

ESCHATOLOGY: DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS

PART 21

KINGDOM PROPHECY, PART 2

The Lord pronounced many prophecies during His First Advent some of which have been fulfilled, some which have been partially fulfilled, and many of which await future fulfillment. Since the words Jesus spoke were words from the Father, that fact alone qualifies Him to be a prophet. His ministry was a prophetic ministry in the sense of speaking the words God wanted spoken to the people, but he also foretold the future both in the immediate sense and in the sense of fulfillment in the distant future.

All the prophecies concerning His death and resurrection were fulfilled as stated.

Matthew 16:21 ²¹From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.

Matthew 12:39–40 ³⁹But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; ⁴⁰for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Matthew 21:43 is an example of a Scripture that was partially fulfilled during the Lord's First Advent and will be completely fulfilled later, in this case, at His Second Coming.

Jesus' prophecy that the Kingdom would be taken away from the leadership generation of Jews who rejected Him, the chief priests and the elders, which was a national, corporate rejection of Him as their King, and given to a faithful leadership generation of Jews who will make up the nation in the future has been partially fulfilled. This prophecy was partially fulfilled when the Kingdom was removed from Israel when their leadership led them into rejecting their King and it awaits complete fulfillment when it will be given to the nation of Israel when they are led by a future leadership generation to repent and cry out for their King. There is no doubt the nation went as their leadership led them; if the leadership—the scribes, the Pharisees, the chief priests, and the elders—had accepted Christ as their King their Kingdom, the Jewish Messianic Kingdom, would have been initiated. In the same way, when they rejected His offer to be their King and bring in their Kingdom the nation rejected Him as well.

Matthew 21:43 ⁴³“Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it.

This verse is difficult to understand, but we have to keep literal hermeneutics in mind when attempting to exegete it. As we will see, many people believe the people (translated nation in every good translation except the NASB) to be the church. All Replacement theologians view the verse this way. For reasons we will discuss, the church cannot be forced into this context. Since the removal of the Kingdom is specifically addressed to the chief priests and the elders (Mt. 21:23), some believe the Kingdom was given to the apostles, the leaders of the early church. There is no textual support for this view. The context could indicate the Kingdom was given to people who believed in Him at that time such as the tax collectors and prostitutes he referred to in the parable of the two sons but that seems to make the Kingdom a spiritual Kingdom established at the time rather than identifying it as the literal Messianic Kingdom that was postponed into the future. My view is as stated above. The Kingdom was removed from the leadership of that generation, and by extension the nation, because it was a national, corporate reject of the King. During the Tribulation there will be believing leaders who will lead the Israelites into a national, corporate acceptance of Christ Jesus as their Messianic King and the Kingdom will, at that time, be established in accordance with the covenant promises God made to Israel. At that time, Israel, under godly, faithful leadership, will produce the fruit expected of them in the Messianic Kingdom which fruit they had failed to produce before under the old ungodly, unfaithful leadership. This explanation seems to best fit the context of the immediate pericope and the overall context of Matthew's gospel.

This verse is very important in terms of understanding the Kingdom. Anyone who does not understand the nature of the Messianic Kingdom is not completely understanding God's program for history. Even many dispensationalists, not all, but too many, confuse the church with Israel in this instance. This is only a small step removed from Replacement Theology. This line of thought also at least downplays, if not ignores, the biblical covenants God made with Israel; the covenants were not made with the church. It is not out of line, however, to recognize the fact the church is now doing what Israel was created to do and that is represent God to the world. But that fact does not change God's promises to Israel based on those covenants.

Dr. Toussaint does not agree with my position; he believes the nation that is to receive the Kingdom is the church (Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew*, p. 251]. The problem with this view is that Israel is the covenant nation and the covenant promises must be fulfilled in and with that nation. Further, the church is not a nation. It is a people called out from the nations by virtue of their position in Christ founded on belief in Him. The Lord made it clear over and over again through the Old Testament prophets that Israel is to be restored in order to realize all the covenant promises God made to them. The faithful remnant of Jews will be given the Kingdom. We will participate in the Kingdom as the Bride of Christ, ruling and reigning with Him, but we are not given the Kingdom in the same sense it was offered to Israel and will be fulfilled in them when the time comes. J. Vernon McGee also believes this verse refers to the church. [J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible*, 4:114]. John MacArthur, who claims to be a

dispensationalist regarding Israel, believes the church has been given the kingdom. "The Kingdom and all the spiritual advantages given to Israel will now be given to 'other vinedressers,' symbolizing the church (v. 43), which consists primarily of Gentiles." [John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, p. 1165].

Merrill F. Unger is another dispensationalist who believes the nation receiving the Kingdom is the church. He is one of the earlier dispensationalists who erroneously makes a distinction between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven which, in reality, both refer to the Messianic, Millennial Kingdom. He relates the Kingdom of God to a kingdom of "religious privilege and election to grace." That's incorrect; it is a literal Kingdom that is still future; it is the Davidic, Messianic Kingdom that is the subject of Christ's offer to Israel. "The kingdom of God (religious privilege and election to grace) would be removed from Israel and given to the Gentiles. 'The kingdom of God' (a rare term in Matthew) [that's true but it was because of the religious sensibilities of the Jews about saying the word 'God'] denotes the sphere of divine grace working on behalf of all humanity, including Gentiles and not merely 'the kingdom of heaven,' designating its working through Israel immediately and to the Gentiles mediately in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah's earthly reign over Israel and the nations. "The kingdom of God,' therefore, means the church (16:18) in which both regenerated Jews and Gentiles spiritually and religiously lose their racial designations and become members of 'the church of God' (1 Cor. 10:32). The church is referred to as a nation (*ethnos*, 'a people'; 1 Pet. 2:9) bringing forth (yielding) the fruits (i.e., faith in the crucified risen Lord and works consonant with such saving faith springing from it) of the kingdom of God." [Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Gospels*, p. 151].

Because Scofield entertained the incorrect definitions of the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven he was led to incorrectly understand this verse. Unfortunately, the notes he wrote for his *Scofield Reference Bible* influenced a lot of dispensationally disposed Christians to embrace his faulty dichotomy between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven. "Note that Matthew here as in verse 31 uses the larger word, kingdom of God. The kingdom of heaven will be yet set up. Meantime the kingdom of God and His righteousness is taken from Israel nationally and given to the Gentiles (Rom. 9:30-33)." [C. I. Scofield, *The Scofield Study Bible*, p. 1945]. The Kingdom has not been given to the Gentiles; the establishment of the Kingdom has been postponed until the Jewish nation is prepared and fit to receive it. The nation of Israel will be judged and refined in the crucible of the Tribulation. The assignment originally given to Israel to reveal God to the world is now the responsibility of the church, but the Kingdom itself has not been given to the church. That is a theological leap that simply must not be made. The men who revised the original *Scofield Reference Bible* didn't completely correct this. "This passage teaches that unbelieving scribes and Pharisees would not be saved, because of their rejection of the Son. Others who will manifest the fruits of salvation take their place. Neither in the present age nor in the future millennium is the kingdom of God the exclusive possession of either Israel or the Gentiles." [*The Scofield Study Bible III*, pp. 1346-1347]. This doesn't really recognize the fact the Kingdom is

totally postponed right now. We are not taking the place of unbelieving Jews, leaders or otherwise. We are an intercalation and the fact that 1 Peter 2:9 has been translated, erroneously in my opinion, to say the church is a holy "nation" doesn't mean we are the nation of Matthew 21:43. The people or nation the Lord was referring to was a future nation of Jewish leadership who would believe in Him and lead the nation into believing in Him. This note also seems to neglect the fact that the Kingdom offer Christ was making to the Jews was the Messianic Kingdom according to the promises of the covenants: land, seed, and blessing. These promises are all part and parcel of the Kingdom offer. The church does not receive those promises although we do and we will enjoy some of the blessings that flow from them. The Kingdom is either completely postponed or it isn't and dispensationalists should be saying it is completely postponed.

Archibald, A. T., Robertson inserted his Replacement Theology into his book *Word Pictures in the New Testament* when he wrote for Matthew 21:43 these words: "It was the death-knell of the Jewish nation with their hopes of political and religious world leadership." [Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 1:172]. Robertson was an outstanding Greek scholar but what he wrote here simply points out the fact that when theologians insert their theology into their exegesis, it doesn't matter how much Greek they know or they don't know; they are in error. Dr. McClain was also quite critical of this comment by Robertson. "On this text, A. T. Robertson has written what seems an unjustifiable dogmatic comment. And the anti-millennialists use the same text to sweep away the covenant rights of historic Israel, against the total testimony of Old Testament prophecy, to say nothing of the clear assertions of Christ and the Apostle Paul." [Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God*, p. 296, n. 20]. The point is, Robertson's tremendous grasp of the Greek text is worthless when he allows his Reformed theology to trump the meaning provided by the exegesis of the original language text according to and based on literal hermeneutics. Theology must never control our understanding of the text; Reformed theologians fail miserably at this point in their exegesis.

The *Word Biblical Commentary* series is written entirely by Reformed, Replacement theologians; this is their reasoning concerning this interpretation and it is typical of Replacement Theology dogma. "The διὰ τοῦτο, "on account of this," refers back not to the immediately preceding quotation but to the parable itself. That is, because of their rejection of the Son sent by the Father, just as the vineyard was let out to other tenants who would hand over the fruit of the vineyard, so will ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, "the kingdom of God" (see *Comment* on 12:28 for this expression in Matthew), be taken away from the Jewish leaders and given ἔθνει ποιοῦντι τοὺς καρποὺς αὐτῆς, "to a people producing the fruit of it [i.e., the kingdom]." The verbs here are "divine passives," reflecting God as the acting subject. This setting aside of the privilege of Israel as the unique people of God in favor of another people, namely, the church (pace [with due respect to, but differing from or despite the interpretation of] Snodgrass, *Parable*), is of course nothing short of revolutionary. The singular ἔθνος, which means "people" or "nation," inevitably alludes to the eventual mission to the Gentiles, the ἔθνοι, plural of the same word (cf. 12:21 [Gentile

inclusion]; 24:14 [the Olivet Discourse]; 28:19 [the Great Commission]). The word in the singular here need not be thought of as excluding Jews, however, since the new nation, the church (cf. 16:18), consists of both Jews and Gentiles (and Jews are included in 28:19). Matthew's church, after all, consists mainly, if not exclusively, of Jewish Christians. To be sure, as several have pointed out (e.g., Harrington), it is not *necessary* to interpret the ἔθνος as meaning the church. But given the total context of the Gospel, this is the most natural interpretation of the passage (see Grundmann). The singular form of the word is applied to the church in 1 Peter 2:9 (also in the context of the "stone" passages). The emphasis on this new group producing the appropriate fruit (cf. v. 41) is thoroughly consonant with Matthew's frequent stress on the righteousness of the kingdom (e.g., 5:20; 6:33[the Sermon on the Mount]) that Jesus embodies and brings. The new people of God have a similar responsibility to live in the righteousness of the law (as interpreted by Jesus)." [Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary*, p. 33B:623]. Because Matthew 12:21, 24:14, and 28:19 mention the inclusion of Gentiles and Gentile nations in God's program, they read those verses back into the interpretation of 21:43 and it therefore, in their theology, must be talking about the church. That conclusion is reached totally out of context and it uses unrelated Scriptures to force a meaning into this text. 1 Peter 2:9 says nothing about the Kingdom; it is talking about the role of believers and the church now being a people of God representing Him to the world. Just because Peter is translated to be saying the church is a "holy nation" does not mean it is the nation Christ spoke of in Matthew 21:43. That does not mean the church has replaced Israel. Romans 11 says we have been grafted into the covenant blessings of Israel; it never says we have replaced Israel. Further, 1 Peter 2:9 could just as easily been translated as a holy "people" rather than a holy "nation." The context of Matthew is not about the church at all. It is about the offer of Jesus to the nation to be their Messianic King, the rejection of His offer and His Kingdom, and the preparation of the apostles to evangelize and build the Church after the Lord's departure.

John Calvin, not surprisingly, puts the church into this verse. "Christ now declares that God was not bound to them, and, therefore, that he will convey to another the honour of which they rendered themselves unworthy. And this, no doubt, was once spoken to them, but was written for the sake of all of us, that, if God choose us to be His people, we may not grow wanton through a vain and wicked confidence in the flesh, but may endeavour, on our part, to perform the duties which he enjoins on his children; *for if he spared not the natural branches, (Rom. 11:21,) what will he do with those which were ingrafted?* The Jews thought that the kingdom of God dwelt among them by hereditary right, and therefore they adhered obstinately to their vices. We have unexpectedly come into their room contrary to nature, and therefore much less is the kingdom of God bound to us, if it be not rooted in true godliness. Now as our minds ought to be struck with terror by the threatening of Christ, that those who have profaned the kingdom of God will be deprived of it, so the perpetuity of that kingdom, which is here described, may afford comfort to all the godly. For by these words Christ assures us that, though

the ungodly destroyed the worship of God among themselves, they would never cause the name of Christ to be abolished, or true religion to perish; for God, in whose hand are all the ends of the earth, will find elsewhere a dwelling and habitation for his kingdom. We ought also to learn from this passage, that the Gospel is not preached in order that it may lie barren and inoperative, but that it may yield fruit." [John Calvin and William Pringle, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, pp. 3:37-38].

McClain believes the people producing the fruit of the Kingdom will be the Jews in a restored nation. "Now the question is, What nation?... [A]ccording to the uniform testimony of Scripture, the covenants and rights of this people are irrevocable (Jer. 33:24-26; Rom. 9:3-5). The fulfilment of these divine promises may indeed be interrupted temporarily, and certain individuals or even a whole generation may be cut off from the benefits, but the promises to Israel cannot be abrogated. And although God cannot bestow His covenanted blessing upon 'a disobedient and gainsaying people' (Rom. 10:21), He can and will purge and purify this very people so that it may once more be a *nation* before Him. There is to be a future restoration (Rom. 11:11-15), a new birth for this nation (Isa. 66:5-13)... To summarize: the Kingdom was taken from a nation of our Lord's day because of its sin; and it shall be given to a nation which brings forth proper fruit. The difference between the two nations is spiritual and moral, not racial. That nation on which the Kingdom is bestowed will be the nation of *Israel*, in harmony with all Old Testament prophecy; but an Israel repentant and regenerated. Just as in the case of a regenerated *individual*, it is wholly proper to contrast the *new man* with the *old man* without any implication of two separate persons; even so the nation which shall receive the Kingdom will be *spiritually* a new nation but, at the same time, racially and politically the Israel of history." [Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God*, pp. 296-297]. This position reflects a solid understanding of the Kingdom and its relation to the Jewish people then, now, and in the future.

Another view believes the Lord to be taking the Kingdom from the Jewish leaders and giving it to the apostles. "But a preferable view is that the kingdom is to be taken away from the disobedient religious leaders and given to the twelve disciples who will lead Jesus' church. In several important biblical passages, the word 'nation' refers to Israel, not the Gentiles. Matthew does not view the church as a gentile entity that supersedes Israel but as the eschatological Jewish remnant that spreads the kingdom message to all the nations, including Israel." [David L. Turner, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew*, p. 516]. Dr. Turner doesn't understand the nature of the postponement of the Kingdom. He does understand that "nation" refers to Israel which is much more than many theologians understand.

Dr. Barbieri wrote a fairly accurate representation of the interpretation of Matthew 21:43. "A better interpretation is that Jesus was simply saying the kingdom was being taken away from the nation Israel at that time, but it would be given back to the nation in a future day when the nation would demonstrate true repentance and faith. In this

view, Jesus was using the term 'nation' in the sense of generation (cf. Matt. 23:36). Because of their rejection, that generation of Israel would never be able to experience the kingdom of God. But a future generation in Israel will respond in saving faith to this same Messiah (Rom. 11:26-27), and to that future generation the kingdom will be given." [Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., "Matthew" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, pp. 70-71].

One more correct dispensational understanding this verse reads: "Jesus warns that 'the kingdom of God will be taken from you (from that generation), and given to a nation (a future generation of Jews) bearing the fruits of it.' The existing rulers and generation of Jews had rejected the King. Clearly the *nation* refers to Israel, not some Gentile nation. God's promise to David that his descendants will rule forever over Israel (2 Sam 7:14ff [the Davidic Covenant]) will be fulfilled." [Hal M Haller, "Matthew" in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, pp. 1:97-98].

We may quibble with Barbieri and Haller whether or not they should insert generation into the interpretation since that word (*γενεά*) wasn't used. It's better to look at this verse in terms of the leadership and the nation. It's not completely out of line to use that if the thought is the people of the nation alive at both times constitute what one may generically call a "generation," but the word isn't used so it is less confusing to refrain from using it. The problem is most people would consider the church to be the generation in question which is not the case.

Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary has as good grasp of the nature of Kingdom postponement in connection with the church that is occurring in this dispensation as any commentary. They are certainly in harmony with how Dr. McClain interpreted this verse in total, however, they do incorrectly say, "In our time, nation refers to the church." As I have noted, it is preferable to understand that nation refers to Israel in Matthew 21:43, but the remainder of their comments on this verse speak to the church's role now and they do accurately present it. "This does not mean, however, that the kingdom has been forever removed from Israel (Rom. 11:26, 27). This is impossible because of the promises given to Abraham, David, and the prophets. That Israel as a people and nation will yet be restored to the place of blessing is asserted by Paul in Rom. 11:26, 27. The church is now the custodian of the vineyard and is expected to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. One day the Kingdom will be restored to Israel (Matt. 19:28)." [Earl Radmacher, Ronald B. Allen, and H. Wayne House, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary*, p. 1182]. This interpretation recognizes the fact that the Kingdom promises to Israel will be fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom. It also recognizes that the church is now doing the job Israel was created to do during this period of time while that nation is set aside. Once the church completes its mission and is removed, Israel will be moved back to the forefront of God's program which will culminate in the nation's restoration into the land in faith.

It is interesting to note that nearly everyone who places the church in Matthew 21:43 uses 1 Peter 2:9 to claim the church is a nation and then use that to specifically identify the nation of 21:43 as the church.

1 Peter 2:9-10 ⁹But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION [ἔθνος, people], A PEOPLE [λαός] FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰for you once were NOT A PEOPLE [λαός], but now you are THE PEOPLE [λαός] OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

The word ἔθνος does not have to be translated nation. The NASB translates it 92 times as "gentiles," 66 times as "nation," 2 times as "people," and once as "pagans." It means "A multitude, people, [or] race, belonging and living together." [Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, p. 503]. It can be translated "nation" but it doesn't have to be the primary meaning; meaning cannot be divorced from context. Abbott-Smith's lexicon has the primary meaning [if the assumption is made that the order of the meanings given in the entry indicates priority in meaning] "a multitude, a company, whether of beast or men" and the second meaning as "a nation, people." [G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 129]. BDAG has it as "a body of persons united by kinship, culture, and common traditions, nation, people." [p. 276]. The point is, the translation of 1 Peter 2:9 could easily read a holy "people" instead of a holy "nation" and then perhaps interpreters in our day would not be so quick to insert this Scripture into Matthew 21:43. "People" is a more accurate translation since the church is not a nation. Possibly the translators of 1 Peter didn't want to use the word "people" twice so close together, but in the Greek that wasn't a problem; two different words were used. Since Peter used two different words, he may well have meant to make the distinction we have in the NASB translation. Nevertheless, making "nation" of Matthew 21:43 into the church doesn't fit the Jewish context of Matthew anyway. It could have been translated "a holy people, a people for the purpose of being God's own possession." That translation is more awkward in English but it is more accurately representing the Greek. The NASB translators were not averse to translating ἔθνος as "people" because they did it in Matthew 21:43 while almost all the other good translations use "nation" in Matthew. It is noteworthy that this is one of only two times the NASB translators translated it as "people." The other is Acts 8:9 where "people" is a very natural translation that fits the context. "Nation" seems to be the better translation in Matthew 21:43 because it more clearly identifies Israel so perhaps there may have been a theological bias in their work here by trying to force the church into this verse (Mt. 21:43) rather than allowing it to refer to Israel. That's speculation on my part, but that is entirely possible. The fact is the Church is not a nation as such; we are drawn from all nations irrespective of national boundaries. We are a group of people belonging together by virtue of our common position in Christ. It is also a fact that Israel will one day as a national entity believe in their Messiah, Christ Jesus.

There are a couple of exegetical problems with what I'm trying to do here. Peter is quoting the Old Testament (EX. 19:5-6) but it is not an exact quote in its totality. He is writing to a Jewish Christian group of believers who would understand the context of his use of the words. "Nation" is an accurate representation of the Hebrew *גו* but that word can also mean "people." Certainly, he is not saying the church has replaced Israel. He seems to be comparing what these Jewish believers are now in comparison to what the Jewish nation was originally called to be. Since the church is not a nation and these Jewish believers are now part of the church performing, not as a nation but as a group of people united in Christ Jesus, what was supposed to be Israel's assignment, it seems reasonable to translate *ἔθνος* as "people" in 1 Peter 2:9. This is an example of the New Testament authors, all of whom were Jewish, using an Old Testament Scripture as an application in the New Testament. The original meaning is Israel was a nation set apart by God for service to Him. They failed and now the church has been appointed to provide these services for God in this dispensation. Because of this similarity, Peter uses this Old Testament Scripture to make his New Testament point.

"When he calls them a holy nation [in 1 Peter 2:9], Peter is not saying Israel has been abandoned by God; he is emphasizing the Church's distinction from the nations of the world as a people belonging to God. This is repeated and emphasized by their fourth description as God's own special people. God's purpose in choosing the Church for this role is that they may proclaim His praises. The motivation for such proclamation is God's saving work, described here as calling believers out of darkness, picturing their unregenerate state, and into God's light, picturing fellowship with God." [Gary Derickson, "1 Peter" in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, p. 1153]. My translation eliminates the confusion over whether or not the church is a nation and eliminates the temptation to place the church into Matthew 21:43 simply because the English word "nation" has been used in both places in most translations. The only good translation I could find that also used "people" in Matthew 21:43 was the NET Bible and its translation note for the verse reads, "Or, to a nation." In my opinion, the NASB would have been more accurate to translate *ἔθνος* as "nation" rather than "people" in Matthew 21:43 and as "people" in 1 Peter 2:9 rather than as "nation." They must have recognized that the church is not a nation so they used "people" in Matthew 21:43 in an effort to imply the church has been given the Kingdom.

"To conclude from this ["nation" in Mt. 21:43] that the kingdom is 'not an external and natural kingdom of the Jews' [as Berkhof does] is to conclude too much. To begin with, to what *nation* is the kingdom to be given? The Church is not a nation but is composed of believing individuals of all nations. Contextually the verse can simply be interpreted as meaning the Jewish generation of Jesus' day will not see the kingdom established in their day, but it will be offered to a later Jewish generation. While this view is not without its problems, it is more consistent with the word *nation*, which cannot be the church. At any rate, it in no way denies the possibility of an earthly kingdom." [Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, p. 192].

Jews can get very offended by the idea that the Messianic Kingdom is here now. "For Israel, the coming of the Messiah and the coming of the Messianic Age are inseparable.... Pinchas Lapide, a Jewish New Testament scholar open to dialogue with Christians, focuses on what he considers the false claims of realized eschatology according to which the kingdom of God is being fulfilled in the Church. He writes, 'A realized eschatology, which basks in a salvation which it supposes to be already attained, produces a triumphalism which transforms the kingdom of God into the church and relegates Christ the king of the far heavens.'" [Ronald E. Diprose, *Israel and the Church: The Origin and Effects of Replacement Theology*, p. 139]. In other words, these Jewish theologians are saying the Jews don't like it one bit when Christians claim the church has usurped the Kingdom of God. While the Jews completely misunderstand and reject the true nature of the Lord's First Advent, they are quite correct when they insist that they will enjoy the blessings of the Messianic Kingdom. It isn't here now in the form of the church or anything else; it is future. The Jews will enjoy it when they see Christ return and cry out "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." The Jewish nation will believe and the Jewish nation will then enter the Messianic Kingdom. The Kingdom declared by Christ in the Gospels is, in fact, the Kingdom predicted by the Old Testament prophets and for which the Jewish people were and are waiting. Matthew 21:43 cannot change these facts no matter how desperately some Christians want them to be changed to mean the church.

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