

Revealing the Kingdom of God Introduction

The pandemic has re-motivated many people to think about the end of the world. As more and more sinful behaviors become more widespread, people wonder how long Christ will delay before He comes again. Some think that because Paul Holland now has a cell phone, the end of the world is near!

I follow a pattern in my Bible classes: A NT textual class (and in the 8 years I've been here, there are only a few books which have not been taught in this auditorium class: 1 & 2 Thessalonians, the Gospel of John, and 2 Peter); then an OT textual class; a practical class, which we just finished: Sowing the Life of Your Dreams; and now a theological class. Some discussion on a theological topic. Now, we are talking about "Revealing the Kingdom of God and the End of the World."

There will be a lot of false ideas which we will have to discuss as we study through this topic. There are a handful of reasons why it is necessary for us to study false interpretations of the Bible:

1. False teaching can lead us to disobey Jehovah God. "Faith only," for example, distorts the necessity and the beauty of baptism.
2. False teaching distorts the nature of God. Calvinism, for example, has led many atheists to reject God because "God took my child." That distorts the nature of God.
3. False teaching perverts the words out of God's mouth: 2 Peter 3:14-16.
4. False teaching distorts and confuses us relative to different genres of Scripture. Poetry should be understood *figuratively* unless there is reason to believe it is meant *literally*.
5. God obligates us to stop the mouths of false teachers: Titus 1:10-11.

When it comes to the "end of the world," we will specifically be dealing with two false ideas: premillennialism and annihilationism. I'll define "premillennialism" in a moment. But I want you to notice something. When I advertised this class, I put some "code words" on the screen... Most of these code words associated with premillennialism are only found *one time* in the Scriptures! As we study through this class, we'll take a look at those Scriptures and their context and we'll observe that these Scriptures are not all talking about the destruction of the world!

"Rapture"	1 Thessalonians 4
"AntiChrist"	1 & 2 John
"Mark of the beast"	Revelation 13
Armageddon	Revelation 16
1,000 year reign	Revelation 20
"Great tribulation"	Matthew 24; Revelation 2, 7
"Premillennial"	Nowhere

So, let me give you a definition of premillennialism: "pre-" means "before," "millennial" means 1,000, "ism" refers to a set of doctrines. There are *lots* of different views on the end of the world and *lots* of different nuances. "Premillennialism" is just one set of ideas, but even in this area, there are differences of opinion. I've got 10 books in my library that deal specifically with premillennialism. The one I'll be using mainly is Norman Geisler's book on *Systematic Theology* because he believes in premillennialism and he presents it in a way that makes it easy to evaluate and if I'm going to evaluate what someone believes, I need to read it straight out of their mouth.

Geisler writes about “premillennialism”: “The essence of premillennialism is that Christ will physically return to earth and set up a worldwide thousand-year reign” (1413). Now, in just a moment, we are going to begin our study of the word of God and we’ll spend several weeks discussing the kingdom of God; we’ve got to get the truth of the word of God in front of us, especially relative to the kingdom, before we can evaluate what else is being said about it.

Secondly, “annihilationism” is the idea that hell is not eternal. These individuals believe that a loving God would not punish people in an eternal fiery hell forever and ever and ever. So, while they might be punished for a period of time, eventually their lives will be consumed in the flames and they will cease to exist; they will be “annihilated.” We’ll talk about that view too, toward the end of our study in about three months.

Let me also say something about the word “apocalyptic.” I will eventually be using this word quite a bit. In fact, we will have perhaps two studies on this word. My Master’s thesis dealt with apocalyptic literature, specifically the fulfillment of Joel 2 in Acts 2 and it allowed me to do extensive study in this literature. There is a whole group of Jewish literary works in the inter-testamental period that are identified as apocalyptic and these words are relevant especially when we study Matthew 24 and Revelation. Briefly, the Greek word “apocalyptic” gives us the name of the book of “Revelation.” If you transliterate the word “Revelation” (ἀποκάλυψις) in 1:1, you get “Apocalupsis.” “Apocalyptic” literature literally is literary works that *sound like* the book of Revelation! It is a body of literature that speaks in catastrophic language and when you get familiar with that language, it starts popping up in the OT over and over again, at least as early as 2 Samuel 22.

Now, let’s begin studying the Word of God...

KINGS AND KINGDOMS:

The word “kingdom” (מַמְלָכָה) is used in the Hebrew OT 126 times. The first time it is used is in Genesis 10:10, referring to the kingdom of Babylon, the *Old* Kingdom of Babylon. In Genesis 20:9, it is used to refer to the kingdom of Gerar, the Philistines. The third time the word is used is in Exodus 19:6, which is the first time the word is used to refer to God’s people:

“you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

Notice that God wanted Israel to be a spiritual “kingdom” - a “kingdom of priests.”

Why would God use “kingdom” as a metaphor for His people?

The next time God’s word uses “kingdom” is in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. Notice in verse 20 that God anticipated a *dynasty* - His king will have *sons* sitting on the throne after him.

Once the nation of Israel is established as a *kingdom* in the days of King Saul, the word starts being used for Israel itself: 1 Samuel 13:13-14; 15:28; 28:17. In 1 Samuel 24:20, King Saul tells David, “Now, behold, I know that you will surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hand.” The phrase “kingdom of Israel” is only used twice in Scripture, once at 1 Samuel 15:28 and here at 24:20.

In 2 Samuel 3, God starts transferring the kingdom from the house of Saul to the house of David: 3:10, 28. In 2 Samuel 5:12, we read: “David realized that the Lord had established him as king over Israel, and that He had exalted his kingdom for the sake of His people Israel.”

But one of the most significant passages in the OT related to the kingdom is God’s promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-16:

“When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. “I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took *it* away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. “Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.””

Because David had proven himself faithful to God’s commandments, God made him the proto-typical king to picture the coming Messiah. We have a prayer of David recorded in 1 Chronicles 29:11; listen to his prayer:

“Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion [kingdom], O Lord, and You exalt Yourself as head over all.”

In 1 Kings 2:46, the kingdom was established in the hands of David’s son, King Solomon. God promised King Solomon:

“As for you, if you will walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you *and* will keep My statutes and My ordinances, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I promised to your father David, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’” (1 Kings 9:4-5).

But because Solomon allowed his spouses to dilate his faith in God, God ripped the kingdom out of his hands (1 Kings 11:11-13):

“So the Lord said to Solomon, “Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant. “Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, *but* I will tear it out of the hand of your son. “However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, *but* I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.”

The kingdom came into the hand of David’s ancestor, King Joash (2 Kings 14:5).

King Abijah said to Jeroboam about the nation of Israel: “Do you not know that the Lord God of Israel gave the rule over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt? ... “So now you intend to resist the kingdom of the Lord through the sons of David, being a great multitude and *having* with you the golden calves which Jeroboam made for gods for you.” (2 Chron. 13:5, 8).

Because King Jehoshaphat followed God and obeyed His commandments, the Bible says, “So the Lord established the kingdom in his control, and all Judah brought tribute to Jehoshaphat, and he had great riches and honor.” (2 Chron. 17:5). Jehoshaphat “he gave the kingdom to Jehoram because he was the firstborn” (2 Chron. 21:3).

In the dark days of the kingdom under the siege of the Assyrian empire, Hezekiah prayed (2 Kings 19:15-19):

“Hezekiah prayed before the Lord and said, “O Lord, the God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. ...“Now, O Lord our God, I pray, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, O Lord, are God.”

This prayer is important when we get to the visions and prophecies of Daniel the prophet. We have now surveyed all the references to “kingdom” that refer to the nation of Israel throughout the books of history. I’ll pause before we look at the prophecies of a coming kingdom. Let’s look at a handful of verses that talk about a “king.” We’ve already looked at one in Deuteronom 17. But, let’s go back before that...

The word “king” (2,526 - מֶלֶךְ) is used in the OT a whopping 3,012 times! We will *not* survey those verses! But, let’s take a look at a few in Genesis...

God tells Abraham: “I have made you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you.” Genesis 17:6.

God says of Sarah: “I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a *mother of nations*; kings of peoples will come from her” (Genesis 17:16).

God told Jacob: “I am God Almighty; Be fruitful and multiply; A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, And kings shall come forth from you” (Genesis 35:11).

It is important to add in here, although the word “king” is not used, Genesis 49:8-11 which is a prophecy of the kingdom coming through the family of Judah, who of course was the ancestor of King David: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him *shall be* the obedience of the peoples” (49:10).

We should also add in here Numbers 24:17, which is another general prophecy of the kingdom coming through the family of Jacob: “I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; A star shall come forth from Jacob, A scepter shall rise from Israel, And shall crush through the forehead of Moab, And tear down all the sons of Sheth.”

What these prophecies tell us is that God had *always* planned to establish a kingdom. That kingdom was going to be the family of Abraham and Jacob, and the king himself would come through the family of Judah, whom we have already seen is, ultimately David himself.

We have seen that the kingdom ultimately belonged to God and that concept was verbalized at least as early as Gideon in Judges 8:23: “Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you.”

THE PROPHECY OF A COMING KINGDOM:

Our survey ended with the books of history and at that point, the nation of Israel was a mess. They had been taken into Babylon exile because of their disobedience, their idolatry, their lack of love and respect for Jehovah God. But God wasn’t turning His back on His people. He still had a promise to fulfill. He had to bring King Jesus into the world.

The word “king” is used 637 times in the prophets. By far most of those are historical references to kings such as Uzziah and King Ahaz. By the time we get into the prophet’s, the prophecies shift more from using the word “king” or “kingdom” to using the name “David;” the

return, the coming of “King David.” For example, “David” is mentioned in the prophets 38 times.

For example, Isaiah predicted in Isaiah 9:6-7: “For a child [the one born of the virgin mentioned in 7:14] will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.”

Someone from the house of David would reign on His throne in lovingkindness, justice, faithfulness and righteousness: “A throne will even be established in lovingkindness, And a judge will sit on it in faithfulness in the tent of David; Moreover, he will seek justice And be prompt in righteousness.” (Isaiah 16:5)

The prophet Jeremiah lived about 130 years after Isaiah; Jeremiah also lived during dark days for the kingdom, when Babylon had carried Jews into exile. But Jeremiah held out hope: “Behold, *the* days are coming,” declares the Lord, “When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land.” (23:5)

So there are a number of prophecies which picture the coming of a descendant of David, who is called “David” in the prophets. For example, picturing the return from exile in Babylon, Jeremiah writes of Israel: “But they shall serve the Lord their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them” (30:9). Here, “David their king” refers to the “son of David,” the descendant of David, who would be identified with the Messiah, the Christ. The expression “son of David” is used 16 times in the Gospels, mostly in Matthew, most of the time the phrase refers to Jesus. In Matthew 1:20, it refers to Joseph, Jesus’ earthly father.

There is a long passage in Jeremiah which predicts the coming of this “son of David:” (33:15-22):

“‘In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth. ‘In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety; and this is *the name* by which she will be called: the Lord is our righteousness.’ “For thus says the Lord, ‘David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings and to prepare sacrifices continually.’ ”The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, “Thus says the Lord, ‘If you can break My covenant for the day and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant so that he will not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levitical priests, My ministers. ‘As the host of heaven cannot be counted and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me.’ ”