

# ESCHATOLOGY: DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS

## PART 13

### PREMILLENNIALISM AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD, PART 2

In reacting to the doctrine that claims the Kingdom is now present either in full as an amillennialist claims or partially as the “already, not yet” postmillennialists and others claim, I said there is no spiritual kingdom identified in the Bible that replaces, either in full or in part, the literal Messianic, Millennial Kingdom. That's not to say there are no spiritual aspects to biblical truth; that would be an absurd statement. We are placed into the body of Christ by virtue of a spiritual rebirth, but we are not placed into a literal Millennial Kingdom the moment we believe. We will be in the Kingdom, but that is a future event. There is a Kingdom of God that is universal in scope that encompasses eternity past and eternity future, but the Millennial Kingdom is only one facet of God's eternal Kingdom program. Unless specified otherwise, when I refer to the Kingdom of God in this Eschatology series, I am referring to the literal Messianic, Millennial Kingdom Christ will establish for 1,000 years at His Second Advent.

A question was asked about God's rule over the heavenly sphere we would refer to as the third heaven. The question was, “Isn't that a spiritual kingdom?” In a sense yes, but it should primarily be considered a literal Kingdom. God is a literal King ruling from a literal throne adjacent to or from a literal sanctuary and/or throne room. He rules over a literal geographical territory that includes His created universe and whatever may be beyond that of which we have no knowledge. He also has a stable of subjects over which He exercises rule that consists of human beings and angels. Obviously, there are many spiritual aspects to His presence in heaven. He is a spiritual being and angels are spiritual beings. That doesn't mean that His rule in and over the third heaven is a spiritual Kingdom. This is a literal Kingdom in the sense we are talking about a Kingdom in Eschatology. Do not press what I am saying beyond this: there is no spiritual kingdom identified in the Bible that specifically replaces the literal, Messianic, Millennial Kingdom that commences at the Second Coming of Christ, the seed of David.

Only three times in the Bible are people, in the sense of Israel as a nation or believers in the body of Christ, referred to as being in a kingdom as priests to God (other verses refer to believers as priests but not as a kingdom of priests [Is. 61:6; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 20:6]). This still is not a reference to any sort of spiritualized Kingdom; it is a reference to an appointment of the people of God to service for God.

Exodus 19:5–6 <sup>5</sup>Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; <sup>6</sup>and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.”

This Scripture is spoken to Israel as a nation. It is conditional. If the people are faithful, then they will be a kingdom of priests. Holiness refers to being set apart for service and Israel was set apart for service to God. Priests represent the people before God. Israel was to be a nation that played a mediatorial role between God and the other nations of the world [Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary*, p. 304]; therefore, they were to be a kingdom of priests. They failed to perform this assignment from God. We will examine the mediatorial nature of the theocratic Kingdom as it existed when God ruled over the nation of Israel.

Revelation 1:4–6 <sup>4</sup>John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, <sup>5</sup>and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood— <sup>6</sup>and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 5:10 <sup>10</sup>“You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”

This is not referring to a spiritual kingdom composed of believers. “Whether we are to be ‘kings and priests’ or ‘a kingdom [of] priests,’ it is clear that believers will co-rule with Christ during His coming earthly reign (Rev. 20:4-6). This future reign will not come to pass until after *Antichrist* has his time on the world stage and a judgment is made in favor of the saints (Dan. 7:18, 25-27).” [Tony Garland, *A Testimony of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, p. 1:175]. These Scriptures are referring not to a spiritual kingdom but to our appointment to service during the literal Millennial Kingdom and this service will be as priests to God in whatever form God has determined this will take.

Fruchtenbaum does recognize a spiritual kingdom [Arnold G. Fruchtenaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, p. 663] that he believes consists of all believers of all time. If you want to think of it that way, that's up to you, but the Scriptures he cites all can easily be considered to be referring to the Millennial Kingdom and Christ's rule involving it. No matter the interpretation you take on this issue, it is not referring to some sort of spiritual kingdom that replaces the Millennial Kingdom. That's the major point I'm making here. I'm refuting amillennial theologians who claim the Kingdom is only spiritual and was never intended to be a literal Kingdom on earth.

Amillennialists claim that “Jesus made no offer of a national kingdom to Israel. What we do find in the Gospel accounts was Jesus' proclamation that a spiritual and nonnationalistic kingdom had drawn near because he had come. Though Israel as a whole did not embrace Jesus and his messianic mission, many Jews did respond to him in faith. The kingdom that he brought was a reality, nonetheless. In fact, the present reality of the kingdom is a major theme throughout the New Testament.” [Kim

Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times*, p. 107]. Is it true that Jesus made no offer of a national kingdom to Israel during His First Advent? The testimony of the New Testament clearly reveals that He did, in fact, make such an offer.

"The kingdom announced by John and by Jesus was primarily and essentially a moral and spiritual kingdom." [Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy & the Church*, p. 70]. Allis goes on to write that preparation for the Kingdom is by "repentance," but his definition of repentance means to be sorry for your sins and promise not to sin in the future. Repentance, however, is a change of mind. The Baptizer and Christ Jesus were calling on the people of Israel to change their mind about the rebellious religious system their leaders established and to return to the true intent of the Law. He misunderstands the Sermon on the Mount for the same reason. He wrote, "To prove his Messiahship Jesus did not appeal to the kingdom prophecies, but rather to His works of mercy and healing." This statement is contradicted by the Word of God. The works Jesus did were the works of the King who was to come. The Old Testament said the King would be identified by His works. He was authenticating Himself, through the miracles, as the Jewish Messiah, the Son of Man, the Son of God, who was to assume the throne of the Kingdom. Allis makes much of the fact that although Jesus accepted the title, Son of David (see Mt. 21:14-15 where He did, in fact, accept that title), He never used it Himself. That may be true, but He called Himself the Son of Man 84 times in the Gospels and the Jews knew that was a claim to be their Messianic King.

The assertions Allis and Riddlebarger make about a spiritual Kingdom are breathtaking in their defiance of the Scriptures. Let's examine the gospels and determine whether or not Jesus did refer to the Old Testament prophecies about the King and His Kingdom in order to identify Himself as their King at His First Advent. Did He, in fact, make an offer of a national Messianic Kingdom to Israel?

Jesus talked about a literal Kingdom as predicted in the Old Testament many times in many ways.

One way He referred to the Kingdom prophecies was by referring to the herald who was to proclaim the coming of the King.

Malachi 3:1 <sup>1</sup>"Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts.

Matthew 11:10 <sup>10</sup>"This is the one about whom it is written, 'BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.'

Obviously, Jesus was referring to an Old Testament prophecy relating to the announcement of the coming Messiah. Jesus is making the claim that He is the Messiah for whom the Jewish people were anticipating.

Allis writes that Jesus let his works of mercy and healing prove He was the Messiah. That's true, but the Jews thought of the Messiah as the King who is to come. Separating Messiah from King in the sense of the Kingdom is not possible. The Bible informs us that these very acts were intended to authenticate the King and His message, which was "the Kingdom of God is at hand." To say the works had nothing to do with the proclamation of the Kingdom is simply untrue. The Jews knew the Messiah would come and perform miracles of healing and restoration in order to authenticate Himself to them as their King. Jesus confirmed it when John questioned His identity.

Isaiah 35:5-6 <sup>5</sup>Then the eyes of the blind will be opened And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. <sup>6</sup>Then the lame will leap like a deer, And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy. For waters will break forth in the wilderness And streams in the Arabah.

Matthew 11:2-5 <sup>2</sup>Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples <sup>3</sup>and said to Him, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?" <sup>4</sup>Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup>the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.

In His first public message, Jesus read from a Messianic Kingdom prophecy in the synagogue in Nazareth. That prophecy was from Isaiah 61 and it is clearly a proclamation of His identity as the Messiah.

Isaiah 61:1-2 <sup>1</sup>The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners; <sup>2</sup>To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD...

Luke 4:17-21 <sup>17</sup>And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, <sup>18</sup>"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, <sup>19</sup>TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD." <sup>20</sup>And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. <sup>21</sup>And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Jesus was crucified for acknowledging that He was the Messiah, the Son of God. He also proclaimed His return will be with power and authority. These are the attributes of the King. Under the inquisition of Pilate, Jesus admitted that He was the King of the Jews. While Pilate may not have understood the significance of what it meant to claim to be the King of the Jews, the Jews knew what it meant. When Jesus was asked if He

was the Christ, this is equivalent to asking Him in Hebrew if He is the Messiah. The Jews knew their Messiah was their King.

Daniel 7:13–14 <sup>13</sup>“I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. <sup>14</sup>“And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

Matthew 26:63–65 <sup>63</sup>But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, “I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.” <sup>64</sup>Jesus said to him, “You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.” <sup>65</sup>Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy;

Matthew 27:11 <sup>11</sup>Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor questioned Him, saying, “Are You the King of the Jews?” And Jesus said to him, “It is as you say.”

On the road to Emmaus, the Lord certainly relied on the Old Testament Messianic prophecies to explain His identity to the two disciples. One suspects that He explained the Messianic Kingdom to them as well because they thought Jesus was the Messiah who came to redeem the nation. The Jews were expecting a literal redemption of their nation. There is nothing in these Scriptures to suggest Jesus was telling them the Kingdom they expected was only spiritual in nature.

Luke 24:21 <sup>21</sup>“But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. ...

Luke 24:25–27 <sup>25</sup>And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup>“Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” <sup>27</sup>Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

“Along with many others these two men thought that Jesus was the One who was going to redeem Israel, that is, be the Messiah and bring in the kingdom.” [John A. Martin, “Luke” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, p. 264]. This is not about a spiritual kingdom replacing the literal Messianic Kingdom and the Lord used the Old Testament to prove it.

The Triumphal Entry was the entry of the King and many of the people knew it. Others knew it and rejected it by simply referring to Him as a prophet from Nazareth (Mt. 21:11). They were calling on Him to save them and they acknowledged Him to be the Son of David. Luke records that they called Him the King. This Scripture clearly records the

Lord's presentation of Himself to the nation of Israel as their Messiah. The words and actions of the Lord were an exact fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy concerning the Messianic Kingdom. Matthew used two Old Testament Messianic prophecies to confirm the King was presenting Himself to the nation. This is not the offer of a spiritual kingdom in the form of the Christian church; this is an offer of the Jewish Messianic Kingdom to Israel.

Matthew 21:1–9 <sup>1</sup>When they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup>saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me. <sup>3</sup>"If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them." <sup>4</sup>This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: <sup>5</sup>"SAY TO THE DAUGHTER OF ZION, 'BEHOLD YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU, GENTLE [πραύς], AND MOUNTED ON A DONKEY, EVEN ON A COLT, THE FOAL OF A BEAST OF BURDEN.' " <sup>6</sup>The disciples went and did just as Jesus had instructed them, <sup>7</sup>and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid their coats on them; and He sat on the coats. <sup>8</sup>Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road. <sup>9</sup>The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David; BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Hosanna in the highest!"

Luke 19:37–38 <sup>37</sup>As soon as He was approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen, <sup>38</sup>shouting: "BLESSED IS THE KING WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

"The careful preparation which the Lord makes indicates His sovereignty. That which is about to transpire is no accident. Detailed and deliberate instructions are given to the disciples. In this situation the King was not placed in the midst of a popular clamor, but He intentionally was causing it. What is significant is the fact that this action was so contrary to His preceding ministry. After His rejection was evident, the King had carefully withdrawn from the cities and avoided the religious leaders, but now He intentionally and openly parades into Jerusalem in the midst of the hierarchy. Even as He sends His disciples for the animals He manifests great authority. The King tells them to explain to the one who would question them, 'The Lord has need of them.' ... this is the only place in Matthew's Gospel where the expression 'the Lord' is used of Christ, and here He applies it to Himself." [Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew*, p. 237].

Matthew combines two Old Testament prophecies to prove that the Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of the King to Zion were fulfilled in Jesus when He offered Himself to Israel as the King.

Isaiah 62:11 <sup>11</sup>Behold, the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the earth, Say to the daughter of Zion, "Lo, your salvation comes; Behold His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him."

Zechariah 9:9 <sup>9</sup>Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble [עָנִי], and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Matthew combined these two Old Testament prophecies to show that Christ Jesus was offering Himself to Israel as their King. Matthew is showing us that the Lord did these things precisely as He did in order to fulfill Old Testament Messianic Kingdom prophecy. He couldn't use the passages in total because the nation as a whole failed to recognize their King. To overcome that ignorance, the King had to overtly announce Himself in this very visible manner which was in accordance with prophecy. Matthew omitted the words about bringing salvation to Israel. Since Israel rejected their King, national salvation will have to wait until He returns.

"The words 'Behold your King' are extremely important. Matthew could hardly make the presentation of the royalty of Jesus more explicit. To Israel Matthew writes, 'Behold, your King!' ... Now Jerusalem is to see its King, but the city perplexed as to His identity fails to own Him as its Messiah." [Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew*, pp. 238-239].

It is important to note the description of the Lord's entry as "humble" which is in contrast to Daniel's night vision in which one like a Son of Man was coming with the clouds of heaven (Dan. 7:13). Jesus also said He would come on the clouds of heaven in Matthew 24:30 and 26:64. Coming on the clouds is implied in Revelation 19:11 when the heavens open and He is seen to return to earth as the conquering King riding a white horse.

The Hebrew word translated "humble," עָנִי, means humble or gentle. It pertains to being unpretentious and straightforward suggesting a lack of arrogance and hubris. This Hebrew word is also used to pertain to being in a lowly, needy state as a class of persons of low status in a society, usually of persons in fiscal poverty. Matthew used the Greek word πραύς which means gentle, humble, and meek to translate it. That's the same Greek word used in the Septuagint to translate עָנִי in Zechariah 9:9.

According to Toussaint, the concept of being humble is further highlighted by the fact that He rode into the city on a donkey. It is true that up until Solomon's time, donkeys were a royal "ride," so to speak but Toussaint alleges that since the time of Solomon no king rode a donkey. That may be true but there isn't a lot of support for that position that I could find. Most expositors believe that by this time in history, kings would arrive at their destination riding a horse which symbolized their role as conquerors. The donkey is thought to be a symbol of peace. [Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., "Matthew" in *The Bible*

*Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, p. 67]. “Rulers rode donkeys in Israel during times of peace. This was a sign of their humble service of the people. Warriors rode horses. Jesus was preparing to declare His messiahship by fulfilling this messianic prophecy. By coming in peace, He was extending grace rather than judgment to the city. He was coming as a servant now. He would return as a conquering King riding on a war horse later.” [Thomas L. Constable, *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible: Volume VI: Matthew-Mark*, 6: 189].

Why the discrepancy between Jesus riding on donkey and entering Jerusalem in a very humble way and His later appearance as a conquering King riding a white horse and coming on the clouds? The explanation is quite simple; each situation describes two different advents. One portrays the Suffering Servant and one portrays the Conquering King.

Jesus was presenting Himself to the people of Israel as the King and many of them knew it. Throwing garments and palm branches on the ground in the path of an entering King was, in a way, to create a carpet upon which they could ride into their city. This was a common way people paid homage to a King. Waving palm branches was a sign of welcome.

What the people were saying is also significant. “Hosanna” comes from Psalm 118:25. This is a Messianic Kingdom Psalm that is part of the Hallel, that is, the praise Psalms sung going up to Jerusalem for the Feasts and during the ceremonies celebrating the Feasts.

Psalm 118:25–26 <sup>25</sup>O LORD, do save [יְשַׁע], we beseech You; O LORD, we beseech You, do send prosperity! <sup>26</sup>Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD; We have blessed you from the house of the LORD.

The word “save,” is יְשַׁע (Septuagint: σῶζω) but the form of the word in Psalm 118:25 is הוֹשִׁיעָה from which “Hosanna” [ὡσαννά] is derived. Hosanna means “save we pray thee” but it became a word of common acclimation. However, it cannot be completely divorced from its original meaning in this Messianic Kingdom Psalm. This is particularly important when they said “Hosanna to the Son of David” and attached the Messianic significance of the Son of David to this cry as Jesus rode into the city.

It is also significant that they included “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” “He who comes” was a Messianic title. They were proclaiming the blessings that would flow from the Messiah when He comes. When we understand this, we can understand the utmost significance of the Lord's words that He would not return until they asked Him to return by saying, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” In other words, He wouldn't return until they recognized Him as their Messianic King.

Matthew 23:37–39 <sup>37</sup>“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen

gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. <sup>38</sup>“Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! <sup>39</sup>“For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’”

“The significance of the triumphal entry is tremendous in this Gospel. To Matthew it is the final and official presentation of Jesus to Israel as its Messiah. This is evident for several reasons. The first is the manner in which Christ acts throughout this whole course of events. He deliberately makes very careful preparation to fulfill every detail of the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. ... A second indication of the fact that Jesus presented Himself to Israel is seen in that the people recognized it as such. All of Jerusalem and the teeming multitudes in that city for the celebration of the feast noticed His Messianic entrance. ... A third proof that the Lord presented Himself as the King of Israel is seen in the parables which the Messiah gives following this event. The parable of the husbandmen (Matthew 21:33-43) clearly teaches that the Messiah has come to Israel but has been rejected. The close connection of the parable with the entrance into Jerusalem indicates that the interpretation of the parable is bound up with that event. A fourth indication of the presentation of the King to Israel is the time in which it occurred. Sir Robert Anderson has shown that the entry of Christ into Jerusalem occurred on the very day that the sixty-ninth week of Daniel’s prophecy had run out. This is the exact time in which the Messiah was to come (Daniel 9:25).” [Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew*, pp. 241-242].

The parable of the landowner and his vineyard in Matthew 21:33-43 is very similar to the parable of the vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-7 and the chief priests and the Pharisees knew He was speaking of them (Mt. 21:45). Jesus referred to the cornerstone that was rejected in Matthew 21:42 which is a prophetic reference in Psalm 118:22.

The very fact of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem at the exact end of sixty-nine weeks is a fulfillment of the Messianic element of the seventy weeks in Daniel 9:24-27.

The end result of all this is no one can ever deny, as Riddlebarger and Allis wrote, that the Lord used the Old Testament prophecies about both the King and the Kingdom to authenticate Himself and then use that denial to say the Kingdom is only spiritual. Anyone who does that is presenting a theological reinterpretation and a denial of the truth of Scripture. It is clear that Jesus identified Himself as the Messianic King and that He offered the Jewish people the Messianic Kingdom and He used the Old Testament prophetic Scriptures to do it.

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