

David wrote in Psalm 110:1, *the LORD said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.* The session of Christ, sitting at God's right hand, encompasses the time from Christ's ascension into heaven to his second coming.

The angel, Gabriel, told Daniel that there would be seventy – sevens (490 years) which *are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city (Jerusalem), to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy,* Dan 9:24. These years would be divided into three time periods – 7 weeks (49 yrs), 62 weeks (434 yrs), and 1 week (7 yrs). After 69 weeks, Messiah would be cut off (crucified). And then there is one week remaining.

If this prophecy regards Israel and Jerusalem, then there must be a gap between the 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>tieth</sup> week. This is the period in which we live and where Christ is sitting at God's right hand in heaven. Why is the nation of Israel not dealt with during this period? The answer is they were being chastised for rejecting the Messiah. The rejection of the LORD started for Israel in the time of Samuel. The LORD was the King of Israel, but the people, rejecting the LORD, wanted a king like the other nations. 1 Sam:8

*<sup>10</sup>And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king. <sup>11</sup>And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. <sup>12</sup>And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. <sup>13</sup>And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. <sup>14</sup>And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. <sup>15</sup>And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. <sup>16</sup>And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. <sup>17</sup>He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. <sup>18</sup>And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.*

### **THE KINGDOM WAS OFFERED TO THE NATION OF ISRAEL**

When the true King, the Son of David, came, His people rejected Him. *He came unto his own, but his own received him not!* John, the Baptist, came saying, *Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,* Matt 3:2. The Lord Jesus preached the same, Matt 4:17. And so he instructed his disciples to preach commanding them, in Matthew 10:7, *And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand,* and then in Luke 10:9-11 saying, *And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.*

What did these statements mean, *The kingdom of heaven is at hand* and *The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.* The first statement can only mean that the kingdom was imminent, that its establishment was at hand. The second statement speaks of the kingdom pertaining to Israel. And what kingdom is this that was at hand? It was the kingdom of Old Testament prophecy that the Jews were expecting and should have been prepared for. It was that kingdom that the seed of the woman would restore, Gen 3:15. It was that kingdom that would be populated by a redeemed people, Gen 3:21, who would believe the Gospel, who would have a faith like Abraham, Gal 3:6-8. It was that Theocratic Kingdom promised to David's Son that would fulfill all the promises. It was that kingdom contained in the Covenants.

Modern commentators, who oppose premillennialism, love to scorn the Apostle's understanding of the kingdom, as being Jewish and earthly and carnal, etc. They point to Matt 20:21-23 implying that there would be no earthly throne or

kingdom, where the sons of Zebedee could sit on either side. Christ refused their request, not on the ground of their misunderstanding the nature of the kingdom, but because *it was not his to give, but it would be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father*. They point to Acts 1:6,7 correctly saying that the Apostles still believed in a restoration of the Davidic throne and kingdom under the reign of the Messiah, but they believed they were in error. But the reply of the Lord confirmed the Apostle's belief. Notice what the LORD said, *it is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power*. Instead of rejecting and correcting their idea of the nature of the kingdom he accepts their understanding of the kingdom and answers their question as to the time of Israel's restoration as something reserved by the Father.

The Apostles thought and concluded that the Kingdom of God would then be established. Now Jehovah would *make the enemies of David's Lord his footstool* (Ps 110:1). Now the Seed of the woman, the Seed of Abraham, the Seed of David would crush the head of the Serpent, (Gen 3:15). Now, the King would *build up Zion, and appear in His glory* (Ps 102:16). Now He would take *the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession, and break His enemies with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel* (Ps 2:8,9). Now <sup>6</sup> *The wolf also 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* (Is 11:6). Now *He would smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips slay the wicked, and would assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth* (Is 11:4,12). Now would the LORD *gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle...then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations,...and the LORD shall be king over all the earth* (Zech 14:2,3,9). Now the LORD *will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS* (Jer 23:5,6). Now *the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven would be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him*, (Dan. 7:27). Now *He would reign in mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously*, (Is 24:23).

The disciples were not wrong in their belief and hope that Messiah would personally reign in his earthly kingdom, but they were wrong in the timing of it! The Lord's disciples were wrong in their traditional teaching that the Kingdom would *immediately* appear, when the Messiah appeared. They heard the Lord tell them that he was going away and that they could not follow him at that time. He told them that he would go and prepare a place for them, but that he would come again and receive them, but they still thought that he would establish the kingdom immediately.

### **THE KINGDOM WAS TENDERED, BUT IT WAS REJECTED**

The Jews did not comprehend that *it was written that it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day*. This was a stumbling block to all the Jews. What was defective was their understanding of the spiritual requirements for entering into the kingdom. Nicodemus had to be reminded that to see the kingdom one had to be born again. John the Baptist had to warn them that to prepare for the kingdom that was at hand they had to repent. It was not the nature of the kingdom, but the nature of those that would inherit it that the Jews totally misunderstood. And this is exactly what we see in the preaching of Christ and the Apostles to their Jewish hearers. Notice that there is not any effort to reeducate them with respect to the nature of the kingdom. By contrast, there is a constant emphasis on the spiritual requirements that are needed to enter into it. Constantly the Jews are warned to repent, to turn from their wicked ways and embrace their Messiah in faith and repentance, but they would not.

And what does the second statement, *"The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you,"* mean? Consistent with the first statement examined above, this statement infers that the kingdom is close, its establishment imminent, but it has not as yet come. To understand the import of this phrase it is helpful to go back to the parallel situation when the establishment on the prototype kingdom was imminent. The generation of the exodus had left Egypt, received God's

law at Sinai, entered into covenant with him, and had marched to Kadesh-Barnea on their way to enter the land of promise. At that point the kingdom was at hand; it was near. At that point the prototype kingdom of the Sinaitic Covenant was nigh, nigh at hand. However, although it was nigh, and geographically they were the closest to the land of promise than any other time in their wilderness wanderings, but they did not enter in.

Paul says they did not enter in because of unbelief. They apostatized and lacked the faith to trust God's promises. Intimidated by the inhabitants of the land, they shrunk back from entering the land. Instead of inheriting the promises they were condemned to forty years of wandering in the wilderness, where all but a few faithful died. A new generation, exercising faith and renewing the covenant on the plains of Moab entered in. The Jews of Christ's generation were in a situation, similar to that of Moses' generation. They too were offered the kingdom. The kingdom was at hand; it was nigh unto them. They too were called to exercise faith and repentance and submit to God's law. But they too could not enter in because of unbelief. They too came to a similar condemnation. They and their descendants have been wandering in a spiritual wilderness not for forty, but for almost two thousand years.

Toward the close of His ministry the Lord Jesus told the Jewish nation, that because they rejected their Messiah, they would be rejected. Notice the Parable in Matt 21:33-46. And 22:1-14.

In conclusion the Jews of Christ's generation were offered the kingdom. They were offered the kingdom for which they had been waiting. They were offered the kingdom of prophecy, the expected messianic kingdom. And they rejected it. They, like the generation of the wilderness, were unworthy to enter in.

### **Therefore, the KINGDOM WAS POSTPONED**

The Apostles asked the question. *Lord, will thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?* Commentators like to pontificate in their self-righteousness and marvel at the ignorance of the Apostles...at the "Jewish" notions of the kingdom that they still held. But these Apostles are the inspired founders of Christianity. For three years they had been in the actual school of Christ. They had been instructed by the Lord himself and sent to preach the "gospel of the kingdom." And now we are told that they didn't even know what the kingdom was all about. This is casting aspersions on our Lord himself who taught them, prepared them, and sent them forth! It is true that they didn't at first understand the need for the crucifixion, but now they did, and they asked this question. Notice, Christ did not rebuke their ignorance or correct them. He did not abuse them, as modern commentators frequently do, for not understanding the nature of the kingdom. Rather he answered their question. And the answer was that the timing of the kingdom, of that kingdom about which they were inquiring, was to be left to the sovereign purposes of the Father and it was not to concern the Apostles at this time.

In the Apostolic Epistles the Kingdom is spoken of as still future and is linked with the second coming of the Lord Jesus. For instance take Peter's confession that Jesus was *the Christ, the Son of the living God*. The Lord acknowledged approvingly Peter's pronouncement saying that *flesh and blood (man) hath not revealed it unto thee but my Father which is in heaven*. This shows that Peter well understood that the Christ was the promised son of David, who was David's Lord, and that to Him was promised an everlasting Kingdom. After the Lord confirmed the Apostle's Jewish understanding of the *Kingdom* (Acts 1:6,7), only that it was not for them *to know the times or the seasons* for its establishment, they began to preach the *gospel of the Kingdom*.

The language of a "postponed kingdom" may be unfortunate. It could imply that God has had to alter his plans. This is of course absurd. *Known to God are all his works from the beginning of the world*. He does *according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth*. *The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will*. Rather the offer of the kingdom has to be seen as conditional and as having failed the Jewish nation for their refusal to repent. But this was all part of God's plan, just as Adam's sin. In Noah's day we read that *it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart, Gen 6:6*. Did this

mean that God's purposes were foiled? Even as the Sinaitic Covenant failed, and even as the Davidic Covenant has for many centuries appeared to have failed, so has this conditional offer to the Israel nation failed. But God's purposes stand certain. The tabernacle of David had fallen down for centuries (see **Psalm 89**), but God has raised it up again through the miracle of the virgin birth. God will in his own time establish the Theocratic Kingdom. The Apostles were not wrong. They were not being rebuked or corrected. They were merely told that the kingdom that they were expecting, the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, will happen in God's own good time.

The Lord Jesus instructs the Apostles that the Kingdom will be postponed in the Parable of the Pounds. Notice the introduction to this Parable in verse 11, *and as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear*. At the beginning of Christ's ministry the Kingdom of God was near. It was at hand! Now it was not near.

A summary of the parable is contained in vs 12, *A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return*.

First, A certain nobleman went into a far country. All commentators interpret this nobleman, literally, *a certain well born man*, to be the Lord Jesus. He indeed is a man, born of a woman, descended from the Kings of Judah, of the royal house of David. He is a noble man born of the noblest of fathers. He is the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the seed of David. And yet he is not a mere man. He is also the Son of the highest. The Holy Spirit came upon Mary, overshadowing, or, as it may be translated, shedding influence upon, her, meaning that without a man that holy thing born to her is the eternal, and only, Son of God. In saying this we must affirm that the Lord Jesus has two natures. He is very God of very God and very man of very man.

At the call of His Father, *Sit thou at my right hand*, this noble man would ascend to heaven in the sight of His disciples, Acts 1:9, going to *a far country*. Heaven is called *a far country*, first, because it is a great distance above the earth, and because it is out of our sight. Second, because heaven is where God is, as Christ taught us to pray, *our Father, which art in heaven*.

This nobleman, before he travelled to this far country, called ten of his servants and delivered to them a pound each, and said unto them, *Occupy till I come*. It is not our purpose to dwell on this portion of the parable, other than to say that the disciples of Christ are his servants and they are to be engaged in using the gifts that he gives them for his glory and service. The word *occupy* in the Greek means to trade or to be engaged in business. In this parable each servant is given a pound, not a large amount, teaching Christians to be humble. *Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called*, still God has chosen them *to bring to nought things that are, that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord*, 1 Cor 1:26-31.

The *servants* represent the professing, Jewish church, for most were not true believers, as is obvious from verse 14. *But his citizens* (that is, the Jews) *hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us*. One of these, which represents a group of false professors, is included in the words of verse 27, *But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me*.

The offer, rejection, and postponement of **THE KINGDOM WAS THEN OFFERED TO OTHERS**. This is revealed in some of Christ's kingdom parables.

The first one is the parable of the wheat and the tares, Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43. That the thrust of this parable has to do with the kingdom is evidenced by the opening statement, *The kingdom of heaven is likened unto...* In this parable it is clear that Christ is no longer declaring that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The kingdom, rather than being imminent, is now postponed until the end of the world. At that time, Christ declares, *...the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*. It is hard to escape the implication that the abundance of tares has occasioned this delay of

the kingdom. And that certainly fits with the facts, for the majority of the Jews, along with unbelieving Gentiles, proved to be tares, as they rejected the Messiah and demonstrated that they were indeed tares, children of their father the devil.

Another parable instructive of this point is the parable of the marriage of the King's Son. It is found in Matthew 22:1-14. Expound. Notice in verses 9-15 that when the Jews refuse to come into the kingdom by faith and repentance, the Gentiles are called. Rom 11

Notice the Parable of the Vineyard, Matt 21:33-46. Again it is clear from this parable that the kingdom is no longer at hand. It is not nigh to those of his audience. Rather, instead of still being offered, the kingdom is taken away from them, that is, the offer of the kingdom is being withdrawn from them, and offered to others. Expound. The gospel will go out to the Gentiles. The kingdom will be given to a nation that will *bring forth the fruits thereof*. And what nation is that? Peter identifies that nation for us, when he states, *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy*, 1 Peter 2:9-10. The elect of God, gathered into the Church of Jesus Christ, to whom Peter is writing, is that holy nation, that Israel was called to be. The elect are those with true faith in Christ, those with the faith of their father Abraham, both Jews and Gentiles, as Paul argues in Galatians 3. But this raising up of a new holy nation will take time. It will take time *until the fullness of the Gentiles to be come in*, that is, the elect Gentiles, Rom 11:25. Therefore the kingdom is postponed until the end of the age. In the meantime the gospel will go out to the Gentiles, who will be grafted into the olive tree, with the believing Jews of all ages, to become part of the true Israel of God.

Consider next the Parable of the Marriage of the Kings Son in Matt 22:1-15. It is clear from all this that those who were invited were the Jews, the children of Israel, the people of the elect nation. And as he is still speaking to the same audience as the Parable of the Vineyard, they perceive this as well. For as soon as he is finished speaking this parable against them the Scripture records, *"Then went the Pharisees and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk."* They were again bent on murder. They were, in their hatred and malicious opposition, fulfilling the very parables that offended them so. That God was prepared to give them the kingdom, had they responded in faith and repentance, is evident from the king's statement to his servants, *The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy*. The result of all this is that the king *"...was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city,"* referencing the coming destruction of the Jewish nation and of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The wedding feast, that is, the kingdom, is postponed, so the king's servants can go out into the highways and byways inviting other men to the feast so that the wedding might be furnished with guests. This is clear reference to this present age where the gospel is going out to all the Gentile nations and God is calling himself out a people to inherit the kingdom that was rejected by the Jews, and forth, postponed to the end of the age.

In these parables we clearly see the following points. First, that a kingdom was offered to the Jews, second, that they rejected it, and third, that it is being given to others. And we see that this process of calling out another people has occasioned the kingdom, that was nigh at hand for the Jews to accept, is no longer at hand, but will be established at the end of the age, when the calling out of the Gentile believers has been completed, "Lk 21:24," and the chastening of the Jews complete. When the last of this engrafted people have been grafted into the olive tree, the true Israel of God, when the fullness of the Gentiles is come in, then the kingdom will be established and the wedding feast furnished with guests as numerous as the sand of the seashore and the stars of the heavens.

If we would be Christ's, we must have the faith of Abraham. If we desire to inherit the kingdom, as joint heirs with Christ, then we must exercise the faith and repentance that the Jews had not. If we would enter in, then we must have that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.