom. It will finally be secure.

II.

(II. THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING...) We move on then to THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON THE COMING KINGDOM. Let's first consider Matthew's Gospel. (II.... MATTHEW 3:1-2) Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament concludes with mention of a forerunner who will precede the coming Messiah. According to Matthew #3 vv. 1 & 2 (MATTHEW 3:1--2), **"In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"** The ruler of the kingdom of heaven, which is synonymous with the kingdom of God, is about to enter this stage of history with an offer to His chosen people to participate in, and to receive, His kingdom. John makes the first presentation.

(II. ... MATTHEW 4:17) Jesus Himself then appears to present the same message. In #4 v. 17 we are told, **"From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"** The religious leaders, however, will reject Jesus. When that rejection becomes clear, Jesus begins to speak of an interim form of his rule, sometimes described as the mystery form of His kingdom, which He illustrates in a series of parables. The promise remains, however, of an eventual earthly kingdom.

(II. ... ACTS 6:1-8) Reference to that kingdom is again made in the Book of Acts. In #1 vv. 6-8, just before Jesus ascends into heaven, there is this account (ACTS 1:6): **"So when they [the apostles] had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?'"** Notice that the apostles are anticipating an earthly kingdom in which Israel has a prominent role.

Verse 7 (ACTS 1:7): **"He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.'"** The Lord does not dispute their understanding of the kingdom. He simply says that it is not for them to know the timing of its advent. Verse 8 (ACTS 1:8): **"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."** The mission of the apostles is to spread the gospel. The power to do that will come from the Holy Spirit who is to be given in a new way at Pentecost.

We turn then to the Book of Romans. (II. ... ROMANS 8:18) The Apostle Paul has several references to the return of Christ and His future rule. Romans #8 vv. 18-21 contains one of them. (ROMANS 8:18) Beginning in v. 18 Paul writes, **"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."** This is a great verse which should encourage all of us when we are faced with trials. A glorious future, which includes participation in an earthly kingdom, awaits us.

Verse 19 (ROMANS 8:19): **"For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God."** The original Greek word for "eager longing" appears

seven times in the New Testament. It always refers to the return of Jesus. Verse 20 (ROMANS 8:20): **“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope...”** As a result of the Fall the creation itself began to be subject to decay. The Law of Entropy went into effect, whereby energy and matter tend to go toward a state of decay and disorder.

Verse 21 (ROMANS 8:21): **“...that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”** Again we see the return of Christ marked by a reversal of the curse, by a return to the state of being that was present in Eden.

(II. ... 1 CORINTHIANS 6:2-3) In 1 Corinthians #6 vv. 2 & 3 the Apostle Paul is criticizing Christians for not being able to settle disputes among themselves. (1 CORINTHIANS 6:2-3) He then makes reference to a future responsibility of judgment which they will have, apparently in connection with the future kingdom. He writes, **“Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? 3 Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!”** That sounds intriguing, doesn't it? The exact timing of this judgment is not described. The final passage which we will look at will make reference to this leadership function in the earthly kingdom. Certainly this judgment will have to be done under the authority and guidance of the coming king.

Finally we come to Revelation #20 vv. 1-10. (II. REVELATION 20:1-10) Chapter 19 describes the return of Jesus to earth when He defeats the enemies of God. We find out what happens next. **“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. 2 And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, 3 and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.”** This is where we get the notion of a thousand year reign of Christ upon the earth, the millennium. The devil will not be around to cause havoc. Humans will still have a sin nature. But this kingdom will begin with only a citizenry who are believers. Children will be born. They will have to make decisions about their own faith in Jesus. But people will tend to live to very old ages, and even the animal kingdom will be transformed to conditions that seemed to characterize the original Eden.

Verse 4: **“Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”** Notice people who have authority to judge, mentioned in the first sentence. The nearest antecedent to the “them” who have authority to judge is



described in #19 v. 14. It is the armies of heaven who return to earth with Jesus. They appear to be Old Testament and New Testament saints.

This responsibility of judgment is referenced early in Revelation. (REVELATION 2:26) In #2 v. 26 Jesus is telling the Apostle John, **“The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations...”** Again this seems to involve some kind of leadership function.

Back in Revelation #20 Jesus continues in this vision of the future in v. 5 (PROJECTOR OFF): **“The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.”** My understanding is that the first resurrection involves the resurrection of the righteous, for which there are several stages--- the resurrection of Christians, the resurrection of Old Testament saints, the resurrection of Tribulation saints. The second resurrection is the resurrection of unbelievers.

Verse 6: **“Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.”** We believers are promised a future leadership role in this coming kingdom.

Verses 7-10: **“And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. 9 And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, 10 and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”** Then comes the final judgment and the eternal state.

The lesson for us in regard to civil government is that a perfect government is coming. The perfect ruler is coming. Because He is God as well as man, His judgment will always be righteous and just. We will have a meaningful part in this coming kingdom. We will be there in resurrected bodies.

There is one requirement necessary to participate in this coming kingdom. Earlier in the Book of Revelation Jesus gave us a picture of the responsibility that we have to trust in Him. In #3 v. 20 (PROJECTOR ON--- REVELATION 3:20) Jesus declared, **“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.”** If you hear Jesus knocking on the door of your life, let Him in. He died to pay the penalty for the sins of the world. Our responsibility is to accept the gift of salvation which He has provided for us. We need to make sure that we have put our trust in Jesus.