

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Tim. 2-19

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Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,
but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in
the house.

Matthew 5:15

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For A Conservative Anabaptist Perspective

From The Editor's Desk**THE GLORY OF CHRIST**

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory,
The glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

John 1:14.

THE GLORY of Christ is apparent, as we study the titles which are given to Him in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel.

THE WORD (*John 1:1*). As the words we speak reveal our character, so Jesus is the speech of the invisible God. He has uttered or declared God (*John 14:9*). The Psalmist said that the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork to the ends of the earth, but in the fairest panorama of the starry heavens, or sunset clouds, there was never such a presentation of God in nature as we have in Jesus.

THE CREATOR (*John 1:2-3*). In the strongest language he could command, the apostle inscribes the Name of Jesus on all things that are in heaven above and in the earth beneath. The iron of which the nails were made that transfixed Him to the Cross; the wood of which it was composed, the thorns which composed His crown, all were due to His creative fiat.

LIFE AND LIGHT (*John 1:4*). It pleased the Father that life should reside in His human nature, as its cistern and reservoir, so that from Him we should derive eternal life, communicated through faith. In His life is light.

THE MESSIAH (*John 1:10-11*). "He came unto His own."

THE SHEKINAH (*John 1:14*). Now and again, during our Lord's earthly career, the curtain of His human nature seemed to part and to emit some gleams of the radiant splendour of His Being. It was so on the Transfiguration mount, and again in His Resurrection and Ascension. The glory was full of grace and truth.

THE ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON (*John 1:12-14*). We may be sons, thank God, but He was The Son. Whatever is implied in that phrase "Only-Begotten," He is separated from the noblest of the children of men by a measureless and impassable chasm. Yet how wonderful it is, that He is not ashamed to call us brethren.

Let us give glory and homage to Him!

F.B.Meyer – Daily Devotional



From the Pulpit

The New Born King
*From a message by Merle Ruth
Given at Denver Mennonite Church
Christmas Day Service 2003.*

On one occasion during the Christmas season a merchant and a minister were conversing together; When Christmas is over, said the merchant, it is my job to rid this store of Christmas in one day.

I beg your pardon, said the minister, I have a bigger job. My job is to keep Christmas in the hearts of my people for a lifetime.

I like the way that minister replied.

But what does it mean to keep Christmas in our hearts?

May I suggest that it means keeping in view the Christ of today, crucified, risen and now reigning King of Kings.

It means doing what David did: I have set the Lord always before my face because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved. *Psalm 16:8*

It means running the race of life with your eyes glued upon Jesus.

It means seeing him not only as the shepherds saw him as a babe in a manger but also as the writer to the Hebrew saw him crowned with glory and Honour.

My sermon title for this occasion is The Newborn King.

Those wise men from the east were right, they perceived that what they had come to see was more than a newborn child. That one who once occupied a manger was soon exalted to a throne and for nearly 2000 years He has been out of his manger and on His throne.

I raise now this question: Were there any indications that the long anticipated Messiah would be a king?

There definitely were.

That very title itself Messiah was in indication of this fact. Daniel in his unique 70 weeks prophecy refers to the coming one as the Messiah, he thus

identified Him as the anointed one for that is the meaning of that title.

Daniel 9:25-26

When Simeon spoke of having seen the Lord's Christ he too was identifying Him as the anointed one. *Luke 2:26*

These two terms Messiah and Christ mean the same. Why then are they different in construction? Because the one is drawn from the Hebrew and the other is drawn from the Greek. But they denote the same thing.

Now if you were an anointed one what did that mean?

For an Israelite it meant that you were a prophet, a priest or a King.

Like no one else Jesus combined all three offices, none of His predecessors were able to even fill one office as well as He fills all three.

This morning my purpose is to highlight just one of those offices namely the kingly office.

David was Israel's humanly anointed King, Jesus for all of God's people their divinely anointed King.

Another Old Testament indication that the one to come would be a King, and perhaps the earliest indicator, appears in *Genesis 49:10*: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah or a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh comes."

The sceptre was a token of kingship and Shiloh was perhaps the earliest title for the coming Messiah. Already as earlier as that, the time of Jacob kingship was associated with the one who was to come.

Balaam inspired of his mixed motives spoke in similar terms: "There shall come a star out of Jacob and a sceptre shall arise out of Israel and shall smite the corners of Moab." *Numbers 24: 17*

That last clause depicts the coming King as defeating the enemies of God's people.

The same note is heard in Psalm 2, a Psalm which is definitely messianic in character, in verse two of that Psalm direct reference is made to the Lord and his anointed. In the picture drawn there they, the Lord and his anointed, are being fiercely opposed but then God is shown to be in complete

control in verse six His triumphant voice is heard making this declaration: Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. *Psalm 2:6*

The context leaves no question whatsoever about the identity of that King, it was from this very song that the Apostles quoted shortly after the day of Pentecost when attempts were made to prevent them from preaching the kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ. They perceived that they were experiencing a part of the conflict depicted in that Psalm.

In second Samuel 7:12 one can hear the prophet Nathan promising David that God would establish the throne of His Son for ever, and that surely looked beyond his immediate son Solomon to a greater than Solomon. *2 Samuel 7:12.*

Isaiah in chapter 9 foresees a Prince of peace and upon his shoulders shall rest the government of the kingdom and Isaiah's 32nd chapter opens with this prediction: Behold a King shall reign in righteousness. *Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 32:1.*

Jeremiah writes repeatedly about a coming King under the figure of King David. *Jeremiah 23.*

In Ezekiel 21 God pronounces judgment upon the unrighteous Kings of Judah. In verse 27 he is heard to say: I will overturn, overturn, overturn and it shall be no more. It, the right to rule, shall be no more until he come whose right it is and I will give it him. *Ezekiel 21:27*

I understand God to be saying I will overthrow repeatedly the leadership in Judah until the appearance of the true messianic King.

The prophet Micah is used of God to name the very birthplace of the one who was to be what? The future ruler in Israel. *Micah 5:2.*

Finally Zechariah speaks to Israel about the non-worldly character of the Messiah King: Behold thy King cometh unto thee. Already He is on the way and surely He will arrive in the fullness of time. He is just and having salvation, He is lowly and riding upon an ass. *Zechariah 9:9*

These prophetic glimpses were all deliberately provided clues designed to help the faithful Israelites to identify the Messiah when He did appear for there was obviously going to be about Him something different than other kings.

Well this brief survey has made it very apparent that the kingly role was definitely a part of the messianic expectation, there is wide agreement over this fact.

Now we must raise a further question: Has this expectation passed into realization? Is Jesus presently exercising His kingship role?

In more recent times because of the appearance of men like John Darby and C.I. Schofield there appears to be a growing cleavage of opinion on this point. The point of disagreement is the time of His predicted messianic reign.

When did that long predicted reign begin?

Did it begin at His first coming or does it await a second coming?

Some believe that God's original plan called for the establishment of a temporal earthly type Jewish flavored kingdom right in the wake of His first coming. In their opinion the non-realization of their hope or the non-realization of this hope was the large scale rejection of Jesus by the Jews.

Those of us who don't accept this view refer to it as the postponement theory because it teaches that the kingdom supposedly needed to be postponed. This concept is one of the underlying assumptions of the dispensational system of eschatology, however people that accept that theory have a hard time reconciling their belief with the fact that the Jews wanted to take Jesus by force and make Him that kind of King but He rejected their offer.

Others believe that the Jews were right in expecting an earthly Jewish flavored kingdom but that they were merely wrong in their timing. The correct time for that development supposedly is when Christ returns the second time or maybe the third time.

Still others believe that neither of those two expectations agree with the Bible when it is rightly interpreted, although I respect those roles are their views I personally identify with this latter view, I believe that according to

a rightly interpreted Bible the kingship of Jesus is a present reality and that the kingly aspect of His Messiah-ship began to find immediate fulfillment in the wake of His first coming.

This view is in agreement with first Peter 1:11 wherein it is stated that the Old Testament prophets testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. *1 Peter 1:11*

I do not believe in separating those two by millenniums of time.

Among the gospel writers John especially depicted the sufferings of Christ as for Him the road to glory and it turned out that way, exactly that way, for His exaltation followed almost immediately on the heels of His crucifixion.

I am moving now to a survey of other biblical data that appears to support this view, the present kingship of Jesus.

For a start you may turn to Luke chapter 1 and we will pick up at verse 31, this is the Angel Gabriel speaking to Mary: *Luke 1:31-33*:³¹ And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.³² He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:³³ And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

I believe God has already done for His Son what Gabriel said He would do, there is no indication whatever that the carrying out of this transaction was to be contingent upon His acceptance by the Jews, no indication of that whatsoever.

As already mentioned when Jesus was yet very young that those wise men came from the East saying: Where is he that is born King of the Jews? Jesus holds the distinction of being the only born King.

Nathaniel upon meeting Jesus for the first time was so impressed that he said: Rabbi, thou art the son of God, thou art the King of Israel. *John 1:49*

The gospel accounts also show us Jesus deliberately taking steps to fulfil Zechariah's prophecy, the one that we previously lifted out when Zechariah said: Behold thy King cometh. *Zechariah 9:9*

Jesus, on that occasion referred to His triumphal entry, accepted and approved the homage of the multitudes, He even justified their hosannas. On that occasion before Pilate the question was put to Him very pointedly: Art thou a King? His answer was: Thou sayest. That was equivalent to yes. *John 18:37*

Just prior to His ascension our Lord in addressing a group of His followers made this incomparable claim: All power, meaning really all authority, is given unto me in heaven and in earth. *Matthew 28:18*

My friends that is the language of a King. Furthermore if you have all there is of something there is no more to be had. Christ possesses presently all the power, all the authority He will ever have. Time is coming however when He will use that power in ways that He is presently not using it.

Since Jesus did not assume the typical kingly posture His non-spiritual Jewish contemporaries became His enemies and for the same reason His nearest friends, the disciples, were perplexed and at times were even critical of Him but a sudden change came upon them in the wake of the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

I am turning now to Acts chapter 2 so that we can listen to a portion of Peter's sermon on that memorable day. Acts chapter 2 beginning at verse 29: *Acts 2:29-31*: "Men *and* brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. ³⁰ Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; ³¹ He (David) seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ."

It sounds to me as though Peter is saying this is the fulfilment of that promise and this is what David himself said and there by divine inspiration wrote about in *Psalms 110*.

This chain of events He "seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ that is soul was not left in hell neither his flesh did see corruption. ³² This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. ³³ Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father

the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. ³⁴ For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, ³⁵ Until I make thy foes thy footstool. ³⁶ Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." *Acts 2:32-36.*

Here is an enlightened Peter realising that the man whom they had so recently crucified was actually David's Lord and that the shedding forth of the Holy Spirit was evidence that He had begun His messianic reign, God had done what Gabriel said He would do, He had given Jesus the throne of His father David. Evidently we are meant to see in the earthly throne of David a type of the heavenly throne to which our Lord returned in glory.

Peter now perceives that the enthronement of Jesus consisted of His being raised from the dead and placed at the right hand of the Majesty on high. No other man on his way to kingship began so low and rose so high so soon.

Let's turn now to Philippians chapter 2 and break-in at verse eight: *Philippians 2:8-9*: ⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. ⁹ Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:"

This is Paul's way of stating the same truth that Peter stated in Acts two. And although the term ascension does not appear here that event is definitely in view, the ascension as described in Acts one was the previewed to His exaltation, in fact those two terms ascension, exaltation are sometimes used almost synonymously but with this difference; the term ascension speaks of our Lord's visible departure, the term exaltation speaks of an act of God and seen by human eyes by which God gave the ascending Christ the place of power at His right hand.

In Ephesians 1 those two ideas are virtually fused together, Paul writes of God raising Christ from the dead and setting Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places far above all principality and power and might and every name that is named. The throne of the Jews would have been as

nothing in comparison with the one He was given by His Father. *Ephesians 1:20-21*

The next passage *Colossians 2:15* is a report of the victory that our Lord won over sin and the spirit world, the express purpose of our Lord's coming was to confront and destroy the one who had become the adversary of God and man, here in Colossians 2:15 we have the outcome of that conflict: "And having spoilt principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

Jesus gained the throne by defeating the devil and all his demonic supporters as is stated in *Ephesians 4:8* He came out on top: "He took captivity captive and gave gifts unto men." That last clause refers to a practice that was commonly observed in those days following a military victory, drawing from the spoils of victory the victorious general upon his return home would bestow gifts upon those whom he sought to honour, especially those who had been loyal to him.

Jesus upon His return home bestowed upon His followers on the day of Pentecost a greater gift than any other victor could bestow and to this day that gift is still being received by every newly made saint of God. All of which is suggestive of the fact that the ascension was the end of a fierce battle from which our Lord emerged victoriously.

It is that which moved the hymn writer to pen those inspiring words: "Look ye saints the sight is glorious; See a man of sorrows now from the fight returned victorious, Every knee to him shall bow." (129 Church Hymnal)

It would be proper I believe to think of Christ as doing for us what David did for all Israel when he defeated Goliath.

And now I invite you to turn back into the Old Testament to the book of Daniel chapter 7, I'm going to look at verses 13 and 14: *Daniel 7:13-14*: "¹³ I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. ¹⁴ And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed. "

Here the central figure is clearly this one that is like unto God, the Son of man. He is being established upon a throne and where is this throne located? Is this an earthly scene or a heavenly scene? What is the direction of the movement depicted here?

Is this Son of man descending to the earth or is he ascending up on high? Well obviously the movement is toward heaven for he is said to have come to the Ancient of days, meaning God the Father, the legions of heaven brought him into the presence of the Ancient of days and then verse 14 indicates that all people should serve this newly made King whether or not they chose but that they should.

There is in my opinion a striking correspondence between this and those just looked at New Testament passages. I wonder if the hymn writer might have been drawing inspiration from this Daniel passage when he penned those familiar lines: "Crown the Saviour, angels crown him, Rich the trophies Jesus brings, In the seat of power enthrone him, While the vault of heaven rings."

We are looking at reasons for believing that the long predicted reign of Christ began upon His return to heaven. Those reasons have still not been exhausted, turn with me now to Luke chapter 19 and let's begin reading at verse 12, this is a parable of our Lord he said: *Luke 19:12-15*: " ¹² He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. ¹³ And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. ¹⁴ But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this *man* to reign over us. ¹⁵ And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading."

And now yet verse 27: "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." *Luke 19:27*.

It was during His absence that these persons have rejected His kingship.

In Romans 15 Paul defends the right of Gentiles to hold membership in the Church. How does he do it? He quotes repeatedly from the Old Testa-

ment, one of those quotes appears in verse 12 (*Romans 15:12*) and is the prediction that Christ would rise to reign over the Gentiles. There you have that same sequence, rise to reign. In perfect agreement with all this the Apostle John in *Revelation 1:5* identifies Christ as being already Prince of the kings of the earth, that means their ruler. Likewise in perfect agreement with all this Peter in his first epistle declares that Christ is gone to heaven and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him. *1 Peter 3:22*

In first Corinthians 15 it is further stated that He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet again implying that He is presently reigning. If then Christ is reigning now it follows that there must now be a kingdom over which He is reigning and indeed there is. In a very significant Old Testament passage we hear these words: In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed and the kingdom shall not be left to other people but it shall break into pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand forever. *Daniel 2:44*

The gospel of the kingdom you and I ought to be declaring is the good news that through the agency of Jesus Christ God has established that kingdom. Immediately after His temptation Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God saying: The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, repenting ye and believe the gospel. *Mark 1:15*

Why did He say that? Because that is the condition upon which entrance into the kingdom is granted. The Ministry of Jesus brought the kingdom of God into the midst of the people of Galilee, Judaea and surrounding countries, the sick were healed, the unclean were cleansed, broken lives were mended and devils were cast out, Jesus indicated that all this and more was indicative of the fact that Satan's house was being broken into, his kingdom was being assailed, deliverance is being offered to the captives of Satan, men and women were being translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear son. *Colossians 1:13*

The carnally minded, nationalistic minded Jewish contemporaries of Jesus were totally blind to what God was doing right before their eyes, in an attempt to open their eyes Jesus on one occasion said that the publicans

and harlots go into the kingdom before you. Then already it was happening, the kingdom was being entered then already. Because His kingdom was so misunderstood Jesus found it necessary to tell Pilate: My kingdom is not of this world. *John 18:36*

It is still necessary to clarify the nature of Christ's kingdom because at so many points it is not like the kingdoms of this world, it is not nationalistic, it is not naturalistic, it is not materialistic, it is not militaristic and neither is it futuristic only. What then is it? It is Christ reigning now in the hearts of His people, it is that wonderful realm into which sinners are being translated by the grace and power of God.

In this connection I would like to call to your attention an interesting shift that appears in the New Testament. In the gospel accounts you repeatedly come upon this expression, the kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of God, but after you get out of the gospels and into the epistles that expression is very rare, however for the word church the pattern is the reverse of that, in all four gospel accounts the word church appears only twice but then in the remainder of the New Testament it appears more than 100 times. Did you ever wonder about that? What might account for that reversal of an emphasis?

By way of an answer I offer these two observations:

First in the gospels Jesus for the most part was speaking to Jewish people, people who were familiar with Old Testament concepts and terminology, they understood kingdom language. In contrast to that the epistles were addressed to churches that were largely made up of Gentile people who were not, who did not have that Jewish background.

Secondly I believe that change in terminology is indicative of the fact that the kingdom of God which Jesus came announcing and preaching was receiving its New Testament name, that corresponds with what Jesus did for Peter, He gave Peter another name, a new name, it corresponds with what happened at Antioch, the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch, some names are interchangeable. Entrance into the Church is equivalent to entrance into the kingdom. *Acts 11:26*

Some day maybe very soon our King is going to return from that far country and then His spiritual kingdom will take on an externally glorious form, indescribably glorious. A man about whom you all know put on record this testimony: "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom." *2 Timothy 4:18*

To have that kind of assurance one needs to enter the kingdom here and now. Have you my friend done that? Have you become by the grace of God a citizen of the kingdom of God, the kingdom that Christ established? If you have not the door into that kingdom is before you now waiting to be entered. Jesus the Prophet, Jesus the Priest, Jesus the King is also the door: By Me if any man entry in he shall be saved.

Surely no one should question the credibility of that claim for He is that one like unto whom there is none other, He is the great Prophet who reveals God, the great Priest who redeems man, and the great King that rules a kingdom the like of which there is none other.

Why should any mortal being be ashamed to identify with one so great, Jesus, and so shall it ever be; A mortal man ashamed of thee, ashamed of Jesus, Sooner far less evening blush to own a star, He sheds the beams of light divine for this benighted soul of mine.

Even when you are still in the manger those wise men fell down and worshiped Him and as a part of their worship they gave Him the very best they had, should we not do likewise? And what is the best we have? Would the whole realm of nature be mine, that where a present far too small; Love so amazing, so divine demands my soul, my life my all.

Are you ready my friends to present to Jesus that gift, that gift of yourself?

Let's pray.

The Kingdom of God Has Come

by Menno Knight – used by permission.

Our thoughts are taken from the passage in **Luke 17:20-25** ²⁰ And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: ²¹ Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. ²² And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see *it*. ²³ And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after *them*, nor follow *them*. ²⁴ For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one *part* under heaven, shineth unto the other *part* under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. ²⁵ But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

For 55 years I thought that the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven—the names mean one and the same—was something I would enter after death. But in preparation for teaching in Haiti, the Holy Spirit has opened the Scriptures and taught me more perfectly that the Kingdom of God came to earth at Pentecost.

I do not claim that the understanding that God set up His kingdom on the earth at Pentecost is anything new. But to those who understand that the kingdom of God is a present reality it changes the way we interpret the Scriptures and how we live on the earth.

Let us look at Luke 17:20-25 in more detail and there find the clear teaching of Jesus: We are living in the Kingdom of God on earth, NOW.

An Earthly Kingdom (Luke 17:20a)

He was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come.

“The kingdom of God” and “the kingdom of heaven” can be used interchangeably. The Gospel writers used these two terms to designate exactly the same kingdom (Matthew 13:24; Mark 4:30; Luke 13:18).

In Luke 17:20 the Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God would begin. Without a doubt the Pharisees believed in an earthly Messianic kingdom. After all, they thought they would certainly enjoy a leading place

in a coming kingdom that would restore the glory of David's kingdom to an Israel freed from Roman rule. The tricky part of the question was "when" the kingdom of God on earth would begin.

In a moment we shall see how Jesus answered the question of when His kingdom would come to earth in His usual figurative language so that the Pharisees would "hear but not understand" (Matthew 13:13). But first let us look at others who also believed in a coming earthly kingdom.

At the time when Jesus came, nearly the whole Jewish world expected that the kingdom of God would be set up on the earth. Among the Jews the belief in the advent of a coming Messiah and an earthly kingdom was so strong that after the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000, the people wanted to "come and take him by force" and make Jesus an earthly king (John 6:15). John the Baptist expected Jesus to set up His kingdom on the earth. "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 3:2), he thundered. His whole message rested on the premise that the people must prepare to be a part of the kingdom Jesus would soon set up on the earth. When Jesus did not set up his glorious Messianic kingdom in the way John had expected, John seemed disappointed and sent disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you the one that should come or should we look for someone else?"

Jesus' chosen disciples believed Jesus would set up an earthly kingdom, and it manifested itself no more clearly than when the mother of the sons of Zebedee crassly asked if her sons could sit at Jesus' side when He came into His kingdom (Matthew 20:20).

Also, the ever present rivalry by the disciples over who should be the greatest when Jesus came into his kingdom (Mark 9:34) demonstrated their belief in a kingdom that would soon appear on the earth.

The belief in an earthly kingdom persisted through the resurrection to the ascension when the disciples asked, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Not a Physical Kingdom (Luke 17:20b-21a)

The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, "Look here it is!" or "There it is!"

Jesus did not deny that the kingdom of God was going to come to earth. But He did explain to the Pharisees in parabolic language that the kingdom of God was not going to be a physical kingdom.

In essence, Jesus told the Pharisees that they should not look for signs in natural disasters—drought, floods, earthquakes, or violent winds to herald the advent of the kingdom.

His figurative language indicated that the Pharisees should not look for physical signs—the flash of swords, the rumble of chariot wheels, the rise or fall of cities and nations, crowns, robes, and palaces—as heralds of His coming kingdom.

Neither should the Pharisees heed prophets foretelling the coming of the king or the kingdom on a certain day or season. Jesus taught the Pharisees that no prophet could possibly predict the advent of his kingdom based on physical signs because the kingdom itself was invisible.

A Spiritual Kingdom (Luke 17:21b)

Behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

Jesus had just told the Pharisees that they would not be able to see physical things as being part of God’s kingdom. Now He plainly tells them that the invisible kingdom of God lay within the heart (“is within you” or “in your midst” or “within your grasp”). His kingdom was to be a spiritual kingdom.

To enter this kingdom of the heart required an inner cleansing and a change of life. From the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry to the very end he taught about the kingdom of God on earth—how to enter it and how to live in it—here and now.

Like John the Baptist, Jesus preached, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17). And Matthew 4:23 says, “And Jesus was going about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom.”

There can be no doubt that Jesus meant that the advent of the kingdom of God was soon to appear on the earth and that his hearers should prepare immediately to enter this spiritual kingdom.

Jesus told his hearers in Matthew 5:20, “Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Jesus was indignant when his disciples tried to keep the children away from him. In Mark 10-15 he said, “Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all.”

Luke 9:2 says that Jesus sent His 12 disciples out “to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing.” Wouldn’t it have seemed strange for Jesus to send His disciples out with authority and power over demons and sickness to authenticate their message, and then have them announce, You will enter the kingdom of heaven when you die?

No, Jesus wanted all to understand that the coming kingdom of God would soon come to earth and that they should prepare to enter it very soon.

Jesus also nurtured the idea of an earthly spiritual kingdom when He taught His disciples to pray, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10).

A Real Kingdom (Luke 17:22-24)

The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. Men will tell you, “There he is!” or “Here he is!” Do not go running off after them. For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other.

Up to this point in the teaching, Jesus had told those who heard Him about the nature of His coming kingdom. But He never answered the Pharisees as to when the kingdom would appear. Now He took His disciples aside and told them when His kingdom would come because He wanted them “to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 13:11).

But before Jesus told His disciples when the kingdom of heaven would come to earth, He warned His followers of doubts and uncertainties that lay ahead for them and then assured them that they would recognize the kingdom when it came. First Jesus seems to tell His disciples that they will remember the “good old days” when great multitudes ate His bread and drank His wine and listened to His teaching for days, when demons were subject to them (Luke 10:17), and when even the wind and waves obeyed Him. They would remember those times when He was with them and the kingdom of God seemed so imminent, so powerful, so glorious, and so real.

Yet Jesus knew that the time would come when the crowds would lose interest in His Messianic claims to the kingdom, and He would even have to ask His disciples, “Will ye also go away?” (John 6:67). Then Jesus tells His disciples that in those tough times, they should never follow false

Messiahs who announce some other kingdom than the kingdom of God He taught them about.

So in the midst of such uncertainty it is easy to anticipate the question the disciples must have had on their minds, How will we know when the real kingdom comes? In the next sentence Jesus answers that question: My day, when I set up the kingdom of God on earth, will be as unmistakable as sizzling lightning. My power and glory when I bring in the new kingdom will be real.

Jesus seems to assure the disciples, “You will know. You can’t miss it.”

The use of lightning to describe the advent of the kingdom of God on earth is no more dramatic than the quote Peter, by Holy Spirit interpretation, used at Pentecost. “This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel . . . ‘I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come’.”

Yes, to the disciples at Pentecost it was as brilliant as lightning that the real kingdom of God had come to earth.

When Would the Kingdom Come? (Luke 17:25)

But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. Jesus plainly tells his disciples that the glorious advent of the kingdom of God on earth would not take place before his suffering and death. “This generation” would see the crucifixion take place. By “this generation” it is certain that Jesus meant those people living at that time. The time of his suffering and death proves it.

Likewise, it is certainly consistent with that meaning to understand that when Jesus used “this generation” to refer to the coming of his kingdom, He meant the people listening to his words. All Jesus’ teaching showed that the kingdom would come soon after the crucifixion and that He expected his disciples to enter it before they died.

In Luke 21:29-32 Jesus taught that the many signs and things he foretold would be seen by those who heard him. He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. “Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. “I tell you

the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.”

Bible students come up with many varied explanations for the figurative language Jesus used in Luke 17 and Luke 21 and Matthew 24. Most of the interpretations are highly speculative and then falsely interpret “this generation” to mean some other time than the obvious and plain meaning Jesus used.

Whatever the meaning of the various passages, we should understand that when Jesus said, “in this generation,” the events referred to were fulfilled in some way during the lifetime of some of those who heard Jesus speaking. When Jesus interprets a parable or gives the meaning of a symbol, it should hold sway over all other interpretations.

Also, it is highly inconsistent to use a disjointed verse by verse interpretation and say that one verse applies to one age and the next verse applies to a different time simply because we do not understand the symbolic language used in the text. It is much better to hold consistently to the plain and obvious meaning of what we do understand and then allow a lot of leeway in the interpretation of things not so clearly explained.

A heathen neighbour, who knew some about figs and little about the scripture, unknowingly taught me the obvious meaning of the parable of the fig tree. While looking at my budding fig tree he said, “The danger of frost is over. Fig trees come out late in the spring and you very seldom see them freeze back.” This is exactly the way Jesus interpreted it. Summer is near. The kingdom of God is near.

Jesus goes on to make his meaning still more emphatic. He says, “This generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.” Jesus wanted his hearers to know that the kingdom of God would come to them in their lifetime.

In Luke 9:27 and Matthew 16:28 Jesus heightened the expectation of his hearers by saying, “I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.” Thus the time when the kingdom of God would come to earth was firmly fixed after Jesus’ crucifixion but before all of his hearers had died.

And so fifty days after the crucifixion the followers of Jesus saw “the Son of Man coming in his kingdom” as he had promised.

God’s timing for the inauguration of his kingdom was as significant as the rending of the temple veil at the crucifixion. Each year the Jewish feast

of the Passover commemorated the Exodus from Egypt by the sacrifice of a lamb.

Fifty days after the Passover the Jews celebrated the giving of the law at Sinai by a great festival of Pentecost, meaning, “fifty days.” Thus exactly fifty days after the sacrifice of the Lamb of God that took away the sin of the world (John 1:29),

God fulfilled the Mosaic law and the Old Covenant with the Jews, and made a New Covenant with the People of God (Hebrews 8:13).

The kingdom of God had come to earth.

The establishment of God’s kingdom transformed the believers.

Gone was the timidity, the uncertainty, and the fear that had characterized the apostles and the believers. With boldness they preached that the kingdom of God had come (Acts 8:4, 12; 19:8).

Baptism took on a new significance. Instead of being just a baptism of repentance and forgiveness, it became a sign of commitment to follow Jesus Christ and the initiation rite into the kingdom of God on earth (Acts 2:38-42, 19:1-7).

After Pentecost, baptism marked the literal entrance into the kingdom of God under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and the exit from the world under the dominion of Satan. Now the presence and power of the Holy Spirit resided in the believer and the joy of living with the saints and doing the will of God on earth had become real.

So the kingdom of God is not only an ethereal celestial abode where we will ultimately live in the eternal presence of the glorified Lord. It is the present reality of living in the kingdom of God on earth.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy! -- **1 Peter 2:9-10**

In summary let us read Luke 17:20-25 again and remember the text verse Luke 17:21 that tells us that “THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU”

Luke 17:20-25 ²⁰ And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: ²¹ Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. ²² And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see *it*. ²³ And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after *them*, nor follow *them*. ²⁴ For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one *part* under heaven, shineth unto the other *part* under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. ²⁵ But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

The Jews expected a Kingdom of God on earth (Luke 17:20).

-- James & John expected an earthly kingdom (Matthew 20:21).

-- Disciples expected a Kingdom of God on earth (Acts 1:6).

-- Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10).

The Kingdom would not be with crowns, robes, & palaces (Luke 17:21).

-- Disciples expected a Kingdom of God on earth (Acts 1:6).

The Kingdom of God would be invisible (Luke 17:23).

-- Many false prophets will arise

-- Will be in the hearts of men

-- As a little child (Mark 10:14-15).

The Kingdom of God will be easy to recognize (Luke 17:24).

-- John Baptist expected Kingdom of God on earth (Matthew 3:2).

-- Jesus said, Kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 4:17).

-- Different living, (Matthew 5,6 and7).

The Kingdom would come after Jesus suffering and death (Luke 17:25).

-- I pray not that you will take them ... (John 17:15-16).

-- "This gen." (Matthew 23:36; 24:34; Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32).

-- Philip preached the kingdom in Samaria (Acts 8:12).

-- Paul preached 3 mos. concerning Kingdom (Acts 19:8).

-- A chosen generation (1 Peter 2:9-10).

THE KINGDOM OF GOD HAS COME TO EARTH
AND
WE ARE LIVING IN IT!

Christ's Coming Foretold in Prophecy

Hebrews 1:1-2: God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, but in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.

God is a God of order. His works are planned, published, and made manifest to the world and especially to His people.

From the Creation through the Old Testament years God communicated with man. This knowledge of a righteous, holy God often brought man to realize his own sinfulness. The prophets and the common people anticipated Christ's coming with hope and expectancy and here is the foretelling of His coming.

Genesis 49:10 The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

Deuteronomy 18:15 The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Isaiah 9:2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hash the light shined.

Isaiah 9:6-7 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace, 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 henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Isaiah 11:10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

Isaiah 53:2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

Isaiah 59:16 And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there

was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.

Jeremiah 23:5 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

Daniel 7:13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

Micah 5:2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Zechariah 6:12 And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord:

Malachi 3:1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

The Bible has many prophecies within its covers. We have the privilege of looking back through history and seeing the many prophecies that have been fulfilled precisely as they were foretold. Through these and many other happenings God wants man to realize his sinfulness and God's judgment upon sin. Amid these occurrences, God was sending forth a ray of hope. A Redeemer, a better time—a time of peace was coming.

Is our thankfulness for His coming as real as the hope of the faithful ones before Christ's arrival? Christ was God's gift to man. Before we can fully appreciate a gift, we must first feel a need of it. We are living in a time of great darkness, and we need the Great Light just as much as they did two thousand years ago. We know that through the ages many chose to ignore first the prophecies and then the coming of Christ. Likewise, today, Christ's coming avails us nothing if we choose to ignore it.

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