

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

**WHAT CHRIST ACHIEVED AS A
RESULT OF HIS FIRST COMING, DEATH
AND RESURRECTION**

- **PROPHECIES FULFILLED**
- **KINGDOM OF GOD ESTABLISHED**
- **CHRIST GIVEN ALL POWER ON HEAVEN AND EARTH**
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- **THRONE OF DAVID ESTABLISHED FOREVER**

BY THOMAS WILLIAMSON

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MISSION ACCOMPLISHED - WHAT CHRIST ACHIEVED AS A RESULT OF HIS FIRST COMING, DEATH AND RESURRECTION

By Thomas Williamson, Th.M., Ph.D.
3131 S. Archer Ave.
Chicago, Illinois 60608

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important subjects in the field of theology is that of the person and work of Christ. There is substantial agreement among Bible-believing Christians with regard to Christ's person and nature: His virgin birth, the hypostatic union of God and man, His perfect nature, His inability to sin, His death on the cross in fulfillment of prophecy, His bodily resurrection, the nature of the Trinity, etc.

But there are substantial disagreements among sincere Christians concerning the work of Christ. Just what did Christ accomplish as a result of His first advent, death and resurrection? We agree on the concept of the substitutionary atonement of Christ, that He bore our sins on the Cross, 1 Peter 2:24, 1 John 2:2, etc. Is that all that Christ accomplished, or is there more? Now that Christ has died and risen again, is He or Satan the ruler of this world? Did He establish the Kingdom that He came to establish, or has that Kingdom been postponed? What is the nature of that Kingdom which He came to set up? Is Christ now ruling on the Throne of David, or must He wait to take that throne at some point in the future?

These are important questions with significant and wide-ranging consequences and applications, depending on how we answer them. Therefore, it would be well worth our time to examine what the Bible says about the work that Christ accomplished when He came to earth for the first time, was crucified, and rose again.

This brief and humble effort will not be able to examine and resolve all issues with regard to the work of Christ, but the author hopes that it will help to reveal and clarify some of the principles that the Bible teaches on this vital subject.

At all times I will approach this subject from the standpoint of one who believes and affirms that the Bible is the infallible Word of God and is our all-sufficient guide in doctrine and practice. I hold to fundamental Baptist doctrinal teaching as found in the 1833 New Hampshire Baptist Confession of Faith and the Doctrinal Statement of the Baptist Missionary Association of America (1950 and 1988 versions). You will find nothing in this book that is contrary to those confessions of faith, nor anything contrary to the clear teaching of the Word of God. All Bible citations in this book are from the King James Version.

DID CHRIST ESTABLISH THE KINGDOM OF GOD/KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AS A RESULT OF HIS FIRST ADVENT?

The Bible teaches that Christ successfully established His Kingdom, as a result of His ministry on earth, and His death and resurrection. The reason for affirming this is that the New Testament speaks of the Kingdom as an established and existing fact.

In Luke 16:16 Christ spoke of the Kingdom as having begun with the ministry and preaching of John the Baptist: *"The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it."*

In Matthew 12:27 Christ cited His personal ministry on earth as proof that the Kingdom had already come: *"And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you."*

To whatever extent the Kingdom had not come in its fullness while Christ was still here on earth, it was to come in its fullness during the lifetime or generation of those living when Christ was on earth: *"Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom."* (Matthew 16:28)

The Apostle Paul stated in Colossians 1:13, *"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son."* See also 1 Corinthians 4:20, *"For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."* We are in the Kingdom of God now.

In Romans 14:17 Paul spoke of the Kingdom as a present reality: *"For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."*

Once we realize that we are now in the Kingdom, this realization will correct and overthrow a lot of false theological notions. For instance, we are told that most of the New Testament, including the Sermon on the Mount, is not for today - these teachings are for the denizens of the future Kingdom. We are told that nothing in our society can get any better until Christ comes the second time to set up the kingdom. We are told that revival is not for today and that we cannot expect any growth or progress of Christianity until Christ gets back and picks up where He left off 2000 years ago. This kind of teaching is a good excuse for apathy, laziness and lethargy in the Lord's work. Whatever it is that we do not want to do for the Lord, we can excuse it by saying that we are just piously, patiently waiting for Him to come back and set up the Kingdom. But when Christ does return, it will be too late for us to do anything for Him anyway because we will then be raptured out of here. It would be far better for us to realize that Christ accomplished His mission the first time around - He did set up the Kingdom and it is our job to be active in Kingdom work.

ARE THERE TWO DIFFERENT KINGDOMS, A KINGDOM OF GOD AND A KINGDOM OF HEAVEN?

Some have attempted to create an artificial distinction between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven. This would allow them to maintain that at least one of these kingdoms was not set up by Christ as a result of His earthly ministry, and that we must await the establishment of that kingdom at some future date.

However, the New Testament uses the terms "Kingdom of God" and "Kingdom of Heaven" in an interchangeable manner, showing that there is just one Kingdom for which 2 names are used: *"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."* (Matthew 19:23-24). Here Christ uses the 2 different names for the Kingdom to describe the same thing (the Kingdom that it is so difficult for a rich man to enter into). Clearly the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven are one and the same.

In Matthew 11:12, Jesus said, *"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."* In the parallel passage in Luke 16:16 He said, *"The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it."* Notice that the terms "Kingdom of heaven" and "Kingdom of God" are used interchangeably, and that this kingdom was a present reality, not something 2000 years in the future. How could it be said that the violent were taking the Kingdom by force in the time of John the Baptist, if the Kingdom was not to be established until at least 2000 years later?

In Matthew 10:7 Jesus said, *"And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."* The parallel passage in Luke 9:2 says, *"And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick."* The Twelve were sent out, not to simultaneously preach 2 different Kingdoms, but to preach one Kingdom for which 2 names are used interchangeably.

Matthew 4:17 says, *"From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* Mark 1:14-15, describing the same events, says, *"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."* Did Christ begin His ministry by preaching 2 different kingdoms, both of them involving repentance, to the same Galilean Jews at the same time? No, He preached one Kingdom, for which 2 different names are used. There is only one kind of Kingdom taught in the New Testament, and there is no scriptural basis for finding 2 Kingdoms just because different names are used for it. I may say that I drive a Chevrolet and later may happen to mention that I drive a Caprice, but I do not have 2 different cars. At this time I own only one

car, for which 2 or more names may be used, but the basic nature of the car is the same regardless of what it is called.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM THAT CHRIST CAME TO SET UP?

Some will say that it is not possible that Christ successfully set up His Kingdom as a result of His first advent, because His Kingdom was meant to be an earthly one, a literal re-creation of David's kingdom, with Christ ruling from an earthly throne in Jerusalem. It is said that the Jews rejected that earthly kingdom that Christ offered them, and as a result the Kingdom was postponed - Christ will try to set it up again at His Second Coming.

It is true that the Pharisees believed that the Messiah would set up an earthly kingdom when He came, but Christ set them straight on this in Luke 17:20-21: "*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: Neither shall they say, Lo here! Or, lo there! For, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.*" There is no way that the earthly kingdom desired by the Pharisees could come "without observation," but that is not the nature of the kingdom that Christ came to set up. He came to set up a spiritual kingdom. As we have seen, Paul in Romans 14:17 describes the Kingdom of God as "*not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*"

The coming of the Kingdom is compared to the growth of a mustard tree from a tiny seed, Matthew 13:31-32, and the slow operation of leaven, Matthew 13:33. The parables of the Kingdom in Matthew 13 clearly describe a spiritual kingdom that grows slowly but surely, not a literal earthly Jewish kingdom that is set up all at once.

When Christ taught concerning the nature of the Kingdom, He spoke of it in the present tense, as if it was a present reality for those who heard Him back then. For instance, in Matthew 19:13 He said, "*Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*" What does little children coming to Christ have to do with a literal, political, militaristic Jewish kingdom with the Messiah ruling from an earthly throne in Jerusalem, which was the kind of kingdom the Pharisees and carnal Jews expected?

Clearly Christ's Kingdom was spiritual, not earthly in nature, as seen also in His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount: "*Blessed are the pure in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven. . . . Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven.*" (Matthew 5:3, 10) We are told that the Sermon on the Mount teaches the "principles of the Kingdom," but where is there anything here about a restoration of the ancient literal political Jewish state? There are instructions here about how to handle persecution, but nothing about the overthrow of the persecutors, the defeat of the Romans or the establishment of a

Jewish commonwealth.

It is simply not true that Christ offered the Jews the earthly kingdom of their misguided expectations, and that they turned it down. On the contrary, they demanded that Christ give them that kind of kingdom and He refused to do so: "*When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.*" (John 6:15)

Christ told Pilate that He had no intention of setting up a worldly kingdom that would rival or challenge that of the Roman Empire on an earthly level: "*Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.*" (John 18:36)

The Kingdom that Christ came to set up was spiritual and heavenly in nature, not worldly and terrestrial. Therefore, the objection that Christ did not set up a visible, worldly kingdom cannot be used to prove that Christ's kingdom is still in the future. Christ did not ever intend to set up such a kingdom.

DOES THE OLD TESTAMENT TELL US WHEN CHRIST WOULD SET UP HIS KINGDOM?

In Daniel's vision of the 4 world empires, we are told that God would set up a Kingdom that would never be destroyed, and that this would take place in the days of the kings of the 4th world empire, which is almost universally (and correctly) understood by Bible commentators to be the Roman Empire:

"*And 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 in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*" (Daniel 2:44) The only way that any kingdom could fulfill this prophecy would be for it to be set up during the time of the Roman Empire. A kingdom that was postponed and not set up until many centuries after the fall of Rome could not possibly fulfill this prophecy.

We are given more information on the timing of the Kingdom in Daniel 7:13-14: "*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. 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.*" **This is a description of Christ's ascension to heaven after His resurrection - at that time, He was to be given a kingdom which would be everlasting and would never be destroyed.**

Some commentators, in order to avoid the implications of this teaching, have said that this passage is a description of Christ's Second Coming, but it is not. This

passage describes Christ coming to the Ancient of Days (God the Father) and being brought before Him. Christ is coming into heaven, not leaving heaven to return to earth. Nowhere does the Bible teach that the Kingdom begins at Christ's Second Coming. In 1 Corinthians 15:23-24, we are not told that the Kingdom begins at His coming; on the contrary, He will deliver up the already-existing Kingdom to His Father at His Second Coming: *"afterward, they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power."*

The New Testament is in harmony with the Old Testament, in teaching that the Kingdom was to be set up during the First Century AD, within the lifetimes of those who heard Christ's preaching on earth: *"Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."* (Matthew 16:28) If the Kingdom was not established within the lifetime of those living approximately in 32 AD when Christ spoke these words, then Christ was a false prophet and we are all in the wrong religion! To affirm that Christ was a false prophet is quite a price to pay, in order to cling to the dogma of the postponed Kingdom. Fortunately, Christ did set up the Kingdom in the First Century as promised, thus proving Himself to be a true prophet and our Lord.

WHO NOW RULES THE EARTH, CHRIST OR SATAN?

Some have taught that we cannot possibly be in the Kingdom, because Satan is now the ruler of this world. Their proof text for this teaching is Luke 4:6: *"And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it."* Even granting that Satan was at this point in time telling the truth (for a change) in making the claims that he made, we must remember that Satan's power over the earth was overthrown as a result of Christ's death and resurrection. We fail to understand and give full credit to the work of Christ on earth, if we do not realize that Christ overthrew the power of Satan over the earth when He died on the Cross and rose again.

Shortly before the crucifixion, Christ said, *"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out."* (John 12:31) In John 16:11 He said, *"Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."* In John 16:33 He said, *"Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."*

Before Christ's death and resurrection, it could be said that the Devil, in a real sense, was "the prince of this world" but that is no longer the case. After His resurrection, Christ told the disciples, *"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."* (Matthew 28:18) There is no way that this statement of Christ's absolute power, authority and lordship can be reconciled with the teaching that Satan is still the ruler of this world. Clearly Christ, not Satan, is the ruler of this world and Lord of all. Therefore, there is no reason to speak of a postponed Kingdom or of the

frustration of Christ's true purposes in coming to earth at His first advent.

Hebrews 2:8 says, *"Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him."* If all things are in subjection under Christ, then in what sense is Satan to be recognized as the ruler of this world? See also Hebrews 2:14, *"That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."* How can Satan be viewed as being the ruler of this world in the light of Romans 16:20, *"And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."*

We are told in Ephesians 1:19-22 that Christ is the supreme ruler: *"According to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things."* Now that sure doesn't sound like Satan is still the ruler of this world or any other part of the universe, does it?

Colossians 2:10 says, *"And ye are complete in him [Christ], which is the head of all principality and power."*

1 Peter 3:20-21 says, *"By the resurrection of Jesus Christ: Who is gone into heaven; and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him."* It would appear that Satan would come under the category of an angel, authority or power and thus Christ is over Satan in power and authority.

Christ announced the impending overthrow of Satan's authority in Luke 11:19-22, *"And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils."*

The Bible clearly teaches that Christ, not Satan, is the ruler of this world, as a result of His successful "Mission Accomplished."

MUST CHRIST BE ON EARTH IN ORDER TO RULE?

We have been conditioned to believe that Christ cannot already be ruling as King over the earth, because He must be physically located here on earth in order to rule and/or be king. But the Bible does not teach this. In Psalm 110:1, 5 we read, *"The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. . . . The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath."*

Psalm 103:19 says, *"The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. He is all-powerful and can rule from the Throne of*

David in heaven, without necessarily having to come down to earth and be physically present here. Psalm 11:4, 6 says, "The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD's throne is in heaven. . . . Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest."

During the time of Samuel, God was located in heaven and yet was King over Israel: "And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the LORD your God was your king." (1 Samuel 12:12)

It is natural and proper for us to look forward to Christ's Second Coming, as a result of which we will be in His presence for all eternity. But until that time comes, there is no scriptural basis for saying that He cannot already be our King or that He cannot rule from heaven.

Strangely, those who teach that Satan has a kingdom on earth and is now ruling this earth, do not insist on the principle that Satan must be physically present on earth to be able to have a kingdom on earth. Yet in the case of Christ they do make that insistence - they hold Christ to a higher standard than Satan, or perhaps they feel that Christ does not have the power to rule on earth from a distance, even though they grant Satan that power.

On what scriptural basis do we insist that Christ cannot rule from heaven? In Revelation 1:5 John described Christ as "the prince of the kings of the earth" even though Christ was in heaven at that time. 1 Peter 3:22 tells us that Christ "is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." See also Revelation 17:14 and Ephesians 1:20-22 - clearly, Christ can and does rule from heaven as supreme King of the universe.

DID CHRIST FAIL THE FIRST TIME AROUND IN HIS MISSION AND MINISTRY ON EARTH?

Much of the modern preaching and teaching on Christ's ministry gives the impression that He was a failure the first time that He came to earth. Supposedly, Christ was trying to set up an earthly Jewish kingdom, but He bungled the mission and got Himself crucified instead. As a result, God had to change His plans, and go to Plan B which involves postponing the worldly Jewish kingdom and having a "Church Age" instead, during the unintended "parenthesis" of 2000 years between Christ's first and second attempts to set up the worldly Jewish kingdom.

Those who teach this system of doctrine will usually hotly deny that they are saying that Christ failed in His mission the first time around. But once in a while they will come right out and admit that yes, in their way of thinking, Christ was a failure. W.E. Blackstone, in "Jesus is Coming," said, "He would have set up the kingdom, but they rejected and crucified Him."

Charles Stevens, in a book entitled "Prophecy and the Seventies" published in

1971 by Moody Press, said, "Christ's kingdom is presently in abeyance. The promised king came to His own and was rejected. David's throne is vacant. The king is 'exiled' in heaven."

S.D. Gordon, in "Quiet Talks About Jesus," said, "Everything must be done through man's consent. . . . God proposes, man disposes. God proposed a king, and a worldwide kingdom with great prosperity and peace. Man disposed of that plan, for the bit of time and space controlled by his will." Thus we see that an essential component of the "deferred kingdom" theory is that man is more powerful than God and has the power to defeat God's predetermined purposes on earth. But once we realize that God is more powerful than man, then the "deferred kingdom" theory goes down the drain.

A recent sermon by the pastor of one of the largest and most prominent independent Baptist churches in Northwest Indiana contains this conception of Christ's report to God the Father after the Resurrection: "When Jesus went back to Heaven, the Father said, 'Well? What happened? Did they accept your proposal?' Jesus replied, 'It didn't go very well, Father.' The Father asked, 'But were You able to negotiate a "contract?" Is there reconciliation?' 'Well, it's like this,' Jesus ventured. 'I went to the most promising people . . . They made fun of You. They put me on a Cross! They stripped me naked. They blasphemed Your holy name!'"

This type of preaching is a reflection of the mistaken impression that many Christians have concerning Christ's mission to earth - they think He came to be an earthly ruler, and that His crucifixion was a tragic mistake. This is a basic misunderstanding of Christ's eternal purpose in coming to earth - He came not to be an earthly ruler sitting on a literal throne in Jerusalem, but He came specifically to die on the Cross for our sins, to redeem us from the power of the Evil One: "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45) Christ's crucifixion was not the bizarre, unforeseen end of a bungled mission - it was the reason for the mission: "Now is my soul troubled: and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." (John 12:27)

It is blasphemous to suppose that when Christ ascended to the Father after His resurrection, He reported to the Father that "things didn't go very well." We get a totally different impression in Colossians 2:14-15: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." The Bible consistently describes Christ's resurrection and ascension as a "triumph." In Ephesians 4:8 we are told that "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." This is a far cry from the pessimistic message of modern preachers who think that Christ's mission to Planet Earth "didn't go very well."

The doctrine of the deferred or postponed Kingdom, which teaches that Christ

was thwarted by mere men in His original purpose of establishing the Kingdom at His first advent, represents a dramatic departure from the traditional doctrine of God's omnipotence or all-powerful nature. This is taught in Genesis 18:14, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" See also Psalm 115:3, "But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." See also Matthew 19:26, "With God all things are possible."

We are told in Colossians 1:16 that Christ is the Creator of everything, including all thrones and dominions: "For by him [Christ] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him." This teaches that the Throne of David was created by Christ and for Christ, and yet we are to supposed to believe that Christ somehow lost control of the situation at His first advent, was not able to establish His Kingdom and sit on the Throne of David that was prepared for Him and by Him, and that He went into "exile" in heaven, a disheveled, bedraggled failure, reporting that things "didn't go very well."

As we present the claims of Christ and His Lordship to sinners and Christians alike, we just might get a better response if we portray Christ as the success and the winner that He is, rather than a loser and failure.

IS THE CURRENT CHURCH AGE A BREAK, OR PAUSE, OR PARENTHESIS IN GOD'S PLAN TO ESTABLISH A LITERAL, WORLDLY JEWISH KINGDOM?

Christians have been taught that the Church Age is not the main event - it is a detour, an unfortunate pause or speed bump on the way to the main purpose of God, which they think is the reestablishment of a literal Jewish kingdom on earth, with Christ ruling from a literal throne in Jerusalem. This helps to explain why many Christians give so liberally, in the amounts of tens of millions of dollars a year, to Jewish religious and educational causes. They have been taught that our whole purpose for being here is to help to establish the Pharisaical Jewish kingdom that Christ supposedly tried and failed to set up at His first coming. This explains the widespread enthusiasm of some evangelical Christians for Jewish causes, as compared to their apathy when asked to help promote the cause of Christianity. If our theology and prophetic preaching give folk the impression that Judaism is the wave of the future and that Christianity is doomed to failure and ruin, then naturally people are going to want to support a winning cause rather than to "beat the dead horse" of Christianity.

Supposedly we are all going to go back to Judaism in the Millennium, complete with a Jewish temple in Jerusalem with animal sacrifices. However, the main point of the epistle to the Hebrews is that the system of Jewish temple worship

and animal sacrifices was being permanently abolished by God, and that any return to that system on the part of Christians would be an act of unforgivable apostasy. During the Millennium, we will continue to worship God in the Church, not in a Jewish temple with animal sacrifices: "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Ephesians 3:21) "All ages" would certainly include the Millennium period.

The Lord's Church is and always will be the "main event" in God's program, not a return to animal sacrifices in a Jewish temple. Some Christians are obsessed about helping to get a Jewish temple built in Jerusalem in order to get things ready for the Millennium, but the Apostle John, describing the Millennium and the New Jerusalem, said, "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." (Revelation 21:22)

There are those who have supposed that God never predicted the Church Age in the Old Testament - it was an afterthought made necessary by the rejection of the Messiah by the Jews, which supposedly took God by surprise. This is not correct. God did specifically predict the Church Age in Hosea 1:10: "And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God." Now let's go to Hosea 2:23: "And I will sow her unto me in the earth, and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy, and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people, and they shall say, Thou art my God."

Now let us see how Paul quoted and applied these passages in Romans 9:24-26: "Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As he saith also in Osee [Hosea], I will call them my people, which were not my people: and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God." Clearly Paul is talking here about the conversion of the Gentiles, since in Romans 9:30-31 he says, "What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness."

In Acts 15:13-18, James quotes from Amos Chapter 9, stating that this prophecy of the restoration of the tabernacle of David would be fulfilled, not by the construction of a literal tabernacle (tent) in Jerusalem, but rather by the ingathering of the Gentiles during the Church Age: "James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." God's work of uniting Jews and

Gentiles in his Church was known to Him and planned by Him from the beginning of the world, and it was revealed in advance by His prophets.

THE GREAT REIGN ROBBERY - IS CHRIST NOW SITTING AND REIGNING ON THE THRONE OF DAVID?

One of the dogmas of modern dispensationalist teaching is that Christ is not yet reigning on the Throne of David - supposedly that throne stands empty, as a result of Christ's failure to accomplish the mission and set up the Kingdom at His first advent. Let's see what the Bible has to say about that.

When the Angel Gabriel announced the conception and birth of Christ to the Virgin Mary, he promised that Christ would be given the throne of David: "*And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. 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: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever: and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*" (Luke 1:31-33).

In this passage, the throne of David is defined, not in terms of any specific location for that throne, but rather in terms of Who it is who sits on that throne. Wherever Christ is seated on the throne, that is the throne of David. The duration of Christ's session on that throne is "for ever:" this would include the Millennium period, but not be limited to that period. To fulfill the promise that Christ would be on the Throne of David "forever," we must have Him on that throne before the Millennium, and afterward, in the eternal state. That throne would not have to be on earth - it could be in heaven. "*Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? And where is the place of my rest?*" (Isaiah 66:1, quoted in Acts 7:49)

The original reference to the throne of David in 2 Samuel 7:16 tells us that the throne of David is forever: "*And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.*" There are those who say that the throne of David cannot exist except on earth, specifically in Jerusalem, or else it is not the throne of David. However, if the throne of David is "forever," then clearly it will continue to exist after the Millennium, in the eternal state, which means that at that time, the throne of David will be in heaven. That being the case, the throne of David clearly does not have to be on earth in order for it to be the throne of David. It could be in heaven now. The throne of David is an office, not a literal chair - wherever the holder of that office is seated, there is the throne of David.

Psalms 89:3-4 also emphasizes the eternal nature of the throne of David - it is not just for a 1000-year Millennium period, but for "all generations:" "*I have made a covenant with my chosen. I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I*

establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah." Any theory that restricts the throne of David to a 1000-year period and to one location on earth, in Jerusalem, does not do justice to the Bible teaching that the throne of David will endure forever.

A thoughtful consideration of the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 9:6-7 rules out the possibility that the throne of David will sit vacant and abandoned for thousands of years after the first advent of the Messiah. How do we know Isaiah is talking about Christ's first advent, not His Second Coming? We know this because he tells us that the Messiah will come as a child, which clearly points to His first coming, not the second one. As a result of His first coming, there will be an increase of His government and peace as the Messiah sits upon the throne of David: "*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder . . . 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.*"

Can we dare postulate that our almighty and all-powerful God failed in His purpose of setting the Messiah on the throne of David as a result of His first advent, when we are specifically told that the zeal of the Lord will perform it and bring it to pass? If God failed to carry out this promise, then how can we ask our hearers to trust Him for anything?

In Acts 2:29-36 we are told that Christ was resurrected and ascended into heaven specifically for the purpose of sitting on the throne of David. If the throne of David has to be on earth, then Christ should have stayed on earth in order to sit on the throne of David, which is a strong indication that the location of the throne of David is in heaven, not on earth. Let's read that passage: "*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. 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; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. 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. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*"

This passage is conclusive and clear in teaching that Christ, having risen from the dead for the purpose of sitting on the throne of David, and having been made both Lord and Christ, and being seated at the right hand of the Father, is now therefore

sitting on the throne of David. But of course, the folks who insist that we are not yet in the Kingdom, and that Christ's mission to earth to establish a worldly Jewish kingdom was a failure, cannot concede that Christ is now on the throne of David. They read this passage and say, "It doesn't specifically follow through to say that Christ actually sat down on the throne of David after His resurrection - therefore He is not yet seated on the throne of David."

Not only is this an "argument from silence" which proves nothing, but it teaches that God's eternal purpose, in sending Christ to earth and then raising Him from the dead, was frustrated and did not come to fruition. Yes, the original plan was that Christ would be raised up to sit on the throne of David, but things went wrong, God's plan was stymied by a bunch of pesky, rebellious infidels, and as a result Christ is marooned and exiled up there in heaven, uncomfortably seated on a borrowed second-hand throne, unable to sit in the throne of David for which He specifically was resurrected.

This type of nonsensical reasoning would, of course, make perfect sense to those who believe that God's plan in establishing a Pharisaical Jewish kingdom on earth was brought to a screeching halt for thousands of years by the stubborn resistance of mere men. This type of god is not very powerful, he is not able to bring about that which he proposes to do, he is constantly running into unforeseen roadblocks, constantly forced to take lengthy detours in an effort to overcome the resistance of men who sometimes appear to be stronger than God. This god is not sovereign, his plans are easily defeated by men, and he does not inspire much in the way of confidence.

If we could ever understand the all-powerful nature of God, His total sovereignty, His total control over history, and the impossibility of frustrating the plans of God, then we would instantly understand that when the Apostle Peter said in Acts 2 that God raised Christ from the dead to sit on the throne of David, then this is exactly what came to pass. We would understand that "*all the promises of God in him [Christ] are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.*" (2 Corinthians 1:20)

In order to help ourselves to be convinced of the sovereignty of God or the immutability of His decrees, let us continue to examine further the question of whether Christ is indeed seated on the throne of David.

In Jeremiah 33:17, 20-21, the prophet Jeremiah states that there will always be a descendant of David seated on his throne: "*For thus saith the LORD; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel. . . Thus saith the LORD, If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers.*" This would appear to be conclusive that there will always be someone sitting and reigning on the throne of David, that the throne would not be left vacant for thousands of years, and that Christ

is now seated on that throne.

Those who insist that we are not yet in the Kingdom, and who keep alive the ancient Pharisaical delusion that the Kingdom would be worldly in nature, have to deny the force of Jeremiah's words. They say that all that Jeremiah was saying is that God would always have a descendant of David available to sit on the throne of David, should the opportunity arise, and that at this point Christ is on stand-by, ready to sit on the throne at some point in the future but somehow unable to do so at this time (even though the Apostle Peter says in Acts 2 that He was resurrected specifically for the purpose of sitting on that throne!)

They cannot admit that Christ is reigning now - supposedly Satan is still reigning on earth, even after Christ's great victory over Satan on the Cross. So we have to jump through whatever theological hoops are necessary, in order to deny the obvious yet politically incorrect teaching that Christ is reigning now from the throne of David.

In Revelation 3:21, Christ says He is sitting on the throne: "*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*" Some will use this verse as a proof-text to show that there are multiple thrones in heaven, designated as "my" and "his." But Revelation 22:1 and 22:3 refer to "*the throne of God and of the Lamb*" as just one throne. Those who deny that Christ succeeded in His mission to set up the eternal Kingdom will insist that "my throne" or "His throne" are not the throne of David. Supposedly Christ had to leave the throne of David sit empty, because of the opposition of mere mortals on earth to His eternal Kingship, so because of those pesky rebels He cannot sit on the throne of David and has to make do with a borrowed throne hastily dusted off and retrieved from some celestial storage room.

All such distinctions as to the names of the thrones in heaven are beside the point: whatever throne Christ sits on, or wherever Christ is located as He exercises His regal authority, is the Throne of David. It is the office or Messiahship of the One who sits on the throne that makes it the Throne of David. The President of the United States retains all the authority of his office even when he steps out of the Oval Office or White House. He may leave the country and/or ascend above the surface of the earth on Air Force One, but he is still the President. Similarly, Christ retains His prophesied position as Son of David, regardless of where His throne is located.

If you or I could sneak into heaven and plop ourselves down on Christ's throne, it would no longer be the Throne of David because we are not the Messiah and are not entitled to hold that office. Meanwhile, those who insist that Christ's throne will be a literal chair on earth will have to make it big enough to hold millions of redeemed Christians of all ages, since Revelation 3:21 says that they all will sit with Christ in His throne. (Or maybe they will take turns, sitting on Christ's lap for a few minutes at a time, like a millennial version of a department-store Santa). Would it perhaps be better to understand this passage as teaching that believers share Christ's authority and rule with Him, as in Matthew 18:18-19, John 20:23, Revelation 1:6?

Much as we would all like to have Christ personally present here on earth, it must be better, at least for now, that He reign in heaven. We are told in Hebrews 8:4 that "if he [Christ] were on earth, he should not be a priest." Christ's presence in heaven does not in any way detract from His ability to be a priest and a King: "We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." (Hebrews 8:1) "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." (Hebrews 4:14) Zechariah 6:13, prophesying of the Branch or Messiah, says, "he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne." This could not be talking about any earthly king in the dynasty of David, since the offices of priest and king were carefully and totally separated in Old Testament times. Only Christ could be both king and priest.

The New Testament speaks of Christ's rule as a present reality: "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." (Hebrews 1:8) "For he is Lord of Lords, and King of Kings." (Revelation 17:14) There is no hint of a postponed Kingdom here, or of a parenthesis in God's plan. If Christ is now ruling as King, how can it be said that the Kingdom was delayed, and that we are not yet in the Kingdom? Who ever heard of a king with no kingdom?

Not only that, but we as Christians are already reigning with Christ in His Kingdom: "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and for ever." (Revelation 1:6) "And hath made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." (Revelation 5:10)

Let us try to sum up the question of the Throne of David. The scriptural evidence points to the these conclusions, that since Christ was resurrected specifically for the purpose of sitting on the Throne of David, and that this throne can be located in heaven, and that Christ is currently ruling in heaven, therefore the prophecy about Christ sitting in the Throne of David has been fulfilled and is a present reality. To deny this is to deny that God has the power to bring about His sovereign will, even in the face of human opposition. It ignores the scriptural evidence showing that the Throne of David is always to be continually occupied and that it is located in heaven, not on earth.

Meanwhile, there is a total lack of scriptural evidence indicating that the Throne of David is to be located on earth, in Jerusalem or anywhere, or that it is to be associated with an earthly kingdom which was the dream of the Pharisees. **If it was God's plan that the Throne of David would be on earth, then why are we specifically told in Acts 2 that God raised Christ and exalted Him to God's right hand in the heavens, in order to reign on that allegedly earthly throne? If the Throne of David had to be on earth, it would have made much more sense to have Christ stay on earth and seek to claim His throne down here.**

There are those who would have us to believe that wicked men frustrated and thwarted Christ's plans for earthly rule by their opposition, but the truth is that Christ

always planned to reign from heaven. "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away." (John 16:8) "The LORD said unto me Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." (Psalm 110:1) "Jesus Christ . . . whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:20-21) "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" (John 6:62) Christ's triumphant ascension to heaven after His resurrection was not Plan B, forced on Him by rebellious men who defeated His plans for an earthly kingdom. It was the original plan all along, that He would reign on the Throne of David from heaven.

The agenda of denying that Christ reigns on the Throne of David is not based on scripture. Rather, it is based on the theology which denies that Christ successfully set up the Kingdom of God and which appears to teach that Christ is not really reigning at all in this age. It is part of a defeatist, escapist theology of despair which teaches that there is little or nothing that Christians can do until Christ returns to make another attempt to set the Kingdom up.

WHAT THE COMMENTATORS SAY ABOUT THE THRONE OF DAVID

(As always, my use of quotations by various authors does not necessarily imply endorsement of all teachings and practices of those authors).

Tertullian, Early Church Father (c155-c220 AD), in "Against Marcion," Book III, Chapter 20: "That new dispensation, then, which is found in Christ now, will prove to be what the Creator then promised under the appellation of 'the sure mercies of David,' which were Christ's inasmuch as Christ sprang from David, or rather His very flesh itself was David's 'sure mercies' consecrated by religion, and 'sure' after its resurrection. . . . Him, not David, has God appointed for a testimony to the nations; Him, for a prince and commander to the nations, who ruled over Israel alone. It is Christ whom all nations now invoke, which knew Him not; Christ to whom all races now betake themselves, whom they were ignorant of before. It is impossible that that should be said to be future, which you see (daily) coming to pass." (Tertullian, while looking for a much greater manifestation of the Kingdom in the Millennium, recognized that the Kingdom, with Christ ruling in the place of David, is a present reality).

Athanasius, Early Church Father (c295-373AD), in "Discourses Against the Arians," 2:15:16, 18: "Therefore the Word Himself became flesh, and the Father called His Name Jesus, and so 'made' Him Lord and Christ, as much as to say, 'He made Him to rule and to reign.' . . . He knew Him to be God's Son, confessing, 'Thou

art the Christ, the Son of the Living God;’ but he meant His Kingdom and Lordship which was formed and came to be according to grace.” (Commentary on Acts 2:36. Athanasius sees Christ’s Kingdom as a present reality, not postponed).

John Gill, commentary on Luke 1:32-33: “And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. Christ, as God, is the Son of God, as man, the son of David; a name often given to the Messiah, and by which he was well known among the Jews; and as Christ descended from him as man, in a literal sense, he had a right to the throne of his father David. . . . but here it intends not his throne, in a literal, but in a figurative sense; for as David was a type of the Messiah in his kingly office, hence the Messiah is called ‘David their king,’ Hosea 3:5, so his throne was typical of the Messiah’s throne and kingdom; which is not of this world, but is in his church, and is set up in the hearts of his people, where he reigns by his Spirit and grace; and this is a throne and kingdom ‘given’ by the Lord God. The kingdom of nature and providence he has by right of nature, as the Son of the Highest; the kingdom of grace, or the mediatorial kingdom, the kingdom of priests, or royal priesthood, is a delegated one; his Father has set him as King over his holy hill of Zion; and he is accountable for his government to him, and will one day deliver it up complete and perfect.

“Verse 33. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob . . . Not over the Jews, the posterity of Jacob, in a literal sense, but over the whole Israel of God, consisting of Jews and Gentiles. For as his father David reigned over the Idumeans, Syrians, and others, as well as over the house of Judah and Israel, so this his son shall reign over both Jews and Gentiles: his kingdom shall be from one end of the earth to the other, even over all the elect of God; who in successive generations call themselves by the name of Jacob, and surname themselves by the name of Israel, of whatsoever nation they be; and this reign of his shall be ‘for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end,’ referring to Isaiah 9:7 see also Daniel 2:44. . . .”

Heinrich Quistorp, in “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Last Things:” “The fact that Christ as the Son of Man will appear on the clouds of heaven is a plain indication that His divine glory and the glory of His kingdom will be no earthly phenomenon, as the disciples had supposed. He who in His incarnate life had hidden His heavenly majesty under the form of a servant will then be manifest with all the tokens of the power of that kingdom which is from heaven because it is the kingdom of God.

“This kingdom of Christ will be an eternal kingdom because it is the kingdom of God. Calvin emphasized this with vigour. Hence he decidedly rejects the chiliasm of the fanatics which would make of the kingdom of Christ a purely temporal and transient one.”

Matthew Poole: “‘He would raise up Christ’ by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of his virgin mother, as to his virgin mother, as to his incarnation; and by the same power out of the grave, In his resurrection. ‘To sit on his throne,’ as Luke 1:32-

33: not as a temporal king, for his kingdom is not of this world; but as David ruled over all the people of God, so does Christ, and shall do for ever.”

(Poole sees the kingdom of Christ as a present reality and as a spiritual kingdom, not worldly).

Matthew Henry: “‘The Lord said unto my Lord,’ when he had raised him from the dead, ‘Sit thou at my right hand,’ in the highest dignity and dominion there; be thou entrusted with the administration of the kingdom both of providence and grace; sit there as king, until I make thy foes either thy friends or thy footstool.”

(Commentary on Acts 2:35. Clearly Matthew Henry sees the reign of Christ on the throne of David as a present reality. If Christ already has the highest dignity and dominion, this rules out the concept of a postponed kingdom or of failure to set up the Kingdom as a result of Christ’s first advent and resurrection).

Adam Clarke: Commentary on Acts 2:36: “‘Both Lord and Christ.’ Not only the Messiah, but the supreme Governor of all things and all persons, Jews and Gentiles, angels and men. . . . It was indisputably proved, that this same Jesus, whom they had crucified, was the promised Messiah, and if so, the Governor of the universe, from whose power and justice they had every thing to dread, as they refused to receive his proffered mercy and kindness.”

(Clarke holds to Christ’s Kingdom as present, not postponed - He is now the supreme Governor of the universe. There is no hint of a deferred kingdom or of Christ waiting for another chance to try to set the kingdom up).

Greg Bahnsen and Kenneth Gentry, in “House Divided:” “Here we learn that David’s prophecy regarding One Who was to sit on his throne was a prophecy of the ‘resurrection.’ . . . His resurrection began His exaltation in preparation for His ascension to the right hand of the throne of God, the place of universal rule and authority. There He was ‘crowned with glory’ (Hebrews 2:9) to begin His rule (Romans 8:34, Ephesians 1:20, Colossians 3:1, Hebrews 12:2, 1 Peter 3:22, Revelation 3:21).”

J. Marcellus Kik, in “An Eschatology of Victory:” “The first misconception is that which speaks of Christ being glorified only at His second coming. Christ is seated upon the throne of glory now. Jesus stated to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, ‘Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?’ Through the cross Christ entered into His glory. Peter on the day of Pentecost shows how God raised up Christ to sit on His throne: ‘being by the right hand of God exalted.’ The exaltation of Christ has already taken place. This Paul also states in Philippians: ‘Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.’ The exaltation does not await the second coming but has already taken place. The glory and reign of Christ are present.

Christ is seated upon the throne of His glory now. After all the events which shall take place at the second coming Christ will give up this Messianic throne of glory so that God may be all in all."

William E. Cox: "We should like to state that this teaching (that Christ aspires to sit on the literal throne of David) is one of the many evidences of the weak Christology in the dispensational system. Even if God should resurrect the throne on which David sat, which throne has long since decayed and turned to dust, it would indeed be a demotion of the lowest order for our Lord, who occupies the throne of heaven, to be a successor to a throne once occupied by an earthly king! . . . Our Lord has for nearly 2000 years occupied the throne of which David's throne was a mere type. Peter depicts this in Acts 2:29-36."

Curtis Dickinson: "It is evident that David understood that the Messiah who was to come from his seed would be raised from the dead in order to sit on David's throne while David himself remained in the grave. It is not after the second coming and resurrection of the dead that Christ begins to reign on David's throne, nor is it an earthly throne in the land of Palestine, but it is the heavenly throne of which ancient Jerusalem was only a shadow or type." - "The Witness," March, 1970.

L.R. Shelton, Jr. In "Revelation 20 - Past Present Future," pp. 22-23: "Twenty-two times in the Book of Revelation, the throne of God, the throne of the Lamb and the throne of the saints is said to be in heaven. . . . You see, He [Christ] is sitting on David's throne now, the spiritual throne in heaven!"

Evangelist Ralph Woodrow, in "His Truth is Marching On," pp. 65-66: "Those who hold the postponement view say God raised Jesus from the dead so that later - 2,000 years or so later! - he would be exalted as King on the throne of David. But this does not fit.

"The fact that there will be a resurrection at the last day was commonly believed by the Jewish people (John 11:24). Had Peter been speaking of one taking the throne of David AFTER the resurrection at the last day, the prophecy could then apply to David himself or someone else. His whole argument would have lost its point.

"It would be while David still slept with his fathers that Christ would be raised up to sit on his throne. Unless Peter was making statements entirely out of context, there is every reason to believe that Christ fulfilled this prophecy by His resurrection and ascension.

"Having ascended into heaven, Christ '*sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool*' (Hebrews 10:12-13). We read also that '*he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death*' (1 Corinthians 15:25-26). He must continue

to reign until death is destroyed. Since Paul, in this same chapter, says death will be destroyed by the dead being RESURRECTED, it seems clear that the reign of Christ had to begin BEFORE the resurrection of the dead.

"Some think the throne of David can only mean a literal, earthly throne in Jerusalem - a rulership over fleshly Jews in a postponed kingdom of the future. But even in the Old Testament era, the 'throne of David' was not a term limited strictly to David, but was also called 'the throne of the Lord.' For example, we read, '*Then sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father.*' (1 Kings 2:12), and a parallel place says: '*Then Solomon sat on the THRONE OF THE LORD as king instead of David his father*' (1 Chronicles 29:23).

"Peter preached that Christ has been raised from the dead and exalted as King. David's prophecy has been fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. David's body saw corruption; he was not raised from the dead to ascend into heaven; his sepulchre was with them to that day. But Christ, while David still slept, has been exalted on his throne. This view brings harmony to the passage and does not require a huge gap or artificial parenthesis of 2,000 years.

"But if Christ's exaltation to the throne of David has not occurred - and will not until after the resurrection - Peter's message was simply not relevant. There would be very little, if any, connection, between what he preached on the day of Pentecost, and what he quoted from the Psalms.

"The 'throne of David' cannot be limited to a literal throne in Jerusalem, for Christ fulfilled the prophecy by ascending into heaven where he was exalted as Lord and Christ. He has 'the key of David' so that He opens and no man shuts, He shuts and no man opens (Revelation 3:7). No one takes this to mean a literal key, some relic handed down from the days of David."

Herman Ridderbos, in "The Coming of the Kingdom," pp. 466-467: "The resurrection discloses what was hidden in many respects in the time before it; namely, **that there is an intimate and indissoluble coherence between Jesus' exaltation as the suffering Servant of the Lord and his glory as the Son of Man invested with all power and authority in heaven and on earth.**

"This coherence is not only manifest in a passage like Acts 2:38 which is often quoted because it explicitly states that God has placed Jesus on His right hand as a result of the resurrection and exaltation and has thus made **Lord and Christ**. But the same thing, viz., that for Christ, too the resurrection meant His investiture with power in accordance with Daniel 7, is even more clearly expressed in the resurrection statement, '*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*' "

Calvin Goodspeed, in "Messiah's Second Advent," pp. 93-94: "Our Lord was the antitype of David. Peter declares this at Pentecost. . . . 'that of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon his throne; he foreseeing this spake of the resurrection of Christ' (vs. 30-31). 'Being therefore,' Peter further explains, 'by the right hand of

God exalted,' through the resurrection, and most certainly, to this promised throne of David, 'and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath poured forth,' in the exercise of His kingly function on this throne, 'this which ye see and hear.' Peter further declares that Psalm 110:1 is an express prediction of Christ's exaltation to the throne promised to David's seed in 2 Samuel 7:16, and from which he has poured out the Holy Ghost (vs. 34-35). 'Let all the house of Israel, therefore,' in view of the argument he has just concluded - this house of Israel that has crucified Christ and is expecting Messiah to come as a national ruler, as do premillennialists - let Israel know assuredly the truth which runs counter to their bitterest prejudices 'that God hath made him both Lord and Christ' (v. 36). He is now, as Messiah, seated on the throne of the Messiah promised to David and to his seed. Can this language and this argument be forced to mean that our Lord was not to ascend this promised throne, and to exercise His authority as the antitype of David, until thousands of years should pass? Peter virtually says, Israel is looking for a Messiah who is to reign from an earthly throne. He is to reign, but from the throne in heaven, whither He went when He was raised from the dead and ascended on high. Do not reject Him as though He were not a king. He is a king, and is now ruling from the throne promised to His father David."

"Christ as the Son of David has already taken up into Himself all the kingly authority promised to His seed, and is already ruling on the prophetic throne of David. . . . the promises that David should never want a man to sit on his throne is fulfilled. Up to the time of our Lord's first coming, the descendants of David continued to have a kind of rule over the Jews. Since He came and ascended on high, He has been exercising a higher form of kingly authority, adapted to the advance in spirituality of the new dispensation as compared with the old, over the antitype of Israel, and this is never to end." - pp. 96-97.

Willard Ramsey, in "Zion's Glad Morning," pp. 69-72:"It is not the location of the throne that defines it as David's throne; it is the person who sits on the throne. The Son of David, wherever He sits, sits on David's throne. . . . The throne of David is in heaven today, because David's Son is there today, sitting at the right hand of God. . . . In setting the Davidic covenant in this relationship to Psalm 110, Peter positively makes the point that the Session of Christ at the right hand of God is in fulfillment of the promise that God 'would raise up Christ to sit on his throne.' Otherwise he made no point at all. It would be senseless to bring up the issue of the throne of David and not mention the act of Christ which fulfills the prophecy. It is clear, therefore, that Peter was making the point that David's Son, in sitting at the right hand of God, was sitting on David's throne. . . . If there ever was One who could have made and established an earthly throne, it was the Lord Jesus Christ. On one occasion the people tried to take Him by force and make Him an earthly king (John 6:14-15). If Larkin and Pentecost were right that Jesus wanted to be an earthly king, He had the perfect opportunity. But they were wrong, and Christ rejected the offer of the Jews

because He refused to be a king on this earth in this world."

Ovid Need, in "Death of the Church Victorious," p. 70: "Christ, according to the clear words of God's Spirit, ascended to the throne of his father, David (Acts 2:27-36). When Peter preached that Christ ascended to David's throne, as prophesied, to rule over His enemies, the Jews cried out, '*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*' One wonders, consequently, if a reason we do not see men today '*pricked in their heart*' is because Christ is not presented as He was by the Spirit to the first church - enthroned as the King with total power and authority over God's enemies."

Darrell Bock and Craig Blaising, in "Progressive Dispensationalism," 1993, p. 183: "Every New Testament description of the present throne of Jesus is drawn from Davidic covenant promises. Repeatedly, the New Testament declares that He is enthroned at the right hand of God in fulfillment of the promise given in Psalm 110:1. This is a Davidic promise; it is the son of David who fulfills it. In Acts 2:30-36, the resurrection, ascension, and seating of Christ in heaven at the right hand of God (Psalm 110:1) are presented in light of the prediction 'that God had sworn to him [David] with an oath to seat one of his descendants upon his throne' (Acts 2:30). No other throne is discussed in this text except the Davidic throne. New Testament descriptions of this enthronement at the right hand of God are often filled with other Davidic features such as being exalted above all other kings, all rule, and all authority. Having all his enemies subjected to him or in some texts waiting to have all things subjected to him are both descriptions drawn from Davidic promises."

George Eldon Ladd, in "A Theology of the New Testament," p. 336-337: "The new redemptive events in the course of Heilsgeschichte have compelled Peter to reinterpret the Old Testament. Because of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, Peter transfers the messianic Davidic throne from Jerusalem to God's right hand in heaven. Jesus has now been enthroned as the Davidic Messiah on the throne of David, and is awaiting the final consummation of his messianic reign. . . . Jesus is enthroned as the Messiah, but His reign is not complete. He must reign until all His enemies are made a stool for His feet."

Patrick Fairbairn: "But presently afterwards when the Spirit has descended with His enlightening and elevating influences, he [Peter] proclaims Christ as already 'exalted to sit on the throne of David' (Acts 2:30); or, as it is again expressed, anointed by God, according to the terms of the second Psalm, and now meeting the opposition of ungodly men, which was there predicted respecting the Lord's anointed King."

George Murray, in "Millennial Studies," p. 44: "The Davidic covenant, of which much has been said, was to the effect that his seed would sit upon his throne and had its natural fulfillment in the reign of King Solomon. Its eternal aspects include the

Lord Jesus Christ of the seed of David; and in the book of Acts, Peter insists that Christ's resurrection and ascension fulfilled God's promise to David that his seed should sit upon his throne. (See Acts 2:30) Why insist, then, on a literal fulfillment of a promise which the Scriptures certify to have had a spiritual fulfillment?"

Kenneth Gentry, in "He Shall Have Dominion," p. 212: "The pattern of the New Testament is: humiliation followed immediately by exaltation (John 7:39; Luke 24:26; 1 Peter 1:11). . . . We must recognize that Christ did receive 'David's' throne ordained in prophetic imagery (Acts 2:29-36; 3:13-15; 5:29-31; Revelation 3:7)

CONCLUSION: APPLICATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Do the topics discussed in this booklet make any difference, or are they just a matter of hair-splitting semantics?

Does it matter whether Christ or Satan now rules the earth? Does it matter whether Christ succeeded or failed in His mission to set up the Kingdom which the prophet Daniel promised would be set up during the reign of the Roman emperors? Does it matter whether or not Christ kept His promise in Matthew 16:28 that people then living would see Him coming in His kingdom? If it is true that Christ failed to set up that kingdom back in the First Century, can anyone produce someone who was living in the First Century who is still alive today, thus absolving Christ from the shame of having uttered a false prophecy? What confidence can we have in the Bible as a reliable and inerrant source of doctrine and practice, as long as we deny the plain statements of the New Testament that we are now in the Kingdom of God?

Does it matter whether or not Christ did sit on the Throne of David, according to the sovereign purpose of God in causing Him to be crucified and then raised from the dead? If mere mortal men were able to thwart and frustrate God's plan at Christ's first advent, why should anyone have confidence that He will do any better the second time around?

It is important to recognize that Christ's ministry on earth accomplished what was intended - His Kingdom was set up, and Christ now rules over His creation from the throne of David. This understanding frees us from any necessity to deny or explain away the many clear statements in the New Testament teaching that Christ set up the Kingdom in the First Century AD.

This understanding does not in any way exclude the expectation that we will see a much fuller expression of Christ's Kingdom on earth, in times to come. Nor does this understanding mandate acceptance of any particular, detailed system of prophecy or eschatology. It does give all Christians, whatever their eschatological perspective, a more optimistic view of what they can accomplish for the Lord in this age, having confidence that Christ is on the throne and that their labor is not vain in the Lord.